

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



BOROUGH ASSEMBLY
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

ASSEMBLY CHAMBERS
350 EAST DAHLIA AVENUE, PALMER

ASSEMBLY REGULAR MEETING

6:00 PM

TUESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2026

I. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, at the Borough Assembly Chambers, 350 E. Dahlia Avenue, Palmer, Alaska. The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by Mayor Edna DeVries.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: 4 - Assemblymember Michael Bowles, Assemblymember Stephanie Nowers, Assemblymember Bill Gamble, and Assemblymember Dmitri Fonov

Telephonic: 3 - Assemblymember Dee McKee, Assemblymember Maxwell Sumner, and Assemblymember Ron Bernier

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

Assemblymember Sumner moved to remove Ordinance Serial No. 25-102, from Reconsideration on the agenda.

The motion passed by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Assemblymember Nowers, Assemblymember McKee, Assemblymember Sumner, Assemblymember Gamble, and Assemblymember Bernier

No: 2 - Assemblymember Bowles and Assemblymember Fonov

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

The agenda was approved as amended without objection.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of allegiance was led by Caleb Buist, Help Desk Specialist.

Mayor DeVries read a proclamation in recognition of the 250th Anniversary of the United States of America, into the record.

Tom Robison, a member of the public, presented a gold pan award to Palmer Pool Lifeguard Cameron Gossett, in recognition of his hard work at the Palmer Pool.

V. MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETINGS

- 26-004** A. Assembly Regular Meeting Minutes: 12/02/25
The minutes were approved as presented without objection.

VI. REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE

A. AGENCY REPORTS (MSB 2.12.082; Seven minutes per person)

1. Reports From Cities

There were no reports provided.

2. Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District

There was no report provided.

3. State of Alaska

There was no report provided.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Joint Assembly/School Board Committees

There was no report provided.

2. Assembly Public Relations

There was no report provided.

C. MANAGER COMMENTS

1. State/Federal Legislation

2. Strategic Planning Issues

3. Port MacKenzie Update

26-017 Port MacKenzie Presentation

David Griffin, Port Director, provided an update regarding Port MacKenzie and the surrounding area.

4. Libraries Update

26-014 Library Board Presentation

Jillian Morrissey, Community Development Director, presented on the accomplishments of the Library Board over the last two years.

5. Transportation Infrastructure Projects Update

26-011 Transportation Projects Update

Tom Adams, Public Works Director, reported on the Borough's transportation infrastructure projects.

D. ATTORNEY COMMENTS

There were no comments provided.

E. CLERK COMMENTS

Ms. McKechnie spoke to the upcoming meeting schedule. Noted that the Commission on Salaries and Emoluments will be meeting on January 12 and 13.

F. CITIZEN AND OTHER CORRESPONDENCE

26-007

1. Agriculture Advisory Board: 11/19/25
2. Animal Care And Regulation Board: 07/18/25, AC&R 25-08, 25-09
3. Big Lake Community Council: 08/26/25
4. Big Lake RSA Board of Supervisors: 12/08/25, Resolution No. 25-02
5. Butte FSA Board of Supervisors: 10/09/25
6. Enhanced 911 Advisory Board: 10/14/25
7. Glacier View Community Council: 10/23/25
8. Gold Trail RSA Board of Supervisors: Resolution No. 25-01
9. Greater Talkeetna RSA Board of Supervisors: 10/01/25
10. Greater Willow RSA Board of Supervisors: 09/08/25, Resolution No. 25-01
11. Knik RSA Board of Supervisors: 12/02/25
12. Library Board: 11/18/25
13. Library Citizen's Advisory Committee: 08/11/25
14. MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission: 06/17/25, 07/16/25, 09/25/25
15. Planning Commission: 12/01/25
16. South Lakes Community Council: 12/01/25
17. Water & Wastewater Advisory Board: 06/18/25
18. West Lakes FSA Board of Supervisors: 12/10/25
19. Willow Area Community Organization: 09/03/25, 10/01/25, 11/05/25

The citizen and other correspondence were presented, and no comments were noted.

G. INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUMS

- IM 26-007** Reporting Conclusion Of Contract No. 24-112B With Northern Asphalt Construction Inc., For A Total Contract Amount Of \$911,764.10, For The North Erica Drive Road Improvements Project.
- IM 26-008** Informing The Assembly Of The Manager's Approval Of, And Submittal Of, The 2026 Online Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Applications For The Department Of Emergency Services, Fire Service Areas Of Sutton, Talkeetna, And Willow-Caswell.
- IM 26-009** Informing The Assembly Of The Manager's Signature On And The Submittal Of A Mat-Su Valley Streambank Habitat Rehabilitation And Protection Cost-Share Program Application Requesting \$2,100 From The Alaska State Department Of Fish And Game For The Caswell Creek Streambank Restoration.

The informational memorandums were presented, and no comments were noted.

