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The Denali Borough Mayor's Annual Report

April 2, 2015

Happy spring to you and yours. I'd like to take this opportunity to provide an update on a variety of Denali Borough affairs.

If you missed last year's annual report, it is available on our website. Again, I will structure the report in alignment with the borough powers, or responsibilities.

Taxation/Finance

I am pleased to report that the Denali Borough remains in a strong and healthy financial position. On our website under the finance tab you'll find links to monthly financial reports, the annual budget and, new to the site, our annual audit. Also this year, 5 year summary graphs are available under the finance tab.

Visitors to the borough set a record this past year: contributing over \$3 million via the 7 percent overnight accommodations tax. 2015 looks to be another strong year for visitation. Positive local revenue outlook is tempered by declining and/or uncertain Federal and State of Alaska revenues, which accounted for over twenty percent of Fiscal Year 2014 borough revenue.

Education

The borough provided the maximum allowable financial contribution to the Denali Borough School District in FY 2014. We are working through two major capital improvements: the Cantwell Sprinkler and Fire Alarm Upgrade, and the Tri-Valley Energy Upgrade, which will connect the Tri-Valley coal boiler heating system to the elementary wing, thereby saving fuel costs. The borough appreciates our good working relationship with the maintenance team, the school board and the current administration.

Planning and Platting

In 2014, the Department of Natural Resources approved the final conveyance of borough municipal entitlement lands. We now have either title to, or management authority of, over 49,000 acres. We, as a borough community, have our planning work cut out for us. In order to make decisions on potential uses of these public lands, we must first go through a public planning process. Our current real property code is insufficient for our growing needs and our volunteer planning commission has wrestled with finding a productive way forward. It is my hope that this year we will work toward new approaches, reach out to the public, and together plan for our

future needs. Please consider serving on the nine member planning commission or simply participating in the future planning processes.

Solid Waste

This past fiscal year was the most successful ever for the borough's solid waste enterprise. Revenue was up 74% and expenses were down. Even with that, the enterprise still operated at a loss, albeit the smallest ever. The landfill received a Department of Environmental Conservation inspection score of 98%.

Please consider bringing your used motor oil to the landfill where it will help heat our shop building. Household Hazardous Waste, such as oil-based paints, solvents, and corrosives, from *residential* sources are accepted at the Denali Borough Landfill and at Cantwell Transfer Station at no charge when segregated by product and in their original closed container.

If you are in need of a burn barrel, there are a number available at no charge at the landfill located at MP 282.5. Also, remember *dry* vehicles are accepted at the landfill at a charge of just \$25.

Cantwell Transfer Station (CTS) saw a number of improvements this past year, including new receptacles. The Native Village of Cantwell, in partnership with the Denali Borough, is collecting certain recyclables at CTS.

The idea of a transfer station located in the Healy area, which was supported on multiple occasions by the assembly, is being developed. The first steps will be a public survey and the planning process of site location. Again, your input is both appreciated and considered.

General Administration

In response to public concerns, the Denali Borough Assembly formed an Ad-Hoc Committee to investigate transportation and pedestrian safety issues in the Healy area. The committee has been working toward an improvement plan. They are using a survey, both online and paper copy, to gather public input and provide guidance.

Legislative highlights from the past year:

- The Denali Borough Assembly again considered putting a sales tax question on the ballot. The assembly ultimately voted against the ordinance, citing questionable need and issues with dedicating funds to services for which the borough has no powers.
- After seven months of consideration and public input, the Assembly adopted an ordinance establishing legal hours of alcohol sales to be between 8 a.m. and 3 a.m. This ordinance effectively further restricts the State's closing sale time of 5 a.m.
- A new section of borough code was added titled Municipal Assistance Program. The borough has codified methods of providing support for non-profit groups, including volunteer fire departments and community libraries. However, the borough has no mechanism to provide support for public functions such as these provided by an incorporated municipality within the borough. The City of Anderson is currently the sole municipality within the borough.
- The assembly adopted an ordinance, effective May 1, 2015, which allows Denali Borough residents to participate in the State's new Permanent Registration Program for vehicles and trailers over eight years old. Inquire at the Department of Motor Vehicles or see the DMV website for more information.

Join in a well-deserved congratulations to Barb Walters, the recipient of the second annual Mayor's Community Service Award. One nominator wrote "Barb has dedicated herself to the community for the benefit of others and has helped set the course for the development of Healy to be the town it is today". Thanks Barb!

Last June the borough organized a Denali National Park trip for borough employees, assembly members, school board members, planning commissioners, and our State legislators to visit the Kantishna businesses. Here is the group at Camp Denali:



The assembly also toured Usibelli Coal Mine in September and has plans to visit Clear Air Force Station this May. These outreach efforts help local government better understand the issues and challenges facing our major economic sectors. The borough continues to strive to better engage the public. Liking our Facebook page is another way to receive updates and notices. We also plan on revamping our website. For this project, we are soliciting photo donations which represent Denali Borough life.

Finally, a few months ago the Denali Borough lost a dedicated employee, and dear friend – Linda Paganelli. Linda’s quick wit, infectious laugh, and steadfast resolve to improve the borough are deeply missed and will always be remembered.

Please join me in welcoming new staff: Amber Renshaw and Chris Noel in the borough office and Paul VanDyke at the landfill. Many thanks to borough staff for your exceptional efforts. And many thanks to the nearly 27 residents who serve on the assembly, planning commission and school board. The Denali Borough is a Home Rule Borough, functioning well only with ample public input and public service. Please don’t hesitate to contact the borough and engage in the public process of local governance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Clay".

Clay Walker, Mayor