

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
Tim Hale, 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, AUGUST 5, 2025

I. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on Tuesday, August 5, 2025, 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

Present: 6 - Assemblymember Stephanie Nowers, Assemblymember Dee McKee, Assemblymember Maxwell Sumner, Assemblymember Bill Gamble, Assemblymember Dmitri Fonov, and Assemblymember Ron Bernier

Telephonic: 1 - Assemblymember Tim Hale

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

Assemblymember Sumner moved to take up Ordinance Serial No. 25-076 immediately following the Informational Memorandums.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of allegiance was led by Palmer City Deputy Mayor Josh Tudor.

V. MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETINGS

- 25-110** A. Special Assembly Meeting Minutes: 07/15/25
 B. Regular Assembly Meeting Minutes: 07/15/25

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

Palmer City Deputy Mayor Josh Tudor, reported on the activities of the city.

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 were no reports provided.

C. MANAGER COMMENTS

1. State/Federal Legislation

2. Strategic Planning Issues

3. Deshka Land Presentation

Sue Mauger, provided a presentation on cold water inflow at the Deshka River.

- 25-116** Presentation

D. ATTORNEY COMMENTS

There was no report provided.

E. CLERK COMMENTS

Ms. Henry spoke to the upcoming meeting schedule.

F. CITIZEN AND OTHER CORRESPONDENCE

- 25-111**
1. Animal Care and Regulation Board: 04/25/25, AC&R Case No 25-05 Final Decision
 2. Big Lake Community Council: 07/14/25
 3. Butte Community Council: 05/14/25
 4. Chase Community Council: 04/09/25
 5. Greater Talkeetna RSA Board of Supervisors: 06/12/25
 6. Greater Willow RSA Board of Supervisors: 02/12/25, 04/30/25
 7. Local Road Service Area Advisory Board: 04/17/25, 06/19/25
 8. MSB Fish & Wildlife Commission: 04/10/25
 9. Meadow Lakes Community Council: 07/09/25
 10. Midway RSA Board of Supervisors: 04/30/25
 11. Planning Commission: 06/02/25, 06/16/25, Resolution No. PC 25-12
 12. Platting Board: 06/05/25, 06/19/25, 07/03/25
 13. South Colony RSA Board of Supervisors: 04/02/25
 14. Sutton Community Council: 02/26/25, 03/26/25
 15. Talkeetna Community Council: 06/02/25, 07/21/25
 16. West Lakes FSA Board of Supervisors: 06/09/25

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

G. INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUMS

- IM 25-148** Reporting Conclusion Of Contract No. 24-110B With Meier Excavation, LLC. For A Total Contract Amount Of \$536,013.81 For The Settlers Bay Drive At Crocker Creek Fish Passage Project.
- IM 25-156** Informing The Assembly Of A Memorandum Of Agreement And Temporary Construction Easement With The Alaska State Department Of Transportation And Public Facilities, For The Church Road Pavement Preservation Project.
- IM 25-163** Informing The Assembly Of The Submittal Of Fiscal Year 2025 United States Marine Highway Program Grant Application, Requesting \$1,324,484 For The Port Mackenzie Cargo And Freight Capacity Project.

IM 25-167 Assembly Notification Of A Land Acquisition Of The Sewer System Lot That Serves The Big Lake Recreation Center.
The informational memorandums were presented, and no comments were noted.

OR 25-076 An Ordinance Enacting MSB 3.80, Areawide Fuel Excise Tax, In The Amount Of Seven Cents Per Gallon.

Sponsors: Borough Manager

MOTION PENDING: Assemblymember Bernier moved to adopt Ordinance Serial No. 25-076.

Assemblymember Nowers moved a primary amendment by inserting the following ballot language:

Proposition No. ____

Advisory Vote on Motor Fuel Excise Tax

Currently in Mat-Su, almost all of the money to pay for local road improvements comes from property taxes paid by property owners. To broaden this tax base, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough could adopt a 7-cent-per-gallon motor fuel tax for a 1.5 year trial period as shown in Ordinance Serial No. 25-076. The tax would generate an estimated \$5 million annually, which, with direction from the Assembly, could be spent to offset property taxes and fund road construction and maintenance.

Should the Matanuska-Susitna Borough enact a 7-cent-per-gallon motor fuel tax for a period of 1.5 years, automatically ending after that period and direct the Borough Manager to prepare future budgets allocation 30 percent of the revenue raised from the tax to be spent to reduce property taxes and 70 percent to be spent on voter-approved road projects?

NOTE: This vote is advisory only, and any legislation would still need to be adopted by the Assembly.

