



MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

Office of the Borough Manager

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 13, 2021
TO: Mayor and Assembly
FROM: Michael Brown, Borough Manager
RE: Manager's Weekly Post

Jonesville Public Use Area Plan Update:

- 1) The Jonesville Public Use Area includes 14,614 acres of State- and Borough-owned land located north of Sutton with primary road access from Jonesville Mine Road.
- 2) Increasing levels of public recreation and vandalism prompted the Sutton Community Council (SCC) to engage with the State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and State Legislature to get the area designated as a Public Use Area in 2018 by House Bill 6, codified in Alaska Statute 41.23.280-41.23.289.
- 3) The Jonesville area has become a gathering ground for some who behave in destructive, unsafe, and/or are engaging in illegal activities to the extent many families have reported they will not access the area out of fear for their safety. Significant funds were spent over the last decade in an attempt to encourage safe, family-centered activities. The lack of active management has resulted in the majority of the improvements being decimated or marred by lawless behavior. The result of over 20 years of lawless, unmanaged activities (indiscriminate shooting, spent ammo casings, abandoned burnt vehicles, improvised explosives, human fecal matter, portable outhouses being removed and dumped into Slipper Lake, and syringes along with discarded trash) has destroyed public property and is negatively affecting the local community.
- 4) State legislation creating the Jonesville Public Use Area was adopted without funding, including funding to conduct the planning process, draft a management plan, and actively manage the public use area.
- 5) The SCC was told that if it drafted Jonesville Public Use Area Management Plan (Jonesville plan) largely following the format of the Knik River Public Use Area Management Plan it would accelerate the process for making improvements. Alaska Statute 38.04.065(d) allows for the DNR Commissioner to adopt the plan once it has been adopted by the MSB Assembly. The MSB

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Community Development Department provided staff assistance to SCC to develop and implement the public involvement and planning process required for a Public Use Area Management Plan. This included meetings with SCC and DNR, public planning meetings, public mailings, and an online survey.

- 6) Input from the scoping meeting was combined with the survey results and the year and a half of public planning meetings to develop a draft Jonesville plan. The draft Jonesville plan was sent to DNR and the Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) for review and comment in May 2020. DNR and ADF&G responded in writing with limited comments.
- 7) The Jonesville plan was released for public review for the month of July 2020. Advertised open houses were held in Sutton and Palmer during the public review period to engage with the public and discuss the Jonesville plan. The plan was amended by the committee based on the comments received during the public review period. The Jonesville plan was presented to the MSB Parks, Recreation, and Trails Advisory Board who adopted a resolution recommending Assembly adoption in August 2020. Finally, the Jonesville plan was presented to the MSB Planning Commission who adopted a resolution recommending Assembly adoption in December 2020.
- 8) Assembly adoption of the Jonesville plan into MSB Code 15.24.030 will meet the requirements of Alaska Statute 38.04.065(d) allowing DNR to adopt the plan. DNR staff have indicated additional State review and changes will be necessary before the DNR will adopt the plan. These changes may require the plan to be brought back to the Assembly for a second adoption or update. Upon adoption of the Jonesville plan, MSB can negotiate a management agreement with DNR.
- 9) A priority for the SCC and MSB is to enhance public safety by limiting the location and duration of recreational shooting in the area. Land Management funding of \$1.5 million was reallocated by the Assembly for implementation of the Jonesville plan. The initial, primary development goal is to construct a shooting range, restrooms, and provide trash cans. Additional amenities are contemplated in the plan should funding, such as grant dollars, become available. Annual management costs based on the costs to manage the Jim Creek Recreation Area are estimated to be approximately \$30,000 per year. We also anticipate garnering volunteer support for shooting range maintenance similar to the Maud Road Range.

Shirley Towne Drive Bridge Summary:

The following is a summary of the timeline and decisions associated with the Shirley Towne Drive Bridge project.

