

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

350 East Dahlia Avenue, Palmer, Alaska 99645 - 907-861-8683

BOROUGH MAYOR

Edna DeVries

BOROUGH CLERK

Lonnie R. McKechnie, CMC

BOROUGH MANAGER

Michael Brown

BOROUGH ATTORNEY

Nicholas Spiropoulos



Michael Bowles, District 1

Stephanie Nowers, District 2

Dee McKee, District 3

Maxwell Sumner, District 4

Bill Gamble, District 5

Dmitri Fonov, District 6

Ron Bernier, District 7

MEETING MINUTES

WILLOW COMMUNITY CENTER
MILE 69 PARKS HIGHWAY, WILLOW

ASSEMBLY SPECIAL MEETING

6:00 PM

THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2026

Budget Public Hearing

I. CALL TO ORDER

The special meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on Tuesday, April 23, 2026, at the Willow Area Community Center, Milepost 69, Willow, Alaska. The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. by Mayor Edna DeVries.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: 5 - Assemblymember Michael Bowles, Assemblymember Maxwell Sumner, Assemblymember Bill Gamble, Assemblymember Dmitri Fonov, and Assemblymember Ron Bernier

Excused: 2 - Assemblymember Stephanie Nowers, and Assemblymember Dee McKee

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor DeVries queried if there were any changes to the agenda.

The agenda was approved as presented without objection.

The Mayor requested a moment of silence in remembrance of the dogs lost in the Caswell incident.

Mike Brown, Borough Manager, provided an update regarding the independent review that will be conducted concerning the Caswell dog incident.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of allegiance was led by Assemblymember Bernier.

V. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (Three Minutes Per Person.)

The following persons spoke to the need for changes in policies regarding animal abuse cases and to funding additional Animal Care Officers: Kai Leddy; Cindy McCann; Shantel Wiley; Kathleen Frederick; Jan Stevens; Adam Larson, Willow Dog Musers Association President; Dameon Kowalke; Patricia Burks; and Kirsten Peterson.

The following person reported on all the grounds improvements made to the Willow Area Community Center, funded through Borough grants and public donations: Jim Huston.

The following person thanked the Borough for the revetment repairs in Talkeetna and to concerns with the length of the closure for the Fireweed Playground: Jon Korta, Talkeetna Community Council Chairperson.

The following persons spoke to the need for increased public transportation: Zoltan Stersky; Helen Katz; Brian Gearry; Paul Causey, President of Valley Transit Board; Wendy Odom; James McCleese, Valley Transit Driver; Jennifer Bush, Executive Director of Valley Transit; and Elizabeth (did not provide last name).

VI. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

A. PUBLIC HEARING

OR 26-026

An Ordinance Appropriating Monies From The Central Treasury For The Borough Operating Funds, Enterprise Funds, Education Operating Fund And Capital Funds, Establishing The Rate Of Levy For All Borough Functions For The Fiscal Year Beginning July 1, 2026, And Ending June 30, 2027; And Setting The Surcharge Rate For The Wireline And Wireless Enhanced 911 Systems For The Period Of July 1, 2026, Through June 30, 2027.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Mayor DeVries opened the public hearing.

There being no one present who wished to testify.

Assemblymember Bernier moved to continue the public hearing for Ordinance Serial No. 26-026 to April 28, 2026.

The motion passed by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Assemblymember Bowles, Assemblymember Sumner, Assemblymember Gamble, Assemblymember Fonov, and Assemblymember Bernier

VII. MAYOR, ASSEMBLY, AND STAFF COMMENT

Assemblymember Bowles moved to rescind his April 21, 2026, motion regarding library materials.

The motion passed by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Assemblymember Bowles, Assemblymember Sumner, Assemblymember Gamble, Assemblymember Fonov, and Assemblymember Bernier

Assemblymember Bowles thanked the public for their attendance. Acknowledged the community's concerns regarding the unfortunate dog incident in Caswell and stated that he empathizes with those concerns. Concluded by stating that it is a privilege to serve.

Assemblymember Bernier thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Recognized the service of military Veterans in the audience and said a prayer.

Mike Brown, Borough Manager, invited Ken Barkley, Emergency Services Director, to introduce the new Willow-Caswell Fire Chief.

Ken Barkley, Emergency Services Director, introduced Ben Knowles, Fire Chief for the Willow-Caswell Fire Service Area.

Ms. McKechnie spoke to the process for budget amendments.

Assemblymember Gamble stated that the budget public hearing in Willow is his favorite and thanked the public for attending.

Assemblymember Sumner thanked the public for their attendance. Spoke to the potential seat composition of the special review committee for the Caswell dog incident.

Assemblymember Fonov thanked Mr. Brown for the update regarding the independent review of the Caswell dog incident.

Mayor DeVries noted that Borough Libraries will be adorned in patriotic decorations in honor of the 250th Anniversary of the United States. Read a statement into the record regarding the same.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:16 p.m.