

Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission Meeting Minutes



Meeting Date: May 18, 2026

Meeting Time: 6:00 PM

Meeting Location

Assembly Chambers – Dorothy Swanda Jones Building

350 E. Dahlia Avenue

Palmer, Alaska 99645

Planning Commission Members

Chairperson: Richard Allen

Vice-Chair: Doug Glenn

Commissioners:

- Brendan Carpenter
 - Michael Collins
 - Linn McCabe
 - Ivan Fonov
 - Curt Scoggin
-

Meeting Agenda

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, and Determination of Quorum

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission's regular meeting was held on May 18, 2026, at the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly Chambers, 350 E. Dahlia Avenue, Palmer, Alaska. Chair Allen called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Attendance:

(*) Next to a name indicates telephonic participation.

Present: Commissioner McCabe
Commissioner Allen
Commissioner Fonov
Commissioner Carpenter

Absent: Commissioner Collins

Commissioner Glenn
Commissioner Scoggin

Staff Present: Mr. Alex Strawn, Planning and Land Use Director
Mr. Wade Long, Development Services Manager
Ms. Lacie Olivieri, Planning Department Admin
Ms. Natasha Grover, Current Planner
Mr. Alex Lowe, Assistant Borough Attorney
Ms. Erin Ashmore, Assistant Borough Attorney

2. Approval of Agenda

Chair Allen inquired if there were any changes to the agenda.

GENERAL CONSENT: The Agenda was approved without objection.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Fonov.

4. Consent Agenda

A. Meeting Minutes – May 4, 2026

B. Introduction for Public Hearing: Quasi-Judicial Matters

C. Introduction for Public Hearing: Legislative Matters

Chair Allen read the Consent Agenda into the record.

GENERAL CONSENT: The Consent Agenda was approved without objection.

5. Committee Reports *(There were no Committee reports)*

6. Agency/Staff Reports *(There were no Agency/Staff reports)*

7. Land Use Classifications

A. Resolution 26-08 A Resolution Of The Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission Recommending Approval Of An Ordinance Classifying Key Borough-Owned Parcels On The Shore Of The Deshka River As Watershed Lands To Protect Salmon Populations. (MSB008272)
Staff: Emerson Krueger, Resource Manager

Chair Allen read the resolution title into the record.

Mr. Krueger provided a staff report.

Commissioners questioned staff regarding:

Fonov – Public access on the land after it is classified.

McCabe – The effect of the change. Restrictions on land. The testing length of the river.

Carpenter – Clarification about the classification reason.

Chair Allen opened the public hearing.

Jessica Speed, coordinator of the Matsu Basin Salmon Partnership – in favor

Esther Huddleston – opposed

Sue – in favor

There being no one else to be heard, Chair Allen closed the public hearing, and the discussion moved to the Planning Commission.

MOTION: Commissioner McCabe moved to approve Planning Commission Resolution 26-08. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Carpenter.

Discussion ensued.

VOTE: The main motion passed without objection.

8. Audience Participation

There being no persons to be heard, audience participation was closed without objection.

9. Public Hearing: Quasi-Judicial Matters

A. Resolution 26-05

A Conditional Use Permit In Accordance With MSB 17.30 – Conditional Use Permit For Earth Materials Extraction Activities To Extract Approximately 360,000 Cubic Yards Of Gravel Over 10 Years Located at 20254 West Susitna Parkway (Tax ID# 16N04W03A009), Within Township 16 North, Range 4 West, Section 3, Seward Meridian.
Staff: Wade Long, Development Services Manager

Chair Allen read the resolution title into the record.

Chair Allen read the ex parte memo. Asking questions of the commissioners.

Mr. Long gave his staff report.

Commissioners questioned staff regarding:

Allen – Any other infractions or problems at this site. Compliance.

McCabe – Signage leading up to where the trucks exit.

The applicant, Mr. Brian Ficklin, spoke about the application.

Chair Allen opened the public hearing.

There being no one to be heard, Chair Allen closed the public hearing, and the discussion moved to the Planning Commission.

MOTION: Commissioner McCabe moved to approve Planning Commission Resolution 26-05. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Carpenter.

MOTION: Commissioner McCabe moved to amend Condition number 23 as read into the record. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Carpenter.

VOTE: The main motion passed as amended without objection.

- B. Resolution 26-07 A Variance in Accordance With MSB 17.65 – Variances To Construct A Residential Structure Approximately 32 Feet From Middle Caswell Lake Located At 49562 South Lure Circle (Tax ID# 6070000L1051), Within Township 22 North, Range 4 West, Section 14, Seward Meridian.
Staff: Natasha Grover, Current Planner

Chair Allen read the resolution title into the record.

Chair Allen read the ex parte memo. Asking questions of the commissioners.

Ms. Grover gave her staff report.

Commissioners questioned staff regarding:

Fonov – Construction status.

The applicants representative, Mr. David Tucker, spoke about the application.

Commissioners questioned the applicant regarding:

Allen – What construction has already been done.

McCabe – Well and Septic plans.

Allen – Landscaping plans

Chair Allen questioned Ms. Grover about the buildable area on the lot.

Commissioner Fonov questioned Ms. Grover about the data on page 250.

Chair Allen opened the public hearing.

Mr. Swan, the neighbor spoke in favor.

