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**Minutes of the Regular Meeting
Denali Borough Planning Commission
Denali Borough Office
September 18, 2024**

REGULAR MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING

CALL TO ORDER

Presiding Officer James Ward called the regular meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

ROLL CALL

Planning Commissioners present were: Mark MENKE, James WARD, Steve JONES, Baxter MERCER, and Susan BRAUN.

Mayor Chris Noel was also present.

Planning Commissioners absent were: Zack RUSSELL.

Susan BRAUN MOVED TO EXCUSE THE ABSENT MEMBER. The motion was seconded.

The VOTE TO EXCUSE PASSED by unanimous consent.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Denali Borough resident Paul Shearer encouraged the Planning Commission to consider the State of Alaska, Department of Transportation road construction standards and refer to those standards when needed. Additionally, there was a request to clarify which roads require compliance with the new road construction standards, specifically clarify if the roads in the Kantishna area would require compliance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Baxter MERCER MOVED to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded.

Susan BRAUN MOVED TO AMEND THE AGENDA by removing PC Resolution 24-12: Spruce Top Subdivision Plat from the agenda at the request of the applicant. The motion was seconded.

The VOTE TO AMEND THE AGENDA PASSED by unanimous consent.

The VOTE TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS AMENDED PASSED by unanimous consent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Susan BRAUN MOVED to approve the minutes from the August 21, 2024 Regular Meeting. The motion was seconded.

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2 The VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES PASSED by unanimous consent.

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4 **COMMUNICATION AND APPEARANCE REQUEST**

5 There were no Communication and Appearance requests.

6
7 **REPORTS**

8 **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR REPORT**

9 Community Development Director Stephanie Ford provided the attached written
10 report (SEE ATTACHMENT A).

11
12 **BOROUGH PLANNER**

13 Denali Borough Planner Marsha Lambert reported the following:

- 14 • There will be a Planning Commissioner training offered on October 27th with
- 15 the Planning Conference scheduled for the spring of 2025.
- 16 • The Denali Borough is now ready to accept lease applications for Denali
- 17 Borough lands.
- 18 • Work continues to develop a street sign maintenance and replacement plan.

19
20 **MAYOR**

21 Mayor Chris Noel highlighted information provided in the attached written report
22 (SEE ATTACHMENT B).

23
24 **PLATS AND CONDITIONAL USES**

25 **PC RESOLUTION 24-12: SPRUCE TOP SUBDIVISION PLAT**

26 The applicant withdrew the Spruce Top Subdivision Plat Application and the Planning
27 Commission amended the agenda to remove this item for consideration.

28
29 **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

30 **ROAD CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS**

31 Steve JONES MOVED TO REPLACE DRAFT 1 DENALI BOROUGH CODE 9.11
32 ROAD CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS WITH THE KETCHIKAN GATEWAY
33 BOROUGH ROAD CONSTRUCTION PROCEDURE. The motion was seconded.

34
35 Planning Commissioners recommended the following changes be made to the
36 Ketchikan Gateway Borough (KGB) Road Construction Procedures for the next
37 meeting.

- 38 • Remove all references to KGB specific departments, positions, code, maps
- 39 and to the Ketchikan Gateway Borough in general.
- 40 • Remove all reference to a Special Assessment District.
- 41 • Remove identified KGB area exclusions and replace with relevant exclusions
- 42 in the Denali Borough, similar to the areas excluded from the uniform
- 43 addressing system described in Denali Borough Code 9.14.
- 44 • Replace KGB wetland map with a relevant wetland reference if possible.

- Add a statement that new development projects will be responsible for any road upgrades needed when the new development triggers a road category change.
- Add a statement that requires Category 4 roads to identify a driveway plan.
- Add a definition for “permafrost”.

The VOTE TO REPLACE DRAFT 1 DENALI BOROUGH CODE 9.11 AND INCORPORATE THE RECOMMENDED CHANGES PASSED by unanimous show of hands.

Baxter MERCER MOVED TO POSTPONE ROAD CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS. The motion was seconded.

The VOTE TO POSTPONE PASSED by unanimous consent.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no New Business to consider.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Denali Borough resident Paul Shearer stated the following:

- Encouraged the Commission to clarify which roads require compliance.
- Encouraged the Commission to consider State of Alaska, Department of Transportation standards.
- Encouraged the Commission to reference and credit any drawings, graphs, or other data points used in the road standards document that do not originate in the Denali Borough.
- Encouraged the Commission to keep the centerline alignment as described in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough procedure.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Planning Commissioners thanked the public for their participation and expressed appreciation for the progress being made.

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT TO THE ASSEMBLY

Commissioner WARD offered to provide the Planning Commission report at the Wednesday, October 9, 2024 Denali Borough Assembly meeting at the Denali Borough Office.

TIME AND PLACE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, October 16, 2024 at 6:00pm at the Denali Borough Office.

ADJOURNMENT

Presiding Officer James WARD adjourned the meeting at 8:51 PM and moved the meeting into work session

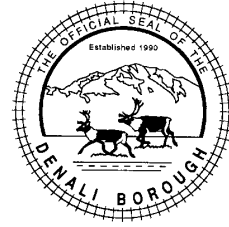
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APPROVED: _____
James WARD, Deputy Presiding Officer

ATTEST: _____
Amber Renshaw, Clerk Date Approved: _____

DENALI BOROUGH

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR UPDATE

September 11, 2024

Land Use

- **Subdivision Draft Concept Designs for Stampede Panguingue and Yanert**
 - Borough staff is conducting an internal review of draft designs with Design Alaska contractors.
- **Antler Ridge Area**
 - Planning to close vaulted toilet on September 16 and open in May when conditions allow. Parking lot will not be plowed over the winter.
 - Next coordination meeting on 10/31 to discuss progress on environmental and historic compliance for Phase 2 (trail construction).
- **Community and Outdoor Recreation Plan**
 - Goal is still to open for public comment from Oct 1-31 with potential of bringing plan before Planning Commission in November and Borough Assembly in December.

