

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, APRIL 7, 2026

I. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on Tuesday, April 7, 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

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

Telephonic: 1 - Assemblymember Bill Gamble

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

Assemblymember Bowles moved to removed Ordinance Serial No. 26-027 from the agenda.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

No: 2 - Assemblymember Nowers and Assemblymember McKee

Mayor DeVries queried if there were any additional changes to the agenda.
Assemblymember Fonov moved to remove Ordinance Serial No. 26-036 from the agenda.

The motion passed by the following vote:

Yes: 6 - Assemblymember Bowles, Assemblymember McKee, Assemblymember Sumner, Assemblymember Gamble, Assemblymember Fonov, and Assemblymember Bernier

No: 1 - Assemblymember Nowers

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

There were no additional changes noted and the agenda was approved as amended.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Assemblymember Ron Bernier led the pledge of allegiance.

V. MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETINGS

26-065 A. Joint Assembly/Planning Commission Meeting Minutes: 03/10/26
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

Katie Gardner, Deputy Superintendent of Business and Operations, reported on changes to the curriculum and other activities of the School District.

3. State of Alaska

Todd Smoldon, Executive Director of Governor Dunleavy's Mat-Su Office, reported on Governor Dunleavy's budget and actions of the Legislature.

4. Mat-Su Convention and Visitor's Bureau

Casey Ressler, Executive Director of the Mat-Su Convention and Visitor's Bureau, reported on the tourism promotion campaign that is occurring this year and status of the new Gateway Visitor's Center, which will open June 1, 2026.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Joint Assembly/School Board Committees

There were no reports provided.

2. Assembly Public Relations

Assemblymember Fonov spoke to visiting several schools in the School District.

C. MANAGER COMMENTS

1. State/Federal Legislation

2. Strategic Planning Issues

There was no report provided.

D. ATTORNEY COMMENTS

There was no report provided.

E. CLERK COMMENTS

Ms. McKechnie spoke to the upcoming meeting schedule.

F. CITIZEN AND OTHER CORRESPONDENCE

26-056

1. Big Lake Community Council: 02/10/26
2. Butte Community Council: 02/11/26
3. Knik RSA Board of Supervisors: 03/03/26
4. Library Board: 12/09/25, 02/10/26
5. MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission: 10/09/25, 11/13/25, 01/08/26, 01/29/26
6. Parks, Recreation, and Trails Advisory Board: 02/23/26
7. Planning Commission: 03/02/26
8. Platting Board: 02/04/26, 02/05/26, 02/18/26, 03/05/26
9. South Knik River Community Council: 02/19/26
10. Tanaina Community Council: 02/23/26
11. Trapper Creek Community Council: 02/19/26
12. West Lakes FSA Board of Supervisors: 01/12/26

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

G. INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUMS

IM 26-063 Reporting The Conclusion Of Contract For Bid No. 25-108B With CGC Services, LLC. For A Final Contract Amount Of \$293,372.71 For The Palmer High School Boiler Upgrades.

IM 26-064 Informing The Assembly Of The Submittal Of A Funding Request To The Denali Commission In the Amount Of \$200,000 To Support A Port Mackenzie Master Plan Update.

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 persons spoke to concerns with property tax assessments within the Borough: Dawson White, Butch Moore, and Jesse Sumner.

The following persons spoke in opposition to the School District shuttering schools and in support of full funding for the School District: Riley Laws, Tori Genter, Roxie Simmons, Heather Bauman, Mary Dooher, Violet Rainbeaux Brooks, Susan Dunham, Nathan Meadows, Barrie Blackman-Green, and Victoria Grey.

The following person spoke in opposition to lifting seasonal weight restrictions for roads: Karel LaWalter.

The following person spoke to the need to plan for long-term, safe infrastructure and to concerns with road maintenance that occurred in her neighborhood: Lisa Harrison.

The following person proposed several ideas for community use of the Glacier View Elementary School if the School District closes it: Gary Wolske.

The following person spoke to concerns with the award of the road service area contract for Meadow Lakes Road Service Area: Daniel Potter.

The following person spoke in support of intellectual freedom and in support of libraries: Mary Robinson.

The following person spoke to concerns with data centers and their impacts on the environment: Travis Friesen.

The following person thanked Mayor DeVries for attempting to veto the data center resolution, spoke to concerns with tax waivers, closing schools, raising taxes, and road maintenance: Steve Edwards.

The following person spoke to the need to preserve section line easements to protect public access: Mark Johnson.

The following person noted that closing and consolidating schools is not a popular decision, but likely one that will have to occur: Andrew Traxler.

The meeting recessed at 7:45 p.m. and reconvened at 8 p.m.

B. PUBLIC HEARINGS (Three Minutes Per Person.)

OR 26-033 An Ordinance Extending The Time Limit For Completion Of Expiring Project Funds Through June 30, 2027.
Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

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. 26-033.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

OR 26-034 An Ordinance Accepting And Appropriating \$281,250 From The State Of Alaska, Department Of Commerce, Community, And Economic Development, Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery Program, For The Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Project.
RS 26-022: A Resolution Approving The Scope Of Work And Budget For A Grant In The Amount Of \$281,250 For The Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Project And Authorizing The Manager To Enter Into An Agreement With The Alaska State Department Of Commerce, Community, And Economic Development.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

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. 26-034 and Resolution Serial No. 26-022.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

OR 26-035 An Ordinance Increasing The Compensation Of The Members Of The Board Of Equalization.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

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. 26-035.

