

# DENALI BOROUGH

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*Clay Walker, Mayor*

## **December 2023 Mayor's Report to the Assembly**

### **73<sup>rd</sup> Annual Alaskan Local Government Conference Dec. 5-8 Dena'ina Center, Anchorage**

- I attended the Alaska Conference of Mayors session on Tuesday when mayors identified shared issues, concerns and areas of focus relating to state and federal policies. In the afternoon session with the State Assessor, appraisal methods, goals, and challenges were discussed.
- On Wednesday, we had addresses from Senators Murkowski and Sullivan, Representative Peltola, heard from the Governor's Chief of Staff Tyson Gallagher, Legislative leaders, and had a welcome from Anchorage Mayor Bronson.
- We heard from Legislative Fiscal Analyst Alexie Painter, who reported the price of oil has averaged above the \$73/barrel which balanced this fiscal year's budget. Excess funds waterfall to two buckets – one for savings and one for a potential additional energy relief payment. The FY25 Percent of Market Value draw from the Earnings Reserve Account (ERA) of the Permanent Investment Fund is set at \$3.66B. Alaska Permanent Fund Corporation Executive Director Devin Mitchell reported that changes to the original structure of the fund relating to the ERA may be necessary to ensure sufficient fund balances.
- On Thursday, I moderated a session on transportation infrastructure financing and presented a session on Alaska's Public Lands, the Department of Interior's Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program, and the National Assn. of Counties' advocacy for public land policy.
- On Friday, I represented the Denali Borough through the AML Business Meeting during which the organization elected its Board of Directors, voted upon a slate of Resolutions, and took "pulse check" votes on pre-filed legislation. Upon my return, I shared a more detailed review of conference sessions, information, and networking with staff and Mayor-Elect Noel.
- The Alaska Municipal League has transformed since I was President in 2016-2017. While the mission of "Strengthening Alaska's Municipalities" remains the same, today AML offers more services and support than ever and partners and contracts with a variety of organizations to help fund the delivery of these services.

### **Copyright Infringement Claim Settlement**

- The copyright infringement claim I reported to the Assembly in my November report has been fully settled. The experience was not pleasant and involved several legal letters and negotiations, but it is resolved. The borough did comply with the complainant's requests to cease and desist use of a purportedly copyrighted image. The borough settled all claims, including injury, with a payment of \$5,500.

### **Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs)**

- The State of Alaska Division of Forestry has provided final approval for the McKinley Village Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the McKinley Village area. McKinley Village Volunteer Fire Department members led this effort. The borough has approved the plan as well and plans to incorporate this plan within the borough-wide CWPP process ahead.

### **Antler Ridge Trailhead Update**

- Phase two of this primarily grant-funded project is underway, as a placed the building atop the double vault. The intention is to have the new facility opened and available this coming summer.

### **Mayoral Cross Training**

- I am pleased to report that Mayor-Elect Chris Noel volunteered his time to come to the borough office for a week of information sharing, training, and readying for the transition. Paid time for the outgoing and incoming mayors to overlap is not afforded by current borough code. This is a potential future weakness which could be addressed through a code change.

### **End of Final Term**

- It has been an honor of a lifetime to serve as the Mayor of the Home Rule Denali Borough for the past 11 years. I believe there is no work better than collaborative work which helps to advance the goals of your own community. I value the personal and professional growth I experienced. I deeply appreciate the borough staff, Assembly members, and Planning Commissioners I've had the pleasure of working with. I am excited about where the Denali Borough is today -- poised with an exceptional staff, committed elected and appointed officials, and the strongest balance sheet ever to not only meet our current obligations but to help advance the development goals of our community.

Happy December, happy Holidays and New Year!

As always, feel free to contact me or staff with any questions...or contact Mayor Chris Noel after December 18th. 😊

- Clay