



Petersburg Borough

12 South Nordic Drive
Petersburg, AK 99833

Meeting Minutes Planning Commission Special Meeting

Friday, January 23, 2026

10:00 AM

Assembly Chambers

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 AM

2. Roll Call

PRESENT

Commission Chair Chris Fry
Commission Vice-Chair Heather O'Neil
Commissioner Marietta Davis
Commission Secretary Sarah Fine-Walsh
Commissioner Joshua Adams
Commissioner Mika Cline

ABSENT

Commissioner John Jensen

3. Acceptance of Agenda

The agenda was accepted as presented.

Motion made by Commissioner Davis, Seconded by Commission Secretary Fine-Walsh. Voting Yea: Commission Chair Fry, Commission Vice-Chair O'Neil, Commissioner Davis, Commission Secretary Fine-Walsh, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Cline

4. Agenda Items

A. Initiation of an amendment to Title 19, Zoning, to address Wireless Communication Facilities.

Judy Ohmer, speaking on her own behalf, encouraged taking a step back to consider what is best for Petersburg. She noted that many communities across the country use 1500-foot setbacks and that these standards have withstood legal challenges.

Tom Kowalski, speaking on his own behalf, provided examples of setback requirements used in other cities across the country and referenced ordinances adopted elsewhere that aim to protect residents from EF radiation.

Harvey Gilliland, speaking on his own behalf, asked whether the tower projects were funded by the federal government or the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He also questioned

whether a survey or study of existing cellular coverage had been conducted and how the proposed towers might affect private providers. Director Liz Cabrera explained that Tlingit & Haida, the regional tribe, had received a federal grant to construct the towers and expand broadband service. She noted that Tidal Network would need to address the question regarding a survey or study and potential impacts on private providers.

Chad Carvey, speaking on his own behalf, emphasized the precautionary principle and noted that Petersburg has ample space offering multiple tower location options.

Commissioner Joshua Adams asked the people who testified where they would choose to put towers. Tom Kowalski responded by saying he would like to see the Papke's tower moved near the rifle range, the Mill Rd tower moved to the back of Mill Rd near the back road, and the tower in town he is unsure.

John Murgas spoke representing himself, he has industrial property at Scow Bay and would like to offer it as an option for tower location.

Motion made by Commission Secretary Fine-Walsh, Seconded by Commissioner Davis.

Commission Chair Fry noted the setback map and stated that under the proposed code, no tower may be located within a half- mile of an existing tower.

Commissioner Secretary Fine- Walsh suggested adding a section to the draft code to address maximum tower heights. She referenced Ketchikan's standards, which limit towers not adjacent to homes or sensitive areas to 200 feet, and those adjacent to such areas to 60 feet

Discussion.

Motion made by Commission Secretary Fine-Walsh, to amend language in the draft ordinance title. As amended **ORDINANCES REGULATING WIRELESS COMMUNICATION FACILITIES (WCF) SHALL APPLY THROUGHOUT PETERSBURG BOROUGH WHETHER WITHIN OR WITHOUT DESIGNATED SERVICE AREAS.** Seconded by Commissioner Cline.

Discussion.

Commissioner Adams asked Director Liz Cabrera maybe we don't need a service area 2 if this works? Director Cabrera stated we don't have a conditional use permit process or zoning outside of service area 1. This ordinance relies on the structure of the zoning code that we have in place inside service area 1. We don't have that outside service area 1 or the mecanizam of enforcement.

Commissioner Secretary Fine- Walsh further amended her motion to add language **ORDINANCES REGULATING WIRELESS COMMUNICATION FACILITIES (WCF) SHALL APPLY THROUGHOUT PETERSBURG BOROUGH WHETHER WITHIN OR WITHOUT DESIGNATED SERVICE AREAS WHICH SHALL BE ENFORCED UPON THE CREATION OF ANY ADDITIONAL SERVICE AREAS.**

Discussion.

Commissioner Secretary Fine- Walsh amended her motion to going back to the original phrasing to add a paragraph to the draft titled BOROUGH WIDE - ORDINANCES REGULATING WIRELESS COMMUNICATION FACILITIES (WCF) SHALL APPLY THROUGHOUT PETERSBURG BOROUGH WHETHER WITHIN OR WITHOUT DESIGNATED SERVICE AREAS. Seconded by Commissioner Cline

Voting Yea: Commission Chair Fry, Commission Vice-Chair O'Neil, Commissioner Davis, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Cline

Voting Nay: Commission Secretary Fine-Walsh

Motion made by Commission Secretary Fine-Walsh to amend Section 7. adding Subsection 4. to read - Federal Compliance as a Condition of Permit. All PWSF/WCF shall be operated in strict accordance with the rules and regulations of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regarding radio frequency interference. Continued compliance with FCC interference standards is a material condition of the borough's conditional use permit and/or building permit. Seconded by Commissioner Davis.

Voting Yea: Commission Chair Fry, Commission Vice-Chair O'Neil, Commissioner Davis, Commission Secretary Fine-Walsh, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Cline

Discussion regarding Section 6, Subsection 2. Sensitive area setbacks.

Motion made by Commission Secretary Fine-Walsh to amend Section 6, Subsection 2 Sensitive area setback: The tower base must be set back a distance of 1500-feet from any school, assisted living facility, or childcare facility. Seconded by Commissioner Davis.

Bob Martin spoke representing himself, mentioned it would be nice if sensitive areas were defined in a way we could try and reconcile that with the telecommunications act, as far as why is Assisted living a sensitive area.

Commission Secretary Fine-Walsh said school, assisted living, or childcare facility is our list, we are naming that the sensitive area list.

Amendment to the Motion made by Commission Vice-Chair O'Neil to add hospital to the list of sensitive areas. Seconded by Commission Secretary Fine-Walsh.

Discussion.

Voting as amended to add hospital to the list, all in favor.

Voting Yea: Commission Chair Fry, Commission Vice-Chair O'Neil, Commissioner Davis, Commission Secretary Fine-Walsh, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Cline

Discussion.

Amendment to the Motion made by Commission Secretary Fine-Wash Amendment to the setback distance to 1000-feet for sensitive areas. Seconded by Commissioner Davis.

The proposed amendment fails by roll call vote.

Voting Yea: Commission Chair Fry, Commissioner Davis, Commission Secretary Fine-Walsh

Voting Nay: Commission Vice-Chair O'Neil, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Cline

The motion as amended. Section 6, Subsection 2. Sensitive area setbacks: The tower base must be set back a distance of 1500-feet from any school, assisted living facility, childcare facility, or hospital.

Amendment passes by roll call vote.

Voting Yea: Commission Vice-Chair O'Neil, Commission Secretary Fine-Walsh, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Cline

Voting Nay: Commission Chair Fry, Commissioner Davis

A clerical error was corrected on page 2. The fifth whereas, 125% should be 110%.

Scott Newman spoke on behalf of himself, being a pilot, tower height is a concern of his.

Chad Carvey spoke representing himself to ask if State lands include Alaska Mental Health Trust lands and could those lands be purchased for this. Commission Chair Fry spoke to say yes, lands could potentially be purchased but it's a question of if they would sell the land.

Voting on the original motion as amended.

Voting Yea: Commission Chair Fry, Commission Vice-Chair O'Neil, Commissioner Davis, Commission Secretary Fine-Walsh, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Cline

6. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:36pm.

Motion made by Commission Secretary Fine-Walsh, Seconded by Commissioner Cline.

Voting Yea: Commission Chair Fry, Commission Vice-Chair O'Neil, Commissioner Davis, Commission Secretary Fine-Walsh, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Cline