Assemblymember Fonov moved a primary amendment by striking "\$100" and inserting "\$150" in its place.

Assemblymember Sumner called for the question (to stop debate).

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

The primary amendment failed by the following vote:

Yes: 3 - Assemblymember Bowles, Assemblymember Fonov, and Assemblymember Bernier

No: 4 - Assemblymember Nowers, Assemblymember McKee, Assemblymember Sumner, and Assemblymember Gamble

The main motion passed by the following vote:

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

No: 1 - Assemblymember McKee

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 the success of Ficklin Construction in the past, spoke to hardships the company faced last year, and to changes that have been made to set the company up for success: Brian Ficklin.

D. CONSENT AGENDA

1. RESOLUTIONS

[Clerk's Note: All resolutions were pulled from the consent agenda for further discussion.]

2. ACTION MEMORANDUMS

- AM 26-034** Award Of Bid No. 26-121B To Northern Gravel In The Contract Amount Of \$300,000 To Remove The Conveyor System At Port Mackenzie.
- AM 26-035** Award Of Proposal No. 26-087P To ECI In The Contract Amount Of \$718,484 To Design The Willow Emergency Services Building.
- AM 26-036** Authorization To Renew The Borough's Cartegraph Asset Management Software With Opengov, Inc. Under A Three-Year Agreement Covering July 1, 2026, Through June 30, 2029; The Total Cost Of The Agreement Is \$261,246.41, With Annual Payments Subject To Appropriation.
- AM 26-037** Authorization To Renew Projectmates Software With Systemates, Inc. Under A Three-Year Agreement Covering July 1, 2026, Through June 30, 2029; The Total Cost Of The Agreement Is \$415,657.13, With Annual Payments Subject To Appropriation.
- AM 26-038** Authorization To Renew The Borough's Opentext Content Manager Software With Information First Under A Three-Year Agreement Covering July 1, 2026, Through June 30, 2029; The Total Cost Of The Agreement Is \$292,165.75, With Annual Payments Subject To Appropriation.
- AM 26-039** Award Of Bid No. 26-123B To Meier Excavation, LLC. In The Contract Amount Of \$496,093 To Construct A New Fish Passage Culvert At An Existing Culvert Crossing On Homebuilt Circle At Neklason Lake.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

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

Assemblymember Bowles moved to divide the question to take up discussion of AM 26-039 separately.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

No: 1 - Assemblymember McKee

FIRST SEGMENT: Assemblymember Bernier moved to approve the consent agenda as read into the record by the Clerk, with the exception of AM 26-039.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

SECOND SEGMENT: Assemblymember Bernier moved to adopt AM 26-039.

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 26-032 Award Of Bid No. 26-129B To Ficklin Construction, LLC. In The Contract Amount Of \$1,186,406 For Meadow Lakes Road Service Area Annual Road Maintenance - Rebid.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: Assemblymember Sumner declared a conflict of interest as he does business with Ficklin Construction.

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

Assemblymember Sumner exited the meeting.

Assemblymember McKee moved to adopt AM 26-032.

The motion failed with Assemblymembers Bowles, Nowers, and Gamble in support and McKee, Fonov, and Bernier opposed (tie vote).

The motion passed with Mayor DeVries invoking her voting power in the affirmative.

Assemblymember Sumner re-entered the meeting.

RS 26-027 A Resolution Requesting The State Of Alaska To Review DMV Processes And Consider Modifications To Facilitate Refugees' Ability To Renew Driver's Licenses.

Sponsors: Fonov

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Assemblymember McKee moved to adopt Resolution Serial No. 26-027.

Assemblymember McKee moved a primary amendment, page three of the resolution, no. 6, by striking the words, "In this state."

The primary amendment passed by the following vote:

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

RS 26-028 A Resolution Opposing Senate Bill 277 And Urging The Protection Of Parental Rights, Charter School Funding, And Correspondence Education.

Sponsors: Bowles

Assemblymember Bowles moved to adopt Resolution Serial No. 26-028.

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

[Clerk's Note: Ordinance Serial No. 26-027 was removed from the agenda at approval of the agenda.]

OR 26-027 An Ordinance Amending MSB 3.28 To Increase The Property Owner Ballot Threshold For Contiguous Local Improvement Districts From 54 Percent To 67 Percent, And Remove The Provisions That Only Returned Ballots Are Considered In Tabulation.

Sponsors: Nowers and Bowles

IX. VETO

There were no vetoes.

