



Alaska Arctic Policy Commission

Fairbanks Meeting Highlights

October 22 & 23, 2013

COMMISSION MEETING | DAY ONE

Location: University of Alaska, Fairbanks Campus (UAF)

October 22, 2013

Co-Chaired by Sen. Lesil McGuire and Rep. Bob Herron

With 23 of 26 Commissioners and 2 Ex Officio members present, Commission Co-Chairs McGuire and Herron welcomed Commissioners to Fairbanks and oriented them to the next two days' work. They stressed the importance of this meeting's focus on people – looking at quality of life issues for those who make their homes in the Arctic, and who thereby serve as reporters from the front lines as the rest of the world addresses larger arctic policy issues.

COMMISSION PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

Below is a brief summary of presentations and public testimony heard by the Commission. To see the meeting's agenda, please check here: www.akarctic.com/?p=272 . To view a full video recording, visit: www.360north.org/gavel-archives, and look through the videos sorted by date.

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UAF's Arctic Strengths

Presenter: Mr. Brian Rogers

Chancellor | UAF

Chancellor Rogers welcomed the Commission to “America’s Arctic University”. He went on to outline the University’s international leadership in Arctic research, education, and collaborative partnerships. He presented the University as a neutral, non-partisan and unbiased resource to the AAPC’s policy recommendation development.

He noted both the challenge and opportunities presented by an opening Arctic, and identified several key Alaska infrastructure needs: energy, communication, transportation, and a trained workforce ready for 21st century jobs, in order to maximize benefit to Alaskans. In addition, Chancellor Rogers stressed that we should focus not only on what Alaska can do, but also how we can maximize the benefit of other entities’ action in the Arctic.

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Challenges, Opportunities, and Other Observations

Presenter: Dr. Mark Myers

Vice Chancellor for Research | UAF



Alaska Arctic Policy Commission

Fairbanks Meeting Highlights

October 22 & 23, 2013

Dr. Myers challenged AAPC to always keep one question in mind as they develop policy recommendations for presentation to the Legislature, and beyond: what is it that you hope to accomplish? Continuing, he shared that most major Alaskan infrastructure projects (the Alcan Highway, Trans-Alaska Pipeline System, etc.) have been built in response to national and international crises, with primarily Outside funding. Other state and locally driven projects have been less resourced, and often less successful due to lack of critical information in planning and execution.

He noted that Alaska currently faces five major challenges:

1. *Sustainable economic development.* Alaska is a young state, still maturing. Many baseline datasets needed for successful project and process planning have not yet been developed, and there is a notable lack of Research and Development funds budgeted by the state or its development partners.
2. *Energy.* We have diverse resources available, but infrastructure through which to access it is sparse - especially in the Arctic.
3. *Frequent disasters, both natural and manmade.* Weather related, resource development caused, etc. - Alaska needs to expand its emergency and contingency planning capability for all potential disasters, regardless of their source.
4. *Rural health.* Many challenges exist, from basic sanitary water systems to physical and mental health care provider shortages, and beyond.
5. *Lack of data underpinning decision making.* Development decisions should be informed by solid information.

Dr. Myers urged the Commission to use University research resources, partner with communities, and identify appropriate roles for public and private sectors in Alaska Arctic advancement. He also opined that the Legislature needs a larger, stronger, independent and nonpartisan objective research engine; interest groups pay for research and present info that backs up their interests, but Alaskans deserve better. Transparency and neutrality are critical to earning and maintaining public trust.

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The State of Native Languages

Presenter: Dr. Gary Holton

Professor of Linguistics and Director, Alaska Native Language Archive | UAF

Dr. Holton provided a quick overview of Alaska Native language history, which led to the presence of approximately 20 distinct Alaska Native languages, and great linguistic diversity in Alaska's Arctic.

Documented research began circa 1700. After years of struggle and decline, in 1972, the Alaska State Legislature passed a Bilingual Education Act that established the Alaska Native Language Center. This center has since supported most of the scholarly work we benefit from today. This work generated dictionaries, diverse learning programs, recordings, other info resources, and a large archive preserved for future generations.



Alaska Arctic Policy Commission

Fairbanks Meeting Highlights

October 22 & 23, 2013

Dr. Holton noted that Alaska Native languages have a “very special connection to Alaska, that other languages don’t”; Alaska Native languages are deeply tied to the land and the places from which they come. He illustrated two current UAF projects in which Alaska Native languages are informing the international scientific community as it develops its own language for studying the Arctic.

Dr. Holton shared the following observations:

- Initial revitalization efforts stemming from the 1972 Act were primarily K-12 school based. Now, they are becoming more grassroots and community based, as people choose to gather and learn together. Many learners seek enrichment, rather than full fluency.
- New media are great learning tools. Electronic media applications and websites give access to audio and video to aide learners. Social media allows people to communicate in less pressured, personal ways.

