

August 11th, 2026
Regular Meeting of the Nenana City Council

Call To Order: Meeting called to order at 6:34 pm by Mayor Verhagen.

Pledge of Allegiance: Recited

Roll Call

Members Present: Mayor Joshua Verhagen

Council members: Kari Irish, Scott Stevens, Kat McElroy, Tarn Coffey (Zoom), Karen Harvey, Tallon Shreeve

Approval of Agenda

Council member Shreeve moved to approve the agenda, council member McElroy 2nd. Voted 6/0. Agenda passed

Approval of Minutes

Council member Shreeve moved to approve the minutes from the July 14th meeting, council member McElroy 2nd. Voted 6/0. Minutes passed.

Public Comments

Stephan Calkin – Thanking the city on being great partners for the new playground. Kids love it. There are problems with siding that are getting resolved. Heads up on city matches 99k, it got updated 105k, needs to be re approved. New regulation of a new ordinance for the new approved amount. There is a vacant seat on school board. Charter and board are aligned. School opens August 19th. Very excited.

Christine Shields – thanking the city for the green dump. Cleared 30 trees around their house.

Charyl Markwood reported that she is working on the gas line issue. She stated that a bill related to the gas line is expected to be sent to the Senate by the end of the week and welcomes calls with any questions. She also shared that the Governor appointed her as Director of the Interior.

Community Reports & Presentations

Library:

Adrian Coffey – we finished the summer reading program and getting grants ready for winter. Board meeting next Thursday, at 6pm, at the library.

Discover Nenana:

Tallon Shreeve – tourist season is almost over. Thankful for the short fire season
1st Tuesday of the month at 6pm at the library

Presentations:

FY2023 Audit Presentation

Gabe Thompson presented an update on the FY2023 audit, noting that it was nearly complete. He explained that the audit included three opinions.

Audit Opinions and Findings

The first opinion addressed capital assets and debt. A few property sales had not been included on the asset list, but those items were corrected. Gabe explained that some property values were not fully supported because the assets were acquired many years ago.

The Mayor asked whether those issues had already been corrected or still needed to be addressed. Gabe confirmed that they had been corrected. The Mayor gave the example of a tanker that had been sold but was still listed and not properly documented, and Gabe confirmed that this was the type of issue that had been fixed.

The second opinion addressed internal control and material findings. Gabe stated that there were five findings. The third opinion was related to testing of the Airport Improvement Program.

The findings included a lack of internal control related to closing the books, payroll approval and documentation issues, cash management concerns, staff leave tracking issues, late reporting, and allowable cost/cost-principal documentation.

The Mayor clarified that the cash management issue was a cash-flow problem, not a missing-money problem. He explained that the city had temporarily borrowed from other internal areas while waiting for grant reimbursements. The issue has since been resolved, and the City now uses a different process.

Corrective Actions

The Mayor summarized the City's corrective actions. For the first finding, multiple people will now help manage the process, including the new finance director. The second finding has been addressed by routing information through each department and entering it into QuickBooks. Receipts are now sent to a designated email address, with a specific person responsible for tracking them, and department heads enter the appropriate accounts and classes.

Additional corrective actions include regular department-head meetings to review sales, creating separate accounts so funds can be tracked more clearly, establishing a new line of credit to avoid borrowing against other accounts, and training the new finance director to manage payroll and benefits.

Gabe also discussed staff leave concerns and late reporting. He noted that management reviewed and addressed the leave issue, and that late reporting was a separate finding from 2023. A corrective action plan has been prepared with Mayor Verhagen.

Dan Smith noted that the city has made many changes this year after reviewing the problems identified in the audit. Moving more processes to digital systems will help by providing electronic signatures and time stamps.

Gabe stated that the audit was expected to be completed the following day.

Department Reports

Mayor Verhagen - reported that Nichole's return date is unknown due to family medical issues. He noted that several items had fallen behind, but the recent hiring of Maddie Murrell as City Clerk has been a significant help. Pat Jirsa also caught up on invoices last month. Although she was not present and did not provide a verbal report, a written letter from her was included.

Port Authority

Dan Smith referred the Council to the written report. He noted that lighting construction has been delayed. Air cards are expected to be accepted soon, which will allow military aircraft to purchase fuel from the city. Forestry personnel are currently in Nenana and purchasing fuel, although fewer planes are landing because of ongoing construction. Surveyors were also on site earlier in the day.

Municipal Utilities

Clint Berry referred the Council to the written report and noted that he will flush the main lines within the next couple of weeks.

