



Council members from Brevig Missions tri-entities sit at a table in the front of the multipurpose building during the community meeting, July 28, 2026. Margaret Sutherland/KNOM

Brevig Mission residents oppose Graphite One mine at community meeting

July 30, 2026 • Margaret Sutherland

Residents of the Seward Peninsula village of Brevig Mission voiced overwhelming opposition Tuesday to the proposed Graphite One mine during a meeting with the Canadian mining company and the Bering Straits Native Corp.

About 80 people filled rows of tables and ate pizza provided by Graphite One at a special joint session hosted by the Native Village of Brevig Mission, the City of Brevig Mission and the Brevig Mission Native Corp. The topic was Graphite One's proposed mining project, located near the headwaters of the village's watershed.

Residents hung signs that read "Protect our future," "No drilling in 2026!" and "No Graphite One Mine," among others.

Unlike other community meetings this summer, this one was led by the village's tri-entities and began with public comments directed at Graphite One representatives.

"I know you really want to dig this mine up for your own money, but we are stopping you for our survival," said Darla Tocktoo, a Brevig Mission resident and the tribal office coordinator for the Native Village of Brevig Mission.

During the meeting, Tocktoo served visitors traditional subsistence foods on paper plates:

dry salmon, dried oograk, or bearded seal, and local greens soaked in seal oil.

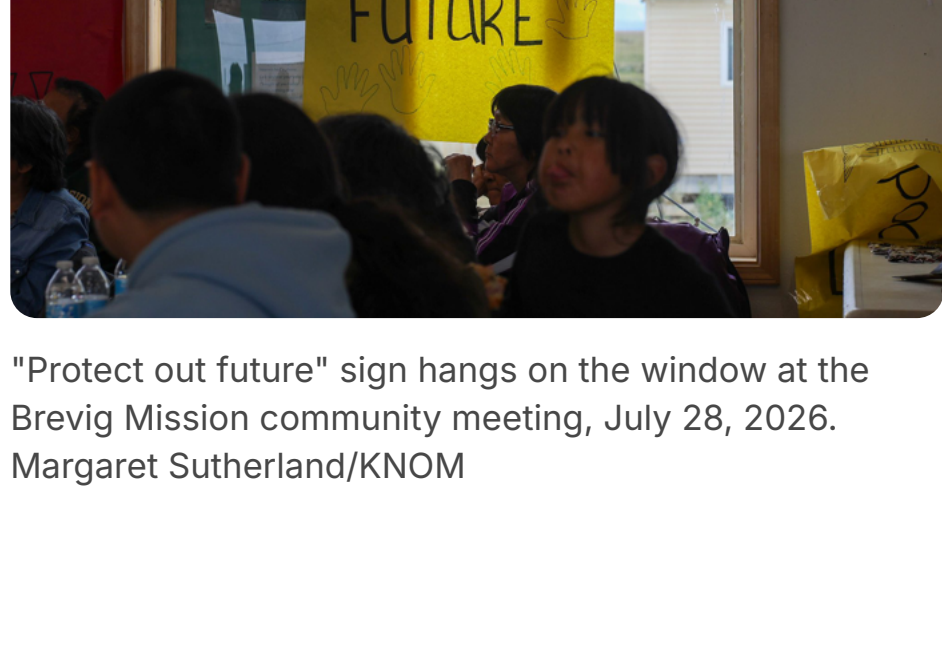
"The plates that I gave you are just a tiny bit of our lifestyle," Tocktoo said. "We hunt everything. We hunt, gather, process and put them in our freezer for the winter. There's no other way that we know how to live but off the land, the sea."

Graphite One had initially planned to visit Brevig Mission on July 1 for a community meeting in tandem with trips to Nome and Teller. But the village declined, saying in a press release that it was not consulted on the date and that the visit conflicted with subsistence activities.

The proposed mine would be a roughly 1.1 mile wide open pit on state land near the Kigluaik Mountains and the Imuruk Basin. Graphite One says the site holds one of the largest known graphite deposits in the United States, and materials from the mine would support a broader battery supply chain.

The site is about an hour by boat from Brevig Mission, a village of about 400 people. Tocktoo said the community relies heavily on subsistence foods from the Imuruk Basin.

"Our kids are going to be dependent on it forever," Tocktoo said. "You start that mine and you pollute our air, water, or sea. You're killing our kids. You're killing our future."



