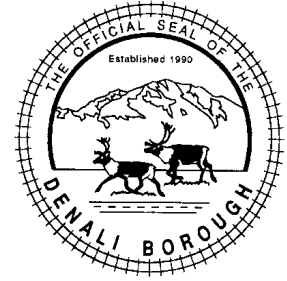


# DENALI BOROUGH

P.O. Box 480 • Healy, Alaska 99743  
Phone: (907) 683-1330 • Fax: (907) 683-1340  
Email: [dbgov@denaliborough.com](mailto:dbgov@denaliborough.com)  
Website: [www.denaliborough.org](http://www.denaliborough.org)



*Chris Noel, Mayor*

## February 2025 Mayor's Report

**This report primarily speaks to non-agenda items, agenda items will be addressed during the Assembly Meeting.**

### Administrative

- Save the Date for Winterfest 2025- **February 21- 23**. As always, this will be a fun-filled and family-friendly weekend. A full schedule of events will be posted to the Denali Borough website.
- Grant kickoff meeting- The nonprofit grant program, including new-this-year road maintenance and improvement opportunities, closes March 1<sup>st</sup>. We plan to hold a kick-off meeting later this spring to discuss grant compliance and share resources.
- For all tax registrations, we now have a year-round and seasonal registration option, and we are working with operators to complete registration for calendar year 2025.
- It is with regret that I accepted the resignation of Land Planner/GIS technician Marsha Lambert, effective May 1. We are diligently working to fill the position and working with Marsha on the transition. We wish Marsha the absolute best.

### Education

- **HB 69** – I provided verbal testimony in support of House Bill 69 to the House Education Committee. This bill would increase the Base Student Allocation by a predictable amount over the next three years, and includes a desired inflation-based adjustment. We will continue advocacy for this robust and necessary increase.

### Solid Waste

- The loader overhaul continues. Due to the hydraulic pump failing, metal shards were distributed throughout the complex hydraulic system, and each component had to be disconnected, flushed, tested, and reinstalled. In the meantime, our rental excavation is fulfilling daily cover needs.

### Emergency Planning

- January 2025 Severe winter storm: The National Weather Service estimates 36 inches of snow fell in Cantwell between January 24<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, leading to highway closures, stranded motorists, a large avalanche, and multiple power outages from both the avalanche and additional equipment failures due to snow loading. The highway was closed for approximately 24 hours while the snow and a front end loader-sized boulder was removed. The borough was in contact with Cantwell residents concerned about the power outage, and remained in contact with the Department of Transportation, and Golden Valley Electric Association. Vitus Gas Station played an important role throughout the event, serving as a hub, road closure point, and keeping vehicles and generators fueled throughout the weekend. When the fuel pumps went down, Vitus quickly dispatched a crew to get them back online. On February 7<sup>th</sup>,

Governor Dunleavy issued a disaster declaration for the Winter Storm. The borough is facilitating ongoing discussion about damage to an Intertie power pole, sustained during the avalanche.

- I took part in a follow-up meeting with GVEA and the National Park Service regarding an electrical service distribution line from McKinley Village to the Denali Park entrance. This project would add redundancy and mitigate the outage risk from a natural hazard such as the 2024 Riley fire, or the 2025 January Severe Winter Storm and Mile Post 219 Parks Highway avalanche. GVEA plans to submit a right of way application to NPS, and I will continue to gather letters of support for this valuable mitigation project.

### **Land Planning**

- Following multiple discussions with the State of Alaska 911 coordinator, Fairbanks North Star Borough, and City of Fairbanks Emergency Communications Center, we have resolution on a missing piece of our address database. Our GIS contractor incorporated this missing piece, completed the database, and returned it to Land Planner Marsha Lambert, allowing her to continue assigning addresses.
- We received a second lease application and are working through our acceptance process. Folks interested in leasing borough land may visit the borough website or stop by the Community Planning office.

### **Other Items of Interest**

- Renaming of the tallest mountain in North America: An unwelcome distraction from the serious and otherwise pressing issues of our country, President Trump signed executive order Titled “Restoring Names that Honor American Greatness,” on January 20<sup>th</sup>. The order directed the Secretary of Interior (Secretary), and each agency head with a sitting member on the Board on Geographic Names, to “review...and consider replacing those appointees.” In addition, it directed the Secretary to change the name of our namesake. Originating from the Koyukon Athabascan word for “the high one,” Denali has been called a variety of names like “the great one” or “the tall one” for thousands of years. To honor this traditional name, and in concert with the State of Alaska, we stand behind maintaining the name Denali, for the tallest peak in North America. Recognizing the process through which we arrived here, Secretarial Order 3337 changed the name from McKinley to Denali, and with an additional Secretarial Action we could see the official name return to Mount McKinley.
- Disruption to federal support- We are tracking impacts from President Trump’s various executive orders. In short; we will stay involved, remain engaged with our partners, and articulate concerns regarding negative local impacts as we hear about them. I remain very concerned about the disruption to our normal seasonal hiring process at Denali National Park, negative impacts on affected employees, and the uncertainty businesses that count on our summer tourism season face.
- 911 Dispatch Coordination- With renewed focus, I have been in contact with our 911 dispatch center, the Fairbanks Emergency Communications Center, Fairbanks North Star Borough, and the Department of Public Safety. We are waiting for a single number assigned by the State, to complete our address database. I anticipate our ability to formally incorporate our data into the dispatch system prior to the summer tourism season.
  - A reminder, residents and business owners may apply for an official street address by visiting the Denali Borough website at <https://www.denaliborough.org/addressing>.
- Golden Valley Electric Association issued notice in mid-January that due to construction on the Intertie and a short-term loss of access to Bradley Lake Hydropower, combined with the ongoing shortage of natural gas from Cook Inlet, means that GVEA has fewer levers to pull, to prevent a power outage.
- I met with Golden Valley Leadership regarding real and pressing concerns about the local housing shortage. They continue to struggle to recruit the workers needed for the Healy Plant, and are facing difficult decisions if they are unable to safely staff the Plant.

- Chris