

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
February 20, 2001
8:36 a.m.

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

ALASKA NATIVE HEALTH BOARD OVERVIEW REGARDING RUNWAY LIGHTS AND RURAL SANITATION

TAPES

01-10, SIDE A

CALL TO ORDER

REPRESENTATIVE CARL MORGAN, CO-CHAIR, reconvened the House Community and Regional Affairs Committee at 8:36 a.m.

PRESENT

Committee members present were Representatives Morgan, Meyer, Halcro, Scalzi, and Guess.

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

ROBERT CLARK, President and CEO of Bristol Bay Native Health Corporation, explained the statewide structure of the Alaska Native Health Board, including examples of regional health organizations. He said the purpose of the Alaska Native Health Board is to advocate for the health needs of rural Alaskans. The board uses a comprehensive definition of health, which includes water and sewer, infrastructure, prevention, and education.

MR. CLARK said he wanted to bring rural Alaska Sanitation Coalition to the attention of the committee. He referred to a handout and went on to discuss the issue, including the scope of the problem. Mr. Clark requested the committee's support with the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation regarding water and sewer hookups; the corporation has included rural sanitation in their 2002 operating budget request to the legislature.

REPRESENTATIVE HALCRO and MR. CLARK exchanged a series of questions and answers on rural Alaska sanitation conditions, and the special environmental and geographic conditions there.

MR. CLARK discussed concerns over federal funding for runway lights for communities, and turning the airports over to the communities who can ill afford their maintenance now with limited state dollars. Mr. Clark pointed out that less than half the villages in his region have runway lights. He related his experiences with not having lights for Medivac flights.

WILSON JUSTIN, Vice-President of the Mt. Sanford Tribal Consortium, said the Alaska Native Health Board has a balanced view of tribal entities and health organizations in Alaska. Mr. Justin noted that he represents some rather remote communities connected by highways rather than airports. He related that the problems in the communities he represents are the same as those communities connected by airports.

MR. JUSTIN spoke to the need for elderly care, specifically the problems relating to the inability to care for elders who are ailing, who wish to return from hospitals, or who don't want to leave the community.

MR. JUSTIN reiterated Mr. Clark's views on the critical needs for runway lights in rural Alaska and the importance of the Rural Alaska Sanitation Coalition.

REPRESENTATIVE HALCRO and Mr. Clark exchanged further questions and answers regarding runway lights and maintenance, including the role of the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) in addressing the problem.

MR. JUSTIN commented on DOT&PF's organizational structure and how this has affected rural airports.

MR. CLARK made additional comments on elder care.

REPRESENTATIVE MORGAN asked Mr. Clark if the board is working with the administration on DOT&PF issues.

MR. CLARK replied that the administration has been accommodating, but the funds and priorities are limited. Mr. Clark went on to mention further problems with health care, subsistence, and mental health.

REPRESENTATIVE HALCRO indicated that similar policy debates exist in urban areas, and thanked Mr. Clark and Mr. Justin for speaking to the committee.

MR. CLARK spoke in support of a state energy policy.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements were made.

COMMITTEE ACTION

The committee took no action.

ADJOURNMENT

CO-CHAIR MORGAN adjourned the overview at approximately 9:20 a.m. The House Community and Regional Affairs Standing

Committee meeting regarding HCR 1 can be found under the minutes of the same date but with the time of 8:08 a.m.

NOTE: The meeting was recorded and handwritten log notes were taken. A copy of the tape(s) and log notes may be obtained by contacting the House Records Office at State Capitol, Room 3, Juneau, Alaska 99801 (mailing address), (907) 465-2214, and after adjournment of the second session of the Twenty-Second Alaska State Legislature this information may be obtained by contacting the Legislative Reference Library at (907) 465-3808.