"Protect our future" sign hangs on the window at the Brevig Mission community meeting, July 28, 2026. Margaret Sutherland/KNOM

The villages tri-entty council members and a young child at the front of the room during the Brevig Mission community meeting, July 28, 2026. Margaret Sutherland/KNOM

The current proposal estimates a 20-year mine life, with the possibility of an extension. Graphite One says the project could employ about 250 skilled workers.

But Frieda Southall – the Vice President of the Native Village of Brevig Mission– said jobs do not outweigh the risk to food security for current and future generations.

"It's always fed to us like, 'oh it's going to help job security,' and what have you," Southall said. "But at the end of the day, when this mine gets what they want from that land, and they use batteries or whatever it is that they're going to use that graphite for, we're still going to be here, and we're going to be the ones left behind trying to make it."

The Graphite One mining project has been in development for the last several years. Last summer it was added to the FAST-41 permitting dashboard, a federal fast-track for selected critical mineral projects across the country.

In November, Brevig Mission's tri-entities – the native village, native corporation, and city – passed a joint resolution opposing the mine, citing concerns for 'subsistence resources, cultural integrity, community wellbeing, and long-term sustainability for the region.'

But earlier this month, the U.S Army Corps of Engineers, which holds a key federal permit for the project, said it needs a more extensive Environmental Impact Statement, or EIS, instead of the less scrutinious Environmental Assessment. That delays the project's federal permitting process, which had been expected to wrap up this fall, by at least a year, and adds more studies and public comment before the project can move forward.

Southall says local knowledge needs to be part of that process.

"Traditional knowledge needs to be put into that, because as a non-native doing that, you're not going to know what a native person utilizes when you get that EIS done," Southall said. "That really needs to be taken into consideration."

Mike Schaffner is Chief Operating Officer for Graphite One. He told attendees that the company wants to mitigate environmental harm and work with the community.

"If we can't put a mine in that honors what you just said, there shouldn't be a mine put in. It's that plain and simple," Schaffner said. "Because every sign you've got up here– 'protect the tradition,' 'protect the salmon,' 'protect the animals,' we agree with that, and if you can't put a mine in that does that, it shouldn't go in."

Schaffner said the more extensive review of the environmental impact statement will give them time to address the subsistence concerns.

Brevig Mission residents also directed concerns toward reps from Bering Straits Native Corporation, which has invested about \$2 million in the project.

Several residents said the corporation invested without consulting shareholders and that the investment undercuts the corporation's role in advocating for their interests.

Larry Pederson, Vice President of Regional Services for Bering Straits Native Corporation and a BSNC shareholder, was one of two BSNC representatives who attended the meeting. He said the investment was a way to secure the region a seat at the table despite not having land claims. With their investment came a seat on an advisory board for the project.

"Normally, in these types of processes, we would have a stake in land ownership in a project. In this case, we do not," Pederson said. "There is no native land, corporation land, that is directly impacted by this project. So our leadership has decided that investing in the company is a way to garner benefits for the people that do decide they want or need the work if it does go."

The mine site sits on a narrow strip of state land surrounded by corporation lands. The graphite deposit was first staked in 1900 and has long been known for its mineral potential, [according to historical records](#).

Graphite One [has said](#) the company would negotiate direct financial compensation for communities in the form of a payment-in-lieu-of-taxes, or PILT, since the villages are not part of a borough and wouldn't receive regular property tax revenue from the project. Still, many at the meeting remained in opposition.

Brevig Mission resident Elmer Seetot Jr. sits on Graphite One's Subsistence Advisory Council. He said he doesn't think public sentiment will change the outcome.

"Whether we say it or not publicly, the federal government, U.S. government, is looking at graphite at that mine. They're going to do it one way or another," Seetot said. "But we can talk about other things – our natural resources, and our environment, these are the things that we can control."

He says climate change and warming Arctic conditions are already leading to more scarce subsistence resources. But he said at least Graphite One is working with them, which is preferred to an alternative company that may not.

"We need to look at the world around us. It's not like when we were young," Seetot said. "Now things change to a point where our people before us said these things would happen, and now they're happening."

After public comments, the tri-entities played a slideshow of locals hunting caribou, gathering berries, fishing, and recreating on the surrounding land. Graphite One gave a project update before the meeting adjourned.

The federal Environmental Impact Statement for the project is expected to be finished in September of next year.

Graphite One's Chief Operating Officer Mike Schaffner speaks during Brevig Missions community meeting, July 28, 2026. Margaret Sutherland/KNOM

Edward Tocktoo speaks during a Graphite One community meeting in Brevig Mission, July 28, 2026. Margaret Sutherland/KNOM

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