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. INTRODUCTIONS (For Public Hearing 04/21/26, Assembly Chambers)

- OR 26-037** An Ordinance Accepting And Appropriating \$28,792.55 From The Alaska State Division Of Forestry, Volunteer Fire Capacity Grant Program; And Appropriating \$2,879.25 In Matching Funds For Firefighter And Firefighting Equipment, Supplies, And Communications Equipment.
RS 26-023: A Resolution Approving The Scopes Of Work And Budgets For The Alaska State Division Of Forestry Volunteer Fire Capacity Grants And Matching Funds For The Fire Service Areas Of Willow-Caswell, Talkeetna, And Sutton.
- OR 26-038** An Ordinance Accepting And Appropriating Disaster Relief Funds From The Alaska State Division Of Homeland Security And Emergency Management In The Amount Of \$823,135.48 For The January 2022 Mat-Su Windstorm Disaster.
RS 26-024: A Resolution Approving The Scope Of Work And Budget For Disaster Relief Funds For The January 2022 Mat-Su Windstorm Disaster Project No. 55030.
- OR 26-040** An Ordinance Accepting And Appropriating \$175,000 From The Alaska State Department Of Military And Veteran's Affairs, Emergency Management Performance Grant; And Requesting A Reappropriation Of \$175,000 From The Emergency Management Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget For Emergency Management Wages And Benefits.
RS 26-026: A Resolution Approving The Scope Of Work And Budget For A Grant In The Amount Of \$175,000 From The Alaska State Department Of Military And Veteran's Affairs, Emergency Management Performance Grant, For Emergency Management Wages And Benefits.
- OR 26-042** An Ordinance Extending The Date Of Completion On The Palmer High School Elevator Replacement Project Through June 30, 2028.
RS 26-029: A Resolution Amending The Budgets Of The Palmer High School Elevator Replacement, Finger Lake Elementary School Boiler Replacement, And Snowshoe Elementary School Boiler Replacement Projects; And Approving The Scope Of Work And Budget For The Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District Deferred Maintenance - Fiscal Year 2026 Project.
- OR 26-043** An Ordinance To Accept And Appropriate 2026 Series B Taxable General Obligation Transportation System Bonds Proceeds Including Issuance Costs And Additional Premium To Debt Service.
- OR 26-044** An Ordinance Appropriating The 2026 Series A General Obligation School Refunding Proceeds For Issuance Costs.

OR 26-045 An Ordinance Changing The Exemption To Weight Restrictions On Borough Roads For Essential Purposes Only.

Sponsors: Sumner and Bowles

OR 26-046 An Ordinance Amending MSB 3.28 To Increase The Property Owner Ballot Threshold For Contiguous Local Improvement Districts From 54 Percent To 75 Percent.

Sponsors: Bowles

B. INTRODUCTIONS (For Public Hearing 05/19/26, Assembly Chambers)

OR 26-041 An Ordinance Creating Republican Way Natural Gas Local Improvement District No. 672, 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 Bernier moved to introduce the legislation as read into the record and to set the public hearings for April 21, 2026, and May 19, 2026, respectively.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

Assemblymember Fonov moved to divide the question to take the introduction of Ordinance Serial No. 26-045 separately.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

No: 2 - Assemblymember Nowers and Assemblymember Gamble
FIRST SEGMENT: Assemblymember Bernier moved to introduce the legislation as read into the record by the Clerk and to set the public hearings for April 21, 2026, and May 19, 2026, with the exception of Ordinance Serial No. 26-045.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

SECOND SEGMENT: Assemblymember Bernier moved to introduce Ordinance Serial No. 26-045 and set the public hearing for April 21, 2026.

Assemblymember Fonov moved a primary amendment to strike "April 21" and insert "June 16" in its place.

The primary amendment failed by the following vote:

Yes: 1 - Assemblymember Fonov

No: 6 - Assemblymember Bowles, Assemblymember Nowers, Assemblymember McKee, Assemblymember Sumner, Assemblymember Gamble, and Assemblymember Bernier

The main motion passed by the following vote:

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

No: 2 - Assemblymember Fonov and Assemblymember Bernier

C. MAYORAL NOMINATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

1. VACANCY REPORT

26-058 Mayoral Requests for Confirmation

MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission

Terry Gorlick

Assemblymember Bernier moved to confirm the appointment 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

D. OTHER NEW BUSINESS

There was 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

A. MOTION TO RECONSIDER PUBLIC HEARING DATE

OR 26-036 An Ordinance Changing The Exemption To Weight Restrictions On Borough Roads For Emergencies Only.

Sponsors: Nowers and McKee

[Clerk's Note: Ordinance Serial No. 26-036 was removed from the agenda at approval of the agenda and reconsideration was not moved.]

XII. MAYOR, ASSEMBLY, AND STAFF COMMENTS

Assemblymember Bernier said a prayer.

Assemblymember Nowers spoke to concerns with damage to roads due to the exemptions for seasonal road restrictions.

Assemblymember Nowers moved to direct the Manager to suspend the issuance of exemption to weight restriction permits until after April 21, 2026.

The motion failed by the following vote:

Yes: 1 - Assemblymember Nowers

No: 6 - Assemblymember Bowles, Assemblymember McKee, Assemblymember Sumner, Assemblymember Gamble, Assemblymember Fonov, and Assemblymember Bernier

Assemblymember Nowers acknowledged testimony provided in opposition to school closures. Stated a preference to postpone any closures for one year. Commented that enrollment capacity varies by site, with one school at or near capacity and another operating at a lower level. Stated that the nursing issue has been resolved and noted cost savings resulting from the bus strike. Further stated a desire to understand the cost of maintaining operations at the three schools under consideration. Added that, if closures proceed, the facilities should be repurposed in a manner that benefits the impacted communities. Expressed concern regarding the School District's budget, including approximately \$8 million allocated for supplies, and noted a need for greater understanding of the reported budget shortfall.

Assemblymember Bowles urged residents of Assembly District 1 to review Ordinance Serial No. 26-045, a recent measure addressing exemptions to seasonal road weight restrictions. Stated that he considers it a more effective solution. Expressed appreciation for the discussion held this evening and noted that it is a privilege to serve on the Assembly.

