

From: Margi Dashevsky <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Tuesday, March 29, 2022 4:45 PM

To: House State Affairs <HouseState.Affairs@akleg.gov>; Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins <Rep.Jonathan.Kreiss-Tomkins@akleg.gov>; Rep. Matt Claman <Rep.Matt.Claman@akleg.gov>; Rep. Geran Tarr <Rep.Geran.Tarr@akleg.gov>; Rep. Andi Story <Rep.Andi.Story@akleg.gov>; Rep. Sarah Vance <Rep.Sarah.Vance@akleg.gov>; Rep. James Kaufman <Rep.James.Kaufman@akleg.gov>; Rep. David Eastman <Rep.David.Eastman@akleg.gov>

Subject: HB 271 Comment in support of AIDEA Reform Bill

Dear House State Affairs Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to elaborate on my verbal testimony just now. I'm a lifelong Alaskan and I support HB 271 and encourage you to further strengthen it by adding amendments to address AIDEA's board's illegal overuse of executive sessions.

AIDEA has a terrible track record of violating the Open Meetings Act and has only recently made superficial changes with increased scrutiny. Some examples of AIDEA's complete disregard of public process include: In 2020, the AIDEA board spent 68% of their meetings in executive session. On three occasions, the board spent over 80% of the meeting in executive session. This was up from 2019 when the AIDEA board spent about half of their meetings in executive session. An average of 2-5 days of public notice is not nearly adequate for public decisions of the magnitude and political nature that AIDEA continues to make.

This changes proposed in HB 271 are necessary to ensure that going forward AIDEA play's to its historical strengths as a lender and focuses on issuing loans and bonds for small locally owned businesses and stops making politically-driven investments in which they are the owner and operator of politically controversial projects like the proposed Ambler and West Susitna roads and the leases in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Oversight is especially needed to ensure AIDEA board member interests aren't swaying their decisions. For example businesses associated with 3 AIDEA Board Members and One Staffer received >\$400,000 in CARES Act Grants. Two AIDEA board members running for public office received \$36,000 In donations from the Energy And Natural Resources Industry. AIDEA board members have donated tens of thousands of dollars to politicians that pushed for oil and gas extraction.

It often appears that the AIDEA board has already made its mind up before they even receive public comments. Public input must inform their decision-making and instead AIDEA it appears that AIDEA is merely conducting damage control and PR, which is not an honest public process. I have personally experienced this numerous times testifying at countless meetings over the last few years.

My first AIDEA board meeting experience was in the early days of the pandemic - AIDEA only gave 3 days' notice for the meeting March 27, 2020 during which AIDEA Board Chair, Dana Pruhs abruptly ended public testimony of people opposing the Ambler Road by saying, "I don't give a shit." The AIDEA board went on to approve \$35 million on the Ambler Road and deny [\\$2.5 million for Alaska's blood bank](#). My second AIDEA meeting was on Dec 23 just before christmas when with less than 48 hours notice I called in despite my power being out due to 80mph winds. I subsequently co-authored two opeds [AIDEA, Alaskans are watching](#) and [AIDEA must diversify Alaska's economy for a resilient future](#).

Lastly, I am forwarding the public comment I submitted to the AIDEA board below to provide specific examples of my experiences of their egregious public process.

Sincerely,
Margi Dashevsky

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Margi Dashevsky** <[REDACTED]@[REDACTED].com>

Date: Wed, Aug 11, 2021 at 3:23 PM

Subject: Public Comment Re: G21-24

To: publiccomment <publiccomment@aidea.org>

Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority
RE: RESOLUTION NO. G21-24

Dear AIDEA Staff and Board,

In reviewing the Public Engagement Presentation for your upcoming board meeting I was concerned because there is no mention of your illegal overuse of executive session. The State of Alaska's Open Meetings Act, which requires that decisions made and actions taken by a public entity like AIDEA are public knowledge and genuinely represent the will of the Alaskan public that AIDEA serves. Glossing over a problem doesn't make it go away; changing your operating procedures and real life practices might start to address AIDEA's history of misallocated and secretive investments. Similarly, launching a Public Relations campaign won't make the Green Bank successful; meaningful and genuine stakeholder engagement, which AIDEA has sorely lacked and even scorned in the past, might.

I was pleased to see your first point on slide 4 that a key purpose of public engagement is to "build trust and create stronger relationships." I am heartened by the personal responses I received from Alan Weitzner regarding to a previous public comment and the opportunity to meet with AIDEA's communication director, Colleen Bryan, about my concerns but pointed, executive level attention after heightened public scrutiny and months of comments doesn't address the serious problems with AIDEA's current and past operations.

This novel responsiveness does go a very long way but does not assuage my objection to the actions that AIDEA has taken and continues to take without addressing the public input you have received. A great way to remedy my concern would be to publicly share documentation of AIDEA's use or rejection of factual and other substantive public comments in its project analysis and decisionmaking process. Furthermore, AIDEA needs to implement policies, practices, and bylaws for a robust public process and how it will be conducted so that for example the public knows what you discuss in executive session.

