

DENALI BOROUGH

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Clay Walker, Mayor

January 2022 Mayor's Report to the Denali Borough Assembly

This report speaks primarily to non-agenda items. Agenda items will be discussed in meeting.

Severe Winter Storms and Governor Dunleavy's Declaration of Disaster Emergency

- The relentless storms of late December and early January, which brought deep heavy snow, wind, rain, and ice, took a toll on private and public infrastructure. Power outages occurred throughout the borough, with the longest being McKinley Village without power and communications for 36 hours.
- Neighbors helped neighbors and, while this was a record snow and unusual ice event, we persevered through some of the most challenging conditions. In calls with the State Emergency Operations Center through the disaster emergency period, I stressed the importance to Denali Borough residents of snow clearing on state roads and highways and resilience of the utility infrastructure.
- Governor Dunleavy's declaration of a state of disaster emergency included the Denali Borough. With that, and not requiring a local declaration, the primary damage relief programs of Individual Assistance and Public Assistance are open to Denali Borough residents and organizations. The borough website has a new page with information regarding these programs, which are managed by the state. For more information, or to report storm damage, go to: <https://www.denaliborough.org/winterstorm>.
- The borough did receive a request from an individual to assist with snowplowing and supplies delivery. We have worked with our local charitable organization (Neighbor to Neighbor) on supplies delivery, directed that person to the state's Individual Assistance Program, and offered evacuation. Our mechanisms for providing such assistance are limited and the state has indicated that plowing expenses on a non-maintained road may not be an eligible expense for reimbursement through the Public Assistance Program.

Review of Governor's Proposed Budget

- The Governor's FY 2023 Budget, released on December 15, prioritizes public safety, fully funds the Base Student Allocation for K-12 education, and includes funding for many programs important to municipalities such as Community Assistance (but does re-capitalize to the full amount) and School Bond Debt Reimbursement. One glaring omission is lack of funding for the Major School Maintenance Program. The state is, once again, a non-participant in the primary mechanism of addressing the major maintenance needs of the state's school infrastructure. Meeting the state's constitutional responsibility to the maintenance of its educational system cannot be framed as a reduction in the dispersal of Permanent Fund Dividends, which, absent a sustainable fiscal plan, is the current situation.

Denali Borough Annual Financial Statements Year Ending June 30, 2021

- Thanks to the Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Solid Waste, granting of a requested exemption from the Operational Deficit Test portion of the Local Government Financial Test for Landfill Assurance of Closure and Post Closure Care, the audit of our financial statements is “clean”, with no findings, and an unmodified opinion. As is the required Federal Single Audit, which audited the accounting of federal (CARES) funds. Congratulations to the Denali Borough finance staff for excellent financial reporting.
- Due to steep tax revenue losses, the borough has suffered a contracted fiscal position, which is reflected in year-over-year declines in unrestricted and unassigned fund balances.
- The accounting of CARES funds as revenue positively influences our forward funding figure for the next budget cycle, but does not change the fact that those funds could not be used as “general revenue” and were primarily dispersed throughout the borough communities.

Antler Ridge Trail Easement from DNR

- After review of our application for a non-motorized trail easement across state land up the Mt. Healy ridge from the new Antler Ridge Trailhead Parking Area, the Department of Natural Resources, Northern Region, has provided a Manager’s Decision recommending the issuance of a 25-foot wide, non-motorized, public easement across state land. Additionally, we are currently reviewing the draft easement and entry authorization.

MilePost (MP) 231 Safety Enhancement Project Update

- On January 6th, DOT hosted Public Meeting Project Update detailing the design scope and construction timetable (summer 2022) for this long-planned and needed project. The scope includes:
 - Construction of the new wayside inside Denali National Park.
 - Construction of new turn lanes for the wayside, the MP 231 intersection, and the Old Parks Highway intersection at MP 230.
 - Construction of new pedestrian facility connections under the Nenana River Bridge on both sides.
 - Trail connections and re-routing (Triple Lakes and Oxbow trails).

January 19 Division of Forestry Hosts Spruce Beetle Public Workshop

- A panel of foresters are hosting an informational session with Q and A at 6 pm. Register for the free virtual session at: alaskasprucebeetle.org

January 19 Planning Commission Meeting – Street Naming

- At this 6 pm meeting, the Commission will consider approval of a list of 317 street names throughout the borough. More information is found at: www.denaliborough.org/addressing

Winterfest and Community Service Award

- Mark your calendars for Denali Winterfest February 25-27th. The borough is planning a Saturday evening event including a Community Dinner and Bingo with prizes!
- Nomination period for the Community Service Award will open Thursday January 13.

Joint Work Session with Denali Borough School District Board of Directors Feb. 2

Alaska Municipal League (AML) Legislative Conference. Juneau, February 16-18

Happy New Year! As always, feel free to contact me or staff with any questions. -Clay