Assemblymember Fonov spoke to his allegiance to the United States of America and shared his immigration history. Spoke to the weight restriction exemption permit, noting that Borough laws apply equally to all residents. Acknowledged that, while differences of opinion may exist, the body must work collaboratively. Stated that it is a privilege to serve his constituents.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:54 p.m.

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

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Bill Gamble, District 5
Dmitri Fonov, District 6
Ron Bernier, District 7

MEETING MINUTES

ASSEMBLY CHAMBERS

350 EAST DAHLIA AVENUE, PALMER

ASSEMBLY SPECIAL MEETING

10:00 AM

THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2026

Departmental Budget Presentations

I. CALL TO ORDER

The special meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on Tuesday, April 9, 2026, at the Borough Assembly Chambers, 350 E. Dahlia Avenue, Palmer, Alaska. The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m. by Mayor Edna DeVries.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: 6 - Assemblymember Michael Bowles, Assemblymember Stephanie Nowers, Assemblymember Dee McKee (entered at 12:23 p.m.), Assemblymember Maxwell Sumner, Assemblymember Dmitri Fonov, and Assemblymember Ron Bernier

Telephonic: 1 - 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 Mr. Brown, Borough Manager.

V. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (Three Minutes Per Person.)

There were no persons present who wished to testify.

VI. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

26-028

Order of Presentations:

1. Administration Budget Overview
Manager Mike Brown
2. Emergency Services
Director Ken Barkley
3. Community Development
Director Jillian Morrissey
4. Public Works
Director Tom Adams
5. Planning
Director Alex Strawn
6. Animal Care and Regulation
Director Vanessa Forbes
7. Port
Director David Griffin
8. Finance
Director Cheyenne Heindel

Mr. Brown, Borough Manager, provided a budget overview.

Ken Barkely, Emergency Services Director, presented the Emergency Services proposed budget.

Jillian Morrissey, Community Development Director, presented the Community Development proposed budget.

(The Assembly recessed at 12:00 p.m. and reconvened at 12:23 p.m.)

[Clerk's Note: Assemblymember Gamble exited the meeting at 12:00 p.m.]

Tom Adams, Public Works Director, presented the Public Works proposed budget.

[Clerk's Note: Assemblymember McKee entered the meeting at 12:23 p.m.]

Alex Strawn, Planning and Land Use Director, presented the Planning and Land Use proposed budget.

(The Assembly recessed at 1:43 p.m. and reconvened at 2:00 p.m.)

Vanessa Forbes, Animal Care and Regulation Director, presented the Animal Care proposed budget.

(The Assembly recessed at 2:54 p.m. and reconvened at 2:57 p.m.)

David Griffin, Port Director, presented the Port proposed budget.

[Clerk's Note: Assemblymember Sumner exited the meeting at 3:00 p.m.)

Cheyenne Heindel, Finance Director, presented the Finance proposed budget.

VII. MAYOR, ASSEMBLY, AND STAFF COMMENT

Assemblymember Bernier spoke to schools and the School Board; thanked everyone; and said a prayer.

Assemblymember Nowers spoke to home school and correspondence programs. Thanked everyone for being creative with our budget and for presenting long-term fiscally responsible decisions.

Assemblymember Bowles thanked Borough staff for their work. Spoke to benefit and salaries increases for the School District and Borough employees.

Assemblymember Fonov thanked Borough staff. Spoke to home schooling programs from other school districts. Spoke to open houses in our school district and the potential marketing of our schools.

Mayor DeVries said good job everybody.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:17 p.m.

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Ron Bernier, District 7

MEETING MINUTES

ASSEMBLY CHAMBERS
350 EAST DAHLIA AVENUE, PALMER

ASSEMBLY REGULAR MEETING

6:00 PM

TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2026

I. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on Tuesday, April 21, 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

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

Telephonic: 1 - Assemblymember Stephanie Nowers

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Assemblymember Fonov moved to remove Ordinance Serial No. 26-045 from the agenda.

The motion failed by the following vote:

Yes: 3 - Assemblymember Bowles, Assemblymember McKee, and Assemblymember Fonov

No: 4 - Assemblymember Nowers, Assemblymember Sumner, Assemblymember Gamble, and Assemblymember Bernier

Assemblymember Bernier called for a moment of silence for the tragedy regarding the dogs in Caswell.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Assemblymember Bowles.

V. MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETINGS

There were no minutes of preceding meetings.

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.

4. MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission

26-070

MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission

Andy Couch, Vice Chair of the MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission, presented on changes to the Upper Cook Inlet Central District Drift Gillnet Management Plan.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Joint Assembly/School Board Committees

There were no reports provided.

2. Assembly Public Relations

There was no report provided.

C. MANAGER COMMENTS

1. State/Federal Legislation

2. Strategic Planning Issues

Manager Brown spoke to the Animal Care case and recent arrest and upcoming investigation. Spoke to letting the investigation run its course. Spoke to the Borough Animal Care team.

D. ATTORNEY COMMENTS

E. CLERK COMMENTS

Ms. McKechnie spoke to the upcoming meeting schedule and inquired about scheduling Valley Transit as an agenda item on the April 28, 2026, special meeting agenda.

There was no objection.

