

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, SEPTEMBER 3, 2024

I. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on Tuesday, September 3, 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 Tim Hale, Assemblymember Stephanie Nowers, Assemblymember Dee McKee, Assemblymember Bill Gamble, and Assemblymember Dmitri Fonov

Telephonic: 1 - Assemblymember Ron Bernier

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda approved as presented.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Assemblymember Nowers.

V. MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETINGS

[24-110](#)

A. Regular Assembly Meeting: 08/06/24

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

Mr. Todd Smoldon, Executive Director of Governor Dunleavy's Mat-Su Office, reported on Governor Dunleavy's Statewide Education Forum.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Joint Assembly/School Board Committee On School Issues

There was no report provided.

2. Assembly Public Relations

Assemblymember Hale thanked Mike Brown, Borough Manager and Jason Ortiz, Development Services Manager, for their support in assisting an elderly couple in his district get their property cleaned up and noted that the community is working on a solution to build a wheelchair ramp to their front door.

C. MANAGER COMMENTS

1. State/Federal Legislation

2. Strategic Planning Issues

3. Big Lake Lion's Recreation Center Update

Jillian Morrissey, Community Development Director, provided a summary of what it would entail for the Borough to acquire the Big Lake Lions Recreation Center.

[Clerk's Note: RS 24-038 was previously adopted on 04/02/24. It is attached for reference only and no action will be taken.]

[RS 24-038](#)

A Resolution Directing The Manager To Research And Report On The Feasibility Of Procuring The Big Lake Lions Recreation Center, Currently Owned By the Big Lake Lions Club, Inc., To Possibly Be Owned And Operated By The Borough.

Sponsors: Gamble

4. Health Care Plan Update

[Clerk's Note: the health care plan update was not provided; it was moved to the 09/10/24 Assembly meeting.]

[Clerk's Note: RS 24-064 was previously adopted on 06/04/24. It is attached for reference only and no action will be taken.]

[RS 24-064](#)

A Resolution Encouraging The Mat-Su Health Foundation To Return To Its Former Policy Of Allowing Members To Vote In The Election Of Board Members; And Encouraging The Mat-Su Health Foundation To Advocate For Lower Pricing To Benefit The Residents Of The Matanuska-Susitna Borough Who Require Hospital Services.

Sponsors: Yundt

D. ATTORNEY COMMENTS

There was no report provided.

E. CLERK COMMENTS

Ms. McKechnie reported on the upcoming meeting schedule and pertinent election dates. Stated that the election brochure would be emailed to the body for approval at the September 10, 2024, regular Assembly meeting.

F. CITIZEN AND OTHER CORRESPONDENCE

[24-113](#)

1. Abbreviated Plat: 08/14/24
 2. Animal Care and Regulation Board: 04/17/24, Final Decision 24-02
 3. Big Lake Community Council: 07/09/24, Resolution No. 24-02
 4. Central Mat-Su FSA Board of Supervisors: 04/08/24
 5. Enhanced 911 Advisory Board: 06/11/24
 6. Gateway Community Council: 04/10/24, 05/08/24, 06/12/24, Resolution No. 2023-03
 7. Historical Preservation Commission: 05/09/24
 8. Library Board: 05/31/24
 9. Library Citizen's Advisory Committee: 07/08/24
 10. Planning Commission: 07/15/24, 08/05/24, Resolution Nos. 24-15, 24-17, 24-18, 24-20, 24-23
 11. Platting Board: 07/18/24, 08/01/24
 12. Waterbody Setback Advisory Board: 07/23/24, Resolution No. 24-02
 13. West Lakes FSA Board of Supervisors: 05/13/24, 07/08/24
- The citizen and other correspondence were presented, and no comments were noted.

G. INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUMS

[IM 24-169](#)

Advising The Assembly That The Total For The Transportation System Project Bonds Has Been Updated To Reflect A Total Of \$36,390,000. The informational memorandum was 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 to concerns that the Borough's Comprehensive Safety Action Plan Survey appears to favor only pedestrian safety and bicycle lanes. Further added that it does not take into consideration motorized vehicles and is not being shared with all Borough residents: Esther Huddleston.

