

# MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH AGRICULTURE ADVISORY BOARD

<b>Chairman</b> – LaMarr Anderson (01)	Melanie Glatt (03)	VACANT (06)	Kenneth Hoffman (10)
<b>Vice Chair</b> – Stephen Brown (08)	Alexandria Hoffman (04)	Adam Janski (07)	Thomas Bergey (11)
Amanda Salmon (02)	Jozef Slowik (05)	Misty O'Connor (09)	VACANT (12)

## AGENDA

**REGULAR MEETING**  
**DSJ Building / Assembly Chambers (Back Half)**

**November 20, 2024**  
**4:30 P.M.**

**Call In #: 1-907-290-7880**

**Participant Code: 577 726 776#**

- I. CALL TO ORDER; ROLL CALL
- II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA; PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
- III. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (Limit 3 minutes)
- IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: October 16, 2024
- V. ITEMS OF BUSINESS
  - A. Staff Report – Suzanne Reilly
  - B. 2025 Board Schedule
  - C. Resolution No 24-03: A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH (BOROUGH) AGRICULTURE ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDING THE BOROUGH ASSEMBLY ADOPT ORDINANCE SERIAL NO. 24-115 WHERE THE BOROUGH HOLDS DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS; SUBDIVIDING TWO AGRICULTURAL PARCELS (320 ACRES) INTO THREE; REVISING THE ORIGINAL FARM PLAN AND ADDING A NEW FARM PLAN; CONSTRUCTING A TEMPORARY STRUCTURE ON THE PRIMARY HOME SITE AND A NEW RESIDENCE ON ONE OF THE NEW 40-ACRE PARCELS (MSB008116).
  - D. Work Session:  
Investigate the feasibility of smaller parcels and more subdivisions and develop a recommendation to the Assembly while ensuring de minimis loss of agricultural land.
- VI. MEMBER COMMENTS (Limit to 3 minutes)
- VII. NEXT MEETING: December 18, 2024
- VIII. ADJOURNMENT

1 **MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH**  
2 **AGRICULTURE ADVISORY BOARD**  
3

<b>Chairman</b> – LaMarr Anderson (01)	Melanie Glatt (03)	VACANT (06)	Kenneth Hoffman (10)
<b>Vice Chair</b> – Stephen Brown (08)	Alexandria Hoffman (04)	Adam Jensi (07)	Thomas Bergey (11)
Amanda Salmon (02)	Jozef Slowik (05)	Misty O’Connor (09)	VACANT (12)

4  
5  
6 **MINUTES** - DRAFT -  
7

8 **REGULAR MEETING**

**October 16, 2024**

9 **DSJ BUILDING**

**4:30 P.M.**

10 **LOWER LEVEL CONFERENCE ROOM**  
11  
12

13 I. **CALL TO ORDER; ROLL CALL**

14 Mr. Anderson called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m.

15 Members present and establishing a quorum were: LaMarr Anderson, Melanie Glatt (by  
16 phone), Alexandria Hoffman (arrived 4:39 p.m., left 5:52 p.m.), Jozef Slowik, Adam  
17 Jensi (left 5:15 p.m.), Misti O’Connor, Kenneth Hoffman (arrived 4:39 p.m.), and  
18 Thomas Bergey (left 5:49 p.m.).

19 Members absent and excused: Stephen Brown, Amanda Salmon

20 Staff present: Suzanne Reilly/Asset Manager, Joseph Metzger/Land Management  
21 Division Manager, Margie Cobb/Department Administrative Specialist  
22

23 II. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA; PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

24 Agenda approved as presented.  
25

26 III. **AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (Limit 3 minutes)**

27 Benjamin Raevsky: Spoke regarding pros/cons of subdivision of agricultural, suggesting  
28 the Board set stringent requirements for smaller lots.  
29

30 IV. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

31 Mr. Bergey moved to approve the September 18, 2024 Minutes; seconded by Mr. Jensi.  
32 minutes were approved as presented.  
33

34 V. **ITEMS OF BUSINESS**  
35

36 A. **Staff Report – Suzanne Reilly**

- 37 - Public notice has been mailed to the Board for property subdivision; this will be  
38 presented to the Board next meeting for action.  
39

40 Questions asked by Board to Staff:

- 41 - Mr. Slowik: With the approval of State passing tax relief, does this Board need  
42 to bring this to Assembly to adopt? Mr. Metzger will ask Borough Attorney and  
43 get answer to Board at the next meeting.  
44 - Mr. Jensi: Question regarding Engstrom North Bypass project that will be  
45 running through an agriculture parcel. Mr. Metzger: Since this property is not

46 part of the Borough Agricultural program, there is technically not anything this  
47 Board can officially do.  
48 - Ms. O'Connor: Reported on outreach for vacancies on the Board. Discussion  
49 on this effort followed.

50  
51 B. Work Session

52 Investigate the feasibility of smaller parcels and more subdivisions and develop a  
53 recommendation to the Assembly while ensuring de minimis loss of agricultural  
54 land.