VII. SPECIAL ORDERS

A. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (You can speak under one of the audience participations on the agenda, but not both; Three Minutes Per Person.)

The following person spoke in support of Resolution Serial No. 26-001: John Klapperich.

The following person suggested that the Borough develop a communication protocol policy for community council members and spoke in support of the District 6 Planning Commission application: Rod Hanson, North Lakes Community Council.

The following person spoke to the need to protect children from pornographic books in Borough libraries: Jackie Goforth.

The following person spoke to concerns regarding wells and septic in relation to Ordinance Serial No. 25-102: Simon Gilland.

The following persons spoke in opposition of Ordinance Serial No. 25-102: Joel Stefanski and Wanda Smith.

The following persons spoke in opposition of Ordinance Serial No. 25-133: Dee DeeWilson, Big Lake Chamber of Commerce President; and Terry Gorlick.

The following person spoke to the possible Eagle River Annexation: Ken McCarty.

The following person spoke in opposition to banning books: Kathy Kysar.

The meeting recessed at 8:26 p.m. and reconvened at 8:35 p.m.

B. PUBLIC HEARINGS (There are no public hearings for 01/06/26. Three Minutes Per Person.)

C. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (You can speak under one of the audience participations on the agenda, but not both; Three Minutes Per Person.)

The following person spoke in support of reconsideration and adoption of Ordinance Serial No. 25-133: Doug Massie.

D. CONSENT AGENDA

1. RESOLUTIONS

2. ACTION MEMORANDUMS

AM 26-003 Approval Of Contract Amendment No. 2 To Contract No. 25-095P With Nvision Architecture To Add \$147,453.60 For Additional Design-Related Services For Birchtree Charter School; And To Authorize An Additional \$150,000 In Change Order Authority For Unforeseen Design Contingencies.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Assemblymember Fonov moved to approve the consent agenda as read into the record by the Clerk.

The motion passed by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Assemblymember Bowles, Assemblymember Nowers, Assemblymember McKee, Assemblymember Sumner, Assemblymember Gamble, Assemblymember Fonov, and Assemblymember Bernier

AM 26-001 Award Of Bid No. 26-084B To Samson Electric, Inc. In The Amount \$217,182 To Construct The Palmer Junior Middle School Elevator Upgrades.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Assemblymember Bowles moved to adopt AM No. 26-001.

The motion passed by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Assemblymember Bowles, Assemblymember Nowers, Assemblymember McKee, Assemblymember Sumner, Assemblymember Gamble, Assemblymember Fonov, and Assemblymember Bernier

AM 26-002 Award Of Bid No. 26-085B To Goertz Construction Inc. In The Amount Of \$208,844 To Construct The Palmer High School Elevator Upgrades.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Assemblymember Bowles moved to adopt AM No. 26-002.

The motion passed by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Assemblymember Bowles, Assemblymember Nowers, Assemblymember McKee, Assemblymember Sumner, Assemblymember Gamble, Assemblymember Fonov, and Assemblymember Bernier

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

IX. VETO

There were no vetoes.

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. INTRODUCTIONS (For Public Hearing 01/20/26, Assembly Chambers)

RS 26-001 A Resolution Approving An Application To Relocate A Beverage Dispensary License From An Area Outside The City Limits In The Borough To A Location Within The City of Wasilla.

OR 26-002 An Ordinance Confirming The Assessment Roll For The Yarrow Road Natural Gas Local Improvement District No. 664 And Establishing The Method Of Terminating Assessments And Making Refunds To Property Owners.

OR 26-003: An Ordinance Providing For The Financing Not To Exceed \$113,105 Principal Amount Of Special Assessment Internal Service Funds For The Yarrow Road Natural Gas Local Improvement District No. 664, And Fixing Details Of Said Financing.

OR 26-004 An Ordinance Confirming The Assessment Roll For The West Raven Circle Natural Gas Local Improvement District No. 669 And Establishing The Method Of Terminating Assessments And Making Refunds To Property Owners.

OR 26-005: An Ordinance Providing For The Financing Not To Exceed \$11,663 Principal Amount Of Special Assessment Internal Service Funds For The West Raven Circle Natural Gas Local Improvement District No. 669, And Fixing Details Of Said Financing.

OR 26-007 An Ordinance To Enter Into A Lease With Cellco Partnership D/B/A Verizon Wireless For A Communication Site Located At 5182 North Pittman Road, Wasilla; And To Classify A Portion Of The Subject Parcel As General Purpose Lands.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Assemblymember Fonov moved to introduce the legislation as read into the record by the Clerk and to set the public hearings for January 20, 2026.