F. CITIZEN AND OTHER CORRESPONDENCE

26-068

1. Glacier View Community Council: 02/26/26
2. Local Road Service Area Advisory Board: 02/19/26
3. North Lakes Community Council: 09/25/25, 10/30/25, 11/20/25, 12/18/25, 01/15/26, 01/29/25, 02/15/26, 02/26/26, 03/15/26
4. Planning Commission: 03/16/26
5. South Colony RSA Board of Supervisors: 01/14/26
6. Talkeetna Sewer & Water Board: 02/04/26, 03/04/26, Resolution No. 26-01
7. Transportation Advisory Board: 02/13/26

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

G. INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUMS

IM 26-077 Informing The Assembly Of The Manager's Signature On A Grant Application For Submission To The Rasmuson Foundation For The Matanuska River Park And Campground.

IM 26-078 Informing The Assembly Of The Manager's Signature On A Memorandum Of Agreement Regarding The Talkeetna Village Airstrip Revetment Reconstruction.

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 persons spoke to Animal Care and Regulation and the Caswell 26: Kathleen Frederick, Holly Thorssin, Casey Randall, Christine Witzman, Eric Kelly, Alyssa Buser, Sara (Last name was indiscernible), Holly Lynn, Margaret Woods, Lance Lesley, Kimberly Wells, Michael Garcia, Jessica Scialfan, Amanda Brooks Henderson, Laura Mullin, and Alyeska (Last name was indiscernible).

The following person spoke to the Borough Tax Assessor and the Board of Equalization: Butch Moore.

The following person spoke the Caswell Lakes Road Service Area No. 15 road maintenance: James Skinner.

The following person spoke in support of Resolution Serial No. 26-033: John Miller, North Lakes Community Council member; Father Randy Hillman; and Nate (Last name was indiscernible)

The following person spoke in opposition of data centers: Karen Lewis.

The following person spoke to the library book, "Let's Talk About It", Senate Bills 41 and 238: Linda Spohn.

The following person spoke to the Borough Tax Assessor, property taxes, assessments, the Board of Equalization, and the formula for the mill rate: Dawson White.

The following person spoke in opposition of Ordinance Serial No. 26-020 and in support of Ordinance Serial No. 26-045: Tracy Barickman.

The following person spoke to the bid process of the Big Lake Road Service Area No. 21 road maintenance contract: Mokie Tew.

The following person spoke to concerns with Ordinance Serial No. 26-045: Joel Stefanski.

The following person spoke to concerns with AM 26-041: Jason Calloway.

The following person spoke to library books, the book "Let's Talk About It", and Caswell 26: Jackie Goforth.

The following person spoke in support of Resolution Serial No. 26-033:
Lyle Downing.

The following person spoke in opposition of the claim there are obscene books in the library and to the upcoming Library Board Meeting: Mary Robinson.

The following persons spoke in opposition of the proposed location for the Talkeetna Water and sewer treatment plant: Andrea Larson and Alan Larson.

The following persons spoke to the closure of Meadow Lakes Elementary: Heather Bauman and Mary Doer.

The meeting recessed at 7:55 p.m. and reconvened at 8:10 p.m.

The following person spoke to the education fund, Valley Transit, and library books: Elizabeth Kiddo.

The following person spoke to the Animal Care and Regulation investigation: Maxine Franklin.

The following person spoke to Ordinance Serial No. 26-045 and culverts: Andrew Traxler.

The following person spoke to a review of the Borough kennel licenses, the license renewal process, and the Animal Care and Regulation response time: Joselin Doerumer.

The following person spoke in support of Valley Transit: Raven Amos.

The following person spoke to the Talkeetna Library, the Caswell 26, and Borough Code regarding kennel licenses: Ruth Wood.

B. PUBLIC HEARINGS (Three Minutes Per Person.)

OR 26-037 An Ordinance Accepting And Appropriating \$28,792.55 From The Alaska State Division Of Forestry, Volunteer Fire Capacity Grant Program; And Appropriating \$2,879.25 In Matching Funds For Firefighter And Firefighting Equipment, Supplies, And Communications Equipment.

RS 26-023: A Resolution Approving The Scopes Of Work And Budgets For The Alaska State Division Of Forestry Volunteer Fire Capacity Grants And Matching Funds For The Fire Service Areas Of Willow-Caswell, Talkeetna, And Sutton.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

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. 26-037 and Resolution Serial No. 26-023.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

OR 26-038 An Ordinance Accepting And Appropriating Disaster Relief Funds From The Alaska State Division Of Homeland Security And Emergency Management In The Amount Of \$823,135.48 For The January 2022 Mat-Su Windstorm Disaster.

RS 26-024: A Resolution Approving The Scope Of Work And Budget For Disaster Relief Funds For The January 2022 Mat-Su Windstorm Disaster Project No. 55030.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Mayor DeVries opened the public hearing.