Fire & EMS

Scott Thompson referred the Council to the written report. Scott Thompson and Laurenda were not present at the meeting.

Mayor Verhagen reported that he met with the program representative responsible for covering Scott Thompson's pay, even though the process is delayed.

Financial

Patricia Jirsa provided a letter, which was included in the packet.

Mayor's Report by Josh Verhagen (see written report attached):

Finite Carbon Reforestation Proposal

Davis Stevenson, president of Finite Carbon, joined Dan Smith and Mayor Verhagen last September for a flight over the 514,000 acres that burned in 2009. The Mayor noted that this is the largest burned area in Interior Alaska's recorded history and that much of the area has not recovered naturally. Although the soil remains suitable, seed dispersal has been limited, so reforestation assistance may be needed. Finite Carbon believes approximately 30,000 acres may qualify for a carbon reforestation project because natural regrowth appears to be below 20%, and in many areas below 10%. The land is state-owned, and the proposal would involve leasing it to Finite Carbon for the project. If the project is justified at that scale, Finite Carbon may invest in a tree nursery in Nenana rather than purchasing trees from Canada. The Mayor added that high, dry areas are difficult to reseed naturally but are well suited for assisted seeding.

Staffing and Administrative Updates

The Mayor introduced Maddie Murrell as the new City Clerk. He also provided an update on Nichole Shreeve being out of the office on bereavement leave.

UAF Hydro Project Tour

The Mayor hosted a UAF tour related to the Nenana hydro project and fish camp work. The group is staying for the week and will visit the platform on Thursday, with the Tribe scheduled at 12:30 p.m. and city representatives at 1:30 p.m. UAF plans to host a community event in October to share information. The Mayor also gave the group a tour of the community and biomass facility and noted that the engineering students were engaged and asked many questions.

Biomass and Energy Updates

The biomass system is expected to be fired up within the next month or so. It operates below 50 degrees but overheats when temperatures are above 50 degrees. The entity meeting went well, and the school plans to hold one during the last quarter of the year.

The mayor reported that the pipeline project is no longer in Genfarn's hands. He stated that the project may be better suited for Nenana and that the representative felt welcome here.

While no promises were made, the Mayor said the project appears likely because it would cost less to complete in Nenana.

The Mayor discussed DEC and Alaska Railroad coordination. He stated that neither party wanted to reach out to Crawley at this time, but he would like the parties to work together as partners. DEC will revisit the conversation.

Finance and Software

The Mayor met with a representative from Caselle, a financial software system commonly used by smaller municipalities. He said QuickBooks is not efficient for the City's current needs and that Caselle may better support utility billing.

Training and Community Development

Lorenda received grant funding to attend a symposium, with most costs covered. The Mayor noted that this was the first event of its kind she has been able to attend in her career and that it provided valuable networking opportunities.

The Mayor met with Clint Hall, who builds energy-efficient home kits and is interested in coming to Nenana to build affordable, efficient housing. The opportunity may be supported by Jason and Jane Underhill, who are moving to Nenana and are interested in building rentals for the community.

Recreation and Facility Improvements

Remaining basketball court funds will allow the project to be expanded. Asphalt will be used because it is more cost-effective than cement. The completed area will include a basketball court and a tennis/pickleball court, along with fencing and new lighting.

Dan provided an update on the Civic Center roof. During the roof work, several uninsulated areas were discovered. Those areas have now been spray-foamed and fully insulated, which should reduce heating costs.

The biomass firewalls for the fitness area were also discussed. Rex addressed the identified issues and will return next month to finish the remaining work.

Old Business

None

New Business

Confirmation of City Clerk

Mayor Verhagen presented the confirmation of Maddie Murrell as City Clerk. He noted that the Mayor has the authority to hire for the position, that the role needed to be filled, and that he is grateful to have Maddie on the City's team.

Council Member McElroy stated that she has known Maddie for several years and described her as kind, calm under pressure, and detail-oriented, which she said are important qualities for the City Clerk position.

Council Member Coffey moved to approve the new hire. Council Member McElroy 2nd the motion. Vote of 6/0.

Jason and Jane Underhill Introduction

Mayor Verhagen introduced Jason and Jane Underhill and invited them to explain their interest in purchasing a lot from the City.

Jason Underhill shared that he is from Delta, Jane is from Kodiak, and he works as a general contractor. He said they are interested in helping address Nenana's housing needs while also supporting workforce development and youth training. Jason explained that he wants to pass along practical life skills and trade experience through a nonprofit focused on teaching and training youth. He hopes to work closely with the school and help more communities become self-sufficient. He is also a private pilot.

