

By: Rebecca Skjothaug
Introduced: January 5, 2026
Public Hearing: January 19, 2026
Action: **Approved**

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH PLANNING
COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. 25-28**

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVING A VARIANCE TO MSB 17.55.020 FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A DWELLING TO BE PLACED APPROXIMATELY 27 FEET FROM THE SHORELINE OF BIG LAKE ON LONG ISLAND LOT 2-B, LONG IS RSB L/02 & 3 Lot 2-B and located within Section 17, Township 3 North, Range 19 West, PLAT #71-83, PALMER RECORDING DISTRICT, STATE OF ALASKA, LOCATED ON LONG ISLAND, BIG LAKE ALASKA TAX ID # 6149000L002-B.

WHEREAS, Alan & Gloria Hunsuck and Dylan & Sabrena Stenger are requesting a variance to MSB 17.55.020 to construct an additional 1,500 square foot cabin at its closest location of 27 feet from Big Lake, on Shepard's Island, Big Lake, Tax ID #6149000L002-B; and

WHEREAS, to grant a variance, the Planning Commission must find that each requirement of MSB 17.65.020 (A) has been met; and

WHEREAS, the subject lot is part of the South Big Lake Alaska Subdivision and was initially plated in 1971 before Borough setback and lot size regulations were established; and

WHEREAS, the subject parcel does not conform to the current Borough subdivision standards for lot size; and

WHEREAS, Big Lake is located north and south of the subject parcel, and east and west of the subject parcel are residential properties; and

WHEREAS, according to the Borough Assessments data, the subject parcel is approximately 0.28 acres; and

WHEREAS, according to the application material, has irregular dimensions of approximately 100 feet northwest to east-west, 111.02 feet northeast to southeast, 110 feet southeast to southwest, and 145 feet southwest to northwest; and

WHEREAS, An overhead MEA utility line, shown on the original 1971 plat and running generally east to west across the property, imposes a required 15-foot setback; and

WHEREAS, the proposed residential cabin will only occupy 12% of the total parcel; and

WHEREAS, Planning staff analyzed all 48 lakefront parcels on Long Island of Big Lake and found that 39 of them contain residential structures; and

WHEREAS, the dwellings that may violate the setback requirements were not included in the average dwelling size calculation; and

WHEREAS, after conducting an analysis, the Planning staff found that there are 39 lakefront parcels with dwellings that appear

to meet the 75-foot setback criteria, have legal non-conforming status or a granted variance, and these dwellings have an average size of 1,332 square feet; and

WHEREAS, Planning staff found the lakefront properties within the analysis area vary in size from 0.24 to 1.24 acres; and

WHEREAS, development within the analysis area averages 1,332 square feet; and

WHEREAS, according to the application material, the applicant proposes building a residential cabin of 1,500 square foot single-story structure; and

WHEREAS, according to the application materials, the proposed residential cabin will adhere to all other setbacks from the side lot lines, northern waterbody setback, and the utility setback; and

WHEREAS, according to the application material, the subject parcel has 221.02 feet of shoreline on Big Lake on the northern and southern end of the subject parcel; and

WHEREAS, based on the application materials, the applicant proposes preserving a minimum of 50% of undisturbed native vegetation of the shoreline bank; and

WHEREAS, according to the application materials, the applicant was provided with an Alaska Fish & Game permit to reconstruct the dock on February 24, 2025; and

WHEREAS, in 2005, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly adopted voluntary best management practices (BMP) for development around waterbodies; and

WHEREAS, MSB Chapter 17.65 - Variances, was written to grant relief to property owners whose lots are impacted by existing land use regulations, thereby making the lot undevelopable; and

WHEREAS, the Big Lake Comprehensive Plan (2009 update), by design, does not set out precise binding rules on development but instead provides general goals on the type of place the community wants to be in the future and then outlines general strategies to reach those goals; and

WHEREAS, Goal (LU&E-3) of the Big Lake Comprehensive Plan Update (August 2009) is to "Protect the natural environment; and

WHEREAS, Goal (LU&E-4) of the Big Lake Comprehensive Plan Update (August 2009) is to "Provide for freedom to enjoy our properties; and

WHEREAS, Goal (LU-1) of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Comprehensive Plan (2005 Update) states: Protect and enhance the public safety, health, and welfare of Borough residents; and

WHEREAS, Policy LU1-1 of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Comprehensive Plan (2005 Update) states: Provide for consistent, compatible, effective, and efficient development within the Borough; and

WHEREAS, Goal {LU-2) of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Comprehensive Plan (2005 Update) states: Protect residential neighborhoods and associated property values; and

WHEREAS, the variance request is consistent with the policies and goals of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Comprehensive Plan (2005 Update) as the residential structure cannot be constructed on the lot without a setback variance, the structure is placed as far back on the property as possible, and the structure is similar to surrounding development; and

WHEREAS, according to the Planning staff's analysis, constructing an 1,500-square-foot dwelling is compatible with the surrounding area; and

WHEREAS, the subject parcel is not in a special land use district; and

WHEREAS, residential structures are allowed on this property; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission hereby adopts the aforementioned findings of fact and makes the following conclusions of law supporting approval of Planning Commission Resolution 25-28;

1. The 0.28-acre parcel has no legal buildable area due to the 75' building setback and the utility easement that runs

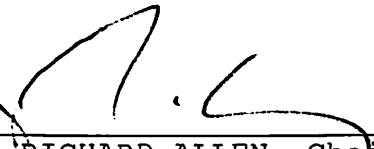
east-west through approximately the middle of the property, which is an unusual condition (MSB 17.65.020(A)(1)).

2. The strict application of the provisions of this title would deprive the applicants of rights commonly enjoyed by others, as the subject lot has certain unique conditions and circumstances that apply. The average size of dwellings within the analysis area is 1,332 square feet. The property is 0.28 acres of land. Therefore, constructing an 1,500 square-foot cabin on the property is a reasonable use of the land. (MSB 17.65.020(A)(2)).
3. Granting a variance will not be injurious to nearby property nor harmful to the public welfare (MSB 17.65.020(A)(3)).
4. The proposed variance is consistent with the applicable comprehensive plans and does meet the intent of MSB 17.65 (MSB 17.65.020(A)(4)).
5. Granting a variance will be no more than necessary to permit reasonable use of the property (MSB 17.65.020(A)(5)).
6. The person seeking the variance did not cause the need for the variance (MSB 17.65.030(A)(1)).
7. The variance will not allow land use in a district in which that use is prohibited, as residential structures are allowed on this site (MSB 17.65.030(A)(2)).
8. The variance is not solely being sought to relieve pecuniary hardship or inconvenience (MSB 17.65.030(A)(3)).

9. All wastewater design, permitting, installation, and maintenance must fully comply with Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) and Matanuska-Susitna Borough requirements.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission hereby approves the 27 FEET FROM THE SHORELINE OF BIG LAKE ON LOT 2-B, LONG IS RSB L/02 & 3 Lot 2-B and located within Section 17, Township 3 North, Range 19 West, PLAT #71-83, PALMER RECORDING DISTRICT, STATE OF ALASKA, LOCATED ON LONG ISLAND, BIG LAKE ALASKA TAX ID #6149000L002-B, as referenced in the application material.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission on this 5th day of January, 2026.



RICHARD ALLEN, Chair

ATTEST


LACIE OLIVIERI, Planning
Clerk
(SEAL)

yes: Glenn, McCabe, Allen, Carpenter
NO: None

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