

Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly

MEMORANDUM

TO: Wayne Ogle, Assembly President
Members, Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly

THRU: Johni Blankenship, Borough Clerk (JB)

FROM: Willy Dunne, Assembly Member (WD)
Brent Hibbert, Assembly Member (BH)

DATE: August 22, 2019

RE: Ordinance 2019-23, Amending KPB Titles 2, 4, and 16 regarding Service Areas to Provide that All Kenai Peninsula Borough Service Area Boards are Appointed Instead of Elected (Dunne, Hibbert)

The Kenai Peninsula Borough (borough) currently has 12 service area boards. Seven of the boards are elected positions and five of the boards are appointed positions. The borough is one of the few boroughs, if not the only, in the State of Alaska with elected service area boards. Historically, it has been difficult to find qualified candidates willing to run in an election to fill all the service area board seats.

In 2017, three service area boards successfully transitioned from elected boards to appointed boards. In 2019, the borough assembly established the Election Stakeholder Group (ESG) through the direction and adoption of Resolution 2019-006, which included community members and members from many local governments in the borough. The ESG researched ways to increase voter participation by developing sustainable election processes that maximize accessibility and inclusivity. After holding many public meetings throughout 2019, the ESG issued a final report with six specific recommendations regarding potential changes to borough code and election processes which are intended to achieve guiding principles initially adopted by the ESG.

The ESG's recommendation #5 is that the borough provides for appointed rather than elected service area boards. Appointed boards have proven to increase public interest in service on a board as potential board members would not have to run or otherwise comply with the election process requirements.

Changing from elected service area boards to appointed boards will significantly reduce the time and expense involved in borough elections. The clerk's office has indicated that thousands of dollars would be saved by eliminating these seats from the election process as this would reduce printing costs and time required of election officials and the clerk's office in reviewing and verifying election ballots. The appointment process will remain a public process in which the mayor will appoint interested applicants and the assembly would confirm the appointment to service area boards. Appointed boards have functioned well for the other five service areas in the borough and throughout other service areas in the state.