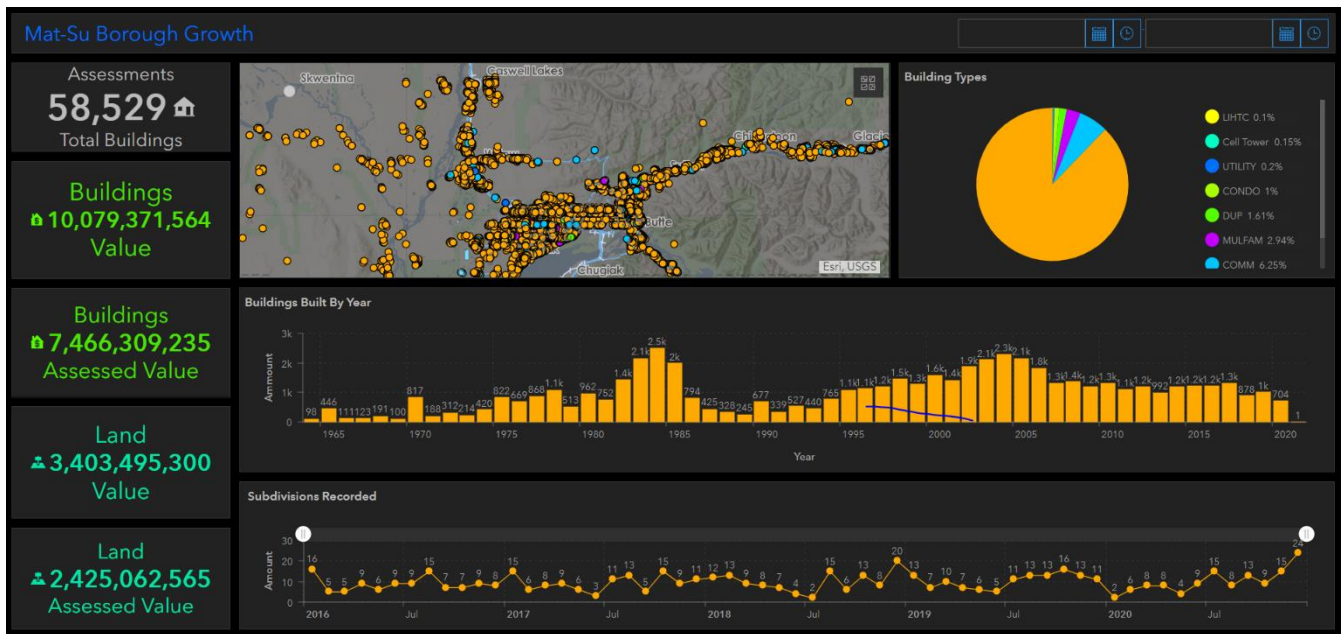
- 1) Fall 2012. The Borough suffered widespread flooding which among other things destroyed one end of the Shirley Towne Bridge. A Federal disaster was declared making damage from this event eligible for FEMA assistance to return facilities to their pre-flood condition. The new Michelle Dr. Bridge over Willow Creek was completed a few months later only a couple of miles downstream from the Shirley Towne Bridge restoring access for residents.

- 2) Summer 2015. The Borough hired DOWL Engineering to inspect the Shirley Towne Bridge, assess the damages in detail, and provide options on replacement, repair, and removal with cost estimates for each option.
- 3) Summer 2016. The Borough continued discussions with FEMA on options for this site. Ultimately, FEMA determined they would allow payment of \$307,000 to repair the approach and drive new pile at the abutment with minor peripheral work. The repair would not address the fact that the new channel has moved north substantially, leaving the new approach protruding into the channel of a swift section of the river.
- 4) Fall 2016. Representatives from Alaska Department of Military and Veteran Affairs, Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (DHS&EM), the State coordinators with FEMA, cited Executive Order 11988 which in part requires “agencies to avoid, to the extent possible, the long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains and to avoid the direct or indirect support of floodplain development whenever there is a practicable alternative.” Because repairing the Shirley Towne Dr. Bridge with FEMA funds would likely violate the Executive Order, the Borough began considering use of an “alternate project” which is a FEMA program designed to allow compliance with this executive order. Part of the alternate project idea is to provide a similar facility, supporting a similar use if the original facility’s repair is not feasible, practical, safe, or would be in violation of EO 1988. Since FEMA was willing to provide \$307,000 but these funds could not be used on the Shirley Towne Bridge, Public Works began looking for an alternate project that would qualify for the funds.
- 5) November 2016. The Borough sent FEMA the request for the alternate project to improve access to the Michelle Drive Bridge. Michelle Dr., Deneki Dr., and all the roads from Willow Fishhook to Kenny Blvd had been in the Borough’s plans for improvement. The Road Service Area had obtained several State legislative grants to support improving access from Willow Fishhook north across Willow Creek to Kenny Blvd. The existing right-of-way and available funding were insufficient to meet project needs. In December 2016, the State agreed with the alternate project request, and sent the request along with their own iteration of the alternate project support to FEMA. In this letter, DHS&EM agreed with the Borough’s analysis and request for the alternate project.
- 6) January 2019. The Borough Manager signed FEMA Project Worksheet 82 approving and accepting the alternate project award. Over the next year, design work was completed, right-of-way was acquired and construction bid documents were prepared.
- 7) December 2019. The Borough declared an emergency disaster due to a winter flood and ice jam that occurred near the Michelle Dr. Bridge during the design of the alternate project. This allowed the opportunity to examine the effects of this type of flood and design the new project to account for them. Had the Shirley Towne Bridge been available, an alternate means of travel would have been available and it is likely no emergency would have been declared.