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

Assemblymember Bernier moved to adopt Ordinance Serial No. 26-038 and Resolution Serial No. 26-024.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

OR 26-040 An Ordinance Accepting And Appropriating \$175,000 From The Alaska State Department Of Military And Veteran’s Affairs, Emergency Management Performance Grant; And Requesting A Reappropriation Of \$175,000 From The Emergency Management Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget For Emergency Management Wages And Benefits.
RS 26-026: A Resolution Approving The Scope Of Work And Budget For A Grant In The Amount Of \$175,000 From The Alaska State Department Of Military And Veteran’s Affairs, Emergency Management Performance Grant, For Emergency Management Wages And Benefits.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

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. 26-040 and Resolution Serial No. 26-026.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

OR 26-042 An Ordinance Extending The Date Of Completion On The Palmer High School Elevator Replacement Project Through June 30, 2028.
RS 26-029: A Resolution Amending The Budgets Of The Palmer High School Elevator Replacement, Finger Lake Elementary School Boiler Replacement, And Snowshoe Elementary School Boiler Replacement Projects; And Approving The Scope Of Work And Budget For The Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District Deferred Maintenance - Fiscal Year 2026 Project.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

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. 26-042 and Resolution Serial No. 26-029.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

OR 26-043 An Ordinance To Accept And Appropriate 2026 Series B Taxable General Obligation Transportation System Bonds Proceeds Including Issuance Costs And Additional Premium To Debt Service.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Mayor DeVries opened the public hearing.

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

Assemblymember Bernier moved to adopt Ordinance Serial No. 26-043.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

OR 26-044 An Ordinance Appropriating The 2026 Series A General Obligation School Refunding Proceeds For Issuance Costs.
Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

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. 26-044.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

OR 26-045 An Ordinance Changing The Exemption To Weight Restrictions On Borough Roads For Essential Purposes Only.

Sponsors: Sumner and Bowles

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Mayor DeVries opened the public hearing.

The following person spoke in opposition of Ordinance Serial No. 26-045: Patricia Fisher

The following person spoke in support of the oversight of weight restrictions in the Borough and having a process: Mokie Tew.

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. 26-045.

Assemblymember Fonov moved a primary amendment to Ordinance Serial No. 26-045 by striking all changes except for Section F of MSB 11.08.10.

Assemblymember Sumner moved to a secondary amendment to reinsert the changes to subsection MSB 11.08.025 (B)(2).

The secondary amendment passed by the following vote:

Yes: 6 - Assemblymember Bowles, Assemblymember McKee, Assemblymember Sumner, Assemblymember Gamble, Assemblymember Fonov, and Assemblymember Bernier

No: 1 - Assemblymember Nowers

The primary amendment passed by the following vote:

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

No: 2 - Assemblymember Nowers and Assemblymember Gamble

The main motion passed by the following vote:

Yes: 6 - Assemblymember Bowles, Assemblymember Nowers, Assemblymember McKee, Assemblymember Sumner, Assemblymember Gamble, and Assemblymember Bernier

No: 1 - Assemblymember Fonov

OR 26-046 An Ordinance Amending MSB 3.28 To Increase The Property Owner Ballot Threshold For Contiguous Local Improvement Districts From 54 Percent To 75 Percent.

Sponsors: Bowles

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

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 Bowles moved to adopt Ordinance Serial No. 26-046.

Assemblymember Nowers moved a primary amendment to strike "67%" and insert "75%" throughout the legislation.

The primary amendment passed by the following vote:

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

No: 2 - Assemblymember Sumner and Assemblymember Fonov

Assemblymember Fonov moved a primary amendment to strike "75%" and insert "70%" throughout the legislation.

The primary amendment failed by the following vote:

Yes: 2 - Assemblymember Sumner and Assemblymember Fonov

No: 5 - Assemblymember Bowles, Assemblymember Nowers, Assemblymember McKee, Assemblymember Gamble, and Assemblymember Bernier

The main motion passed as amended by the following vote:

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

No: 1 - Assemblymember Sumner

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 AM 26-041: Wayne Whaley.

Assemblymember Bernier moved to suspend the rules and extend the meeting past 10 p.m. and not to exceed 10:30 p.m.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

D. CONSENT AGENDA

1. RESOLUTIONS

RS 26-031 A Resolution Establishing The Minimum Level Of Funding For The Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District From Local Sources For The Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2027.

RS 26-033 A Resolution Directing The Manager To Acquire Land On Wolf Lake From The Alaska State Department Of Natural Resources To Develop And Manage A Park For Public Purposes.

Sponsors: Fonov

RS 26-036 A Resolution Directing The Manager To Determine The Costs And Requirements Associated With Subdividing The Tanaina Elementary School Property Into Multiple Lots For The Purpose Of A Land Sale To The YMCA Of Alaska And The Tanaina Community Council For A Public Purpose.

Sponsors: Fonov

2. ACTION MEMORANDUMS

- AM 26-040** Approval Of Additional Utility Relocation Cost Of \$75,850 To Matanuska Electric Association, Inc. For The Crimsonview Drive, South Vermillon Drive, South Thalo Drive, And South Ochre Drive Reconstruction Project In South Colony Road Service Area No. 16; And Extend The Completion Date To August 31, 2026.
- AM 26-042** Award Of Bid No. 26-125B To Tutka, LLC. In The Contract Amount Of \$1,897,024.41 To Construct Phase 1 Fern Street Upgrades And Pathways.
- AM 26-043** Award Of Proposal No. 26-138P To Lounsbury And Associates In The Contract Amount Of \$175,220 To Provide Construction Management Services For Phase 1 Fern Street Upgrades And Pathway Improvements.
- AM 26-044** Approval of Election Officials For The November 3, 2026, Regular Borough Election.