Transportation

- **Denali Area Airport Study**
 - Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting on September 24 and public meeting scheduled for the evening of October 8 at the Tri-Valley Community Center in Healy.
- **Separated Pathways**
 - Attending coordination meeting with partners at the DOT&PF and NPS as projects move forward.
- **Railroad Realignment Project**
 - Borough will likely apply for a Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant to realign the railroad and eliminate the at-grade highway crossing at MP 235 and separated crossing at MP237, which if awarded would be administered by DOT&PF. Working with partners to secure needed matching funds and on a strategy to concurrently seek a legislative solution to lands challenges.

Community Development

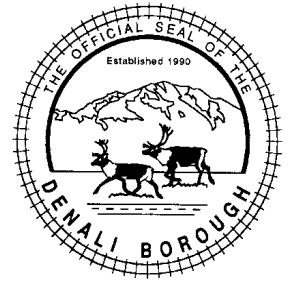
- **Fall Flu Vaccine Clinic**
 - Planning for a November clinic at the Tri-Valley Community Center.
- **Upcoming Grant Applications**
 - Community Change Grant (EPA) – working with Alaska Municipal League and School District on an application with school infrastructure improvements as the “heart” of the application. Now exploring wrapping improvements to the Tri-Valley

- Community Center and McKinley Village Community Center into the grant to create a network of 5 community resilience hubs in the Denali Borough.
- Rural Professional Housing Grant Program – Stephanie and Chris will attend grant training for this program on Sept 12th. Grant application for construction of housing for teachers, health care workers, and public safety officials.
 - Recreation Economy for Rural Communities – exploring whether this grant program is a good fit for the Denali Borough.

Stephanie Ford
Community Development Director

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Chris Noel, Mayor

September 2024 Mayor's Report

Administrative

- In partnership with the Alaska Municipal League, the borough hosted an Asset Management training on August 21st. Representatives from Golden Valley Electric Association (GVEA), the Denali Borough School District, Usibelli Coal Mine, and nonprofit partners learned about the growing field and best practices. The case was clear that proactive asset management saves time and money in the long term. Lessons learned will guide our efforts in managing a new trailhead, and in the future as we take on long term operations and maintenance of separated nonmotorized pathways. Our industry partners have more experience in this field and must balance competing demands for ongoing maintenance with emergent issues.

Solid Waste

- The rental excavator has been hard at work removing overburden from the gravel stockpile area to the southeast of the landfill fence. We are weighing the benefits of keeping the excavator for one additional month to maintain momentum and uncover as much gravel as possible before freeze up.
- The 966 Caterpillar loader developed an issue in early September and was stranded in the field. Landfill staff attempted an emergency repair but were unable to resolve the issue. NC Machinery diagnosed the issue and a faulty circuit board was the culprit. A new part is on order.
- Kudos to the City of Anderson on lot cleanup efforts. The before and after pictures tell a story of much community effort, transforming an eyesore into a new vacant lot that is ready for re-development.

Land Planning and Community Development

- The Denali Area Airport Study is still underway, and Community Development Director Stephanie Ford and I participated in a check-in meeting with representatives from DOT and Doyon. Look out for an additional public meeting in Healy on October 8th. Visit a new Arc GIS Story map at this link <https://arcg.is/1mHmHv0>.
- Senator Murkowski introduced a bill (S.2615) that would amend the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, removing the provision that Village Corporations must convey lands in trust to the State of Alaska, for future Municipal Corporations. This situation applies to the land under which the Cantwell School and Cantwell Transfer Station sit, both currently held in trust for a future city. This could lead to a challenging scenario related to building ownership and site control. We will watch this bill, and look for an opportunity to advocate for the state to retain land (in trust) where there are existing public facilities.

Items of Interest

- Treasurer Allison Johnson and I shared lunch with Superintendent Polta, school district staff, and Acting School Board Chair Dawn Adams. We presented a ceremonial check for the full borough contribution to the district of \$2,775,068.
- Holland America Princess (HAP) Director of Sustainability and Community Relation Bonnie Westlund invited borough staff to an orientation and tour. WE learned more about the critical link Denali plays in

the land-based portion of a cruise package. Around 60% of Denali's visitors start or end their trip on a boat. One way to think about the overnight accommodations in the Nenana Canyon is that on any given summer day, that area is our largest city with over 5000 visitors and employees on site. HAP has been a long-term partner in the Denali Zero Landfill Initiative, and they continue to pioneer waste reduction methods.

- GVEA New ERA Award- Golden Valley Electric Association announced the exciting award of over \$206 million in 0% interest loans through the US Department of Agriculture's Empowering Rural America (New ERA) program. GVEA proposed to construct a new battery storage system, upgrade transmission lines and substations, and refinance Healy Unit 2's remaining debt as part of the grant proposal. If awarded, Healy Unit 2 would be retired and become a stranded asset. GVEA is committed to considering community impacts during award negotiations, and the award is preliminary subject to final negotiations.

- Chris