

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, DECEMBER 17, 2024

I. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on Tuesday, December 17, 2024, 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: 5 - Assemblymember Stephanie Nowers, Assemblymember Dee McKee, Assemblymember Maxwell Sumner, Assemblymember Bill Gamble, and Assemblymember Ron Bernier

Telephonic: 2 - Assemblymember Tim Hale, and Assemblymember Dmitri Fonov

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Assemblymember Fonov requested that Resolution Serial No. 24-126 be pulled from the consent agenda.

The agenda was approved as amended without objection.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Assemblymember Sumner.

V. SPECIAL ORDERS OF THE DAY

A. Appointment of Deputy Mayor - Ron Bernier

Mayor DeVries queried if there was any objection to the appointment of Assemblymember Ron Bernier as Deputy Mayor.

There was no objection noted.

VI. MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETINGS

[24-161](#)

- A. Assembly Special Meeting: 10/03/24
 - B. Joint Assembly/Planning Commission: 10/08/24
 - C. Assembly Regular Meeting: 10/15/24
 - D. Assembly Special Meeting: 11/19/24
 - E. Assembly Regular Meeting: 11/19/24
 - F. Assembly Regular Meeting: 12/03/24
- The minutes were approved as presented without objection.

VII. 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

Todd Smoldon, Executive Director of Governor Dunleavy's Mat-Su Office, spoke to the Governor's proposed budget and Trooper post in Talkeetna.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Joint Assembly/School Board Committee On School Issues

There was no report provided.

2. Assembly Public Relations

Assemblymember Nowers spoke attending a Crisis Now Project event.

C. MANAGER COMMENTS

1. State/Federal Legislation

2. Strategic Planning Issues

3. Port MacKenzie Rail Extension Farms

[25-007](#)

Port MacKenzie Rail Extension Farms

Suzanne Reilly, Asset Manager, presented on the Port MacKenize Rail Extension Farms.

D. ATTORNEY COMMENTS

E. CLERK COMMENTS

Ms. McKechnie spoke to the upcoming meeting schedule. Suggested the schedule for Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Meetings.

Mayor DeVries queried if there was any objection.

There was no objection noted.

F. CITIZEN AND OTHER CORRESPONDENCE

[24-159](#)

1. Abbreviated Plat: 11/27/24, 12/04/24
2. Big Lake Community Council: 09/24/24, 10/08/24
3. Board of Adjustment and Appeals: 05/24/22, 06/30/22, 08/17/22, 09/08/22, Final Decision for Case Nos. 24-01, 24-02
4. Caswell RSA Board of Supervisors: 08/12/24, Resolution No. 24-01
5. Fairview RSA Board of Supervisors: 04/16/24, 05/07/24, 09/24/24
6. Local Road Service Area Advisory Board: 11/21/24, Resolution No. 24-01
7. North Lakes Community Council: 10/24/24
8. Tanaina Community Council: 11/25/24
9. Trapper Creek Community Council: 09/19/24

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

G. INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUMS

[IM 24-229](#)

Informing The Assembly Of The Submittal Of The Annual Volunteer Fire Capacity Grant Applications From The Alaska State Department Of Natural Resources Division Of Forestry And Fire Protection By The Caswell, Sutton, Talkeetna, And Willow Fire Service Areas.

The informational memorandum was presented, and no comments were noted.

VIII. 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 to Action Memorandum 24-143: Rod Hanson, Chair of North Lakes Community Council.

The following person spoke to election integrity: Richard Stoffell.

The following person spoke to the Borough's Community Development Department and librarians: Jackie Goforth.

The following person spoke to Academy Charter School build: Barbara Gerard.

The following person spoke to the proposed property sale at Point MacKenzie: Trent Blankenship.

B. PUBLIC HEARINGS (Three Minutes Per Person.)

[RS 24-124](#)

A Resolution Approving Changes To Update The Fiscal Year 2026 Schedule Of Rates And Fees, Effective July 1, 2025.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Mr. Brown provided a staff report.

Mayor DeVries opened the public hearing.

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

Assemblymember Bernier moved to adopt Resolution Serial No. 24-124.

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 24-096](#)

An Ordinance Amending MSB 17.73 To Clarify That Mobile Home Parks Are Not Permitted In The Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Sponsors: Nowers

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Alex Strawn, Planning Director, provided a staff report.

Mayor DeVries opened the public hearing.

The following person spoke in support of Ordinance Serial No. 24-096:
Rod Hanson, Chair of the North Lakes Community Council.

