

DENALI BOROUGH

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Clay Walker, Mayor

July and August 2022 Mayor's Report to the Denali Borough Assembly

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

Clear Fire

- **Coordination** – The borough worked with four different incident management teams on this long, complex, and impactful fire. Through the period of Type 1 and Type 2 teams, there were generally around 500 personnel working the fire.
 - The teams hosted a number of different Community Meetings, in which the borough participated, to provide up to date information to the public and to hear questions or concerns.
- **Evacuation Levels and Maps** – For more than eight weeks, the borough regularly worked with the Fire Team and the City of Anderson to set the changing levels of evacuation preparedness– from Ready to Set to Go. These maps were published with the daily fire updates.
- **Sheltering** – The borough established shelter locations at both Tri-Valley and Nenana Schools. Not many took advantage of the offerings (actually, just one night stay), but the invitation stood.
- **State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC)** – The borough worked with the SEOC to send out text message evacuation alerts when an area was placed into “GO”. We continue to work with the SEOC regarding the disaster declaration and open programs.
- **Disaster Declaration**
 - On July 21, based upon the impacts of the disaster, I issued a local disaster declaration with three objectives: to ask the State to open the Individual Assistance program, to ask assistance with recovery efforts focusing on debris removal and access restoration, and to open the borough's Disaster Contingency Fund to fund recovery efforts to a maximum of \$20,000.
 - I appreciated Senator Bishop's letter of support to the Governor. Governor Dunleavy did amend a previous Summer Fire 2022 Disaster Declaration to include the Clear Fire. The State's declaration did not open the Individual Assistance Program but did open the Public Assistance Program.
- **Damage Assessment** – Forest Shreeve worked with homeowners and the Fire Team to develop the most complete list of damaged properties possible. One year round residence, 14 different cabins, 20 sheds and outbuildings, plus many pieces of equipment, trailers and building supplies were lost.
- **Suppression Repair Plan** – The borough was a signatory to a plan to repair damage caused by the many fire suppression efforts. We continue to coordinate with residents, the fire team, and DNR, with the goal of leaving the area (private property and public access easements) in the best shape possible.

- **Debris Removal** – The borough has offered assistance with the removal of fire-impacted debris. We placed a dumpster at a road junction for general use as well as one at the site of the full-time residents. Additionally, we have offered residents who sign a liability waiver the service of coming onto properties to remove debris, within the limits of our program. We have contracted that service.

I want to thank the many Fire Service personnel who worked this fire and helped to protect our communities. Let us remember the loss of responder and pilot Alaskan Doug Ritchie and honor his sacrifice. And I want to thank the whole borough team, who worked hard to provide accurate and timely information to the public. This has been a complete team effort.

DOT Projects

- **MP 231 Safety Enhancements**
 - The up-to 20 minute delays at the project site have impacted residents, travelers and businesses. Thankfully, DOT project managers, early on, agreed to offering expedited service to businesses who go through multiple times per day. Thanks to Vanessa at the Chamber for helping to coordinate that provision with the businesses.
- **Healy Spur Road Rehabilitation**
 - Design is being finalized (with the addition of two 6 foot shoulders) and construction may be moving up to 2023, which the borough is supporting.

FY 23 State Budget Final

- In later June, Governor Dunleavy did veto funding included under the Alaska Long Trail for a pedestrian path connecting Carlo Creek to Crabbie’s Crossing. Additionally, Major School Maintenance Funding was reduced significantly, but the Anderson Roof Project was funded.

Solid Waste Updates

- The annual groundwater monitoring event is scheduled to take place this month.
- The State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has informed the borough that new requirements regarding additional testing for methane gas are being implemented.
- We submitted to DEC our application to renew our Operating Permit for our Class 2 Denali Borough Landfill. This is a five-year permit.

GVEA Board Action

- The borough, like many, was frustrated and disappointed by the GVEA Board’s pivot on the pending decision of re-investment in Healy Plant #1. Their decision to make those required investments in Healy #1, but at the same time ask the administration to develop a plan to shut down Healy #2, came as a surprise as that question was not on the meeting agenda.
- Follow-Up Meetings with GVEA Leadership – We had meetings with GVEA CEO Burns regarding the meeting, the decision and next steps. Additionally, we met with the Director of Power Supply. There are a number of issues and concerns with the directed December 31, 2024 proposed shut down date for Healy 2.

Alaska Gasline Development Corporation

- Met with the Project Manager and received an update regarding the status of the Alaska LNG Project. This project, with high gas prices and strong LNG market, has renewed interest. The current structure includes industry leaders operating each of the major project components – the North Slope Gas Treatment Plant, the 800-mile pipeline, and the LNG plant in Nikiski. The project is planning to move into FEED (Final Engineering and Design) next year. The team

confirmed that the location of the Healy Compressor Station could also potentially allow for other uses of that area.

Denali Regional Airport Planning

- The borough has met with DOT and an interested private party, Doyon, Inc., regarding the potential to move forward with an identified transportation goal of a regional airport within the Denali Borough. Planning work to identify a suitable site and finding funding, likely federal, to conduct the necessary studies to locate this facility, is beginning.

Public Lands ARPA funding

- U.S. Treasury is mandated to disperse the payments to counties by Sept. 30 of this year but have yet to arrive at an allocation formula. NACo is leading this engagement and stressing the legislative intent to tie this payment to PILT payments. How this shakes out will be significant for the borough treasury.

Attended the Clear Space Force Station Change of Command Ceremony

Staffing

- With Allison Johnson soon moving to the Treasurer position, we posted the opening of the Administrative Clerk/ Accounts Receivable position. We received interest from a number of excellent applicants. We hired **Nicole Dalton**, who had a range of applicable experience. She is stepping right in and doing a great job. Welcome Nicole when you come to the office.
- Emergency Planner and Project Coordinator, **Forest Shreeve** started on June 20 and the next day the Clear Fire started. He has done an amazing job coordinating with the different teams and carrying out our response.
- **Connie MacMaster**'s last day as Borough Treasurer will be September 4. We thank Connie for all she has done for the borough over the years and wish her and Peter "Many Happy Travels"!

Candidate Packets are now available from Borough Clerk Amber Renshaw for the Borough elections (Assembly and School Board) in November.

Happy August. As always, feel free to contact me or staff with any questions.

- Clay