Yes ____ No ____

VOTE: The primary amendment passed by the following vote:

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

**No: 2 - Assemblymember Hale and Assemblymember Fonov
Assemblymember Sumner moved a primary amendment by
striking "30 percent" and "70 percent" and inserting "50
percent" in both places.**

The primary amendment passed by the following vote:

**Yes: 6 - Assemblymember Hale, Assemblymember Nowers,
Assemblymember Sumner, Assemblymember Gamble,
Assemblymember Fonov, and Assemblymember Bernier**

**No: 1 - Assemblymember McKee
Assemblymember Nowers moved to postpone Ordinance Serial
No. 25-076 to December 2, 2025.**

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

No: 2 - Assemblymember Hale and Assemblymember Fonov

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 persons spoke in opposition to Ordinance Serial No. 25-076: Ken Hukeba, Chris Tyree, Daniel Potter, Samantha Carney, Craig Odom, Linda Spohn, Mark Spohn, Jackie Goforth, Father Randy, Bob Lochner, Brian Endle, David Eastman, Mark Johnson, Mike Alexander, Lloyd Thurman, Dave Maxwell, Janice Norman, Katherine Schmidt, and Lily Abbish.

The following person opined that the Borough should have an employee of the year: Tom Roberson.

The following person spoke to safety concerns with a ditch behind the Willow Library: Jim Huston.

The following person opined that senior citizens should not pay any property taxes, spoke in opposition to Ordinance Serial No. 25-076 and Ordinance Serial No. 25-090: Michael Bowles.

The following person spoke to concerns with Ordinance Serial No. 25-076: Colleen Vague.

The following person spoke in support of Eagle River being annexed into the Borough: Ken McCarty.

The following person spoke to the need to expand funding for road service areas: Andrew Traxler.

The following person spoke to the need to have equal maintenance in all road service areas and in opposition to Ordinance Serial No. 25-076: Mike Coons.

The following person spoke in support of Ordinance Serial No. 25-076: Cecilia Anastasia.

The meeting recessed at 8:30 p.m. and reconvened at 8:41 p.m.

B. PUBLIC HEARINGS (Three Minutes Per Person.)

OR 25-081 An Ordinance Enacting A Tax Cap Under MSB 3.04.077 And Establishing An Areawide Real Property Tax Cap Of 10 Mills And A Non-Areawide Tax Cap Of 0.55 Mills.

Sponsors: Sumner, Fonov and Bernier

Ms. Henry read the legislation into the record.

Mayor DeVries opened the public hearing.

The following person spoke to the possibility of exempting senior citizens from paying property tax: Michael Bowles.

The following person opined that a question of whether to exempt seniors from property tax should go before the voters: Esther Huddleston.

There being no others present who wished to testify, the public hearing closed, and discussion moved to the Assembly.

Assemblymember Sumner moved to adopt Ordinance Serial No. 25-081.

Assemblymember Bernier moved a primary amendment by striking "10 mills" and inserting "9.5 mills" in its place.

Assemblymember Fonov moved a secondary amendment by striking ".55" mills and inserting ".05 mills" in its place.

The secondary amendment passed by the following vote:

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

The primary amendment passed by the following vote:

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

The main motion passed as amended by the following vote:

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

OR 25-082 An Ordinance Naming The Story Walk Pathway At Sutton Library In Honor Of Nancy Bertels.

Sponsors: Hale

Ms. Henry read the legislation into the record.

Mayor DeVries opened the public hearing.

The following person spoke in support of Ordinance Serial No. 25-082: Michelle Huen.

There being no others present who wished to testify, the public hearing closed, and discussion moved to the Assembly.

Assemblymember Hale moved to adopt Ordinance Serial No. 25-082.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

OR 25-084 An Ordinance Adopting MSB 3.15.037(E) To Allow For Prorated Senior And Disabled Veteran Residential Real Property Tax Exemption When A Qualifying Individual Moves Their Permanent Residence Mid-Year; And Submitting The Question To The Voters.

Sponsors: Gamble

Ms. Henry read the legislation into the record.

Mayor DeVries opened the public hearing.

The following person opined that senior citizens should be exempt from property taxes: Michael Bowles.

There being no others present who wished to testify, the public hearing closed, and discussion moved to the Assembly.

Assemblymember Gamble moved to adopt Ordinance Serial No. 25-084.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

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 to concerns with the State Board of Fisheries having only commercial fisherman as members: Esther Huddleston.

The following person spoke in support of Ordinance Serial No. 25-090: Mike Vinduska.