Looking forward, he recommended 3 main policy foci:

1. Alaska Native languages need full official and legal recognition.
2. Support preservation and access to as-yet unarchived recordings and other materials.
3. Support revitalization. Many valid strategies (grassroots-up to top-down). None should be discounted, and research to determine which efforts are working, and at what levels, would encourage efficiency and effectiveness in this area.

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Alaska Native Youth Resilience and Suicide Prevention

Dr. Stacy Rasmus, Research Professor | Center for Alaska Native Health Research (CANHR)
and

Mr. Billy Charles, Research Collaborator | Community of Emmonak

UAF’s CANHR conducts “community-based participatory research” – collaborating as an equal partner with Alaska Native community members in seeking solutions to health challenges faced by communities across the state. Inherent in this approach is a recognition that progress will come through working together, but true solutions can only come from within each community. CANHR strives to work only with communities who identify needs and generate ideas, then invite CANHR to join them - rather than impose, even through suggestion, their presence or outside expertise.

Dr. Rasmus reviewed CANHR's history, and that of other Alaska Native focused research and public awareness efforts following the Anchorage Daily News' groundbreaking 1988 "A People in Peril" series, which outlined various health and social challenges to many Rural Alaska communities. Some epidemiological studies had begun in late 1970’s, but numbers exploded following People in Peril. Many of those studies’ results presented data showing a high prevalence various struggles in rural communities, especially among Alaska Native male youth.



Alaska Arctic Policy Commission

Fairbanks Meeting Highlights

October 22 & 23, 2013

Following “A People in Peril”, Alaska Native leaders asked for studies focusing on the strengths of Alaska Natives. The idea was to support the good, not just the struggle, and to give communities and youth something to look forward to and strive to find themselves. In response, the National Institutes of Health funded the “People Awakening Project”, a CANHR study of the Alaska Native sobriety process, to identify what forms of cultural presence most help to create strong, healthy young Alaska Natives who know and embrace who they are.

Stacy and Billy currently collaborate on a Yup’ik Youth and Community Resilience project, focusing on how arctic communities’ strengths affect documented health disparities (specifically: substance abuse, mental health, and suicide). Their community sample size is small, but carefully constructed to maintain empirical value in higher academic peer-review settings – and they believe their approach can translate to work in any region of Alaska.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Commissioners made time for an open public comment period, to which anyone who desired could address the commission in person or in writing. One person participated in this way.

Ms. Pamela Miller, Arctic Program Director of the Northern Alaska Environmental Center located in Fairbanks, shared a wide-range of thoughts on the Alaskan arctic. Topics she touched on include: AAPC’s process, preliminary draft document content, the importance of arctic resident education, the fundamental value of land to Alaska’s indigenous peoples, the need to fully protect the state’s ecological resources for resident wellbeing and their tourism and recreation economic value to future generations, critical oil spill preparedness and response planning, the impacts of climate change, the need to more extensively address marine shipping issues, the need to recognize both the benefits and the risks of non-renewable resource development, recognition of the loss of the Alaska Coastal Management Program, and other related topics.

WORKING LUNCH: FURTHER PRESENTATIONS

Over a working lunch, AAPC Commissioners heard from two more invited presenters.

Dr. Bert Boyer, Professor of Molecular Biology and Director of CANHR | UAF

Dr. Boyer gave a larger overview of CANHR’s work, and highlighted a few of the center’s diverse ongoing projects supported from its two clinical research facilities (one in Fairbanks, the other in Bethel). The small sample he mentioned ranged from an investigation of contaminants in traditional subsistence foods, stress’ effect on Arctic villagers’ physical health, a “Fish to Schools” program, as well as obesity and cancer prevention and intervention projects.



Alaska Arctic Policy Commission

Fairbanks Meeting Highlights

October 22 & 23, 2013

Dr. John Walsh, President's Professor of Global Change and Chief Scientist | UAF International Arctic Research Center (IARC)

Dr. Walsh introduced AAPC members to IARC and its basic mission: to foster Arctic research in order to help the world prepare for and adapt to the pan-Arctic impacts of climate change. Find a more detailed mission statement here: www.iarc.uaf.edu/en/about/mission_statement.

IARC integrates university, state, federal, and international partners to operate a wide range of programs and collaboratives in support of its mission. The Center strives to maintain a holistic view of the Arctic – mindful of infrastructure, ecosystem, and human impacts.