The applicant, Paul Knecht spoke.

David Tucker spoke.

There being no one to be heard, Chair Allen closed the public hearing, and the discussion moved to the Planning Commission.

MOTION: Commissioner McCabe moved to approve Planning Commission Resolution 26-07. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Carpenter.

Discussion ensued.

MOTION: Commissioner Fonov moved to amend the bottom section of the resolution to recommend approval of the variance. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Carpenter.

MOTION: Commissioner Carpenter moved a secondary amendment to edit the whole resolution to reflect the intent of the commission. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCabe.

The Commission took a ten-minute recess.

Alex Strawn read the changes into the record.

VOTE: The main motion passed as amended without objection.

10. Public Hearing: Legislative Matters *(There were no Legislative public hearings)*
11. Correspondence and Information *(There was no Correspondence and information)*
12. Unfinished Business *(There was no unfinished business)*
13. New Business *(There was no new business)*
14. Commission Business
 - A. Upcoming Planning Commission Agenda Items

Chair Allen asked whether Commissioners had any questions about the list of upcoming agenda items in their folders.

15. Director and Commissioner Comments

Alex Strawn: Yeah, this is Alex Strawn, planning director, one more time. So we are in the current plan, as far as current planners go, and that's the planners that process conditional use permits, we are down a couple of planners. When we have one that is on extended leave and the other, we also have a vacant position. And so we are currently hiring for that. So right now, Natasha is the show. Natasha and Wade is stepping up and sort of helping process these as well and we're actually pulling on Mark Wisenhunt, who is a former current planner, and asking him to help out during the situation. So please bear with us while we're short-staffed. We're going to be as responsive to the public and applicants as possible and do what we can with what we have. And then also you'll notice that the agenda has a different look and feel to it. Yeah, this is due to a federal requirement that documents that we produce and are put online are made accessible. It's part of the American with Disabilities Act. And so we have modified this agenda so that if you were to try to use a software program to read it aloud to you, it would be coherent and would make sense. So Lacie spent a lot of time on that. We're still, we fortunately got a one-year extension because it was supposed to come into effect this last month here. We got a one-year extension, fortunately, because we're still working on solutions for making the packet handicap accessible. It's a monumental effort and we're going to need the entire year to figure this out. But we're working towards that is one of several challenges that we are facing, but we are doing it all. Thank you.

Lacie Olivieri: I just wanted to announce that I found out last week I am having a baby girl.

Commissioner Fonov: I do find this more expanded commission process interesting compared to the last meeting that we had. The whole of five minutes last time and then up to two hours this time. So yeah, it's very interesting. I appreciate all the time and effort that every one of the staff puts in making everything easily accessible,

readable, laid out, enough to quickly find and reference, especially like in this specific meeting today. Thank you.

Commissioner Carpenter: I have a thing that I was unsure about bringing it up. There's 2 movements currently going on in South Central Alaska. One of them is called Exit Eagle River. That's not going to happen because they're going to have to change some serious constitutional stuff or do some massaging as it were, like just the way that the state has said to be able to move because they don't want a bunch of small little cities or small little boroughs. They'd rather have, that's why the boroughs are the size they are to fill in the huge landmass that we have. The other one is called Annex Eagle River Now and they're going to be asking the Matsu Borough to annex Eagle River Inn. Some people might be looking at the money and how that would work and There's going to be a lot of questions, but I know that there's \$90 million in bonds that they're setting up to pay for themselves. So they're not asking us to do it. They're going to save roughly a little over \$10 million, roughly \$10 million in payroll because three APD officers in Eagle River is like 18 million or 17 million-ish. and the three officers in Palmer are like 7 and a half million tops. It's below 8. So they're saving that. And I look at it as more like us bringing in like-minded people, allowing them autonomy. So if they wanted to become a city, they could. Currently, they can't because they're already within the confines and borders of a city, because the borders of Anchorage go from Knik River Bridge to just past Girdwood. So the guy who's kind of leading this up, his name is Ken McCarty. And I thought it would be maybe appropriate if he came and did a presentation for us and we send it to the assembly because they're going to have to go. And if I just thought I would put that out there for food for thought of what's coming down the pipe for the Matsu Borough, what they're looking at and what would be coming our way. And I thought it would be something that, as a planning commission, we might be aware of or at least, you know what I mean? I don't want to, I'm not trying to say that it's good or bad. I'm just saying like it, I think it would be, I don't know, I think it'd be nice to see a presentation if it's planning and how that would look and what's going on with it. instead of just having to go to the assembly, if that makes sense.

Commissioner McCabe: Just I'm really glad that it's greening up outside now. The temperature just needs to come up a few degrees and we'll be a little happier. Good to see everybody. Thanks for your work staff, we appreciate you.

Commissioner Allen: I'll just really echo what Commissioner Fanav said. I'm always impressed by the work of the borough staff. And you know, in all of the things that we studied today, the packet had tons of information, was very well prepared, and I think allowed us to do our job in terms of making, you know, independent decisions with the information that we need. So always impressed and always appreciate the work that you folks do. So with that, I don't have anything else to say.

16. Adjournment

The regular meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.



RICHARD ALLEN

Planning Commission Chair

ATTEST:



LACIE OLIVIERI

Planning Commission Clerk

Minutes approved: 6/1/26