- 8) Summer 2020. The Borough completed permitting and design. The Assembly adopted Ordinance 20-068, on July 14, 2020, providing funding for the Shirley Town Bridge reconstruction.
- 9) Fall 2020. The project went out to bid with a scheduled completion by fall 2021. Contract award of this project is on the Assembly agenda for January 19, 2021.

Growth in the Borough:

The Borough’s GIS Division continues to develop new ways to visualize growth within the Borough over time. The following link is to an interactive dashboard showing Assessment data going back to 1965 and Platting data going back to 2016. Going forward, the GIS Division will continue to work on new ways to visualize data in a way that is useful to decision-makers and the public.



<https://maps.matsugov.us/portal/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/1435a5c05dec4745b7ea740ca167191a>

Central Mat-Su Fire Department Training Center Campus Buildout:

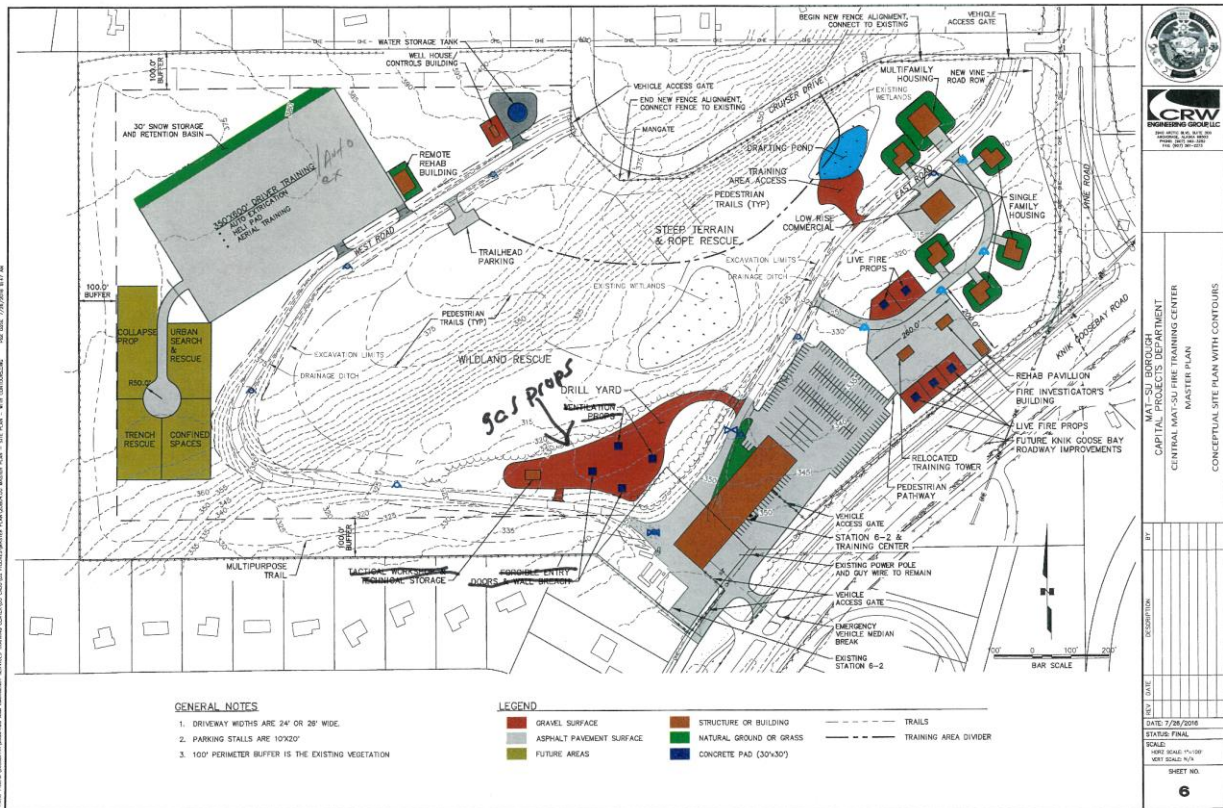
History:

Prior to 2000, a need for a Fire Training Center complex was identified by the Central Mat-Su Fire Department (CMSFD) that would support all of the emergency service training needs for years to come. The facility is needed to host fire, rescue, and EMS, among other training needs. Between the late 1990s and 2010, roughly 79 acres of land was acquired for this purpose along Kink-Goose Bay Road at Vine Road.