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 Bowles, Assemblymember Nowers, Assemblymember McKee, Assemblymember Sumner, Assemblymember Gamble, Assemblymember Fonov, and Assemblymember Bernier

AM 26-033 Award Of Contract No. 26-143C To McKenna Brothers Paving, Inc. In The Contract Amount Of \$1,232,145.33 For Big Lake Road Service Area Annual Road Maintenance.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: Assemblymember Sumner declared a conflict of interest on AM 26-033 as he has worked with McKenna Brothers Paving, Inc.

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

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: Assemblymember Fonov declared a conflict of interest on AM 26-033 as his family worked with McKenna Brothers Paving, Inc.

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

(Assemblymembers Sumner and Fonov exited the meeting.)

Assemblymember McKee moved to adopt AM 26-033.

The motion failed by the following vote:

Yes: 2 - Assemblymember Nowers and Assemblymember Gamble

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

Recused: 2 - Assemblymember Sumner and Assemblymember Fonov

AM 26-041 Approval To Vacate The 50-Foot-Wide Section Line Easement, On The Western Boundary Of Block 6, Lot 6, Geor Dol Estates, Plat No. 77-179 (Tax ID No. 1343B06L006), Located Within The Northwest ¼, Section 15, Township 16 North, Range 3 East, Seward Meridian.

Ms. McKechnie read the legislation into the record.

Assemblymember Bowles moved to adopt AM 26-041.

Assemblymember Bowles moved a primary amendment to strike the word "vacate" and insert the words "veto the vacation of" in the title and summary statement.

Assemblymember Bernier moved to suspend the rules and to extend the meeting past 10:30 p.m. and not to exceed 10:45 p.m.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

The primary amendment failed by the following vote:

Yes: 1 - Assemblymember Bowles

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

The main 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 presented.

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. INTRODUCTIONS (For Public Hearing 05/05/26 Assembly Chambers)

OR 26-047 An Ordinance Accepting And Appropriating \$250,000 From The Mat-Su Trails And Parks Foundation For The Government Peak Recreation Area Traverse Trail And Skeetawk Summer Trails Survey Project And Authorizing The Manager To Execute The Grant Agreement.
RS 26-032: A Resolution Approving The Scope Of Work And Budget Of The Government Peak Recreation Area Traverse Trail And Skeetawk Summer Trails Survey Project.

OR 26-049 An Ordinance Reappropriating \$125,000 From The Planning Department's Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget, To Fund The Port MacKenzie Master Plan Update.
RS 26-035: A Resolution Approving The Scope Of Work And Budget For The Port MacKenzie Master Plan Update.

B. INTRODUCTION (For Public Hearing 04/23/26, At The Willow Community Center; 04/28/26 At The Menard Sports Complex; And 04/30/26, In Assembly Chambers)

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.

Assemblymember Bernier moved to introduce the legislation as read into the record by the Clerk and to set the public hearing for April 23, 2026; April 28, 2026; April 30, 2026; and May 5, 2026, respectively.

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. MAYORAL NOMINATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

1. VACANCY REPORT

26-069 Mayoral Requests for Confirmation
Platting Board
Reginald Carney, Jr.
Amanda Salmon, resignation
Big Lake RSA No. 21
Nate Suing, resignation

Assemblymember Bernier 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

D. OTHER NEW BUSINESS

There was 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 presented.

XI. RECONSIDERATION

There were no reconsiderations presented.

A. MOTION TO RECONSIDER PUBLIC HEARING DATE

OR 26-045 An Ordinance Changing The Exemption To Weight Restrictions On Borough Roads For Essential Purposes Only.

Sponsors: Sumner and Bowles

[Clerk's Note: The reconsideration was not moved.]

XII. MAYOR, ASSEMBLY, AND STAFF COMMENTS

Assemblymember Nowers spoke to the Caswell 26, budget hearings, and schools.

Assemblymember McKee spoke to the Caswell 26.

Assemblymember Sumner spoke to the potential school closures, Caswell 26, and potential creation of a citizens advisory board regarding kennels.

Assemblymember Bernier spoke to management in Animal Care and Regulation and the Caswell 26.

Assemblymember Bowles directed the Manager to remove "Let's Talk About It" from every Borough Library.

Assemblymember Sumner moved to postpone the motion until May 5, 2026.

The motion to postpone discussion passed by the following vote:

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

Assemblymember Bowles directed the Manager to put the Animal Care Officer involved with the Caswell 26 on leave without pay until the investigation concluded.

Assemblymember Bernier moved to suspend the rules and to extend the meeting past 10:45 p.m. and not to exceed 10:52 p.m.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

Assemblymember Bernier moved to suspend the rules and to extend the meeting past 10:52 p.m. and not to exceed 11:15 p.m.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

Assemblymember Sumner called for the question (to stop debate)

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

The main motion failed by the following vote:

Yes: 2 - Assemblymember Bowles and Assemblymember McKee

No: 5 - Assemblymember Nowers, Assemblymember Sumner, Assemblymember Gamble, Assemblymember Fonov, and Assemblymember Bernier

Assemblymember Bowles spoke to loss of life, to saving lives, and the March for Life event coming up.

Assemblymember Gamble spoke to innocent until proven guilty and Animal Care and Regulation.

Assemblymember Fonov spoke to the justice system and the loss of life.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:59 p.m.

