

## Challenges from Anchorage

### Description

# Matanuska Brewing Company Innovates

(2021@donnliston.co)



Dining in our own bubble; **Waneta Borden, Bill Borden, Brenda Borden** and this writer, recently had a wonderful meal at **Matanuska Brewing Company** in Eagle River.

**Matanuska Brewing Company** owner **Matt Tomter** believes his business absorbed the pandemic shutdown better than some other area businesses because of innovation to safely protect and improve on customer experience at the company's three restaurants located in Anchorage, Eagle River and Palmer.

And Tomter takes the long view of the challenges faced: “If you look at this worldwide, it is the first time we have been in the same situation together since World War II. The entire country is dealing with something nobody knows how to fix,” he said. “There have been a variety of ideas about how to deal with the pandemic; some I don’t agree with, some I do agree with. It has been a year now and I expect to get back to normal pretty soon.”



ature of the business borne out of social  
y seat six guests.

“I called a friend I had met on a trip to France, who owned an aerospace fabrication company that made parts for **Boeing** and **Airbus**. I asked if they could consider an idea I had for this structure,” he said. “They designed the whole thing that your family and I are sitting in now. We worked on the project together since October and here we are at the beginning of 2021 with the **Astreea Igloo**.”



Read about another amazing Eagle River Business here:

### The Cozy Side of Eagle River

<https://donnliston.net/2021/01/destiny-happens.html>

Some might remember when MBC in Eagle River had a large white tent early in the **Municipality of Anchorage** business shutdown.



Each MBC location features four Igloos for guests.  
Tomter says they book fast most evenings.

“Would you rather be in a tent, or in this?” enthused Tomter, looking up through the clear bubble. “The silence inside is very nice, you cannot even hear the cars going by on the highway or the people talking in other igloos right beside us. It is like your own personal VIP room. For us this is a really cool thing that came out of a lousy situation.”





MBC owner Matt Tomter talks about innovation during the Covid-19 Pandemic.  
(Photo by Waneta Borden.)

**What has been your experience working with Anchorage compared to working with Palmer as a business owner?**



The Matanuska Brewing Company in Anchorage features a replica of the Palmer Water Tower.

“Palmer handled the COVID-19 situation very different than Anchorage,” explained Tomter. “Palmer kept all businesses open. It was **extremely** frustrating dealing with how Anchorage responded. It made no sense.

**“For instance, hospitals continued normal operation throughout 2020, and now in 2021, doing elective surgeries,” continued Tomter. “You can get a boob job at a local hospital, without it being an emergency situation. I have 100 percent sympathy and compassion for the front line healthcare workers, but as long as the business side of a hospital can operate as if there is no emergency and provide cosmetic surgery, I think my business should be open.”**

That was not the case in Anchorage.



Read about another amazing Eagle River Business here:

## What Happened to Anchorage Hospitality?

<https://donnliston.net/2021/02/the-best-thing-about-being-in-anchorage.html>

“I would encourage anyone living in Eagle River to drive out and spend a day in Palmer,” said Tomter. “The city is clean, well policed and business is thriving. Palmer has its own schools, police department, and fire department. I would love to see Eagle River separated from Anchorage and run as its own city. If Palmer can do it well so can we.”