A fire training tower was completed in 2001 near the original Fire station 6-2, including an underground water tank to support firefighting. Additional improvements were made between 2001 and 2010 including a pad around the training tower, a pumper service test pit and a fire hydrant. A later phase constructed east and west roads, water mains and additional fire hydrants to begin better developing and utilizing the area.

Between 2010 and 2016, a “Master Plan” was developed for this site and the initial phases were started. There was a significant delay awaiting for the available funds to be approved, which delayed actual implementation and construction of the early phases. A new Fire Station 6-2 was built starting in 2018 and the basic infrastructure for the facility was constructed.

The money currently requested in Ordinance 21-008 on the January 19, 2021 Assembly meeting agenda, is to continue the buildout of the current master plan and will complete the majority of the infrastructure needed to support the remainder of the long term design.



Justifications:

The Fire Station 6-2 Training Complex is needed to support quality emergency service delivery in the Mat Su Borough:

1. As our area and Department grows, we must have the ability to support the training of both full time and on-call responders. As we attempt to bolster responder roster numbers, we must have the ability to adequately train these personnel all year around.

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2. As the scope of emergency services expands, we need to have the ability to train personnel in additional disciplines of emergency response. The fire department does not only respond to “fire” emergencies any longer. We are an all hazards type response agency including Rescue, EMS, and hazardous materials incidents.
3. This training facility enhances responder safety by allowing quality, realistic training. The National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) requires certain training for responders and sets specific parameters to conduct it safely. Meeting these standards enhance safety and reduce potential liability.
4. Realistic training results in lower responder injuries/fatalities and reduced property damage for the community on responses.
5. The new training areas included in this phase better represent the commercial and multi-residential development we are currently experiencing. This will better prepare our personnel for current and projected future growth.
6. The driving course will allow us to train our personnel in a safe environment with limited risk of damage. Driving and operating emergency vehicles safely is a critical component of our operations. Current driver training is conducted on public roads and parking lots. All Mat-Su Responders are trained in accordance with the CEVO (Coaching the Emergency Vehicle Operator) program from the National Safety Council.
7. The facility expansion is necessary to allow simultaneous courses and drills to support training large numbers of responders. This is a more efficient use of time and resources. As our area and call volume grows, so must the number of our responders. This also meets our requirement for joint training.
8. The master plan accounts for adding props that we do not currently have. This will allow us to expand the types of available training that we can provide our responders.
9. This facility is truly a Borough-wide asset. It can and will be utilized by EMS, neighboring FSAs, and law enforcement. It will also be used to host State-wide courses bringing conferences and visitors to the local area.

Summary:

This training facility is an identified need for emergency services and has been in planning for over 20 years. Many steps towards its development have already occurred. The current request is a critical need towards completing the project and enhancing emergency service response in our community.

Vaccination Weekly Update:

- EMS has vaccinated a total of 130 responders, 50 of which of have received both doses.
- Next week we will be completing the second dose for the remaining 80 responders from the first group, and initiating the first dose for an additional 20 responders. That will make a total of 150 responders for DES with the vaccine.
- EMS is in the State system (VacTrAK) as an administering agency, so we are able to order and manage our own vaccines from our allotment. Now that the first couple of rounds have been administered, we expect more responders to request it and will be ordering as needed each week.

