

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

ASSEMBLY CHAMBERS
350 EAST DAHLIA AVENUE, PALMER

ASSEMBLY SPECIAL MEETING

6:00 PM

THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2026

Budget Public Hearing

I. CALL TO ORDER

The special meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on Thursday, April 30, 2026, at the Borough Assembly Chambers, 350 E. Dahlia Avenue, Palmer, Alaska. The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. by Mayor Edna DeVries.

II. ROLL CALL

Gamble and McKee excused.

Present: 5 - Assemblymember Michael Bowles, Assemblymember Stephanie Nowers, Assemblymember Maxwell Sumner, Assemblymember Dmitri Fonov, and Assemblymember Ron Bernier

Excused: 2 - Assemblymember Dee McKee and Assemblymember Bill Gamble

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved as presented without objection.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of allegiance was led by Lonnie McKechnie, Borough Clerk.

V. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (Three Minutes Per Person.)

The following persons spoke in support of funding for public transit: Cody Prentice; Mary Wall; Brian Gearry; Ken Hills; Mitchell Forbes; Robert Walden, City of Wasilla Deputy Administrator; Rebecca Emerson; John Clennen; Zoltan Stersky; Kaylie Oposik, Valley Transit Dispatcher; James McCleese, Valley Transit Driver; Jennifer Bush, Valley Transit Executive Director; Sandra Kitchen; Dana Rafaniello; Molly Benson; Scott Elliard; Raven Amos; and Angie Spraker.

The following person spoke in opposition to schools closing and to funding for public transit: Heather Merrill,

The following person thanked the Assembly for their support of tourism: Casey Ressler.

The following persons spoke to concerns of the adverse impacts to children if schools are closed: Riley Laws and Milly Laws.

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.

The following person spoke in support of the Manager's proposed budget, in support of funding for public transit, in support of libraries, and in support of Parks, trails, and public facilities: Michelle Huen.

The following person spoke in support of full funding for the School District and to funding public transit: Mary Doerr.

Assemblymember Bernier moved to continue Ordinance Serial No. 26-026 to May 7, 2026.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

VII. MAYOR, ASSEMBLY, AND STAFF COMMENT

Assemblymember Bowles requested that Valley Transit provide ridership data regarding the number of riders who are going to opioid treatment or other medical services.

Assemblymember Bernier thanked everyone for attending. Said a prayer.

Assemblymember Nowers noted that the Borough does not contract with Valley Transit and has no authority to direct its operations; however, the possibility exists for the Borough to provide funding to help meet community needs. She spoke to the challenges of securing reliable transit services and opined that, given low commuter bus ridership, that Anchorage commuter route could potentially be redirected to support on-demand riders. She further commented that a more cost-effective commuter model for travel to Anchorage may be feasible. Stated that she does not support closing any schools and opined that the community was blindsided by an announcement that should have been made well in advance, allowing time for public input and potential solutions. Thanked the public for attending.

Assemblymember Bowles commented on the significant responsibility of ensuring public funds are spent appropriately to benefit all members of the Borough. He stated that serving as a member of the Assembly is a privilege.

Assemblymember Fonov thanked the public for attending.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.



Mayoral Signature and Clerk Attestment

For

April 30, 2026, Assembly Budget Public Hearing Minutes

(4 pages)


EDNA DeVRIES, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:


LONNIE R. McKECHNIE, CMC, Borough Clerk

Minutes Approved: 05/19/26