The following person praised the Alaska State Fair for their recycling efforts and wondered if they also had recycling available for cardboard and for food composting: Travis Friesen.

The following persons spoke to concerns with the Graphic Adaptation of Ann Franks Diary being in Borough libraries and how books are chosen by librarians: Jackie Goforth and Karen Lewis.

The following person spoke to concerns to a pedophile agenda: Chris Tyree.

The following person spoke in support of Ordinance Serial No. 24-083: Jean Holt.

B. PUBLIC HEARINGS (Three Minutes Per Person.)

[OR 24-080](#)

An Ordinance Approving The Sale Of Borough-Owned Property Identified As Lot 15 Rustic Wilderness Division 2 To The Adjacent Property Owners, Kelly And Pamela Hill.
Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Jillian Morrissey, Community Development Director, 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. 24-080.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

[OR 24-081](#)

An Ordinance Accepting And Appropriating \$20,700 In Anticipated Project Income During Fiscal Year 2025 For The Rail Extension Project From Port MacKenzie To The Mainline.

RS 24-079: A Resolution Establishing The Scope Of Work And Budget For Anticipated Project Income During Fiscal Year 2025 For The Rail Extension Project From Port MacKenzie To The Mainline.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Cheyenne Heindel, Finance Director, 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 Gamble moved to adopt Ordinance Serial No. 24-081 and Resolution Serial No. 24-079.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

[OR 24-082](#)

An Ordinance Accepting And Appropriating A Grant In The Amount Of \$44,000 From The Alaska State Department Of Health And Social Services, For The Continued Management Of Points Of Dispensing And Medical Countermeasures.

RS 24-080: A Resolution Approving The Scope Of Work And Budget For A Grant In The Amount Of \$44,000 From The Alaska State Department Of Health And Social Services, For The Continued Management Of Points Of Dispensing And Medical Countermeasures.
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 spoke in support of the legislation: Jean Holt.

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. 24-082 and Resolution Serial No. 24-080.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

[OR 24-083](#)

An Ordinance Extending The Effective Date Of The Waterbody Setback Advisory Board To March 18, 2025.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Alex Strawn, Planning and Land Use Director, provided a staff report.

Mayor DeVries opened the public hearing.

The following persons spoke in support of Ordinance Serial No. 24-083: Rod Hanson, North Lakes Community Council; and Patti Fisher, Meadow Lakes Community Council.

Assemblymember Hale moved to adopt Ordinance Serial No. 24-083.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

[OR 24-084](#)

An Ordinance Accepting And Appropriating Additional National Opioid Settlement Funding Totaling \$215,644.52 From The Manufacturers And Traders Trust Company For Opioid Settlement Relief.

RS 24-081: A Resolution Amending The Scope Of Work And Budget For Opioid Settlement Relief.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Cheyenne Heindel, Finance Director, 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 Hale moved to adopt Ordinance Serial No. 24-084 and Resolution Serial No. 24-081.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

[OR 24-085](#)

An Ordinance Accepting And Appropriating \$316,302 From The Alaska State Department Of Health And Social Services For The Human Services Community Matching Grant Program.

RS 24-082: A Resolution Approving The Scope Of Work And Budget For The Human Services Community Matching Grant Program.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Cheyenne Heindel, Finance Director, 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 Hale moved to adopt Ordinance Serial No. 24-085 and Resolution Serial No. 24-082.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

[OR 24-087](#)

An Ordinance Creating A New Regular Full Time Position Of Healthcare Concierge As A Non-Bargaining Unit Position Within The Borough Manager's Office.

Sponsors: Yundt

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Sonya Conant, Human Resources Director, 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 Hale moved to adopt Ordinance Serial No. 24-087.

Assemblymember Nowers moved to postpone Ordinance Serial No. 24-087 to October 15, 2024.

The motion to postpone failed by the following vote:

Yes: 2 - Assemblymember Hale, and Assemblymember Nowers

No: 5 - Assemblymember McKee, Yundt, Assemblymember Gamble, Assemblymember Fonov, and Assemblymember Bernier
Assemblymember Gamble moved a primary amendment to Ordinance Serial No. 24-087 by striking the base salary of "\$65,000" and inserting "\$85,000" in its place.