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

CONFLICTION OF INTEREST: Assemblymember Sumner declared a possible conflict of interest as a home builder.

RULING: Mayor DeVries ruled that Assemblymember Sumner did not have a conflict of interest.

Assemblymember Nowers to adopt Ordinance Serial No. 24-096.

Assemblymember Sumner moved a primary amendment as follows:

***section 3, page 2, 17.73.250(A), by striking (1) in its entirety;**

and

***(2) by striking the words "any other"; and**

***(2)(a) by striking the words "footings, piling, or."**

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 24-115](#)

An Ordinance Approving A Request From The Agricultural Rights Owners Paul And Margaret Cook, And Ben Raevsky, To Subdivide A 320-Acre Farm Consisting Of 2 Parcels Into Two 40-Acre Parcels And One 240-Acre Parcel); To Construct One Permanent And One Temporary Residence To Accommodate The Farm Families; And Implement An Updated Farm Plan With An Additional Subunit Farm Plan.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Suzanne Rielly, Asset Manager, provided a staff report.

Mayor DeVries opened the public hearing.

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

Assemblymember Bernier moved to adopt Ordinance Serial No. 24-115.

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 24-117](#)

An Ordinance Amending MSB 5.25.060(C), Service Area No. 36: Talkeetna Sewer And Water Service Area To Amend The Operating Rules, Rates, And Procedures.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Chad Frye, Operations & Maintenance Division Manger, provided a staff report.

Mayor DeVries opened the public hearing.

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

Assemblymember Bernier moved to adopt Ordinance Serial No. 24-117.

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 24-118](#) An Ordinance Accepting And Appropriating \$315,790 In Fiscal Year 2025 Community Assistance Program Funding.
RS 24-128: A Resolution Approving The Scope Of Work And Budget For The Community Assistance Program And Authorizing The Manager To Enter Into Agreements With 20 Unincorporated Communities Within The Borough.
Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Cheyenne Heindel, Finance Director, provided a staff report.

Mayor DeVries opened the public hearing.

The following person in support of the Ordinance Serial No. 24-188 and community council grant process: Rod Hanson, Chair of the North Lakes Community Council.

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

Assemblymember Bernier moved to adopt Ordinance Serial No. 24-118 and Resolution Serial No. 24-128.

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.)

There being no one present who wished to testify audience participation closed.

D. CONSENT AGENDA

1. RESOLUTIONS

- [RS 24-125](#) A Resolution Providing Notice And Authorization To Make Expenditures Related To Borough Transportation Infrastructure Program 2024 And Reimburse The Borough From Related Bond Proceeds.
- [RS 24-129](#) A Resolution Approving The Final Spending Plan For The American Rescue Plan Funding To Comply With The December 31, 2024, Obligation Requirements Of The United States Treasury.
- [RS 24-130](#) A Resolution Approving The Scopes Of Work And The Budgets For The Tuxedo Avenue Bridge Replacement Project, And The Montana Creek Bridge Maintenance And Armoring Project; Approving The Amended Scopes Of Work And Budgets For The Kepler Drive Bridge Replacement Project, And The Shirley Towne Bridge Maintenance Project; And Approving The Amended Budgets For The Midnight Drive Bridge And Snowball Circle Bridge Project, And The Bridge And Railroad Crossing Major Maintenance And Repair Project.

2. ACTION MEMORANDUMS

- [AM 24-138](#) Approval Of Change Order No. 3 For Contract No. 22-104P(A) With Kinney Engineering, LLC. To Add Up To \$50,730 For The 49th State Street Pathway Project; And Extend Completion Date To June 30, 2025.
- [AM 24-139](#) Approval Of Change Order No. 3 For Contract No. 22-098C With HDL Engineering Consultants, LLC. For The Old Glenn Pathway Phase II Project To Extend Completion Date To December 31, 2025.
- [AM 24-140](#) Approval Of Change Order No. 3 For Contract No. 22-090P(A) With CRW Engineering Group, LLC. For The Tex-Al Drive Extension, Upgrade, And Pathway Project To Extend Completion Date To June 30, 2026.
- [AM 24-141](#) Approval Of A Change Order For Contract No. 22-039P With Architects Alaska, Inc. To Add 35,946.08 For The Palmer Emergency Services Facility Project; And To Extend The Contract From December 31, 2024, To February 26, 2027.
- [AM 24-142](#) Requesting The Authorization For Destruction Of Ballots From The November 5, 2024, Regular Borough Election.