- As soon as Phase 1b, Tiers 2-4 open, we will begin vaccinating the Borough law enforcement agencies, including local AST.
- Side effects reported with the first dose were infrequent and in general, mild. Soreness at the injection site, headache and fatigue were the most common. A very small number of people reported fever and/or muscle aches. Symptoms resolved within 48 hours. Of note, as predicted by the literature and in-line with the science behind the mRNA vaccine, the second round of doses produced more and/or stronger side effects. An increased number of people reported flu-like symptoms including low-grade fever. Like the first, most resolved within 24-48 hours and could be relieved with over-the counter medicine.
- For future consideration as vaccines become more available, round #1 did not impact anything operationally, but round #2 is going to be more likely to result in people who may miss a day of work as a result, so strategic scheduling should be considered.
- Locally, we've seen no true anaphylaxis to the vaccine. We've see one case of an actual allergic reaction, everything else has been stress-related. The more people that get vaccinated, the closer we get to the "true" rate of adverse events. 6.68 million doses of the vaccine have been distributed and 3,907 adverse events have been reported to the CDC. The most common symptom is headache, nausea, and pain. 30 people/physicians reported anaphylactic reactions. On Jan 6, 2021, CDC published a report describing 21 of these cases in 1.89 million doses. Of which, 71% occurred within 15 minutes of vaccination. While there are limitations to this data, it confirms what we were already seeing subjectively.
- For the Public Health Points of Distribution (POD) at Raven Hall, we will be shifting a second operational unit to support Palmer, making sure to have an ambulance available to the Fairgrounds as operations allow.
- As an operational forecast, since we know from experience that the second dose elicits a stronger immune response, we may see an increase in call volume 3-4 weeks from now when these 2,500 people get their second dose.

We anticipate delivery of 2,500 vaccines. Appointments will be available on four separate days during the clinic to provide vaccines to Alaskans in Phase 1a and Phase 1b, Tier 1. This includes Alaskans 65 years and above, health care workers, long-term care facility residents and staff, and EMS personnel who meet certain criteria. MSB Emergency Management and EMS will be supporting this effort at the Fairgrounds. The schedule is as follows.

- Tuesday, Jan. 12 – 300 appointments
- Thursday, Jan. 14 – 600 appointments
- Tuesday, Jan. 19 – 800 appointments
- Thursday, Jan. 21 – 800 appointments

This schedule will repeat in February (different dates) for the second round of doses. The POD will open for pre-scheduled appointments only. Walk-in vaccinations will not be available. The vaccine administered will be the Moderna vaccine, which requires a second dose 28 days later. An appointment for the second dose will be scheduled at the time of the first dose. The second dose will also be administered at Raven Hall.

Public Affairs Media Flyover:

Borough Assembly - Assembly discusses school funding and tax cap:

https://www.frontiersman.com/news/assembly-discusses-school-funding-and-tax-cap/article_c04b0428-54bd-11eb-ba1f-d73616f24b6d.html

Central and West Lakes Fire Service Area boards help one another:

https://www.frontiersman.com/news/central-and-west-lakes-fire-service-area-boards-help-one-another/article_ecb62c14-5250-11eb-bb29-13d37180564e.html

Big Lake dust control amendment passes Assembly: https://www.frontiersman.com/news/big-lake-dust-control-amendment-passes-assembly/article_fe2be008-5253-11eb-b62d-db1c181f3392.html

COVID - DHSS, Mat-Su Borough and Mat-Su area community partners announce COVID-19 Vaccine appointments for 65+ and health care workers: https://www.frontiersman.com/news/dhss-mat-su-borough-and-mat-su-area-community-partners-announce-covid-19-vaccine-appointments/article_793ea0a4-5232-11eb-8c13-3b5c46e84b93.html

Mat-SU Borough EMS received second COVID-19 vaccinations:

https://www.frontiersman.com/news/mat-su-borough-ems-receive-second-covid-19-vaccine-doses-this-week/article_e0f30942-50ca-11eb-8eda-7bb118121e95.html

Big Cabbage Radio: On January's "Inside the Borough," Emergency Manager, Casey Cook talked about the latest phase of vaccinations. Listen here: <https://www.radiofreepalmer.org/2021/01/12/inside-the-borough-emergency-manager-casey-cook-2021-1-12/>

Fisheries - Mat-Su Borough Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Howard Delo writes in his monthly message about wetlands mitigation and recent Assembly actions:

https://www.frontiersman.com/sports/outdoors/i-applaud-the-borough-mayor-for-his-action-regarding-the-wetlands-management-policy/article_d5acd8bc-50be-11eb-b7f0-13ea805c2589.html

Losing Salmon - Craig Medred addresses the mystery of vanishing salmon: Are hatchery Pink Salmon effecting the ecosystem and hurting the other species of Salmon:

<https://craigmedred.news/2021/01/07/losing-salmon/>

Capital Projects

Shirley Towne Bridge reconstruction postponed: https://www.frontiersman.com/news/shirley-towne-bridge-reconstruction-postponed/article_78d6b15c-50c9-11eb-9e23-dbe24cb642f2.html

Economy

Alaska's Population drops overall, Mat-Su defies trends and grows: <https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/2021/01/07/alaskas-population-drops-for-the-4th-year-in-a-row-extending-record-losses/>

CARES Act Funding Summary: More information is available at <https://msbcares.matsugov.us/>. See the attached infographics for the details. This will be updated as grants are finalized.