The primary amendment failed by the following vote:

Yes: 3 - Yundt, Assemblymember Gamble, and Assemblymember Fonov

No: 4 - Assemblymember Hale, Assemblymember Nowers, Assemblymember McKee, and Assemblymember Bernier

The main motion passed by the following vote:

Yes: 6 - Assemblymember Hale, Assemblymember McKee, Yundt, Assemblymember Gamble, Assemblymember Fonov, and Assemblymember Bernier

No: 1 - Assemblymember Nowers

[OR 24-088](#) An Ordinance Extending The Time Limit Of Expiring Match Funds For The Alaska State Department Of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Fund Program Grant, Being Used To Complete The Borough's Historic Preservation Plan Update, To February 2025. Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Leda Borys, Long Range Planner, 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 Hale moved to adopt Ordinance Serial No. 24-088.

The motion passed by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Assemblymember Hale, Assemblymember Nowers, Assemblymember McKee, Yundt, 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 meeting recessed at 8:22 p.m. and reconvened at 8:30 p.m.)

There was no one signed up to speak under this audience participation.

D. CONSENT AGENDA

1. RESOLUTIONS

[RS 24-091](#) A Resolution Allocating National Opioid Settlement Funding Totaling \$63,273 To Local Nonprofits Organizations Under The Mat-Su Opioid Training And Education Grant.

2. ACTION MEMORANDUMS

[AM 24-099](#) Authorization To Vacate The 50-Foot-Wide Section Line Easement On The Eastern Boundary Of Tract B-1, Hatcher Pass Village Phase I, Plat No. 2018-112, Located West Of Little Susitna River, East Of North Mountain Trails Drive, And North Of East Edgerton Parks Road, Within The Northeast 1/4, Section 33, Township 19 North, Range 1 East, Seward Meridian.

[AM 24-100](#) Authorization To Vacate The 66-Foot-Wide Section Line Easement In Little Susitna Flats, Plat No. 2022-133, Located North Of North Pittman Road, Directly West Of West Sunrise Place, And South Of The Little Susitna River. Lying Within Sections 14 And 23, Township 18 North, Range 2 West, Seward Meridian.

[AM 24-101](#) Award Of Bid No. 25-032B To Western Construction & Equipment, LLC. In The Amount Of \$292,475 For The Talkeetna Revetment And Dike Repair Project.

[AM 24-102](#) Award Of Bid No. 24-144B To Nodak Electric & Construction, Inc. In The Contract Amount Of \$344,200 To Supply And Install Generators At Emergency Services Stations.

Ms. McKechnie read the consent agenda into the record.

Assemblymember Hale 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, Yundt, Assemblymember Gamble, Assemblymember Fonov, and Assemblymember Bernier

[AM 24-092](#)

Authorization To Vacate A Public Use Easement Located Directly Northeast Of North Engstrom Road, North Of Cornelius Lake, And Southwest Of North Palmer-Fishhook Road Lying Within Section 22, Township 18 North, Range 1 East, Seward Meridian.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record

Assemblymember Nowers moved to adopt AM 24-092.

Alex Strawn, Planning and Land Use Director and Tom Adams, Public Works Director, provided a staff report.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

[AM 24-103](#)

Award Of Proposal No. 24-135P To The Boutet Company, Inc. In The Contract Amount Of \$250,153.40 To Design The Kepler Bradley Bridge Replacement.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: Assemblymember Yundt declared a conflict of interest as he does business with the Boutet Company and plans to continue in the future.

RULING: Mayor DeVries ruled that Assemblymember Yundt had a conflict of interest and would be recused from voting.

[Clerk's Note: Assemblymember Yundt was attending telephonically and was unable to exit the meeting. He did not participate in discussion and he did not vote on the legislation.]

Assemblymember Hale moved to adopt AM 24-103.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

Recused: 1 - Yundt

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

IX. VETO

There were no vetoes presented.