D. CONSENT AGENDA

1. RESOLUTIONS

RS 25-074 A Resolution Supporting The Transportation Priorities Identified In The 2023 Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan.

2. ACTION MEMORANDUMS

AM 25-087 Approval Of Utility Relocation Cost Of \$114,814.04 To Matanuska Telecom Association, Inc. For The Crimsonview Drive, Vermillion Drive, Thalo Drive, And Ochre Drive Improvements For The South Colony Road Service Area Improvement Project; And Extend The Completion Date To July 15, 2026.

AM 25-088 Award Of Bid No. 25-189B To K&H Civil Constructors In The Contract Amount Of \$1,049,261.50 For Snowcrest Drive And Trapline Drive Improvements.

AM 25-089 Award Of Bid No. 26-005B To Dirtworks, Inc. In The Contract Amount Of \$386,941.30 For South Butte Drive Road Improvements.

AM 25-090 Award Of Bid No. 25-179B To Southcentral Construction, Inc. In The Contract Amount Of \$1,487,654.50 To Construct The Cell 4 Expansion At The Central Landfill.

AM 25-091 Purchase Of Sodium Chloride From Northern Gravel & Trucking, LLC. In The Amount Of \$425,750.

AM 25-093 Award Of Bid No. 26-010B to JRF Enterprises, LLC. In The Contract Amount Of \$385,678.34 For Birch Creek At Mastodon Road Fish Passage Improvements.

AM 25-094 Award Of Bid No. 26-011B To Western Construction & Equipment, LLC. In The Contract Amount Of \$568,255 For Eska Street, Granite Street, Utah Street, And Grand Avenue Improvements.

AM 25-096 Authorizing A Memorandum Of Agreement With The Alaska State Department Of Transportation And Public Facilities Regarding Maintenance And Match Requirements For Palmer-Fishhook Separated Pathway, Trunk Road To Edgerton Parks Road.

AM 25-097 Authorizing Memorandum Of Agreements With The Alaska State Department Of Transportation And Public Facilities Regarding Maintenance And Match Requirements For Seldon Road Reconstruction, Wasilla-Fishhook Road To Lucille Street, And Inner And Outer Springer Loop Separated Pathway.

AM 25-099 Award Of Bid No. 26-018B To Ficklin Construction, LLC. In The Contract Amount Of \$115,612 For Pioneer Peak Trailhead Parking Expansion.

AM 25-101 Award Of Bid No. 26-006B To Crowley Fuels, LLC. For An Estimated Annual Contract Amount Of \$300,000 To Furnish And Deliver Heating Oil And Fuels.

Ms. Henry read the consent agenda into the record.

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

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

AM 25-100 Award Of Contract No. 26-017C To Wolf Architecture In The Contract Amount Of \$306,968 To Provide Construction Administration Services For American Charter Academy School Construction.

Assemblymember McKee moved to adopt AM No. 25-100.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

OR 25-054 An Ordinance Adopting MSB 15.24.030(B)(48) Bogard-Seldon Corridor Access Management Plan.

Ms. Henry read the legislation into the record.

MOTION PENDING: Assemblymember Fonov moved to adopt Ordinance Serial No. 25-054.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

RS 25-068 A Resolution Directing The Borough Manager To Prepare Future Budgets Utilizing The Fuel Excise Tax Revenue To Reduce The Areawide Mill Rate And Create A Proportional Increase In The 16 Road Service Area Mill Rates And Allocate An Amount Equal To 70 Percent Of The Excise Tax Revenues To A Capital Project For Voter Approved Transportation Projects.

Sponsors: Sumner

Ms. Henry read the legislation into the record.

MOTION PENDING: Assemblymember Fonov moved to adopt Resolution Serial No. 25-068.

The motion passed by the following vote:

Yes: 1 - Assemblymember McKee

No: 6 - Assemblymember Hale, Assemblymember Nowers, Assemblymember Sumner, Assemblymember Gamble, Assemblymember Fonov, and Assemblymember Bernier

[Clerk's note: Assemblymember McKee noted that she voted incorrectly. The Assembly decided not to redo the vote. Assemblymember McKee requested that it be noted in the minutes she intended to vote no on Resolution Serial No. 25-068.]

IX. VETO

There were no vetoes.

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. INTRODUCTIONS (For Public Hearing 08/19/25, Assembly Chambers)

OR 25-079 An Ordinance Adopting MSB 15.24.030(C)(43), Fuller Lake, Lake Management Plan; And Amending MSB 17.59.060, Lake Management Plan Implementation.