IARC's current strategic plan emphasizes the need to focus on five critical issues:

1. Trans-Polar Shipping
2. Arctic Marine Ecosystems
3. Ocean Acidification
4. Changes in Arctic Terrestrial System
5. Climate Change (a separate issue, but noted to also umbrella over the other four)

Dr. Walsh went on to highlight a few of IARC's ongoing projects. Following his prepared remarks, there was a question and answer exchange with Commissioners.

ADMINISTRATIVE WORK SESSION

National Strategy for the Arctic Region (NSAR) Update

Co-Chair McGuire reported to the Commission on an October 1, 2013 AAPC-White House teleconference regarding NSAR (report released May, 2013) and coordination between the two groups.

Participants identified the following areas in which the White House's NSAR and AAPC's current draft preliminary report align:

1. Economic and Energy Resource Development
2. Conservation of Arctic Ecosystems
3. Protection of the Environment / Conservation of Natural Resources
4. Improved Ice-Capable Ship Fleet
5. Ratification of the international United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
6. The Arctic Council's upcoming US Chairmanship (Note: AAPC would like to see an Alaskan named Chair, while NSAR does not specify this).

Following the October 1 teleconference, AAPC's Co-Chairs submitted a letter to the NSAR team urging them to consider a broad diversity of perspectives, draw from expertise within Alaska and allow for more time for state and federal ideas to meld in the coming months for an effective and enduring strategy. A quick, positive response from Brenden Kelly was received right before the



Alaska Arctic Policy Commission

Fairbanks Meeting Highlights

October 22 & 23, 2013

meeting – agreeing that greater coordination between the two groups would be beneficial, and inviting them to continue monthly teleconferences. Dr. Nikoosh Carlo, AAPC’s Executive Director, will work to develop this relationship and facilitate communication with the NSAR team.

AAPC Executive Director Update: The Path Forward

Dr. Nikoosh Carlo, AAPC Executive Director, summarized the common questions and concerns communicated to her as she met individually with 22 AAPC members in September. She also reviewed the AAPC mission, accomplishments thus far, items still pending, and specific near-term goals.

AAPC’s enabling legislation gives Commission two goals:

1. Develop and Arctic policy for the state of Alaska;
2. Provide a plan for implementing that policy.

It also requires the Commission to provide to the Legislature:

1. A preliminary report with recommendations regarding Arctic policy (due 1/30/2014);
2. A final report with specific legislative proposals for consideration (due 1/30/2015).

These two deliverables guide the Commission’s work for its remaining 14 months.

AAPC has accomplished much since becoming active in March 2014: convening four major meetings providing a forum for public input on Arctic issues, developing a draft of the “State of Alaska’s Arctic” background document, creating Guiding Principles; and building partnerships spanning all sectors. Partnership building has included gathering expert advice from vested partners in local and regional communities, sending a Letter of Intent to key federal agencies and leadership, and forging a working relationship with the federal NSAR Task Force leads to discuss implementation and future collaboration. The early Letter of Intent, necessitated by a recent flood of federal Arctic policies and strategies, covered several key assumptions that continue to drive the work of the Commission - including emphasis on state leadership and experience, the need for federal/state/local collaboration, and the need for international engagement and governance.

Much work remains. Prior to January 2014, the draft policy recommendations must be completed, gaps and outstanding questions identified and resolved, and the full report delivered to the Co-Chairs for finalization. To accomplish all this, AAPC must focus the remainder of the Fairbanks meeting on reviewing the background document, in order to prepare for in-depth discussion of preliminary policy recommendations.

For the purpose of cohesiveness, Dr. Carlo reviewed three points previously agreed on by Commissioners:

1. To define “Arctic”, AAPC will use the definition articulated in the Arctic Research and Policy Act of 1984 (ARPA) – this includes all of Alaska north of the Arctic Circle and north and west of the Porcupine, Yukon, and Kuskokwim rivers and the Aleutian chain. Commissioners agreed to this definition at the first full AAPC meeting, held in Juneau during March 2013;



Alaska Arctic Policy Commission

Fairbanks Meeting Highlights

October 22 & 23, 2013

2. The Alaska State Legislature is our primary audience, but AAPC's report will also speak to other audiences: all Alaskans, the federal government, and the wider international Arctic community. AAPC will focus on the three main things we want them to know about each policy area, some ongoing efforts, and potential solutions;
3. Seeking widespread Alaskan expertise will lead to a more informed document. AAPC will accomplish this by holding public comment periods whenever possible, throughout the process.

Commissioners asked that a work plan be developed for 2014 – timeline, implementation strategy and plans for external market/branding that would be employed. Other questions arose, including how to determine the difference between Arctic policy and general state of Alaska policy (Resolution: by focusing on those policies that are specific to the Arctic) and whether or not it was realistic to meeting during the upcoming legislative session and campaign season.