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. INTRODUCTIONS (For Public Hearing 09/10/24, Assembly Chambers)

[OR 24-086](#) An Ordinance Accepting And Appropriating \$944,804 From The United States Department Of Transportation Maritime Administration For The Port MacKenzie Rough Terrain Cargo Crane Project.
RS 24-083: A Resolution Approving The Scope Of Work And Budget For The Port MacKenzie Rough Terrain Cargo Crane Project.

[OR 24-089](#) An Ordinance Amending MSB 4.50.030(A), Local Emergency Planning Committee Composition.

[OR 24-090](#) An Ordinance Appropriating \$75,000 Of Road Service Area Fund Balance That Resulted From The Sale Of Surplus Road Service Area Equipment To A Project Account To Purchase An Asphalt Recycler.
RS 24-085: A Resolution Approving The Scope Of Work And Budget For Purchase Of A Trailer Mounted Asphalt Recycler.

[OR 24-091](#) An Ordinance Accepting And Appropriating Additional January 2022 Mat-Su Windstorms Disaster Relief Funds In The Amount Of \$30,389.73 From The Federal Emergency Management Agency; And \$10,129.90 From The Alaska State Division Of Homeland Security And Emergency Management.
RS 24-087: A Resolution Approving The Amended Budget For The January 2022 Mat-Su Windstorms Disaster.

[OR 24-092](#) An Ordinance Accepting And Appropriating January 2022 Mat-Su Windstorms Disaster Relief Funds In The Amount Of \$207,916.20 From The Federal Emergency Management Agency; And \$69,305.39 From The Alaska State Division Of Homeland Security And Emergency Management.
RS 24-088: A Resolution Approving The Scope Of Work And Budget For Borough-Wide Debris Removal As A Result Of The January 2022 Mat-Su Windstorms Disaster.

B. INTRODUCTIONS (For Public Hearing 10/01/24, Assembly Chambers)

[OR 24-079](#)

An Ordinance Creating Homestead Drive Natural Gas Local Improvement District No. 667, Approving The Improvement Plan For The District, Authorizing The Manager To Proceed With The Improvement, And Assessing Equally Among The Properties Within The District The Costs Of The Improvement.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Assemblymember Hale moved to introduce the legislation as read into the record by the Clerk and to set the public hearings for September 10, 2024, and October 1, 2024, respectively.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

C. MAYORAL NOMINATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

1. VACANCY REPORT

[24-115](#)

Mayoral Requests for Confirmation
Central Mat-Su FAS No. 130
James Craig Robinson

Assemblymember Hale moved to confirm the appointment requested by the Mayor.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

D. OTHER NEW BUSINESS

There as no other new business.

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

There were no referrals.

XI. RECONSIDERATION

There were no reconsiderations.

XII. MAYOR, ASSEMBLY, AND STAFF COMMENTS

Assemblymember Bernier commented God bless everyone.

Assemblymember Yundt stated that he would like an update from the Manager on the Comprehensive Safety Action Plan Survey. Stated that he is looking forward to going moose hunting.

Assemblymember Nowers stated that she too would like an update from the Manager on the Comprehensive Safety Action Plan Survey. Noted that the Borough's webpage search engine does not bring it forward when it is searched for. Stated that she would like to understand why that is. Spoke to her enjoyment of the Alaska State Fair. Spoke to the high costs of health care. Opined that hospitals are not being transparent as required by Section 2718 of the Public Health Service Act, titled "Bringing down the costs of health care coverage." Noted that it is unfortunate that no one is policing hospitals and enforcing that requirement. Spoke to the possibility of finding a way to get the Borough's health insurance limitations known to more employees, rather than hiring a health insurance concierge.

Mr. Brown stated that the Borough's website does not have a federated search engine at this time, because free software is being used, but that it is an ongoing effort to change that.

Assemblymember Gamble opined that a Health Insurance Concierge would be a valuable position to the Borough. Opined it requires a higher salary in order to hire someone who is qualified for the position. Stated that he did not know that the Comprehensive Safety Action Plan Survey even existed and that he would like to know more.

Assemblymember Fonov spoke to having attended a community council meeting in which the Comprehensive Safety Action Plan Survey was being discussed. Opined that it appeared to be biased toward pedestrians and opposed to motorized vehicles. Further opined that it needed to be distributed to more Borough residents.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:52 p.m.