55  
56 Mr. Anderson noted that he invited Fred Wagner, Borough Platting Officer, to  
57 join today's meeting to share Borough Code requirements.

58  
59 At 4:58 p.m. motion was made to go into Committee As A Whole by Mr. Bergey,  
60 seconded by Mr. Hoffman. At 5:50 p.m. motion was made to come out of  
61 Committee As a Whole by Mr. Hoffman, seconded by Ms. O'Connor.

62  
63 VI. MEMBER COMMENTS (Limit to 3 minutes)

- 64 - Ms. O'Connor: Took a lot of notes from discussion; appreciated comments made by  
65 others. Would like to see the Board stay open with all possibilities on definition of  
66 what a farm is.  
67 - Mr. Hoffman: From a production standpoint 5 acres could work, but realistically 10  
68 acres for government efficiency and less rules, keeps it simple.  
69 - Ms. Glatt: Flexibility needed. We need to be smart how lands are broken down.  
70 - Mr. Anderson: Definitely need to continue discussion for smaller acres. Contact  
71 Mr. Wagner if you have questions regarding subdividing. A reminder to Board  
72 members that attendance at these meetings is important as this discussion continues;  
73 the Board cannot go backward once decisions are made.

74  
75 VII. NEXT MEETING: November 20, 2024 – Assembly Chambers/Back Half

76  
77 VIII. ADJOURNMENT

78 Mr. Anderson adjourned the meeting at 6:02 p.m.

79  
80  
81  
82  
83  
84  
85  
86  
87  
88

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
LaMarr Anderson, Chairman      DATE

89 \_\_\_\_\_  
90 Margie Cobb  
Department Administrative Specialist



**Agriculture Advisory Board  
Meeting Schedule  
2025**

**Lower Level Conference Room  
Dorothy Swanda Jones Administration Building  
4:30 – 6:30 p.m.**

**All meetings will be on a need to meet basis. If it is decided that the Board needs to meet the meeting date will be as follows:**

<b>2025 Monthly Meeting Schedule</b>	
<b>Agenda Cut-off</b>	<b>Meeting Date</b>
January 2, 2025	January 15, 2025
February 5, 2025	February 19, 2025
March 5, 2025	March 19, 2025
April 2, 2025	April 16, 2025
May 7, 2025	May 21, 2025
<i>No Meetings - June, July, August</i>	
September 3, 2025	September 17, 2025
October 1, 2025	October 15, 2025
November 5, 2025	November 19, 2025
December 3, 2025	December 17, 2025

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH  
AGRICULTURE ADVISORY BOARD  
RESOLUTION NO. 24-03**

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH (BOROUGH) AGRICULTURE ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDING THE BOROUGH ASSEMBLY ADOPT ORDINANCE SERIAL NO. 24-115 WHERE THE BOROUGH HOLDS DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS; SUBDIVIDING TWO AGRICULTURAL PARCELS (320 ACRES) INTO THREE; REVISING THE ORIGINAL FARM PLAN AND ADDING A NEW FARM PLAN; CONSTRUCTING A TEMPORARY STRUCTURE ON THE PRIMARY HOME SITE AND A NEW RESIDENCE ON ONE OF THE NEW 40-ACRE PARCELS (MSB008116).

---

WHEREAS, the Borough Agriculture Advisory Board was enacted by Matanuska-Susitna Borough Ordinance 15-050 to review issues specifically related to and affecting Borough agriculture lands, and advise the Assembly and Manager on such matters; and

WHEREAS, the Borough holds development rights in deeds for the 1977, 1981, 1982, and 1983 agricultural land sales programs and the subject property was originally sold in 1977; and

WHEREAS, 1977 agricultural covenants require Borough approval to re-plat or add structures; and

WHEREAS, agricultural covenants under former Title 13 from 1977, 1981, 1982, and 1983 allow the creation of new parcels no less than 40 acres; and

WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Land and Resource Management Division received applications from Paul & Margaret Cook and Ben Raevsky to modify the farm property lines to create a new parcel (for a total of three parcels, two 40 acres and one 240 acres) in the land estate of Tax ID's 18N01E04A002 and 18N01E04B001; and

WHEREAS, the application includes a request to allow a temporary structure (a yurt) to be constructed on the main 5-acre homesite to house family members who will work the farm; and

WHEREAS, the application also includes a request to allow a new residence to be constructed on the new 40-acre parcel which will be occupied by additional family members who work the farm;

WHEREAS, updated farm plans are required by covenants and have been submitted by both Paul Cook for the main farm parcel and Ben Raevsky for the new 40-acre parcel;

WHEREAS, both farm plans have been reviewed and comply with the requirements of the agricultural covenants, and providing accommodations for additional workers will enhance the productivity and development of the family farm;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Agriculture Advisory Board recommends the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly hereby adopt Ordinance Serial No. 24-XXX, to accept the new farm plans, re-plat, and construction of new residences for farm workers and family members.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Agricultural Advisory Board this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2024.

