

**Candidate name**

Bill Evans

**1. Describe your previous experience with Alaska tourism. Do you have any prior employment in the industry?**

As former Board Chair of the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce I worked cooperatively with Visit Anchorage on their issues and priorities for encouraging and supporting Alaska (and Anchorage) tourism. In my professional capacity I represent clients who are significantly involved in tourism such as the Alaska Railroad.

**2. Visit Anchorage ensures our community remains top-of-mind with visitors, meeting planners, and travel trade professionals. The work distinguishes our destination in a crowded, competitive landscape. Do you support Visit Anchorage's mission? Please explain your position.**

I do support Visit Anchorage's mission. The relationship between the Municipality and Visit Anchorage should be symbiotic. We each can aid the other in supporting our respective missions. The Municipality must improve its condition in order to be a more enticing draw for tourists while Visit Anchorage must continue its work in advertising our progress and what we offer to visitors.

**3. Anchorage's 12% room tax supports municipal services in three ways: one-third goes to the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) general fund; one-third goes to support operations and pay the bond debt for the Anchorage Convention Centers; and one-third goes to the MOA's destination marketing contract (currently held by Visit Anchorage). Do you support the current three-way allocation of Anchorage room tax revenues? Please explain your position.**

I do support the current division of room tax funds. The Convention Center is a critical facility in attracting conventions and other groups to Anchorage and thus is a worthwhile beneficiary of a portion of the room tax revenues. The Municipality needs to obtain some benefit from the tourism revenues entering the city and in the absence of a sales tax, its portion of the Room tax is necessary. It also makes sense to continue to market Anchorage as a destination in order to ensure that we maximize the revenue stream obtained from the Room tax. The 3-way split is equitable and sensible.

**4. In Anchorage, the visitor economy is already a significant contributor. Prior to COVID, the industry generated \$297 million in visitor-related spending and \$38 million in municipal hotel and rental car taxes. In addition to the taxes paid by visitors, tourism created one in nine jobs locally. Do you support additional taxes levied on the tourism industry and/or customers? If yes, please explain the type of**

**taxes you believe would be most appropriate, and also how you believe those funds would be spent. If no, please explain your position.**

I am generally in support of a broad-based sales tax for Anchorage. Such a tax would not be targeted solely at the tourism industry but would apply across the board. The proceeds from such funds would be used for three purposes: (1) to alleviate the constant pressure on increased property taxes, (2) to provide additional revenue streams for the necessary expenses involved in rebuilding Anchorage's private sector economy and positioning Anchorage to successfully compete for investment and business opportunities in the 21st Century, and (3) to finance specific voter approved infrastructure projects.

**5. COVID has fundamentally affected leisure and convention travel, and a complete recovery may be several years away. How would you work to aid local businesses and individuals – particularly those reliant on tourism and travel – so that they can survive and flourish?**

The first step is to ensure that we take all reasonable steps to reach the end of the pandemic as quickly as possible. Getting back to normal will be the most significant step in rebuilding and repairing the tourism and other industries that have borne the most significant economic brunt of the pandemic. We also have to ensure that the disbursement and allocation of any COVID relief funds are distributed in a manner that maximizes the survival of the many businesses that have been placed in jeopardy by the pandemic. In addition, depending on how long the pandemic lasts as a functional matter, we have to be willing to explore tax relief and other steps that could make the difference in businesses surviving or going out of business. All this must be accomplished in direct communication and cooperation with the affected industries.

**6. Do you have priorities that would make the municipality a more travel-friendly destination? If yes, please provide details.**

My main goal is to grow the private sector economy in Anchorage. Doing that creates the economic engine that makes all other programs and services possible. Part of doing that is making Anchorage a place where people want to invest, build and live. We need to clean up the visible problems of homelessness that plague a large swath of our city. We also have to significantly further reduce the crime rate in Anchorage. People will not invest if they do not feel Anchorage is a safe city. If we do that, we will make Anchorage a more desirable tourist destination at the same time.

**7. What do you see as the mayor's role in Anchorage's visitor industry, destination marketing, and community development?**

The Mayor should be an active and involved partner in these activities. He or she should be a champion for the various improvements and changes necessary to make Anchorage succeed in the coming decades.

**8. What are your overall priorities for the municipality?**

1. Create robust private sector investment and development
2. Significantly reduce the public aspects of homelessness on our streets.
3. Reduce the rate of crime in Anchorage
4. Partner with ASD to foster creative solutions that improve educational outcomes.
5. Make Anchorage the most connected city in the U.S.

6. Significantly improve the Municipalities permitting processes.

**9. What do you see as the greatest threat to Anchorage's future success? What about the greatest opportunity for the community?**

Continued failure to proactively compete for investment and opportunities. If we continue to ignore or, worse yet, inhibit private sector economic development we will continue to decline as a city. Our greatest opportunity is that we have unparalleled natural resources and lifestyle options that will provide us with a competitive advantage in competing for investment with other cities across the globe. We just have to improve upon the livability of our city.

**10. Would you be interested in a follow-up meeting with Visit Anchorage?**

Absolutely.