

**SUBJECT: Chief Wasilla Statue**

REQUESTED BY: Administration

PREPARED BY: Administration

DATE: April 28, 2000

FOR AGENDA OF: May 8, 2000

**SUMMARY:**

Council:

The Chief Wasilla Statue and Memorial Project is moving forward with the support of the Mat-Su Borough Mayor and Assembly, and with the Alaska State Legislature's commemoration.

Project coordinator Harold Newcomb and I met on April 27, 2000. Other meeting attendees included Mayor Salmon, Mayor Guinotte, Bekki Spencer from our museum, a local principal and other interested citizens. We were honored to have relatives of Chief Wasilla participate in the meeting and help educate us by providing information on Wasilla's history.

The statue and memorial will be a reality in Wasilla. I encourage us all to participate in the private-sector fundraising efforts that will help build this fitting tribute to our indigenous peoples' heritage. It is Mr. Newcomb's committee's intent to exhaust all means of private-sector fundraising before approaching any level of government for money.

There may be a potential resource partnership between the city and the project committee in the future, namely, we should be able to assist the project with a statue location and historical records-keeping assistance. The Mat-Su RC & D is requested by the Project Committee to act as trustee/administrator of the funds collected for the project.

Please see the following attachments:


- ◆ The Alaska Legislature Commemorating a Life History
- ◆ City of Wasilla Resolution No. 99-31
- ◆ Mat-Su Borough Resolution No. 99-068

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** FYI.

**FISCAL IMPACT**  No  Yes, amount requested:

Fund:

**MAYOR REVIEW/COMMENT:**

  
 Reviewed by: SARAH PALIN, Mayor

Presented to Council  
 Date: 5/8/00  
 verified by: FL

# THE ALASKA LEGISLATURE



RECEIVED

APR 28 2000

CITY OF WASILLA, ALA

## \*COMMEMORATING A LIFE HISTORY\*

### \*CHIEF VISILLA\*

Chief Visilla was born in the 1840s; however, his actual birthday and birthplace is unknown. His formative years were spent during the Late Russian Period, a time when the natives enjoyed an equitable trading relationship with the Russians. The influence of the Russian church had expanded as far as the Village of Susitna. Visilla's name is apparently derived from the Russian surname, "Visiliev," meaning "Basil." Visilla's six-foot stature leads credence to a Russian origin.

He was in the prime of his life during the Early American Period. It is probably during this period that he rose to power, becoming Chief of Benteh (meaning "among the lakes"). His ability to acquire riches through trade and ingenuity helped gain him the status as Qesh'qa. As head of the local lineage group Chief Visilla was responsible for the wellbeing of the village. Chief Visilla was also noted for his strength in forging a lasting peace among neighboring Dena'ina clans and the Copper River Ahtna. Visilla was also a great shaman who practiced the Russian Orthodox faith.

After the premature death of Chief Visilla the Seward Weekly Gateway reported: "... he became chief through his mental and moral superiority and ruled the other natives sternly. Because of his character and intelligence he was held in much esteem . . . ."

The Twenty-first Alaska State Legislature recognizes the life history of Chief Visilla. His generosity, willingness to assist others coupled with his ability to forge peace with his neighbors contributed greatly to the development of the Mat-Su Valley.



*Brian S. Porter*  
BRIAN PORTER  
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

*Dore Pearce*  
DORE PEARCE  
PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

Date: February 9, 2000

*Vic Kohring*  
VIC KOHRING  
PRIME SPONSOR

Cosponsors: Representatives Porter, Austerman, Berkowitz, Brice, Cissna, Coghill, Jr., Cowdery, Croft, Davis, Dyson, Green, Grussendorf, Halcro, Harris, Hudson, Kapsner, Kemplen, Kerttula, Kott, Masek, Morgan, Murkowski, Sanders, Smalley, Rokeberg, Therriault, Williams; Senators Halford, Ward, Wilken, Leman, Parnell, Pearce, Green, Mackie, Pete Kelly, Tim Kelly, Taylor, Donley, Hoffman, Lincoln

Requested by: Administration  
Prepared by: Administration  
Adopted: September 13, 1999  
Vote: Unanimous; Bennett and Patrick absent

**CITY OF WASILLA  
RESOLUTION SERIAL NO. 99-31**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF WASILLA IN SUPPORT OF THE  
CONSTRUCTION AND PLACEMENT OF CHIEF WASILLA STATUE AND  
MEMORIAL ON THE SHORE OF WASILLA LAKE.**

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WHEREAS, Alaska was purchased in 1867 and the City of Wasilla was founded by the Alaska Railroad in 1917; and

WHEREAS, there were many native people in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley and Chief Wasilla was a great leader and chief of his people; and

WHEREAS, Chief Wasilla and his people owned lands in the city area, including lakes and streams; and

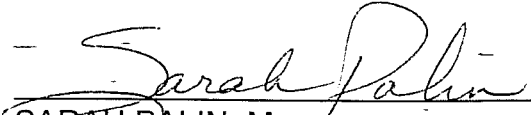
WHEREAS, the City of Wasilla bears the name of the chief, and this monument and its related research material would put forth the history of the city's name; and

WHEREAS, Chief Wasilla was a major-force in the development of Wasilla and the Valley.

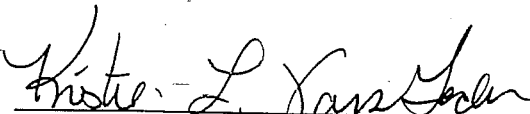
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the City of Wasilla supports the construction and placement of a Chief Wasilla memorial on the shores of Wasilla Lake.

ADOPTED by the Wasilla City Council on September 13, 1999.

I certify that a resolution in substantially the above form was passed by a majority of those voting at a duly called and conducted meeting of the governing body of the City of Wasilla this 13<sup>th</sup> day of September 1999.

  
SARAH PALIN, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
KRISTIE L. VANGORDER, CMC/AE  
City Clerk

[SEAL]

By: Mayor Salmon  
Adopted: 10/19/99

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH  
RESOLUTION SERIAL NO. 99-068**

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH ASSEMBLY IN SUPPORT  
OF THE CONSTRUCTION AND PLACEMENT OF A CHIEF WASILLA STATUE AND  
MEMORIAL ON THE SHORE OF WASILLA LAKE.

WHEREAS, Alaska was purchased in 1867; and

WHEREAS, the City of Wasilla was founded by the Alaska  
Railroad in 1917; and

WHEREAS, there were many native villages in the Matanuska-  
Susitna Valley and Chief Wasilla was a the leader of the local  
Dena'ina; and


WHEREAS, Chief Wasilla and his people lived in the city area  
and utilized the local lakes and streams; and

WHEREAS, Chief Wasilla was a fair and honest man who was  
respected by the people in the region; and

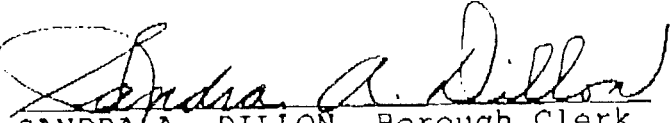
WHEREAS, the City of Wasilla bears the name of the chief, and  
this monument would memorialize the chief and present the history  
of the city's name for its citizens and visitors.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Matanuska-Susitna  
Borough Assembly supports the construction and placement of a Chief  
Wasilla statue and memorial on the shore of Wasilla Lake.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly this 19th  
day of October, 1999.

  
DARCIE K. SALMON, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:

  
SANDRA A. DILLON, Borough Clerk

(SEAL)