DENALI BOROUGH

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Chris Noel, Mayor

October 2024 Mayor's Report

Administrative

- Administrative Clerk Salena Mirasole and Finance Clerk Nicole Dalton enrolled in a three-month professional development academy hosted by the National Association of Counties (NACo). The borough once again received a scholarship to offset enrolment costs. Borough and other program alumni have found excellent value in the training received, and we are glad to support our staff on their ongoing professional development journey.
- Tax audits complete- The borough contracted with Alliance CPAs to complete code required tax audits. After selecting operators at random, the auditor worked with two overnight accommodations and one alcohol operator to complete audit requirements. We appreciate the cooperation of our operators in the audit process, concurrent with the end of another summer season.
- Career and Technical Education Meeting- I attended a meeting at the Tri-Valley school regarding the Perkins V career and technical education grant. Principal Gurley walked through the current program and solicited feedback from attendees.
- AML Winter Conference- The Alaska Municipal League Winter Conference is coming, December 9th- 13th. I encourage our elected and appointed officials to consider attending. Stay tuned for the agenda, and please contact Salena if you have any questions.

Solid Waste

- NC machinery was able to diagnose and fix an issue preventing the loader from starting. They found a corroded circuit board which prevented the machine from starting. The 2012 loader has ~12,000 hours and we will need to eventually consider a replacement timeline for this key piece of equipment. After at least three trips to the landfill, NC was able to troubleshoot and repair the equipment. In the meantime, having the excavator on-site proved to be valuable, as we were able to keep up on daily cover requirements by loading the rock truck out of the back cover material development area.
- We completed the sale of the D8 Waste Handler through GovDeals. With a final sales price of $100,000, we didn't receive as much as expected however the machine will stay in state, and hopefully provide many more years of operating life in the private sector. The D6 did not sell during the initial auction, and we subsequently listed and sold it via a live Ritchie Bro's auction in Wasilla, fetching $25,000.
- Community Cleanup update: The City of Anderson removed 312,000 pounds of refuse from a condemned lot, improving the health and safety of the community. At their September meeting, the Assembly waived $23,744 in tipping fees, in addition to the $5,000 I initially waived.

Land Planning and Community Development

- Working with Design Alaska, we took advantage of other imagery work taking place in the borough and collected aerial imagery of the three areas under consideration for a new borough residential subdivision. Additionally, on our behalf, Design Alaska submitted a request for a wetland determination from the US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). This administrative determination helps guide the final lot, road, and utility layout. The determination can be a month's prolonged process.

- Panguingue Lignite- We just learned that a contract with Stantec was fruitful, and they were able to perform a wetland delineation on the northern half of Panguingue Lignite subdivision area. Stantec found no wetlands on the northern half of the parcel, providing needed certainty to move forward with a final design. Stantec prioritized the northern half of the site to focus on a potential Phase 1 of the subdivision development.

Items of Interest

- The Antler Ridge trailhead toilet was cleaned, closed, and locked for the season. By all accounts, this was a successful inaugural year for the borough's first trailhead. Four years ago, this month, the Department of Transportation held an open house to collect feedback on the concept. Field surveys were conducted this year in preparation for the next phase of the project, including an ADA loop to the bluff overlooking Antler Creek, and picnic tables near the parking lot.
- Rural Professional Housing Training- Community Development Director Stephanie Ford and I attended this beneficial training about the Rural Professional Housing Grant Program. Administered by Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, this is a promising opportunity to help construct 1-4 unit housing for healthcare workers, teachers, or first responders including law enforcement and EMS. We'll work with the school district, clinic, and fire department to target this opportunity in future grant cycles. A 15% match is required.
- Parks Highway MP 235 at-grade crossing elimination- We were very pleased to learn that the realignment project was included in the STIP Amendment 1, recently partially accepted by the Federal Highway Administration. Of note, the $64 million dollar project is included, with estimated construction to occur after 2030. The borough will continue to advocate for this project, including the necessary easement exchange between Denali National Park and Alaska Railroad.
- Emergency Manager Forest Shreeve and I met with Lions Club members at the Otto Lake park to discuss the vaulted toilet project. The club continues to work with Golden Valley Electric Association to drop power, and it will be helpful to coordinate the toilet project in conjunction with other identified improvements.
- Denali Area Airport Planning Study- There is a public meeting to present information about the planning process, and collect feedback and input, October 10th at the Tri-Valley Community from 5-7 PM.

Denali Borough School District

- Congratulations to Superintendent Dan Polta, Alaska Superintendent of the Year 2025. Dan has served as Superintendent since 2015 and has been a tireless advocate for Denali students and staff. He is a dedicated partner in administration, regularly attending Denali Borough Assembly meetings to provide updates on the facilities, staffing, and share out bits of the excellent work happening across the district. Dan represents the Interior Region B on the Alaska Superintendents Association Board and is a trusted resource for other rural districts. Go Dan!
- Work continues to get a second basketball goal installed at the Tri-Valley school outdoor court, before winter sets in. This project is the last piece of the improvements started with a resurfacing the borough took on last year.

AMLJIA/APEI Merger

- The borough utilizes the Alaska Municipal League Joint Insurance Association (AMLJIA), a shared risk pool of Alaska municipalities and school districts, for insurance coverage and training. The alternative coverage option, Alaska Public Entity Insurance (APEI), and AMLJIA have been working towards a merger for many years. The combined organization will offer expanded services, keeping the staff of the two organizations, but offering the specialties of each to the entire Alaska public entity pool.

Happy Fall. Feel free to call or email me or staff if you have any questions.

- Chris