



# Daily News-Miner

THE VOICE OF INTERIOR ALASKA SINCE 1903

## Inside Today

Lathrop's Kelcy McGrath wins state precision rifle title in Anchorage. » SPORTS, B1

## GOOD MORNING



### The weather.

Mostly cloudy with scattered snow showers and highs in the mid- to upper 40s.

High today .....49  
Low tonight .....31

### WEATHER » A9

### Aurora forecast.

Auroral activity will be low. Weather permitting, displays will be visible overhead from Barrow to Fairbanks.

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>

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## FARMERS MARKET

After conference, Homer market learns it's ahead of trends.

INTERIOR  
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## EASTER PARADE

Unique hats, costumes make annual event festive.

NATION  
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## GENETIC SEARCH

Law enforcement turns to ancestry companies for DNA.

HEALTH  
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...

SOURDOUGH JACK:  
"I think I got a burger just like that in the back o' my fridge!"



# 5 percent pot tax goes to voters

By Amanda Bohman  
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Voters in the borough will decide on a 5 percent retail tax on marijuana this fall. If approved, the assembly could later raise the pot tax to 6 percent.

The cities of Fairbanks and North Pole already have a 5 percent marijuana tax in place.

"I think that a 5 percent tax is reasonable considering that the alcohol industry faces the same size tax," said Frank Berardi, one of several people representing the new marijuana industry who testified before the Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly on Thursday.

The assembly approved the ballot question in a 7-0 vote with two members absent.

One of the reasons for the provision allowing the tax to be raised to 6 percent is that the borough is statutorily required

**"I think that a 5 percent tax is reasonable considering that the alcohol industry faces the same size tax."**

Frank Berardi, chairman of the Coalition for Responsible Cannabis Legislation

to collect the tax on behalf of the cities of Fairbanks and North Pole.

The cities reportedly plan to collect it, but if that changes the borough is on the hook, according to the borough legal department.

Some leaders said they want to recoup collection costs. Representatives from the marijuana industry opposed the provision.

"We want to be able to provide our product at as low of a cost as possible," said Berardi, who is also the chairman of the Coalition for Responsible Cannabis Legislation.

Berardi said a low tax will keep Fairbanks competitive, increas-

ing marijuana business here and thus providing more tax revenue.

Much of the assembly's discussion of the tax was about when to implement it.

Borough Mayor Karl Kassel said collecting potentially large amounts of cash, a new thing for the borough, might require remodeling at the treasury and budget office.

"We may need to modify the building a little bit, and we've got to start on that soon if we are going to do it," Kassel said.

Assemblyman Van Lawrence proposed an amendment to give the administration more time, making the effective date of the tax April 20, 2017. The amend-

ment failed. Four-twenty day, as it is called, is an unofficial holiday embraced by pot smokers.

Instead, the tax would go into effect on Jan. 1, 2017, assuming the voters approve it.

The pot tax in the City of Fairbanks was approved last fall by a margin of 84 percent.

In North Pole, the City Council authorized the marijuana tax, applying it to both retail and wholesale transactions.

The borough collects about \$1 million a year from the 5 percent alcohol tax, according to budget records.

Contact staff writer Amanda Bohman at 459-7587. Follow her on Twitter: @FDNMBorough.

## BOROUGH SCIENCE FAIR



Srijan Aggarwal, front right, and Ian Herriott, back left, with the American Society for Microbiology, Alaska Branch, review the experiment "What is the Effect of UV Light On Bacteria" by Ladd Elementary School fourth-grader Carlie Viray during public viewing at the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District Science Fair on Friday morning at the Pioneer Park Civic Center. "As a biologist I use UV to kill bacteria daily. She did a good experiment," Herriott said of Viray's project. About 400 entries were selected from nearly 30 Interior schools for this year's event for students through eighth grade. Sponsors include ABR, Inc., Shannon & Wilson, Inc. and Goodcents. ERIC ENGMAN/NEWS-MINER PHOTOS

## SPECIAL AWARD WINNERS

### Director

- Lainee Bertolotti
- Braden Diaz
- Nathan Rochester
- David and Evangeline Walz
- Grace White
- Leksi Curry
- Corbin Becker
- Amber Smith
- Mrs. Reece's class

### Shannon & Wilson

- Abby and Bradley Birkholz
- Makayla Barnes

### ABR

- Amal Shubair
- Pirada Anderson and Audrey Fox
- Raylene Goowin

### GVEA

- Alex Wease and Brad Baker

### ADEC Solid Waste Program

- Kadence Brinkman

### Fairbanks Orthodontic Group

- Elias Gibson
- Keeda Michaelis
- Emma Tomeo

### Museum of the North

- Myrica Gale Meierotto
- Madelyn Guffey
- Ben Brown
- Ethan Parker
- Shani Fisher-Salmon
- Hank Zacheis

### National Park Service

- Greer Breen
- Robin Baker
- Mrs. Budge's class

### UAF College Savings

- Jonathan Ebel
- Evdokia Wise

- Thomas Bueler
- Conor Murphrey

### Alaska Geographic Alliance

- Robin Baker

### Fairbanks Children's Museum

- Owen Norton

### AK Science Teachers

- Huc McCall
- Aaron Richards
- Drake Lanam

### American Society of Microbiology Dan Glass award

- Ryland Meininger
- and Reo Davis

### American Society of Microbiology

- Isabel Brown
- Carlie Viray
- Kaitlynn Rice

# Borough approves telephone, written testimony

By Amanda Bohman  
ABOHMAN@NEWSMINER.COM

New rules are in place affecting Planning Commission meetings, who can testify and how.

Residents with standing can now offer telephonic testimony and sworn statements at quasi-judicial hearings, such as appeals, variances and conditional use permits. These types of hearings commonly happen before the Planning Commission.

Also, the boundaries were extended for who is notified of land use hearings and invited to testify.

The Borough Assembly approved the new rules Thursday in a 7-0 vote with two assembly members absent.

"The whole idea in this is to allow public participation," said Assemblywoman Diane Hutchison, a sponsor of the legislation along with Assemblywomen Kathryn Dodge and Janice Golub.



Hutchison

The issue came to the attention of the three assemblywomen last year.

Hutchison explained to the assembly the genesis for the idea.

"It was us ladies sitting through Planning Commission meetings — various ones at different times — and hearing people who had been sent 'Dear property owner' letters not being able to testify," she said.

According to municipal attorney Jill Dolan, the borough tightened the process a couple of years ago, limiting who could testify at quasi-judicial hearings in response to state law and for due process reasons.

Only people who can show a specific property interest — more than that of the general public — are allowed to testify, Dolan said.

The municipality also requires the testimony to be in-person so that the person

TESTIMONY » A3



Left: Projects fill the facility during public viewing. Right: A Carl's Jr. cheeseburger on display as part of Barnette Magnet School third-grader Hunter Schmitt's experiment "Forever Fast Food" during public viewing. The experiment compared a variety of fast food cheeseburgers and a homemade cheeseburger to see which grew mold the fastest.