MAT-SU BOROUGH CARES ACT FUNDING



EDUCATION LOAN CONTRIBUTION

\$4,957,149



UTILITY ASSISTANCE

\$535,778



**COVID RELATED
1ST RESPONDER & OTHER
WAGES AND BENEFITS**

\$7,399,986



**CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE GRANTS**

\$141,000



**FOOD COALITION
GRANTS**

\$1,899,390



**COVID RELATED
SOCIAL DISTANCING, IT &
PPE RELATED PURCHASES**

\$4,493,759



**DIRECT GRANTS TO
NONPROFITS**

\$3,057,957



**SMALL BUSINESS &
NONPROFIT GRANT**

\$10,530,356

DIRECT GRANTS TO NONPROFITS

MSCVB	\$ 1,500,000	Su-Valley PTA	\$ 3,000
Big Lake Lions	\$ 40,000	Trapper Creek Community Council	\$ 500
Iditarod	\$ 297,000	Trapper Creek Community Services	\$ 13,000
AK State Fair	\$ 515,000	Mat-Su Miners	\$ 5,000
Musk Ox Farm	\$ 65,000	United Way	\$ 30,000
Meadow Lakes Community	\$ 4,091	Mat-Su Health Foundation	\$ 577,366
Willow PTA	\$ 8,000		

\$3,057,957

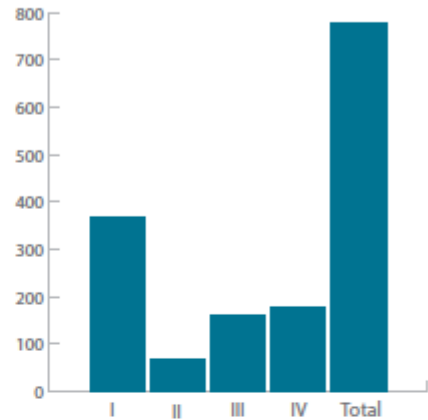
SMALL BUSINESS & NONPROFIT GRANT

The MSB CARES Small Business & Nonprofit Grant Program launched on August 10th with \$13 million in funds to support eligible small businesses in the Mat-Su Borough

The program conducted 4 phases of application periods for local businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The grant program was modified by Assembly members on September 15th. Changes included an increase to the maximum grant award from \$10,000 to \$25,000, and revision of grant restrictions to enhance business eligibility. A total of 776 businesses applied for a grant.

APPLICATIONS PER PHASE



TOTAL GRANT FUNDS DISTRIBUTED

\$10,530,356

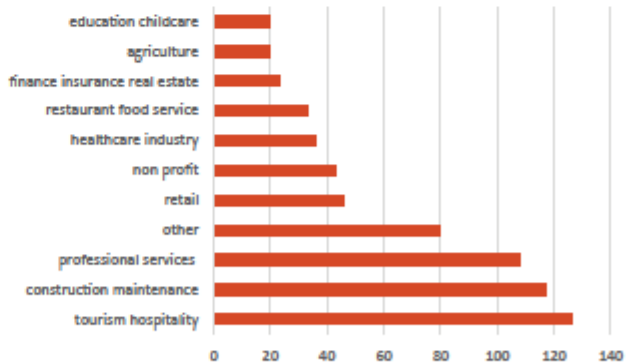
652 BUSINESSES WERE APPROVED FOR A GRANT

GRANTS BY REGION

AREA	GRANTS	AWARD
Wasilla *	346	\$ 5,814,391
Palmer *	155	2,323,450
Talkeetna	92	1,530,352
Willow	33	508,326
Sutton	12	145,169
Trapper Creek	9	113,892
Houston *	2	50,000
Cantwell	1	25,000
Skwentna	2	19,776
Total	652	\$ 10,530,356

* Areas outside City limits

GRANTEE'S MAIN LINE OF BUSINESS



TO VIEW THE GRANT DISTRIBUTION DASHBOARD PLEASE VISIT

msbcares.matsugov.us

As of January 7, 2021

Topics under Manager Comments at January 19 Assembly Meeting:

State Redistricting Update presentation by Bill Stoltze.

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