

# DENALI BOROUGH

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*Clay Walker, Mayor*

## **November 2023 Mayor's Report to the Denali Borough Assembly**

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

### **73<sup>rd</sup> Annual Alaskan Local Government Conference Dec. 6-8 Dena'ina Center, Anchorage**

- Mark your calendars for the Annual Local Government Conference hosted by the Alaska Municipal League (AML). The Newly Elected Officials training, provided free online November 29 and in-person at cost on December 4<sup>th</sup>, is always very worthwhile.
- I will be presenting on Public Lands and the National Assn. of Counties' advocacy for public land policy.

### **Claim of Copyright Infringement**

- The borough was surprised to receive a letter from a California attorney representing a Washington state professional photographer with a claim of copyright infringement for a photograph used on the Denali Borough website. We are working with our insurer and our legal counsel to resolve the issue in a timely and economical manner.
- By way of background, the borough has updated our website several times in the past ten years. We currently have ensured that all photos used therein have permissions or licenses. This claim, and the photograph in question, stems from the first update back in 2013, when we solicited the first local photographs from the local public. We received this photograph at that time and used it up to the receipt of the letter.
- We have "ceased and desisted" using this photo and complied with other demands held in the letter. The plaintiff has agreed to a timeline extension while we continue to work with our counsel and insurer to determine if this claim is covered under our insurance. Our insurer has never received a claim of copyright infringement and to date believes that this is not covered under our Participant Memorandum Agreement. The letter demands \$9,500 to settle the claim.

### **School Major Maintenance Projects**

- You have an ordinance for introduction which completes the funding package (part grant funding, part borough funding) for the needed generator replacement at Tri-Valley School (TVS). Another needed project is the replacement of the TVS Siemens control panel which controls and monitors the school's HVAC systems. In discussions with Superintendent Polta, we propose to split the costs of this \$120,000 project, so expect an allocation ordinance at the December meeting for \$60,000 from our Major School Maintenance Reserve Fund.

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

- McKinley Village Volunteer Fire Department has finalized their area's CWPP which has been in the works for a couple years. The borough signed off on the plan and next the Division of Forestry needs to approve for the plan to be fully approved.
- On November 1, Borough Emergency Manager Forest Shreeve and I met with GVEA's team to discuss our mutual interest in addressing the beetle kill spruce and other hazard trees in and near utility lines in the southern part of the borough. While GVEA has been clearing their utility Right-

Of-Way, many dead hazard trees are located outside of that ROW, which in most areas is a total of 30 feet.

- GVEA's idea, which the borough agrees is worth pursuing through a public planning process, is to engage landowners and seek approval for creating "shaded fuel breaks" in the additional area outside the ROW. A vehicle for this process and even approvals can be the upcoming borough-wide Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). If included in an approved plan, it is possible that this type of work could be funded through future wildfire mitigation grants.

### **Subdivision Planning**

- The Denali Borough Planning Commission is hosting a 6 pm public Open House in advance of their regular meeting on Wednesday November 15<sup>th</sup>. Conceptual designs of a potential Lignite area subdivision will be available to view and provide comment upon.

### **Otto Lake Lions Club Park Vaulted Toilet Design**

- In coordination with the Healy Lions Club, the borough has procured engineering plans for the installation of a double concrete vaulted toilet sited at Otto Lake Park. Next, these plans will go to the landowner, the Alaska Railroad, for approval.

### **Antler Ridge Trailhead Update**

- Phase two of this primarily grant-funded project is underway, as a contractor installed the double concrete vaults on the west side of the new trailhead parking lot. The contractor plans to complete the installation by placing the building atop the vault, making the facility available next summer.

### **November 3 Vaccine Clinic**

- The vaccine clinic was a success, with over 70 folks getting immunized for influenza. Thanks to the Division of Public Health for supporting and to the National Park Service for providing personnel. Borough staff and volunteers helped make this a broader community event, with the provision of fire-prevention Chimfex to all attendees, the availability of early voting, and a Community and Outdoor Recreation Committee table with public surveys. Thanks to all who helped and attended.

### **November 7 Denali Borough Election**

- Thanks to all who helped deliver an informed, free, and fair election process borough-wide. Kudos to the Tri-Valley School juniors and seniors who put on the public candidate forums. Thanks to the election judges and election chairs at all four borough polling locations. And thanks to the teamwork of the borough staff led by our election guru, Borough Clerk Amber Renshaw.

Happy November, happy Thanksgiving!

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

- Clay