



MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 4, 2023
TO: Mayor and Assembly
FROM: Michael Brown, Borough Manager
RE: Manager's Weekly Post

Borough Police Powers: The following summary of the Police Powers Task Force is provided as a refresher of the work conducted in 2018-2019 at the direction of the Assembly. At the request of a current Assembly member, the Borough Attorney will be providing an overview of the process for creating a service area at the January 17, 2023 Assembly meeting. This information is simply to refresh previous discussions around police services in advance of the Attorney's presentation.

Background

During 2018, three public safety related actions took place:

1. Citizen Working Group Meetings in Palmer, Wasilla and Willow; citizens concluded that the top three problems in the Borough were drugs, theft, and recidivism.
2. A formal survey of Borough residents showed that 96.2% consider crime very serious, or somewhat serious, in the Borough and 52.7% believed the Borough should look at acquiring police powers.
3. Proposition No. B-1 was put before the voters asking "Should the Matanuska-Susitna Borough investigate and consider steps to develop a proposal to voters that adds police powers to its responsibilities?" The voters approved that proposition with 59.67% of the vote.

Creation of a Police Powers Task Force

As a result of the previous actions noted above, the Borough Assembly created a Police Powers Task Force on March 5, 2019, via MSB Ordinance 19-030. The purpose and direction from the Assembly was as follows: "The Police Powers Task Force will investigate and consider steps to develop from one to three prioritized, fiscally reasonable, and possible proposals for the purpose of sending them to the Assembly for consideration. The Assembly will consider whether to present one or more of these proposals to the voters on the next regular ballot for the purposes of adding specific police powers to the Borough's responsibilities."

Recommendations (note: funding calculations are from 2019)

The Police Powers Task Force met from March through November of 2019 and presented their recommendations to the Assembly in December of 2019. The first question answered by the Task Force was *why* we should have police powers in the Borough. Based on the three actions taken by the Borough in 2018, the Task Force determined the following: people don't feel safe in their homes and in the Borough, they don't feel our police response is adequate, they want criminal activity stopped or reduced, and they want some Borough authority in fighting crime. The Task Force then developed three options of a police force for the Borough. The third option was a fully manned Borough Police Force of 110 officers, but the cost at \$27.5M was prohibitive, so they eliminated that option and only recommended the following two options in priority order:

PRIORITY #1: Create a Dedicated Drug and Property Crimes Police Task Force in the non-areawide part of the Borough

- 20 Police Officers – Approximate cost \$7 Million (Without facility)
 - Option a: Contract to Wasilla Police Department (WPD), Palmer Police Department (PPD), and Alaska State Troopers (AST) to each provide Officers
 - Option b: If no contract, create a Borough dedicated Police Task Force
- Focus on property crimes and drug crimes (not exclusive)
- Leave other crimes primarily to AST, WPD, and PPD
- Non-Areawide Funding Sources: Sales Tax, Property Tax Increase
- Estimated Cost: 1st year \$7.1M, then \$5.5M (without facility)
- Property Tax Increase Estimates - With Houston Included:
Cost per \$100,000 of Property Value: 1st Year \$86.00, then \$68.00
- Property Tax Increase Estimates - Without Houston:
Cost per \$100,000 of Property Value: 1st Year \$90.00, then \$71.00

PRIORITY #2: Create a Police Service Area (PSA) in the Core-Area (Plus) Part of the Borough

- 55 Police Officers
- Includes Houston, but Not Wasilla or Palmer
 - Option a: Contract to Wasilla PD or Palmer PD
 - Option b: Separate PSA reporting to MSB
- AST would cover the area outside the PSA
- Funding Sources: PSA Sales Tax or PSA-Only Property Tax Increase
- Estimated Cost: 1st year \$18.1M, then \$14.1 (without facility)
- Property Tax Increase Estimates - With Houston:
Cost per \$100,000 of Property Value: 1st Year \$314, then \$245
- Property Tax Increase Estimates - Without Houston:
Cost per \$100,000 of Property Value: 1st Year \$322, then \$251

The final Police Powers Task Force recommendations were presented to the Assembly on December 17, 2019. The Assembly did not take action on the recommendations.

The final 2019 Police Powers Task Force Report is available here:

<https://matsugov.us/docs/general/20981/police-powers-task-force-report-12-17-19.pdf>

Public Affairs Media Flyover:

Safety

- [Enstar urges Southcentral Alaskans to clear off natural gas meters](#)
ADN
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Alaska News Source

Windstorm

- [Windstorms bookend the start and end of 2022](#)
Frontiersman
- [Mat-Su resident says Borough contractors buried his property while clearing snow](#)
Alaska News Source

Federal Government

- [Murkowski brings home the bacon, including for Mat-Su](#)
Frontiersman

Fisheries

- [Cook Inlet Fisheries: Counsel has months to fix Salmon Management Plan](#)
Alaska Journal of Commerce
- [Windstorm. Created challenges for ice fishing in Mat-Su](#)
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- [Environmental groups sue to stop oil/gas lease sale in Cook Inlet](#)
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