

Introduced by:	Bjorkman
Date:	06/16/20
Action:	Withdrawn by Sponsor as Amended
Vote:	8 Yes, 1 No, 0 Absent

**KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH
RESOLUTION 2020-045**

**A RESOLUTION TO REOPEN THE KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH ASSEMBLY
RESPONSIBLY, RESTORE IN-PERSON ACCESS, AND ENCOURAGE
IMPROVEMENTS TO INTERNET CONNECTIVITY**

- WHEREAS,** Aristotle described the nature of people in this way: “Man is by nature a social animal ... Anyone who either cannot lead the common life or is so self-sufficient as not to need to, and therefore does not partake of society, is either a beast or a god”; and
- WHEREAS,** there is an emerging body of work that shows online social interaction is not equitable to in-person social interaction and gathering; and
- WHEREAS,** Zoom meetings were not intended to replace in-person assembly meetings; and
- WHEREAS,** many residents of the Kenai Peninsula do not have the internet connectivity needed to participate in Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly meetings using video; and
- WHEREAS,** many Kenai Peninsula residents have expressed difficulties participating in Zoom meetings of the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly; and
- WHEREAS,** Alaska Communications (“ACS”) has been given millions of dollars by the federal government of the United States to improve internet connectivity in rural Alaska by completing “the last mile” of internet infrastructure, which would connect many to the internet, and still has not completed improvements needed to connect many Kenai Peninsula residents; and
- WHEREAS,** completion of “the last mile” of infrastructure would mitigate future complications with distance meetings if needed; and
- WHEREAS,** Zoom meetings can be exploited by bad actors who wish to disrupt the public process; and
- WHEREAS,** Alaska Health Mandate 011: Social Distancing has been superseded most recently by the current Phase III and Phase IV of “Reopen Alaska Responsibly Plan”; and
- WHEREAS,** the borough assembly last agreed to talk about talking about changing the mode of assembly meetings on May 19th while the State of Alaska was living under Phase II of “The Reopen Alaska Responsibly Plan;” and

WHEREAS, the majority of the assembly declined to allow discussion about the possibility of a plan to implement in-person meeting options during July on June 3, 2020, even though the laydown memo of May 19, 2020 regarding public meeting forecast as discussed in a work session on May 19, 2020 stated that “the time line (for reopening) be reassessed with the release of new mandates from Governor Dunleavy regarding large group gatherings;” and

WHEREAS, new guidance for social, religious, and other gatherings was released by the Dunleavy regime on May 22, 2020; and

WHEREAS, new guidance for large group gatherings was released by the Dunleavy regime on May 29, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the State of Alaska has moved out of Phase II of reopening and into Phase III through IV which states the following guidance about gatherings:

For Indoor gatherings:

- a. This section applies broadly to any types of gatherings, including political, union, fundraising, or other group events, as well as meetings of individuals from different households.
- b. Social distancing of at least six feet continues to be a best practice.
- c. It is encouraged to continue wearing cloth face coverings when attending gatherings. See Health Alert 010 for helpful information on cloth face coverings.
http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/SiteAssets/Pages/HumanCoV/SOA_04032020_HealthAlert010_ClothFaceCoverings.pdf.
- d. If the event is being held in a building that is open to the public, and not an individual's home:
 - i. Persons with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 should not be on the premises.
 - ii. Frequent handwashing by staff and volunteers is encouraged; and

WHEREAS, the Kenai Peninsula Borough owns several school facilities that would provide significant space to allow adherence to the best practices suggested by Phase III and IV of the Reopen Alaska Responsibly Plan; and

WHEREAS, at least one Kenai Peninsula Borough assembly member expressed a desire to move toward in-person availability as an option for borough assembly meetings on May 19, 2020, during the Policies and Procedures Committee meeting, but then a “consensus” was pronounced that the assembly continue to meet on Zoom; and

WHEREAS, a more formal means appears to be needed in order fully open the borough assembly for business and be transparent to the public who does not have technological access;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH:

SECTION 1. The Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly (Assembly) upholds the seminal work of Aristotle and modern social scientists who recognize the need for people to interact in person.

SECTION 2. The Assembly encourages ACS to complete its work of improving internet connectivity to citizens of the Kenai Peninsula as soon as possible in order to mitigate some difficulties of residents participating in possible future online meetings of the Assembly.

SECTION 3. The Assembly shall adhere to the suggested science based and data driven best practices of the State of Alaska and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention which allow for in-person gatherings.

SECTION 4. The Assembly requests representatives of the administration, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, clerk’s office, and the IT department to work together with the Assembly to create a plan which would allow for Assembly meetings to be held in the assembly chambers or a school auditorium on the central Kenai Peninsula, as soon as safe and practical.

This plan would include the following:

- i. adherence to suggested best practice health guidelines for meetings as outlined by the State of Alaska;
- ii. the ability for assembly members and the public to attend Assembly meetings in person;
- iii. the ability for the public to testify in person or over the phone via remote sites at Assembly meetings as has been done for numerous meetings in the past on the central peninsula, Seward and Homer;

- iv. this plan will incorporate the integration of in person meetings with the zoom platform so more meetings are available to the public on a permanent basis; and
- v. inclusion of other stakeholders and facilitators as needed in creation of this plan for the purpose of accomplishing the above goals.

SECTION 5. This resolution be disseminated to interested stakeholders including local entities, ACS, Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan and the Dean of the US House of Representatives, Congressman Don Young.

ADOPTED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH THIS 16TH DAY OF JUNE, 2020.

Kelly Cooper, Assembly President

ATTEST:

Johni Blankenship, MMC, Borough Clerk

06/16/20 Vote on Motion to Withdraw as Amended:

Yes: Bjorkman, Blakeley, Carpenter, Cox, Dunne, Hibbert, Johnson, Cooper

No: None

Absent: None