



MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

Office of the Borough Manager

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 22, 2023
TO: Mayor and Assembly
FROM: Michael Brown, Borough Manager
RE: Manager's Weekly Post

Alaska State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Permitting Process for Skeetawk Road and Parking Improvements: Assembly Resolution 23-035 requests DNR expedite the permitting process for Skeetawk Road access improvements. The Borough Mayor and Manager met with the DNR Commissioner and staff along with Skeetawk staff on March 21, 2023 to discuss the permitting process. In the next two weeks, DNR expects to issue its preliminary findings and post a 30-day public notice. Following the 30-day public notice, there is a 20-day appeal period once a decision is rendered. There is an undefined period of time following the 30-day public notice where DNR staff will have to sort through public comments in order to prepare a decision. The Borough has already provided a written letter supporting the permit. The best case scenario likely would entail granting entry authorization in 90 days.

Roads Task Force Recommendations: In Assembly Resolution 23-036, the Manager was directed to implement the Roads Task Force recommendations. Appendix G of the Roads Task Force findings summarizes the Task Force's recommendations. Staff have actively been working on implementing the following items:

1. Contract Structure. The task force agreed with Borough staff's recommendation from the Road Maintenance Services and Cost Analysis report dated September 29, 2021 on retaining a "unit price per mile" structure.
2. Contract Criteria Knowledge. Public Works hosted a meeting in the fall of last year with RSA contractors to discuss winter road maintenance. A spring meeting is scheduled in April to discuss summer maintenance activities.
3. Staffing needs for oversight. The task force report mentioned looking into staffing to determine if the appropriate number of Borough employees were engaged in providing contract oversight. This was reviewed as part of FY 2024 annual budget preparation. At this time, staff are not recommending adding personnel.
4. Areawide Brush-Cutting. Public Works will retain this service within each RSA maintenance contract. Brush-cutting is associated with clear zone requirements and distances will be set accordingly.

5. Start-up inventory. The Borough recognized the need to improve start-up inventories in its Road Maintenance Services and Cost Analysis report dated September 29, 2021. The start-up inventories section of the contract was poorly written. The Borough updated its language and incorporated that language into the four RSA contracts that were bid in the spring of 2022 for South Colony, North Colony, Alpine, and Butte RSAs. Additionally, the Borough created an online platform to standardize what data is input and to ensure it is maintained by the Borough.
6. Roads condition database. Similar to the start-up inventory is a roads condition database which is intended to collect information in an online platform for roads that do not meet Borough standard. This database will be used to document shortfalls by RSA and provide a tool for staff and RSA advisory board members to plan for future road improvements.
7. Problem Reporter app. The Problem Reporter app continues to provide a much improved interface to crowd source issues related to snow removal, road maintenance, road signage, abandoned vehicles and trash within Borough right-of way and most recently issues related to animal care. This tool provides notification of issues directly to road maintenance contractors and provides Borough staff and the public insight into reported issues.
8. Road Service Area Operating Manual. Public Works has completed updates to the RSA operating manual; a draft copy was provided to the LRSAAB for review/comment. This document is an internal department operating manual and not a policy document.
9. Budget reporting. The Borough implemented new RSA budget reports in February 2023 to better communicate revenues, expenditures and capital funding available for road improvements. Public Works is able to run these reports upon request and Finance will attend two LRSAAB (“Big Board”) meetings each year to provide reports as part of budget preparation and upon completing the audit.

Strategic Plan: See the FY2024-2029 Strategic Plan from our recent strategic planning meeting on the Borough website here: <https://matsugov.us/docs/general/22936/2023-Strategic-Plan.pdf>

Borough Timber Sale Methods: This information follows up questions from the Assembly at their March 11 Strategic Planning session. Firewood sales and salvage timber sales are different programs.

Permits: The **firewood program** is meant to allow people to harvest firewood from Borough land for heating their homes. Land and Resource Management (LRM) has a firewood program in place where citizens can collect unlimited cords of firewood per household, per year, free of charge, from identified areas of beetle kill spruce. The public can either come in or go on-line to get the free permit. There are currently five such areas designated for firewood gathering. We will open more over time. In addition, there are a couple firewood harvest areas where the public can purchase a \$25 permit, and up to 10 cords each year at \$25/cord to harvest live birch.

Contracts: Salvage timber sales occur where we have commercial loggers and other wood products folks/sawmills interested in harvesting dead/dying beetle-kill spruce and over-mature birch logs. We set up salvage timber sales, allowing purchase and harvest of these trees for a minimal cost under a timber harvest contract. It is good for the industry and for forest health. LRM has been selling salvage timber

for \$5.00/cord. The total cost of the sale is dependent upon how many cords of wood are estimated to be in the sales unit.