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

WILLOW COMMUNITY CENTER
MILE 69 PARKS HIGHWAY, WILLOW

ASSEMBLY SPECIAL MEETING

6:00 PM

THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2026

Budget Public Hearing

I. CALL TO ORDER

The special meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on Tuesday, April 23, 2026, at the Willow Area Community Center, Milepost 69, Willow, Alaska. The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. by Mayor Edna DeVries.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: 5 - Assemblymember Michael Bowles, Assemblymember Maxwell Sumner, Assemblymember Bill Gamble, Assemblymember Dmitri Fonov, and Assemblymember Ron Bernier

Excused: 2 - Assemblymember Stephanie Nowers and Assemblymember Dee McKee

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

The agenda was approved as presented without objection.

The Mayor requested a moment of silence in remembrance of the dogs lost in the Caswell incident.

Mike Brown, Borough Manager, provided an update regarding the independent review that will be conducted concerning the Caswell dog incident.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of allegiance was led by Assemblymember Bernier.

V. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (Three Minutes Per Person.)

The following persons spoke to the need for changes in policies regarding animal abuse cases and to funding additional Animal Care Officers: Kai Leddy; Cindy McCann; Shantel Wiley; Kathleen Frederick; Jan Stevens; Adam Larson, Willow Dog Musers Association President; Dameon Kowalke; Patricia Burks; and Kirsten Peterson.

The following person reported on all the grounds improvements made to the Willow Area Community Center, funded through Borough grants and public donations: Jim Huston.

The following person thanked the Borough for the revetment repairs in Talkeetna and to concerns with the length of the closure for the Fireweed Playground: Jon Korta, Talkeetna Community Council Chairperson.

The following persons spoke to the need for increased public transportation: Zoltan Stersky; Helen Katz; Brian Geary; Paul Causey, President of Valley Transit Board; Wendy Odom; James McCleese, Valley Transit Driver; Jennifer Bush, Executive Director of Valley Transit; and Elizabeth (did not provide last name).

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.

There being no one present who wished to testify.

Assemblymember Bernier moved to continue the public hearing for Ordinance Serial No. 26-026 to April 28, 2026.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

VII. MAYOR, ASSEMBLY, AND STAFF COMMENT

Assemblymember Bowles moved to rescind his April 21, 2026, motion regarding library materials.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

Assemblymember Bowles thanked the public for their attendance. Acknowledged the community's concerns regarding the unfortunate dog incident in Caswell and stated that he empathizes with those concerns. Concluded by stating that it is a privilege to serve.

Assemblymember Bernier thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Recognized the service of military Veterans in the audience and said a prayer.

Mike Brown, Borough Manager, invited Ken Barkley, Emergency Services Director, to introduce the new Willow-Caswell Fire Chief.

Ken Barkley, Emergency Services Director, introduced Ben Knowles, Fire Chief for the Willow-Caswell Fire Service Area.

Ms. McKechnie spoke to the process for budget amendments.

Assemblymember Gamble stated that the budget public hearing in Willow is his favorite and thanked the public for attending.

Assemblymember Sumner thanked the public for their attendance. Spoke to the potential seat composition of the special review committee for the Caswell dog incident.

Assemblymember Fonov thanked Mr. Brown for the update regarding the independent review of the Caswell dog incident.

Mayor DeVries noted that Borough Libraries will be adorned in patriotic decorations in honor of the 250th Anniversary of the United States. Read a statement into the record regarding the same.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

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

MENARD SPORTS COMPLEX
1001 SOUTH CLAPP STREET, WASILLA

ASSEMBLY SPECIAL MEETING

6:00 PM

TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2026

Budget Public Hearing

I. CALL TO ORDER

The special meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on Tuesday, April 28, 2026, at the Menard Sports Complex, 1001 South Clapp Street, Wasilla, Alaska. The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. by Mayor Edna DeVries.

II. ROLL CALL

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

Excused: 1 - Assemblymember Maxwell Sumner

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved as presented without objection.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Assemblymember Fonov.

V. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (Three Minutes Per Person.)

The following person spoke to spoke the organization REACH 907: Skyler DeBoer.

The following persons spoke to potential school closures: Patricia Fisher, Caroline Arnold, and Aunia Brasher.

The following persons spoke in support of Valley Transit: Brian McRumitt, Margaret Provost, Caroline Robinson, Zofta Sturtsy, Helen Katz, Brian Geary, Sonya Debec, and Steve McHomey.

The following person spoke in support of Meadow Lakes Elementary School: Riley Laws.

The following person thanked the Assembly for their grant to Hatcher Pass Avalanche Center: Heather Johnson.

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 to the proposed budget, Government Peak Chalet, and the funding formula for schools: Jim Colver.

Assemblymember Bernier moved to continue the public hearing on Ordinance Serial No. 26-026 to April 30, 2026, at 6 p.m. in the Borough Assembly Chambers.

The motion passed by the following vote:

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

Excused: 1 - Assemblymember Sumner

B. TRANSIT DISCUSSION

Jennifer Busch, Executive Director of Valley Transit, presented on public transit.

The meeting recessed at 7:52 p.m. and reconvened at 8:05 p.m.

VII. MAYOR, ASSEMBLY, AND STAFF COMMENT

Assemblymember Bowles spoke to serving as an elected officials and requested the public reach out with their ideas.

Assemblymember Bernier said a prayer.

Assemblymember McKee spoke to her appreciation of public transit and thanked everyone for attending.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

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.