COMMISSION WORK SESSION

Commissioners continued earlier discussion of their “State of Alaska’s Arctic Background Document”, a continuation of discussion from their August 2013 meeting in Unalaska. Policy Team Captains (or their designees) briefly summarized their individual sections, highlighting changes made since the Unalaska meeting. The full group discussion once again opened each policy group’s work to all commissioners.

LEGISLATOR LEADERSHIP MEETING

A private meeting for legislator-Commissioners was held in the evening, for the purpose of discussing strategies to support the AAPC’s work in the upcoming 2014 legislative session. A report on the legislators’ discussion was given to all Commissioners and the public the next day.



Alaska Arctic Policy Commission

Fairbanks Meeting Highlights

October 22 & 23, 2013

COMMISSION MEETING | DAY TWO

Location: Pike's Waterfront Lodge, Binkley Room 3

October 23, 2013

Co-Chaired by Sen. Lesil McGuire and Rep. Bob Herron

POLICY SECTION OVERVIEWS

Overviews were given of the following policy sections, followed by full-commission discussion:

- Oil, Gas, and Minerals Development & Oil Pollution Prevention and Response – Commissioner Pekich
- Science and Research – Tim Clark, staff to Commissioner Edgmon
- Energy – Tim Clark, staff to Commissioner Edgmon
- Wildlife – Commissioner Neuman
- Infrastructure and Planning – Commissioner Neuman
- Fisheries – Commissioner Hoffman
- Governance, Indigenous Perspectives and Concerns – Commissioners Stevens, Hughes and Moore
- Coast Guard and Marine Transportation – Commissioner Austerman

RECAP OF PREVIOUS EVENING'S LEGISLATOR ONLY MEETING

Several legislator members expressed general appreciation for the public experts on the commission. It was noted the December meeting will be a 2-day work session on preliminary report, and that the draft recommendations will be *preliminary*. Staff will send out a structure or format to plug reports into.

It was remarked that the process was disjointed and got off to a slow start, but Commission work is progressing, aided by the high level of expertise of its members. It was re-emphasized that the Commission is legislatively led and driven. There was concern that with 2014 being an election year it might be hard for legislators to participate as much as they'd like to.

Questions were asked: Rather than the report collecting dust on someone's desk, How do we get this in front of legislature? What will be that process? How do we start the debate? Ideas included resolutions (including one on the National Strategy for the Arctic Region), Arctic policy in statute, separate bills dealing with pieces of arctic policy, and legislator members promoting the policies with their colleagues.

Other commissioners commented that: deciding what legislation should be is difficult without seeing final report; the format for the report's sections still needs to be harmonized; overlap remains a concern; Alaska people should be prominent in the report; and the commission should look carefully to see if anything is missed in the report.



Alaska Arctic Policy Commission

Fairbanks Meeting Highlights

October 22 & 23, 2013

Report on the Arctic Energy Summit and the Arctic Circle Conference: October 2013 in Iceland

Commissioner Andreassen delivered a presentation on the Arctic Energy Summit. Richness plus Responsibility equals Resilience was the overall summit theme. Other topics included:

- Moving from Stakeholders to Rights-holders
- Cross-sectoral approach including Academic, Private, Non-governmental, and Public sectors
- Richness includes use of renewable and non-renewable resources and conservation/efficiency
- Noting that responsibility to communities, cultures, and the environment is important since development in Arctic is not risk free

Several Commissioners attended the Arctic Circle Conference and shared their impressions with the group. All noticed the high level of international participation, such Southeast Asia, China, and Africa as well as many more countries being interested in the Arctic. Alice Rogoff was commended for giving Alaska a role and a seat at the table throughout the event.

The Arctic Circle Conference welcomed many diverse perspectives. Some Commissioners noticed a strong anti-development tone, while others did not. Some thought that parts of the conference implicitly suggested that arctic peoples could not govern themselves but needed outside organizations to make decisions for them; and that there were plenty of grand visions, but less practical suggestions.

Commissioners also noted the following observations:

- We know very little about the oceans – much more mapping is needed
- The impact of climate change creates a sense of urgency
- Iceland has a stellar model for energy supply
- Singapore is interested in Alaska's position in the Pacific
- 80% of the arctic landmass is in Russia or Canada
- Melting of Himalayan glaciers (“third pole”) could cause two billion people's water supply to be negatively impacted

Overall, the sentiment was that Commissioners served effectively as Arctic Ambassadors. Efforts should be continued to maintain an Arctic presence. There is a role for the legislature to lead, and the AAPC can be a voice for what Alaska can contribute and what Alaska is already doing.

List of Policy Recommendations Reviewed

At the end of the meeting, the Commission cursorily reviewed all 70+ policy recommendations that have been developed to date.