[AM 24-143](#)

Approval Of Change Order No. 3 For Contract No. 22-090P(C) With HDL Engineering Consultants, LLC. To Add \$164,134 For Engineering Services For The Engstrom Road To Trunk Road Connector Project; And Extend The Contract To March 31, 2026.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation 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

[RS 24-126](#)

A Resolution Directing The Manager To Utilize A Design-Build Alternative Delivery Method For The New Academy Charter School.

Sponsors: Fonov

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

CONFLICTION OF INTEREST: Assemblymember Sumner declared a possible conflict of interest as his daughter attends Academy Charter School.

RULING: Mayor DeVries ruled that Assemblymember Sumner did not have a conflict of interest.

Assemblymember Fonov moved to adopt Resolution Serial No. 24-126.

Assemblymember Fonov moved a primary amendment as follows:

***4th WHEREAS, insert the word "may" to read: "an alternative delivery systems may result in an accelerated timelines; and";**

***5th WHEREAS, strike "Design-Build is" and replace with "an alternative delivery method may be" to read: "an alternative delivery method may be a good option for complex projects such as additions and continued phase developments that desire an accelerated delivery schedule; and"; and**

***in the NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, strike "utilize the Design-Build" and replace with "consider an alternative" to ready: "that the Assembly directs the Manager to consider an alternative delivery method for the new Academy Charter School.**

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 by the following vote:

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

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

X. VETO

There were no vetoes.

XI. NEW BUSINESS

A. INTRODUCTIONS (For Public Hearing 01/07/25, Assembly Chambers)

[OR 25-001](#) An Ordinance Amending MSB 3.15.200, Board Of Equalization; Appeal, Related To Setting Of Dates For Tax Assessment Appeals Before The Borough Board Of Equalization.

[OR 25-002](#) An Ordinance Accepting And Appropriating A Grant In The Amount Of \$15,000 From The Alaska State Department Of Military And Veteran's Affairs, 2023 State And Local Cybersecurity Grant Program And Approve The Scope Of Work And Budget For Modernizing Critical Telecommunications Cybersecurity Infrastructure.
RS 25-001: A Resolution Approving The Scope Of Work And Budget For A Grant In The Amount Of \$15,000 From The Alaska State Department Of Military And Veteran's Affairs, 2023 State And Local Cybersecurity Grant Program.

[OR 25-003](#) An Ordinance Converting The Port Mackenzie Building Maintenance Specialist Position From An On-Call Position To A Full-Time Position And Allowing For The Hiring Of This Position Prior To The Beginning Of Fiscal Year 2026.

Ms. McKechnie 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 January 7, 2025, respectively.

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

[24-160](#)

Mayoral Requests for Confirmation

Borough Area Schools Site Selection Committee

Dolores "Dee" McKee

Thomas Bergey

Dmitri Fonov

Enhanced 911 Advisory Board

Christian Hartley

Jt Assembly/School Board Committee on School Issues

Thomas Bergey

Ole Larson, resignation

Andrew Shane

Kathryn McCollum, resignation

Dolores "Dee" McKee

Brooks Pitch

Local Emergency Planning Committee

Christian Hartley

Planning Commission

Doug Glenn

Michael Collins

Port Commission

Christopher Gerteisen

Central Mat-Su FSA #130

James Steele

Talkeetna Sewer & Water Service Area #36

Ryan Sheldon

**Assemblymember Bernier moved to confirm the
resignations and appointments 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)

There were no referrals presented.

XII. RECONSIDERATION

There were no reconsiderations.

XIII. MAYOR, ASSEMBLY, AND STAFF COMMENTS

Mr. Spiropoulos wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

Assemblymember McKee thanked staff for showing grandson the Christmas display and Merry Christmas.

Assemblymember Bernier said Merry Christmas and said a prayer.

Assemblymember Nowers spoke to the mobile home park permit process and wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

Mr. Brown directed staff to followed up with Academy Charter School plan and delivery method on January 7, 2025.

Assemblymember Fonov wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New.

Assemblymember Hale spoke to Santa's Little Angels Program in the Butte and Merry Christmas.

Ms. McKechnie wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

Assemblymember Sumner thanked staff for coming out and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and spoke to a Christmas display at the Word of Life Church.

Assemblymember Gamble spoke to community councils grant programs. Wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Spoke to the Joint Assembly/State Delegation meeting on December 19, 2024.

Mayor DeVries spoke to the mayor's challenge for Ringing the Bell for the Salvation Army. Noted that 2026 is the 250th anniversary of the United States and task force meetings regarding having it included in the school curriculum.

XIV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.