

Lonnie McKechnie

From: Vern Halter <vhalter@mtaonline.net>
Sent: Sunday, January 3, 2021 9:49 AM
To: Lonnie McKechnie
Cc: Mike Brown; Nicholas Spiropoulos; Tam Boeve; vhalter
Subject: Veto- Resolution 20-123

[EXTERNAL EMAIL - CAUTION: Do not open unexpected attachments or links.]
I hereby Veto passage of Resolution 20-123.

I have received many e-mails expressing concern over the Passage of Resolution 20-123. The concerns raised, center first of all on usurping the public process and secondly on the merits on a wetland mitigation policy for the Borough. Both are weighty issues.

The usurption of the public process using a resolution to stop or prevent proposed legislation from going forward is not good public policy. This legislation should go forward and be heard at public meetings by the Borough's Fish Commission and the Borough's Planning Commission. Both bodies can and should take public testimony on the proposed legislation. Based on their recommendations and deliberations this legislation may or may not come before the Assembly of the Mat Su Borough for public hearings. This is the public process the Borough should maintain. The public really had no or very little opportunity to address wetland mitigation through Resolution 20-123.

Secondly, a wetland mitigation policy for the Mat Su Borough is not to be feared- it is a positive step forward. No one can deny the rapid upward trajectory of the Borough's population. No one can deny the rapid and major decline for the returns of all species of salmon to Mat Su rivers and streams over the last ten years. No one can deny we need to encourage development and business opportunities for the Borough. The right mixture of development that benefits all sectors of our economy is key to our future. Protecting one of our most important Borough assets- wetlands is a key factor in development. Relying solely on the Corp of Engineers is not, in my judgement, in the best interest of the Borough at this critical moment in our growth.

To argue wetland mitigation will stymie business or development is an age old false premise. Promoting development should not pit one asset against another. I have never been totally enamored by the wetland mitigation bank now in existence, but I know one thing for sure, a better policy for protecting our Borough wetlands, streams and rivers will protect and promote more jobs than any other single step the Borough can take.

The Borough often gets caught up in false assumptions that big projects are the key to success. The MV Susitna, the Railway Spur Line, The Port, and now the West Susitna Access Project had a cost and will cost the Borough more in energy and time and money than something as simple as a good wetland mitigation strategy going forward. Protecting jobs and our economy through mitigation is an important tool for the Borough.

Respectfully,

Mayor Halter

TIMELINE

2012 – MSB Wetland Management Plan - Identifies best practices for maintaining wetland services; discusses role of local wetland ordinance, <https://www.matsugov.us/plans/wetlands-management-plan>

2018 – USACE determines mitigation for Donlin Gold Pipeline through MSB

- 200 wetland acres and 1,363 linear feet of MSB streams impacted
- USACE required ~ 5 MSB wetland acres for compensatory mitigation

3/2019 – Special Assembly workshop on wetlands and mitigation

- USACE – MSB FWC – ADF&G – EPA – MSB Assembly participants

5/2019 – MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission passed RS FWC19-03 supporting supplemental wetland mitigation

8/2019 – MSB Assembly passed RS 19-074 directing the Planning Department to continue developing provisions for supplemental wetland mitigation for large-scale projects

9/2019 – Staff starts giving regular SWMO updates to the MSB Fish and Wildlife Commission at their monthly meetings

3/2020 – SWMO update given to the joint MSB Assembly/Planning Commission meeting

6/15/2020 – Planning Commission meeting: staff gives report on draft SWMO work with anticipated introduction for public hearing at the 8/17/2020 PC meeting

7/2020 – SWMO Project Web Page created and published; discusses project, presents SWMO, and invites public comment on the draft ordinance, <https://www.matsugov.us/acvolunteering/43-projects/21326-wetland-mitigation-ordinance>

7/2020 – Staff develop a GIS Story Map on wetlands and the SWMO which is posted on project web page, <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/ea7c88c5a82d43efaba346ecd27700f1>

7/2020 – SWMO stakeholder email list created with various subject matter experts and interested persons to solicit feedback on the SWMO

7/2020 – SWMO Update given in May/June Manager's Report, <https://www.matsugov.us/mar>

7/2020 – Planning Staff create five short videos on wetlands and the SWMO; these are posted on the project web page; Public Affairs is asked to push these out on MSB media platforms, <https://www.matsugov.us/acvolunteering/43-projects/21326-wetland-mitigation-ordinance#Media>

8/3/2020 – SWMO introduction for public hearing is set on the agenda for the 8/17/2020 Planning Commission meeting

8/6/2020 – Planning Department staff brief the Acting Borough Manager, Department Directors, and MSB Attorney on SWMO; Acting Borough Manager requests SWMO be pulled from PC agenda and instead seek a referral to PC resolution from the Assembly

9/2020 – Planning Division staff meet with USACE staff Birdie Budnik to discuss USACE permitting, wetland mitigation, and SWMO

9/2020 – Planning Department submits FOIA request to USACE for 2015-19 MSB wetland development permits issued

10/2020 – Planning Division staff meet with Great Land Trust staff Dave Mitchell to discuss USACE permitting, wetland mitigation, and SWMO.

10/12/2020 – Planning staff give update on SWMO work to joint Assembly/Planning Commission meeting

10/2020 – Planning Division staff meet with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency staff Matt LaCroix to discuss USACE permitting, wetland mitigation, and SWMO

11/2020 – MSB Planning Department receives FOIA materials requested from USACE

12/31/2020 – The deadline on the SWMO public comment period on the project web page prior to final edits to the draft SWMO,
<https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/911e8d55717948b3bbfdfcc6f754651e>