


SUBJECT: AN ORDINANCE OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH ASSEMBLY AMENDING MSB 2.12.070 TO PERMANENTLY ALLOW TELEPHONIC PARTICIPATION BY THE PUBLIC AT ASSEMBLY MEETINGS.

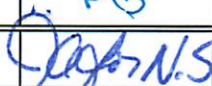

AGENDA OF: February 15, 2022

ASSEMBLY ACTION:

Adopted without objection 3-15-22


MANAGER RECOMMENDATION: Introduce and set for public hearing.

APPROVED BY MICHAEL BROWN, BOROUGH MANAGER: 

Route To:	Department/Individual	Initials	Remarks
	Originator	NS	For Assemblymember Hale
	IT Director	MB	
	Borough Attorney		
	Borough Clerk	JRM 2/7/22	

ATTACHMENT(S): Fiscal Note: YES ___ NO X
Ordinance Serial No. 22-___ (pp)

SUMMARY STATEMENT: This ordinance is sponsored by Assemblymember Hale to amend MSB 2.12.070 to permanently allow telephonic participation by the public at Assembly meetings.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough comprises an area approximately 24,500 square miles which is equivalent to the size of Scotland or West Virginia. However, the seat of Borough government is in Palmer and the regular Assembly meetings occur at the Assembly chambers at 350 East Dahlia Avenue, Palmer, Alaska. Up until 2020, members of the public who want to speak to agenda items or to general audience participation would normally be required to travel to Palmer and attend in-person.

In 2020, with the outbreak of COVID-19, the Borough staff worked to allow remote participation by the public via telephone. This was done due to the necessity of the pandemic, social distancing protocols, and statewide orders restricting the numbers of people who could be in a room at any one time. In 2022, COVID-19 is still

affecting daily life, but the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly meetings are currently held in person with many people coming to speak at the meetings. However, there is still the opportunity for the public to call in to Assembly meetings and participate by telephone.

The ability to call in and not physically travel to Palmer has allowed residents to speak at Assembly meetings when the residents otherwise would not because they live far away, have ongoing health concerns due to COVID-19, or the weather is bad. In addition, telephonic participation has eliminated the need for members of the public to be physically present and sit through many parts of an Assembly meeting to get to the part they are concerned with. In short, telephone participation makes it easier and more convenient for the public to speak at Assembly meetings and removes a barrier to allow for increased participation by the public.

The proposed ordinance here will amend Borough code to mandate that the public be allowed to participate telephonically at all Assembly meetings held at Assembly chambers located at 350 East Dahlia Avenue, Palmer, Alaska. This change is being made so that as COVID-19 lessens in impact, the efficiency, convenience, and service to the public to be allowed to participate telephonically will remain.