



# Daily News-Miner

THE VOICE OF INTERIOR ALASKA SINCE 1903

**Inside Today** House passes bill that factors well-being of pets into restraining orders. » A4

## Legislators OK deepest of proposed cuts to UA

By Matt Buxton  
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**JUNEAU** — Legislators in charge of the state budget have chosen a funding amount for the University of Alaska that is, according to university officials, a worst-case scenario that will cause the elimination of 400 to 500 jobs.

The legislative conference committee on the operating budget, meeting at about 5 p.m. Thursday went with the \$50 million cut championed by the

House, a nearly 15 percent cut to the university's budget and the third consecutive year of reductions. The number reduces state funding to \$300 million from \$350 million.

The Senate had put forward a \$325 million budget; Gov. Bill Walker had submitted a \$335 million budget.

Sen. Pete Kelly, R-Fairbanks, had pushed for the higher number earlier this session out of concern about the impact of deeper cuts but said he could no

longer support it after seeing the revised oil revenue forecast.

"Right now we'll be in tough times," he said after the meeting.

The conference committee voted 5-1 in favor of the House budget number. Kelly was joined by Sens. Anna MacKinnon, R-Eagle River, and Lyman Hoffman, D-Bethel, and by Reps. Mark Neuman, R-Big Lake, and Steve Thompson, R-Fairbanks.

The lone opponent to the cut was Rep. Les Gara, D-Anchorage.

"My concern is that we're going to build a university that people don't want to go to and we're going to lose a lot of talent," Gara said. "At some point this has to be a state where people want to live in, and I think this is going the wrong way."

No other members of the committee commented on the num-



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ber during the hearing.

University of Alaska spokeswoman Robbie Graham said the university was disappointed with the decision and that it will force the university, which has already been preparing for sharp cuts, to look for deeper reductions.

"Like all Alaskans, we understand that the state is struggling to balance its budget," she said. "But given the importance of the state's

CUTS » A5

### GOOD MORNING



#### The weather.

Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid to upper 40s. North winds to 10 mph.  
High today ..... 45  
Low tonight ..... 29

#### WEATHER » A7 Aurora forecast.

Auroral activity will be high. Weather permitting, highly active auroral displays will be visible overhead.

This information is provided by aurora forecasters at the Geophysical Institute at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. For more information about the aurora, visit <http://www.gi.alaska.edu/AuroraForecast>



#### TOTAL TAKEOVER

Monroe blanks Hutchinson in boys soccer opener.  
SPORTS  
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#### SOURDOUGH JACK: "That bear's a leader I can support."



## A visit from Smokey



Care providers and clients excitedly greet Smokey the Bear as he arrives for a fire safety presentation with the Division of Forestry at Morning Star Ranch on Thursday. ERIN CORNELIUSSEN/NEWS-MINER



Stuart Yamamoto smiles as he poses with Smokey the Bear during a fire safety presentation with the Division of Forestry at Morning Star Ranch on Thursday.

## Dozens testify on proposed outdoor hydronic heater ban

By Amanda Bohman  
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An anti-pollution proposal requiring outdoor hydronic heaters in the Air Quality Control Zone to be removed drew dozens to the Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly meeting on Thursday.

The assembly was still taking testimony on the measure as of press time. The vote was postponed to another meeting.

"I think we need to start looking at who is putting out these big emissions and make them have to change," testified Lynn Larsen of Fairbanks.

Under Ordinance 2016-21, all hydronic heaters in the borough's Air Quality Control Zone would need to meet certain requirements or be removed. One requirement is that they be indoors.

An estimated 250 hydronic heating systems are impacted.

Hydronic heater is defined in borough code as a fuel burning appliance designed to burn wood, or other solid fuels, and heat building space or domestic hot water with the distribution, usually through pipes, of a fluid heated in the appliance.

A 2009 study by the Cold Climate Housing Research Center suggests that hydronic heaters are responsible for a disproportionate amount of the smoke pollution causing wintertime spikes in particulates, which have been shown in scientific research to cause health problems.

"We don't have time to just hope the winters remain warm and that oil prices stay low," said Assemblyman Van Lawrence, a

HEATER » A5

## New process gives amnesty on old zoning violations

By Amanda Bohman  
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Property owners can apply for forgiveness from old zoning violations under a new process approved by the assembly Thursday.

"I think this will help a lot with these ever-increasing situations we are seeing where people are having a hard time getting financing," said Fairbanks North Star Borough Assemblyman Lance Roberts.

The assembly approved the measure by Roberts, Assemblyman Matt Cooper and Assemblywoman Diane Hutchison in a unanimous vote.

Under the new process, the forgiveness can be granted outright by a planning department official or after an administrative hearing as opposed to going before the Planning Commission for a vote.

Criteria for receiving amnesty includes that the zoning violation

must not be extreme, it must predate 2010 and it can't have been created by the property owner seeking forgiveness.

Also, the zoning violation at issue cannot affect health, safety or welfare.

The borough planning department is overwhelmed with cases of people seeking forgiveness for old zoning violations in the wake of a new federal law, the Dodd-Frank Act, that tightened lending rules.

Hundreds of houses that previously were eligible for financing are now being flagged by lenders.

Borough Planning Director Christine Nelson suspects there are thousands of properties in the borough with old zoning violations.

In a separate vote, the assembly rejected a measure prohibiting borough employees from serving on borough boards and

ZONING » A3

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**ICE DOGS** **PLAYOFF HOCKEY IS HERE!**

Fairbanks Ice Dogs vs Coulee Region Chill | The Road to the Robertson Cup starts NOW!

APRIL 15 & 16, FRI & SAT, 7:30PM • APRIL 17 SUN AT 5PM

WEEKEND SPONSORS:

APRIL 16 SATURDAY AT 5PM TAILGATE PARTY AT THE BIG DIPPER