OR 25-083 An Ordinance Accepting And Appropriating \$18,000 From The Alaska State Department Of Natural Resources, Office Of History And Archaeology, For The DePriest Family Farm National Register Nomination Project.
RS 25-069: A Resolution Approving The Scope Of Work And Budget And Authorizing The Manager To Enter Into The State Grant Agreement And The Agreement With The DePriest Family Trust For The DePriest Family Farm National Register Nomination Project.

OR 25-086 An Ordinance Enacting MSB 1.10.180, Limited Health Powers From The Cities.

Sponsors: Borough Manager

OR 25-087 An Ordinance Amending MSB 5.25.044(A), Service Area No. 27: Meadow Lakes Road Service Area; And Placing On The Ballot Of The November 4, 2025, Regular Borough Election The Annexation Of Parcels Located On West Mana Naen Street, West Elvas Lane, And A Portion Of North Utopia View Circle Into The Meadow Lakes Road Service Area.

RS 25-075: A Resolution Finding The Annexation Of Parcels Located On North Mana Nael Street, West Elvas Lane, And A Portion Of North Utopia View Circle Into The Meadow Lakes Road Service Area, Serves The Public Interest; And Placing The Question Before The Voters In The November 4, 2025, Regular Election.

Sponsors: Bernier

OR 25-088 An Ordinance Annexing All Of Lot 4A, Homestead Hills Phase 2, Into The Greater Butte Road Service Area.

RS 25-076: A Resolution Finding The Annexation Of All Of Lot 4a, Homestead Hills Phase 2, Into The Greater Butte Road Service Area Serves The Public Interest.

Sponsors: Hale

Ms. Henry read the legislation into the record.

Assemblymember Bernier moved to introduce the legislation as read into the record by the Clerk and to set the public hearings for August 19, 2025.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

B. MAYORAL NOMINATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

1. VACANCY REPORT

25-113 Mayoral Request for Confirmation
Animal Care and Regulation Board
Destiny O'Daniel, removal
Enhanced 911 Advisory Board
Dwayne Shelton, resignation
Lucas Szipszky
Planning Commission
Wilfred Fernandez
Knik RSA No. 17
John Jobe
John Szymik
Joe Cizek
Trapper Creek RSA No. 30
Becky Badillo, resignation

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

The motion passed by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Assemblymember Hale, 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)

OR 25-089 An Ordinance Amending MSB17.17, Denali State Park Special Land Use District, By Eliminating A Provision That Allows The Special Use Boundary District To Change Automatically When The Boundary Of Denali State Park Changes.

Mayor DeVries queried if there was any objection to taking up the referrals together.

There was no objection noted.

Ms. Henry read the legislation into the record.

OR 25-090 An Ordinance Adopting MSB 17.77, Large Lot District.

Sponsors: Hale

Assemblymember Bernier moved to refer Ordinance Serial Nos. 25-089 and 25-090 to the Planning Commission for 90 days.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

XI. RECONSIDERATION

There were no reconsiderations.

XII. MAYOR, ASSEMBLY, AND STAFF COMMENTS

Assemblymember Gamble thanked the public for their testimony this evening and spoke to the need to diversify the tax base.

Assemblymember Sumner agreed with Assemblymember Gamble.

Ms. Henry thanked the body for having she and Estelle at the dais.

Mr. Brown noted that a fuel excise tax is an option for diversifying the tax base. Spoke to his support of the Assembly conducting town halls for residents to speak to their concerns regarding the fuel excise tax in a manner that best suits them and their constituents.

Assemblymember Nowers thanked the public for attending the meeting. Advised that audience participation is not a question-and-answer time and that the Assembly does listen to the testimony provided. Noted that the Borough is growing quickly and diversifying the tax base needs to happen. Noted the public testimony in support of privatizing the Animal Care Shelter and advised that no private entity has expressed interest in doing that. Spoke in support of the fuel excise tax being an advisory vote.

Assemblymember Bernier spoke in support of conducting town hall meetings. Noted his agreement with Assemblymember Nowers. Said a prayer.

Assemblymember McKee noted her frustration at funding for the School District.

Mayor DeVries spoke in support of conducting town hall meetings. Noted that differences in municipal powers of the Municipality of Anchorage and the Borough..

Assemblymember Hale spoke in opposition of the possible fuel tax. Opined that a gravel tax may be a better option.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.



Mayoral Signature and Clerk Attestment

For

August 5, 2025, Assembly Special Meeting Minutes

(15 pages)

EDNA DeVRIES, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:

LONNIE R. McKECHNIE, CMC, Borough Clerk

Minutes Approved: 09/02/25