

DENALI BOROUGH

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Clay Walker, Mayor

November 2021 Mayor's Report to the Denali Borough Assembly

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

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grants Through the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)

- The borough is a partner in a statewide tourism recovery grant application under the Build Back Better Regional Challenge, which was submitted by the Oct. 16 deadline. We expect to hear if this grant application made the first round of cuts nationally in mid-December.
- The borough is considering other grant applications under different ARPA programs – specifically the Economic Adjustment Assistance program and the Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation program. We are working with partner agencies and the EDA in developing our potential applications. For these two programs, applications are due March 15.

Assistance to Net Revenue-Loss Municipalities

- The 2021 State Legislature approved the allocation of \$50 million in State of Alaska ARPA funds to help support municipalities who lost revenue and did not receive equivalent federal aid. Many thanks to our Senator, Senator Click Bishop, for championing this funding, which the Denali Borough and the Alaska Municipal League strongly supported. The state, through their Division of Community and Regional Affairs, has now formulated an application process to implement this program.
- The Denali Borough, based upon our steep revenue losses and scant aid, easily qualifies to participate in this program. We plan to apply and are hopeful that replacement of lost revenue can help support our declining fiscal position.

First Quarter (Q1) Tax Returns

- The end of October marks the due date for the July-September tax remittances. This is the largest quarter of our fiscal year. Returns for Overnight Accommodations taxes showed a 50% increase over 2020, but still 45% below 2019 levels.
- With alcohol and marijuana tax collections beginning Jan.1, 2021, this is the first Q1 of this new revenue source. Returns exceeded estimates.

Meetings of Note since October Assembly meeting:

- October 15 and 16: Denali Borough School District Core Planning Team Strategic Planning Session
 - This Saturday and Sunday meeting of the Core Planning Team, which was made up of about 30 community members including district personnel, resulted in a refreshed framework of the district's Strategic Plan.

- October 21: Denali Borough All Staff Meeting
 - Office staff and solid waste staff convened for this full day meeting. We had a presentation from a State of Alaska benefits program representative who addressed benefit programs and options available to employees. Throughout the afternoon, we reviewed draft changes to the borough's Personnel and Procedure Manual.
- October 27: Met with Tri-Valley Fire Chief Brad Randall and EMS Director Sam Kimmel to discuss potential Summer Medic Program staffing levels and changes to the state's EMS program. We also toured the new ambulance procured through a federal grant and the new/used tender procured through both department and borough (ERA grant program) funds.
- October 28: Met with representatives from Railbelt Mental Health and Addictions to learn more about their service offerings and consider ways in which to partner or include RMHA in health care conversations.
- November 1: National Assn. of Counties Public Lands Steering Committee meeting. Infrastructure Bill was discussed. Senate Bill 3011 passed which directs ARPA funding to the state, who then shall pass along to the boroughs. We were not pleased with that (these appropriations should come to us directly) but understand that it is a byproduct of the issues around the Unorganized Borough – wherein a majority of land in Alaska is in a single unorganized borough administered by the state.
- November 2: Met with Sen. Murkowski's Chief of Staff Kaleb Froehlich to discuss PILT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes), the Small Population Counties PILT Parity Act, and the Infrastructure Bill.

Otto Lake Municipal Land Entitlement Boundary Survey

- The recording of this boundary survey plat enables the borough to next apply for the patent to these 633 acres. The contractor, GPS, produced this survey in a timely manner.

Alaska Liquefied Natural Gas (AKLNG) Project Study Results

- The Alaska Gasline Development Corporation (AGDC) commissioned a Greenhouse Gas Lifecycle Assessment for its' AKLNG Project. The assessment was developed to compare the AKLNG project to other global energy options. It found that exporting Alaskan LNG to Asian markets results in a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to using Chinese coal.
- To see the report, go to: http://agdc.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Greenhouse-Gas-Lifecycle-Assessment_Alaska-LNG-Project.pdf

Annual Local Government Conference

- The Alaska Municipal League is hosting this annual conference in person in Anchorage. I will be attending in person and participating in two board meetings. Portions of the conference will also be available for online viewing, including the session on training for newly elected officials. This valuable training takes place Nov. 9 and 10. It is free to register this year.

Happy November; even through difficult times, we have so much to be thankful for. As always, feel free to contact me or staff with questions.

-Clay