The motion passed by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Assemblymember Bowles, Assemblymember Nowers, Assemblymember McKee, Assemblymember Sumner, Assemblymember Gamble, Assemblymember Fonov, and Assemblymember Bernier

B. MAYORAL NOMINATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

1. VACANCY REPORT

26-008 Mayoral Requests for Confirmation
Agriculture Advisory Board
Misty O'Connor, resignation
Animal Care and Regulation Board
Carrie Ann Brophil
Board of Adjustment and Appeals
Jessie Rongitsch
Library Board
Cynthia Redmond
Local Emergency Planning Committee
Sherry Carrington
Planning Commission
Brendan Carpenter
Water and Wastewater Advisory Board
Danny Noland
Central Mat-Su FSA No. 130
Brian Davis
Big Lake RSA No. 21
Randy Richards
Fairview RSA No. 14
Loren Means

Assemblymember Fonov moved to confirm the resignations and appointments requested by the Mayor.

The motion passed by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Assemblymember Bowles, Assemblymember Nowers, Assemblymember McKee, Assemblymember Sumner, Assemblymember Gamble, Assemblymember Fonov, and Assemblymember Bernier

C. OTHER NEW BUSINESS

There was no other new business.

D. REFERRALS (For Referral To The Planning Commission For 90 Days Or Other Date Specified By The Assembly)

There were no referrals.

XI. RECONSIDERATION

A. Motion For Reconsideration Filed by Assemblymember Bowles (OR 25-102 is reconsidering the referral to the Platting Board. OR 25-133 is reconsidering the main motion.)

OR 25-102 An Ordinance Amending MSB 43.20, Subdivision Development Standards To Allow Lots To Be Reduced To 30,000 Square Feet Within Single-Family Residential Land Use Districts.

Sponsors: Sumner

[Clerk's Note: Ordinance Serial No. 25-102 was pulled from the agenda at approval of the agenda and reconsideration was not moved.]

OR 25-133 An Ordinance Allowing Renters Of The Big Lake Lions Recreation Center To Consume And Serve Alcoholic Beverages Per The Terms Of The Rental Agreement At The Big Lake Lions Recreation Center.
Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.
Assemblymember Bowles moved to reconsider Ordinance Serial No. 25-133.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

No: 2 - Assemblymember McKee and Assemblymember Fonov

The main motion passed by the following vote:

Yes: 4 - Assemblymember Bowles, Assemblymember Nowers, Assemblymember Sumner, and Assemblymember Gamble

No: 3 - Assemblymember McKee, Assemblymember Fonov, and Assemblymember Bernier

XII. MAYOR, ASSEMBLY, AND STAFF COMMENTS

Assemblymember McKee spoke to her appreciation of the Assembly holding differing viewpoints while still treating one another with respect. Noted that she valued the discussion that took place.

Assemblymember Bernier thanked everyone for attending and offered a prayer.

Assemblymember Nowers echoed the comments of Assemblymember McKee. Queried whether information could be provided regarding the number of books or other items checked out of Borough libraries. Noted that the Platting Board had indicated it lacked sufficient information to provide advice on Ordinance Serial No. 25-102. Stated that it is important that when the Assembly refers legislation to a board for input, the board is provided with as much relevant information as possible. Commented that a standardized form could be created to accompany referrals, outlining the specific input the Assembly is seeking.

Assemblymember Sumner noted that he would be attending the upcoming Platting Board meeting at which the legislation will be considered and that he intends to testify regarding the overall intent of the legislation.

Mr. Brown noted that Governor Dunleavy has requested a review of the tax framework for the possible liquid natural gas line. Related that he recently attended a meeting with representatives from the five affected boroughs that the proposed natural gas line would cross. Advised that a bill may be introduced that could lower the mill rate for the pipeline below what is typically applied to energy infrastructure. Related that he will bring proposals back to the Assembly and request that the body take a position to present to the Legislature. Stated that he intends to have legislation before the Assembly by the first meeting in February.

Assemblymember Bowles spoke to the volume of input he received from constituents opposed to Ordinance Serial No. 25-102. Opined that smaller lot sizes could turn the Valley into Anchorage. Spoke to ongoing concerns regarding libraries and children's access to inappropriate materials. Stated that while he supports free speech, that ensuring that pornographic materials are not accessible to children is not a free speech issue. Expressed appreciation that Assembly members feel comfortable reaching out to him regarding reconsideration of legislation.

Assemblymember Gamble spoke in opposition to having numerous lengthy presentations during a single meeting. Thanked Assemblymember McKee for her input on Ordinance Serial No. 25-133. Noted that he does not take

disagreements personally and believes debate is healthy. Shared that a former mentor once told him that elected officials vote for their own interests only once, in the voting booth, and that the rest of the time they should be voting in the best interests of their constituents.

Assemblymember Fonov stated that he would like Assembly meeting videos to be time stamped.

Ms. McKechnie advised that Granicus videos, which serve as the official Borough record, are already time stamped.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:28 p.m.



Mayoral Signature and Clerk Attestment

For

January 6, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes

(11 pages)


EDNA DeVRIES, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:


LONNIE R. McKECHNIE, CMC, Borough Clerk

Minutes Approved: 02/17/26