

By: Rebecca Skjothaug
Introduced: May 4, 2026
Public Hearing: May 18, 2026
Action: **Approved**

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. 26-07**

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVING A VARIANCE TO MSB 17.55.020 FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A DWELLING TO BE PLACED APPROXIMATELY 32 FEET FROM THE SHORELINE OF MIDDLE CASWELL LAKE SUBDIVISION, PLAT #68-10, PALMER RECORDING DISTRICT, STATE OF ALASKA, LOCATED AT 49562 S LURE CIRCLE, TAX ID 6070000L1051.

WHEREAS Paul and Elizabeth Knecht, property owners, have applied for a variance under MSB 17.65 for a parcel located on Middle Caswell Lake, Alaska (Tax ID# **6070000L1051**).; and

WHEREAS, to grant a variance, the Planning Commission must find that each requirement of MSB 17.65.020(A) has been met; and

WHEREAS, the subject lot is part of the Caswell Lakes Subdivision and was initially platted in 1968 before Borough setback and lot size regulations were established; and

WHEREAS, the subject parcel does not conform to the current Borough subdivision standards for lot size; and

WHEREAS, Middle Caswell Lake is located west of the subject parcel. To the north and south is a residential property with a cul-da-sac on the eastern boundary; and

WHEREAS, according to the application material, the subject parcel is approximately 0.39 acres; and

WHEREAS, there is buildable area as indicated on the survey conducted by Richard L. Wentworth on December 20, 2024; and

WHEREAS, Planning staff analyzed 67 parcels with lake frontage on Middle Caswell Lake; and

WHEREAS, Planning staff found the lakefront properties within the analysis are approximately 0.3 acres; and

WHEREAS, after conducting an analysis, the Planning staff found that there are 21 lakefront parcels with dwellings that appear to meet the 75-foot setback criteria, and these dwellings have an average size of 977 square feet; and

WHEREAS, the dwellings that may violate the setback requirements were not included in the average dwelling size calculation; and

WHEREAS, according to the application material, the applicant proposes building a 1,132 two-story structure; and

WHEREAS, according to the Planning staff's analysis, constructing a 1,132-square-foot dwelling is compatible with the surrounding area; and

WHEREAS, according to the application materials, the proposed structure is planned to be 10.9 feet away from the southern property line and 32 feet from Middle Caswell Lake (west), 56.8 feet from the northern proper line, and 53.5 feet from the eastern property line (ROW); and,

WHEREAS, based on the application material, the current land use consists of recreational and family activities; and

WHEREAS, in 2005, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly adopted voluntary best management practices (BMP) for development around waterbodies; and

WHEREAS, based on the application materials, the applicant proposes preserving the natural shoreline and maintaining a buffer of undisturbed vegetation along the shoreline; and

WHEREAS, MSB Chapter 17.65 - Variances, was written to grant relief to property owners whose lots are impacted by existing land use regulations, thereby making the lot undevelopable; and

WHEREAS, Goal (LU-1) of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Comprehensive Plan (2005 Update) states: Protect and enhance the public safety, health, and welfare of Borough residents; and

WHEREAS, Policy LU1-1 of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Comprehensive Plan (2005 Update) states: Provide for consistent,

compatible, effective, and efficient development within the Borough; and

WHEREAS, Goal (LU-2) of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Comprehensive Plan (2005 Update) states: Protect residential neighborhoods and associated property values; and

WHEREAS, the variance request is consistent with the policies and goals of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Comprehensive Plan (2005 Update); and

WHEREAS, the subject parcel is not in a special land use district; and

WHEREAS, residential structures are allowed on this property; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission hereby approves the aforementioned findings of fact and makes the following conclusions of law supporting approval of Planning Commission Resolution 26-07;

1. The 0.3-acre parcel has limited legal buildable area, which is an unusual condition (MSB 17.65.020(A)(1)).
2. The strict application of the provisions of this title would deprive the applicants of rights commonly enjoyed by others, as the application indicates the parcel is currently used for camping and outdoor recreation. The

average size of dwellings within the analysis area is 977 square feet. The property is 0.3 acres of land, and there has limited legal buildable area on the property.. (MSB 17.65.020(A)(2)).

3. Granting a variance will not be injurious to nearby property nor harmful to the public welfare (MSB 17.65.020(A)(3)).

4. The proposed variance is consistent with the applicable comprehensive plans and does meet the intent of MSB 17.65 (MSB 17.65.020(A)(4)).

5. Granting a variance will be no more than is necessary to permit a reasonable use of the property (MSB 17.65.020(A)(5)).

6. The person seeking the variance did not cause the need for the variance (MSB 17.65.030(A)(1)).

7. The variance will not allow a land use in a district in which that use is prohibited, as residential structures are allowed on this site (MSB 17.65.030(A)(2)).

8. The variance is not solely being sought to relieve pecuniary hardship or inconvenience (MSB 17.65.030(A)(3))

9. Denial of the variance request would interfere with the current drive and only access to the lake launch.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission hereby approves the setback variance

to construct a 1,132 two-story dwelling within the parcel located on Middle Caswell Lake, Alaska (Tax ID# **6070000L1051**), as referenced in the application material.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission this 18 day of May 2026.



Richard Allen, Chair

ATTEST



Lacie Olivieri, Planning Clerk

(SEAL)



YES: Fonov, Carpenter, Allen, McCabe

NO: None