

**MINUTES
CITY OF SAINT PAUL
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
January 18, 2024**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Mercurief called the meeting to order at 9:01AM.

II. ROLL CALL

Council members present were Jason Bourdukofsky, Joseph Kozloff, Heidi Mercurief, Raymond Melovidov, Naomi Edenshaw, and Daniel Porath

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CM Porath MOVED to approve. Seconded by CM Mercurief. There were no comments or questions. Motion to approve was carried by a Voice vote with 7 Ayes.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Resolution 24-01 - A Resolution of the City Council Authorizing the City Manager to Execute the MOU Titled "Halibut Users Coalition Assistance and Cost Agreement" and Contributing \$100

CM Porath MOVED to approve. Seconded by CM Kozloff.

Heather McCarty presented on the background of the MOU. A suit was lodged by the Groundfish Forum, the trade association that represents Amendment 80, the bottom trawl sector, on December 19, 2023. The suit is against the National Marine Fisheries Service and asks that the action that set up the Abundance-Based Management program for halibut bycatch management be set aside and be remanded to NMFS for fixing. The group does not think that it adheres to the Magnuson-Stevens Act. She and others now known as the Halibut Defense Alliance, made up of several groups associated with the fisheries have joined together, each with a pledge, falling within a range of \$100 to \$40,000, and are being represented by attorney John Fortuna. Those who have committed to the agreement will become intervenors and will intervene on the side of the government, NMFS/NOAA, supporting their case and making their own cases as to why the Abundance-Based Management of halibut bycatch is necessary for their interest in the fishery. The lead contact is CBSFA. The group have a total of about \$100,000 and will need more for the process. They will be setting up a GoFundMe to make \$150,000 to \$200,000 more. With the MOU, if the City chooses to join the Halibut Defense Alliance the City would agree to have a representative on the coordinating committee that makes the decisions having to do with admin and legal issues. The City would have an equal voice with those already signed on, no matter how much money is pledged.

Mateo gave some input on why the City's participation would be compelling, given former Mayor Swetzo's voice of concerns over the years starting in 2012 when the numbers started to go down before presenting a problem in 2014 with a potential for the directed halibut fishery to be closed because the biomass was so low, and the bycatch was so high. What is

valued by the coalition is the City's involvement in terms of the wisdom, information, and credibility it brings. Nine of the original sixteen highly engaged halibut communities that were identified by the Amendment 123 Abundance-Based Management Action are gone and no longer participate in the halibut fishery. So, there is a real threat to the Bering Sea.

City Manager Zavadil commented that the City has significant investments into the harbor and small boat harbor as the local sponsor. CM Melovidov added that the total bycatch that comes out of the Bering Sea, 90% come out of area 4CDE, the area that surrounds Saint Paul and when they take that bycatch it comes off the top of the amount that the directed fishery gets to harvest. With the halibut Saint Paul holds between CBSFA CDQ and local fleet IFQ it's about 25% that gets allocated to 4CDE.

Motion to approve was carried by Roll Call vote of 7 Ayes.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

CM Porath MOVED to adjourn. Seconded by CM Melovidov. Motion was carried by Voice vote with 7 Ayes. The meeting was adjourned at 10:00AM.

SUBMITTED BY:

APPROVED:

Aubrey Wegeleben, City Clerk

Date