Commercial timber sales are similar to salvage timber sales in that they require a contract. The primary difference is the quality of the timber. There is very little accessible commercial-grade timber on Borough land. Commercial timber generally has a higher price per volume and can be based on the board foot or cubic foot.

Public Affairs Media Flyover:

Earthquake

- [5.4 earthquake off coast near Homer shakes Southcentral Alaska](#)
ADN

Fisheries

- [ADF&G closes Cook Inlet king salmon sport fishing](#)
KINY

Assembly

- [Gravel discussion continues at public meetings](#)
KTNA
- [Joint MSB Assembly, Planning Commission meeting discuss gravel extraction ahead of continued public hearings](#)
Frontiersman
- [Joint MSB Assembly, Planning Commission receive updates to road construction, Parks Hwy alternate corridor projects](#)
Frontiersman

Palmer Library

- [Palmer Library gets a temporary home](#)
Frontiersman

Central Landfill

- [The central landfill could get a new entrance away from 49th State Street](#)
Frontiersman

Industrial Development

- [Susitna access road will be public, AIDEA says community meetings later this month](#)
Frontiersman

Future Events:

- March 23, 2023 at 10 a.m., Houston High School Ribbon Cutting
- March 23, 2023, Noon to 2:00 p.m., West Susitna Access Project Community Meeting, Skwentna Roadhouse, 100 Happiness Lane, Skwentna
- March 31, 2023, 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., West Susitna Access Project Community Meeting, 2530 E. Parks Highway, Wasilla

Major Planning Milestones: Below are major milestones for a number of upcoming code changes as well as for Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), public transit program, and stormwater management development.

Assembly Directed Code Changes			
Code	Description	Sponsor	Assembly Public Hearing
17.60	Onsite Consumption Prohibition	Yundt	April 18, 2023
17.55	Setback Amendments	Yundt/Tew	April 18, 2023
15.24	Lake management plan implementation process update	Yundt	April 18, 2023
17.30	Gravel Amendments	Tew	May 16, 2023
17.73	Overhaul of multi-family code	Yundt	June 20, 2023
17.05	Essential Services Utilities Standards	Manager	September 19, 2023
17.59	Standardize definitions for lake management regulations	Yundt/Hale	April 18, 2023
Title 23	Agricultural Conveyances (Land Management)	Manager	2024
4.10	Repeal Aviation Advisory Board/Add Aviation seat to Transportation Advisory Board	Manager	March 21, 2023

Metropolitan Planning Organization Formation Milestones	Date
MVP Pre-Policy Board Finalize the Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary	May 2023
Resolutions of Support from the City of Palmer, Wasilla, ADOT &PF, Knik and Chickaloon Councils, and the Borough Assembly for the Operating Agreement, Bylaws, and MPA Boundary	May-June 2023
Submit the Operating Agreement Package to the Governor’s Office	End of June 2023
Resolutions of Support for the Operation of the MVP office including fee agreements from City of Palmer, Wasilla, ADOT &PF, Knik and Chickaloon Councils, and the Borough Assembly	July 2023
MVP for Transportation is formed by the Governor	October 2023
MVP for Transportation files NGO incorporation documents	August / September 2023
MVP for Transportation is ready to receive federal operations funding for planning	October 2023
Hire staff and open an office	Fall / winter 2023-2024

Public Transit Program Plan Timeline	
Milestones	Estimated Date
ADOT&PF hire a consultant to develop a Transit Service Continuity Plan	March 2023
Host transit project kick-off and formalize the scope of work with ADOT and consultant team	March 2023
Host steering committee and Stakeholder meetings to document provider and rider needs	April 2023
Develop MSB organizational policy and program documents for 5307 formula funding for Public Transit	April 2023
Develop transit service scope of work, deliverables, reporting requirements and contract agreements	May 2023
Develop a MSB Transit Program Organizational and Decision Structure document and a program staffing plan	June 2023
Develop funding mechanism options for match requirements including a potential cost share agreement between the cities and the MSB	July 2023
Present transit program document to the Assembly for approval with policy and program structure options	August 2023
Finalize cost share agreements with the cities and sign a memorandum of agreement	September 2023
MSB Transit Program ready to accept 5307 FTA funds for FY 2024	October 2023

Stormwater Management Program Timeline	
Milestones	Estimated Date
Census Issues Urban Designation	December 2022
DEC send a letter requesting the MSB and Partners to apply for MS4 Permit	June 2023 (rough estimate)
MSB and partners submit application & Stormwater Management Plan (6 months after receiving the letter)	November/December 2023
Draft permits are reviewed by DEC	6-month review process
DEC issues draft permit for review	January 2024 (60-day review)
Permittee review and comment	10 days
Updated permit released for public comment	30-60 days
Final draft permit based on public comment	30 days
Permittee review	5 days
Final permit issued	July 2024
Permit activities & reporting requirements	Annually for 5 years