Jane Underhill said they hope to bridge the gap between trades and youth while helping address the housing shortage. She said they want to become part of the community and develop a school-based program that introduces students to multiple trades. She also noted their interest in helping Native youth learn more about their cultural background and its connection to trade skills.

Council Member Harvey stated that her rental units are always full and said additional housing is clearly needed.

Lot Purchase Request: Block 40, Lots 6 and 7

Mayor Verhagen noted that a letter from Guy Whitney was included in the packet. Mr. Whitney requested to purchase Block 40, Lots 6 and 7, which are adjacent to his property. He offered \$7,000 for Lot 6 and \$4,000 for Lot 7, citing the work needed on the properties. The Mayor stated that the City owns both lots outright, so the process is less restrictive than it would be for foreclosed properties.

Council Member Harvey initially suggested moving the matter to a resolution for placement on the next agenda.

The Mayor explained that the City has used this process in the past for City-owned lots. Residents may bring offers for adjacent City-owned properties to the Council for consideration and a vote. He noted that City-owned land does not generate tax revenue and that selling the lots would also relieve the City of cleanup responsibility. Both lots measure 50 by 140 feet.

After the explanation, Council Member Harvey withdrew her suggestion to proceed by resolution.

Council Member McElroy moved to approve the lot purchase request, and Council Member Shreeve seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of 6–0.

Block 20, Lots 6, 7, and 8

The Mayor explained that Block 20, Lots 6, 7, and 8 were foreclosed on in 2022 and retained by the City. He noted that the school is in significant need of housing, and that Chris Robinson and Jason Underhill had suggested these lots as a possible location. Jason Underhill is willing to help build the homes. Because the lots were foreclosed properties, the City would need to market them for resale.

Council Member Irish asked whether the market value would include the work the City had already put into the lots. The Mayor confirmed that it would.

Council Member Irish also asked whether the property would return to housing use rather than utility use.

Council Member Coffey commented that it would have been useful to see the lots used for additional parking.

The Mayor responded that the other side of the area may be better suited for parking, since most additional parking demand is related to basketball games.

Council Member McElroy said she was saddened when the previous teacher housing was torn down, even though the units were no longer livable. She stated that new housing is clearly needed and supported the idea.

Council Member McElroy moved to approve the lot request, and Council Member Shreeve seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of 5–1.

Block SM 1, Lot 2: Saint Mark's Addition

Jason Underhill stated that he and Jane are interested in being near town and the water and would like to help develop the area.

Council Member Coffey noted that the property is waterfront and said the price should reflect that value.

Mayor Verhagen said the City would have the lot surveyed and appraised, as that work has not been updated recently.

Council Member Irish moved to approve the lot request, and Council Member McElroy seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of 5–1.

Public Comments

none

Assembly Comments

- Council Member Irish – Please keep your heating fuel drivers in mind when getting ready for winter. My seat is open and I won't be running again. Get your wood in. Thanks for coming.
- Council Member Stevens – Thanks for coming. Thanks to all of the departments. Welcome Miss Murrell.
- Council Member McElroy – Welcome to the team Maddie and welcome to Jason and Jane. Thanks everyone for coming tonight. Tourists stop by my van and say they love this community and I sure do too.
- Council Member Coffey – Thank you to the public for showing up. I encourage the community to run for those open seats.
- Council Member Harvey – Today marks my 56th wedding anniversary. What started with a blind date and that obviously ended up going great. Thank you, Dan, for the port financial report. It was quite easy to read. Welcome to Nenana, Jason and Jane. Welcome to the team Maddie.
- Council Member Shreeve – Thanks for being here. It is always good to see land coming out of the city's hands because that means new things are coming. Get ready for winter and the winding down of the tourist season. Welcome Maddie. AML is next month in Fairbanks.

Closing Comment, Mayor Verhagen –

Mayor Verhagen said AML is a valuable networking and support resource for local governments and noted that its services have grown significantly. He will be presenting a class on how to leverage grants.

He is planning on attending the North Pole City Council meeting and encourages participation in AML. He reminded the Council that the UAF tour of the City's platform is scheduled for Thursday at 1:30 p.m. and thanked everyone for attending.

Notice of Next Meeting and Adjournment

- September 8th, 2026, regular meeting 6:30 pm at the Community Civic Center.
- Adjourned at 9:02 PM