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Margie Cobb,  
Department Admin Specialist

\_\_\_\_\_  
LaMarr Anderson, Chairman

# Matanuska-Susitna Borough



## MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 20, 2024 meeting

TO: Agriculture Advisory Board Members

THROUGH: Joe Metzger, Land Management Division Manager

FROM: Suzanne Reilly, Asset Manager

RE: AN ORDINANCE OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH ASSEMBLY APPROVING A REQUEST FROM AGRICULTURAL RIGHTS OWNERS, PAUL AND MARGARET COOK, AND BEN RAEVSKY, TO SUBDIVIDE A 320-ACRE FARM CONTAINING TWO PARCELS, INTO THREE (TWO 40± ACRE PARCELS AND ONE 240± ACRE PARCEL); TO CONSTRUCT ONE PERMANENT AND ONE TEMPORARY RESIDENCE FOR THE FARM FAMILIES; AND APPROVE AN UPDATED FARM PLAN WITH AN ADDITIONAL SUBUNIT FARM PLAN (MSB008116).

---

The applicants, Paul & Margaret Cook and Ben Raevsky have applied to subdivide their agricultural land interest (tax IDs 18N01E04A002 and 18N01E04B001) from two parcels into three, none being less than 40 acres. They also request to build a temporary residence (a yurt) on the primary home site and a new home on one of the new 40-acre parcels with the intent . Updated farm plans have been submitted for both the primary farm parcels and the newly created 40-acre parcel. The Borough, which holds the development rights, must approve any significant changes to the farm plan, including new structures. These requests are allowable under the land covenants, conditions, and restrictions detailed in the agricultural program, as specified under Title 13 and in the LRMD Policy and Procedures manual.

**Property History:** The subject property, originally 360 acres, was purchased at the 1977 Borough Agricultural Sale conducted under former Title 13. Under this title, the Borough conveyed “agricultural rights” to the buyer while retaining (by not conveying) “development rights”. MSB 13.30.120(H) defines the agricultural rights as “All rights except mineral rights and development rights. Development rights are the rights to subdivide or use the surface of the land for residential, commercial, or industrial uses that are not part of the farming enterprise conducted on the land.” This was done to prevent unnecessary subdivision and protect and preserve the

lands for agriculture, rather than as rights reserved for the borough to develop the property for commercial or industrial uses.

Title 13 also allowed the Assembly to establish other conditions of sale designed to promote the agricultural use and development of the lands. The parcels in the 1977 agricultural program were sold as single economic units for farming purposes and required that a farm plan for the entire unit be approved. While the parcels are separate taxable units of record, the adherence to the combined approved farm plan and restrictions (even on further conveyance) require the borough to review and approve changes and separation of the economic unit.

The timeframe for development in the 1977 program was set out in the approved farm plan. The original program brochure stated that applications had to contain “a realistic and balanced progressive development schedule showing substantial completion at the end of 10 years.” Except for the requirement in the deed that adherence to the farm plan was mandatory (but could be amended) no required completion date was stated. Based on 2024 imagery, the subject farm has achieved the substantial completion of development required by Borough code.

**Current and Expanded Uses:** The farm currently focuses on elk production, which includes breeding, raising, hunting, and selling elk for meat and other products. Approximately 72.12 acres of the farm are developed pastures, 34± acres are in hay production, and 189± acres of forest are used for browsing, to sustain a herd of 85, up from 59 in recent years. This past summer the family also raised 400 chickens and 100 turkeys for meat and egg laying and grew vegetables for sale at local farmers’ markets. Further maintenance and development of the current operation includes maintenance of seven miles of fence, leveling uneven pastures, reworking neglected pasture biology, and overall modernization of the ranch. The proposed expansion includes development of a horse boarding and training operation which is in short supply in the area. With the help of their son (the ranch manager), and their son-in-law (company partner), the Cooks will be better able to maintain and diversify the farm’s output to enhance its sustainability.

**Impact on Agricultural Lands:** If approved, the loss of agricultural lands will be de minimis. The selected placement of the yurt is on the current homesite, close to ranch activities, but not an area currently used by the herd. The homesite proposed for the 40-acre parcel (Parcel A) was selected in a strategic location outside of currently utilized grazing lands to ensure the land’s agricultural productivity is not compromised in any way. The proposed changes are likely to

improve agricultural practices and production on the farm, ensuring its long-term viability and productivity.

**Preservation of Family Tradition:** With this request the family is committed to perpetuating a rich tradition of family farming. By creating a conducive environment for multiple generations to live and work together on the ranch, the applicants wish to establish a legacy of agricultural excellence and familial continuity through a seamless transition of knowledge and expertise from one generation to the next.

**Long Term Vision:** The family foresees the ranch serving as “a beacon of agricultural innovation and sustainability in Alaska.” Through diligent stewardship and strategic planning, they aspire to maximize the potential of the land by increased productivity and diversified revenue streams while safeguarding its natural resources for future generations.

**Recommendation:** The Land and Resource Management Division has thoroughly reviewed the applications and met with the owners at the ranch to consider this request, and respectfully request that the Agriculture Advisory Board approve Agriculture Advisory Board Resolution 24-03, recommending the Matanuska-Susitna Borough adopt Ordinance Serial No. 24-115.