On slide 5, I appreciate that you want to better understand your audience but the purpose of familiarizing yourself with stakeholder values, priorities, and concerns should not be to inform "messaging" (this is public relations). The purpose of gathering this information should be to improve decisions and project outcomes (this is public process as the law requires: actual, genuine public engagement)!

On slide 7, you claim that "Deliberation and action by AIDEA's Board occurs during public session; no decisions are made during executive session" and that "agendas with supporting documentation are posted seven days prior to the next meeting" which has absolutely not been my experience. Historically,

AIDEA has been notoriously obtuse and has only recently made changes with increased scrutiny. For example, much of your deliberation on the Arctic Refuge leases occurred in private and the December 23, 2020 meeting was announced with less than 2 days' notice. You also only gave 3 days' notice for the March 27, 2020 meeting when you decided to spend \$35 million on the Ambler Road.

Can you please clarify for me "all steps occurring in the decision-making process" because clearly there's a lot that is decided upon before, during, and after board meetings that the public is absolutely not privy to and do not represent the will of the Alaskan public. I had hoped to be able to comment on the next steps of Arctic Refuge seismic process at this board meeting but it's not on the agenda and instead you've already issued a press release stating your intent to award the contract to SAE. This press release once again does not address any of the public comments in opposition that you have received. When will there be future opportunities for public engagement with regard to the Arctic Refuge or has AIDEA met its public engagement quota for this project already?

That majority of what you propose on slide 8 for next steps sounds like one directional sharing of information about AIDEA's projects. If it's not a two-way exchange then you will continue to fail to "represent the will of the public" that AIDEA ultimately must serve.

I've said this before: it often appears that the AIDEA board has already made its mind up before you receive public comments. If this is the case then you're not actually using public input to inform your decision-making which is illegal and you are merely conducting damage control and PR--not honest public process. To this point I'm including excerpts from FOUR previous comments below.

Respectfully,
Margi Dashevsky

6/22/21

I am dismayed that once again I am scrambling at the last minute to convey vital information. 5 days is the bare minimum and way too short notice for any meaningful public engagement. Large scale, long term projects like planning for and permitting a seismic program in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge are of global importance and warrant at least thirty days advance notice. Furthermore, there should be a way to sign up to receive notifications for when the website is updated as a courtesy so we don't have to keep checking back.

Spending of \$1.5million now is eerily reminiscent of when you allocated \$35M for Ambler Road in the height of the Pandemic. Alaska can't afford to waste money on a suspended lease especially given the impending government shut down and 15k state employees just received pink slips!

It is unacceptable that you do not even acknowledge in the 300+ email comments, and on 12/23/20 heard from 39 testifiers all in opposition to bidding on leases except 1.

5/18/21

The proposed Energy Independence Program & Fund can be a powerful engine to diversify Alaska's economy and is clearly aligned with AIDEA's scope and mission, however I am concerned that greater transparency and accountability are necessary to ensure success.

For example, public process is a key element to ensure robust management. I encourage you to establish and implement policies and procedures that require 30 days notice for public comment on resolutions and a publicly available document showing AIDEA's record of its use or rejection of factual or other substantive public comments. I also encourage minimizing the extensive time AIDEA spends in non-public discussions and providing detailed statements describing the basis for and outcomes from each Executive Session.

1/12/21

There is a disconnect between what you said and what you did. Before voting unanimously to pass resolution No. G20-31 AIDEA board members said that they listened to, read, and some even agreed with public comments (which were 98% in opposition). However, there was no honest consideration to any alternative to the resolution on the table. AIDEA board member statements made it clear that your minds were made up well ahead of the hearing. This disconnect between your words and your actions continued when you bid on 11 tracts and ultimately spent \$12,018,825 on Arctic Refuge leases.

I and other members of the Alaskan public, not to mention countless concerned stakeholders across the US and world, are listening very closely to you and it does not appear you have extended the same courtesy to us. During your meeting tomorrow please reconcile this disconnect between your actions and words. Show us that you are listening and acting in good faith.

12/22/20

AIDEA's disregard for the public process is egregious! The draft resolution was released to the public, under pressure, only two days before this meeting, which further fails to serve Alaska's public process. Meeting to discuss and vote on this important and far-reaching resolution in the hours leading up to the Christmas holiday is irresponsible.

Furthermore, to spend \$20 million of taxpayer dollars on such a contentious and hotly-contested issue, in such haste, without reasonable notice, and without forethought of the consequences, fails to serve the public's best interest and fails to meet Governor Dunleavy's commitment - to restore the people's trust in our government.

Finally, my power has been out today due to 80mph winds. The current storm in Southcentral has taken down power in multiple communities during the only 7 hours to submit a written comment during an already prohibitively tight timeframe.

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Dena'inaq etnen'aaq' gheshtnu ch'q'u yeshdu.

I live and work on the land of the Dena'ina.

Translation by Joel Isaak and Sondra Shaginoff-Stuart

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