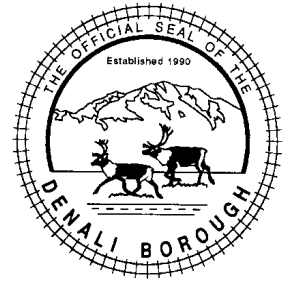


# DENALI BOROUGH

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**Chris Noel, Mayor**

## August 2024 Mayor's Report

### Administrative

- The Riley Fire disrupted our normal meeting schedule, and July meetings of the Assembly and Planning Commission were canceled.
- The FY24 Denali Borough Grants program cycle has ended and the final quarter (April – June) reimbursements have been dispersed to grantees. In total, the borough distributed \$723,969 of the \$764,875 awarded in FY24. The Matching Grant program grantee Denali Preschool and Learning Center will carry their remaining fund balance of \$27,662 for one additional quarter as that program allows a 15-month period for construction projects. Thank you to all grantees for timely and accurate reporting this fiscal year.
- The FY25 grant program cycle began July 1st, 2024, with first quarter reimbursement reports due October 20th.

### Finance

- Preliminary tax revenues from the fourth quarter bring the total tax revenues for FY24 to \$5.78 million. Preliminary overnight accommodation tax revenues for FY24 are \$5.2 million and alcohol tax revenues amounted to \$452,000, surpassing the budgeted revenues by \$0.8 million and \$52,000.
- An engagement letter for audit services with Alliance CPA LLC was signed and work has begun for the FY24 audit.
- Following the borough's FY23 audit recommendation to resume tax audits, the borough selected three operators at random for tax audits to be conducted in late September. Notice of selection for tax audit has been provided to the selected operators.

### Solid Waste

- The rental excavator arrived at the landfill on June 18<sup>th</sup>, and the crew has been busy clearing the ditches along the access road (Sanitation Way) and developing the cover material source on borough land south-east of the landfill footprint. C and R Pipe and Steel brought a bailer down to the landfill, and the excavator was useful in cleaning up and loading out the scrap steel. Stay tuned for a final tally of the amount of material diverted from the landfill through our ongoing scrap metal program. As of this report, an estimated 250,000 pounds of steel was successfully diverted and recycled.
- Following a request from the City of Anderson, I waived tipping fees for up to \$5,000 of waste disposal from derelict lot cleanup. The City continues to work diligently to condemn vacant lots posing a risk to community health and safety.

### Riley Fire Response

- The Riley Fire started at 13:30 PM on Sunday, June 30<sup>th</sup>- just one mile north of the Denali National Park entrance near the Alaska Railroad tracks. The fire was initially attacked by smokejumpers, water scooping aircraft, and our local first responders. In addition to disrupting one of the busiest weeks of the year, the

fire led to an extended power outage of the Nenana Canyon hotels and businesses and led to a partial evacuation and closure of the National Park. Alaska Complex Incident Management Team 2 took over management of the fire on Wednesday July 4, providing a much-needed capacity boost to local agencies. From the onset, the Borough worked to coordinate with cooperating agencies, support the evacuees, and share public information in a timely manner. The Tri-Valley school successfully served as a shelter for between 100-200 evacuees. The character of our community was on full display as local nonprofits and private residents stood up to support the evacuees during the first few days. Eventually, the Red Cross took over management of the shelter and alongside Salvation Army, supported shelter operations until it closed on July 7<sup>th</sup>. On Wednesday July 10, the Park fully reopened and Doyon/Aramark Joint Venture resumed bus tours into the Park. The fire was determined to be human caused and is still under investigation.

I want to extend a huge thank you to borough staff for their efforts in response to the fire. Our community should be very proud of the level of professionalism they displayed, working tirelessly to support sheltering, agency coordination, and public information aspects of the response.

### **Election**

- The Denali Borough Candidate Filing period is open for the 2024 Regular Municipal Election. The filing deadline is September 12 at 4:00 PM.

### **Land Planning and Community Development**

- Land Lease Application for borough land is now available on the Borough website. Applicants are encouraged to review the Land Management Plan (2022) for the parcel of interest, to consider compatibility with identified management intent. Existing leases will be managed following existing terms and conditions.
- We continue to work towards sharing our address database with the Fairbanks Emergency Communications Center, to better equip 911 call takers with the location information they need to dispatch our first responders.

### **Items of Interest**

- Thanks to the Legislature and Governor Dunleavy, included in the FY 2025 capital budget are two big wins for the borough. The City of Anderson will receive \$100,000 towards a vacuum truck, an identified need in response to the winter groundwater infiltration and freeze-up issues. The borough will receive \$180,000 towards a vaulted toilet at Otto Lake park, dramatically improving sanitation for park users. The borough worked with the Lions Club to identify and plan for this exciting addition.
- The City of Anderson also recently learned of a \$2,000,000 award from the Department of Environmental Conservation towards the replacement of the piped sewer system; moving the community back to onsite disposal systems for 62 households. The design phase of the project will last until December 2025, with construction to follow. Construction is expected to take place during 2026 and 2027, completed by December 2027. In the meantime, the project also includes additional funding for the vacuum truck, which should better equip the City to manage groundwater infiltration in the meantime.
- In June, I had an opportunity to drive around Healy with DOT Denali District Superintendent Jason Luddington. We looked at local road issues, discussed DOT's summer maintenance and operations plans, and ongoing challenges. In addition to work on the Denali Highway, our local crews prioritized resurfacing on the worst sections of Otto Lake and Hill top road, filling potholes on Lester, Suntrana, and Coal Street, and producing grit for the winter out of the Carlo Creek DOT pit.
- Last month, I attended the annual Change of Command Ceremony at Clear Space Force Station. Outgoing Commander Lieutenant Colonel Stephanie Flowers transferred command to Lieutenant Colonel John Burton.

- Our neighbor to the north, Mayor Josh Verhagen organized an interior Mayors gathering and I enjoyed getting to meet with City of Fairbanks Mayor David Pruhs and Acting City of North Pole Mayor Chandra Clack. We had time to discuss local issues over lunch, and toured the demolition of the Polaris building in downtown Fairbanks.

Happy August.

- Chris