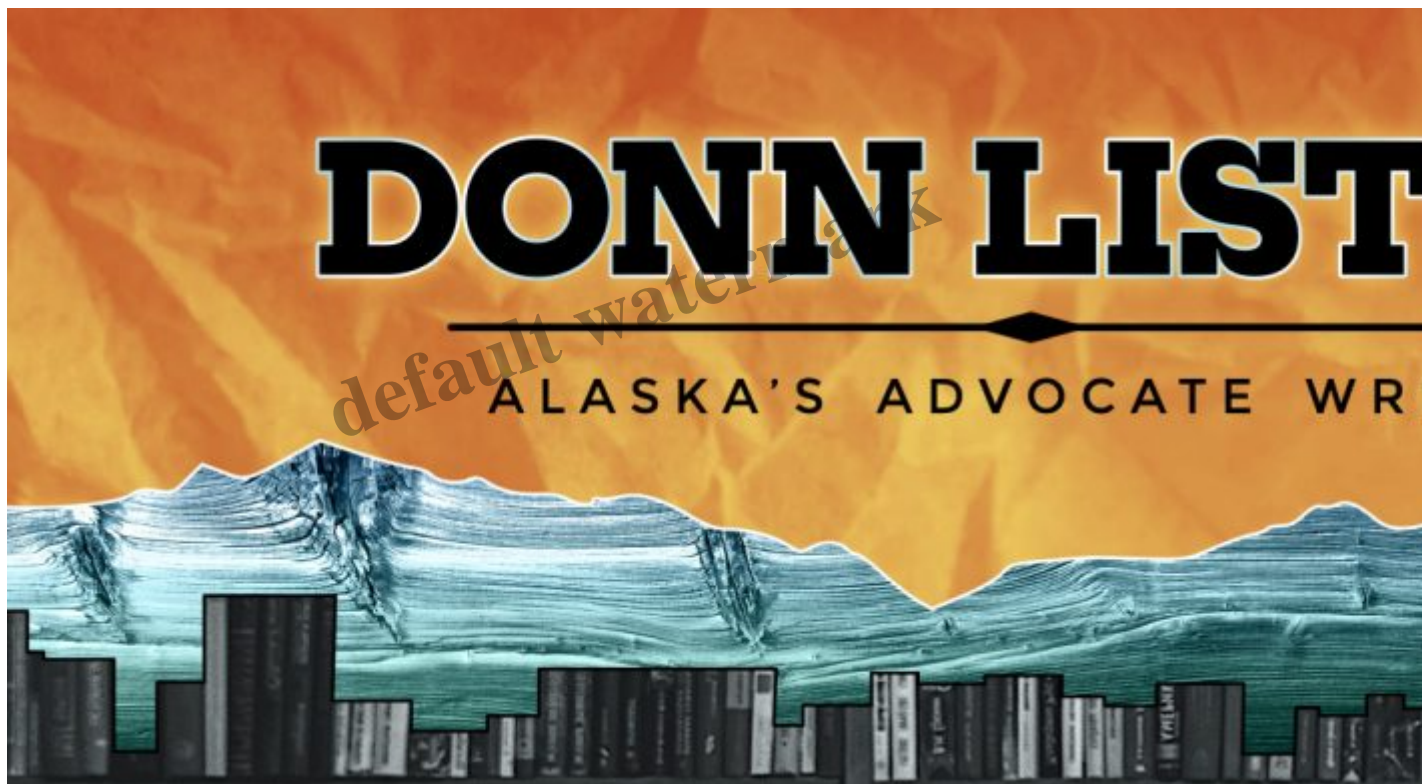
Tomter continued: “At my restaurant in Anchorage we battle daily with street living intoxicated people. They are left alone by the Anchorage administration to do pretty much what ever they want. There are no consequences for their behavior. A guy named Mike Buckland once told me “conduct has consequences”. Well, he was right. I want a city that enforces the law equally on all people, and when you’re breaking the law you get arrested. Why is it now so different than when I grew up.”



“I am a huge fan of keeping Eagle River safe for the people that live here,” said Tomter. “The current Anchorage Assembly—minus our Eagle River elected members—seem to be following in the footsteps of Seattle, Portland and San Francisco. I didn’t move up here 30 plus years ago to live in San Francisco.”

“I have regressed from the original question,” Tomter concluded. “But I love our little town of Eagle River. It has been a significant challenge to operate the last year considering how things have gone with Anchorage city government. We have been fortunate to have a loyal local following at my business. I do not want to see Eagle River become more like Anchorage. With the right leadership, Eagle River could succeed at separating from Anchorage and then maybe become more like Palmer.”

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### **Category**

1. Alaska Economy
2. Eagle River/Chugiak Community
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4. Pandemic

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