

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE ARCTIC

February 5, 2015

11:32 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Cathy Giessel, Co-Chair
Senator Lesil McGuire, Co-Chair
Senator Donald Olson
Senator Click Bishop
Senator John Coghill

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Lyman Hoffman
Senator Gary Stevens

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

OVERVIEW: ALASKA ARCTIC POLICY COMMISSION FINAL REPORT AND
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- HEARD

ACTION NARRATIVE

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CO-CHAIR MCGUIRE called the Senate Special Committee on the Arctic meeting to order at 11:32 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Olson, Bishop, Coghill, Co-Chair Giessel, and Co-Chair McGuire. Co-Chair McGuire noted that Senator Stevens was excused.

**OVERVIEW: ALASKA ARCTIC POLICY COMMISSION FINAL REPORT AND
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

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CO-CHAIR MCGUIRE announced the presentation of the Alaska Arctic Policy Commission Final Report. She held up copies of the final report, the implementation plan, and the executive summary, noting that they can be found at www.akartic.com. She noted that she and Representative Bob Herron, representing the commission, have been making presentations throughout the nation. She stressed the importance of representatives from the federal

government at a recent Seattle presentation in light of the proposed ANWR bill. She said they stressed the importance of the people in the Arctic.

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CO-CHAIR MCGUIRE offered the PowerPoint to all Senate members, staff, and the public to share with the residents of Alaska and to all public members.

She began with the fact that Alaskans are at the forefront of emerging opportunities in the Arctic. She described the makeup of the 26-member commission and showed a picture of the group in Kotzebue. She showed where the commission convened public meetings around the state.

She said the commission's vision for the Arctic is based on economic and resource development, a healthy environment, secure and safe communities, and transparent decision making. The Arctic is an integral part of Alaska's identity, is home to many Alaskans and is an important part of Alaska's history, culture and future. The Arctic presents multitudes of opportunities that are being realized due to increased accessibility. She related that in 2007 the Northwest Passage opened in both lanes. This opportunity is of strategic importance to Alaskans who are building on years of vision, hard work, and experience living and working in the region.

She related that in April 2012 the legislature established an Alaska Arctic Policy Commission to develop an Arctic policy for the state and produce a strategy for the implementation of an Arctic policy. The commission was made up of ten lawmakers and sixteen subject matter experts who conducted a baseline review of the Arctic by evaluating strengths, deficiencies, and opportunities. It incorporated a preliminary report published last January, and a final report produced January 30 of this year. The commission operated under the conviction that the state is an active, willing leader and a partner in Arctic decision-making. The commission has remained committed to producing a policy for Alaska's Arctic that reflect the values of Alaskans to provide options that capitalize on the opportunities that safeguard against the risks, and a policy that will withstand the test of time. The commission hopes that the policy will act as a living document.

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She stated that through the process the commission has investigated and relied upon coordination among jurisdictions,

cooperation at all levels of government - international, national, state, local and tribal - and sought to balance multiple values to protect, promote, and enhance the well-being of the Alaskan Arctic, including the people, flora, fauna, land, water and other resources.

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL shared the four vision statements:

1. Uphold the state's commitment to economically vibrant communities sustained by development activities consistent with the state's responsibility for a healthy environment.
2. Collaborate with all levels of government, tribes, industry and nongovernmental organizations to achieve transparent and inclusive Arctic decision-making resulting in more informed, sustainable and beneficial outcomes.
3. Enhance the security of the state through a safe and secure Arctic for individuals and communities.
4. Value and strengthen the resilience of communities and respect and integrate the culture and knowledge of Arctic peoples.

CO-CHAIR MCGUIRE added that the value statements are the overarching view of the commission.

She highlighted a map that shows the definition of Arctic from the Arctic Research and Policy Act from 1984. The commission adopted that definition; however, Alaskan policy makers tend to view all of Alaska as the Arctic. For example, the Port of Seward is a partner.

SENATOR COGHILL noted that the largest ice field in North American is south of the line defining the Arctic.

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL explained more about policy statement 1, related to economically vibrant communities and natural resource development. The vision would ensure that Arctic residents and communities benefit from economic and resource development activities in the region. She stressed that one of the commission's "big pieces" was to emphasize people during policy considerations. This policy statement speaks to destiny control for individuals; the ability to have a good-paying job. She said, "It's hands working, rather than hands out."

She recalled when the commission attended a community meeting in Barrow, Edward Itta said he would like to see Alaska "stick a straw in ANWR and suck it dry." He knew on-shore development could be done safely and he has seen the change that jobs have made in the state. She stressed that is the driving force behind this policy statement. It also implies workforce development regardless of where they live.

CO-CHAIR MCGUIRE highlighted policy statement 2, collaboration between all levels of governments and stakeholders. She pointed out that the picture shows collaborative decision makers from the Northwest Circle, which reflects the commission's philosophy as they met with communities in the Arctic. She said the commission hopes the federal government will visit Alaska. Alaska will be Chair of the Arctic Council and 15 meetings will be held in Alaska.

She related that the hope of the policy is to strengthen and expand cross-border relationships and international cooperation, especially bilateral engagements with Canada and Russia. She expressed gratitude that the governor has chosen to rejoin the Northern Forum. The legislature hopes to renew relationships with the Dumas in Russia. She stressed the importance of maintaining healthy relations in the Arctic. Other goals are to sustain and enhance state participation in the Arctic Council, to pursue opportunities to participate as a partner in the development of federal and international Arctic policies, and to strengthen communication with Arctic Council permanent participants, the state's indigenous peoples. She pointed out that Craig Fleener has been appointed by the governor to serve as a special Arctic representative. She concluded that the policy also reiterates the state's long-term support for ratification of the Law of the Sea Treaty, noting concerns about sovereignty.

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CO-CHAIR GIESSEL highlighted policy statement 3 - to enhance the security of the state through a safe and secure Arctic. She said it includes efforts to enhance disaster and emergency prevention and response, and search and rescue capabilities, such as increased Coast Guard presence. She noted that companies and workforces contribute to these capabilities. There also was discussion of increasing broadband capabilities and roads, as well as energy interties and other resource-related infrastructure.

SENATOR COGHILL stressed the importance of the increase in traffic in the Bering Strait and the need for Alaska's advocacy role in promoting safety and security.

CO-CHAIR MCGUIRE talked about the importance of the Coast Guard. She noted Jamie Robinson from the Coast Guard attended all meetings. Admiral Ostebo attended, as well.

SENATOR COGHILL recalled that Alaska has five times the coastal region as the contiguous U.S. and should play a large role in protecting the Pacific Northwest.

CO-CHAIR MCGUIRE pointed out that Alaska still doesn't have a deep water port in the Arctic. The commission highlighted the lack of preparedness and contingency plans.

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CO-CHAIR MCGUIRE continued with policy statement 4 - to value and strengthen the resilience of communities by recognizing Arctic indigenous people's cultures and unique relationship to the environment, including traditional reliance on a subsistence way of life for food security, which provides a spiritual connection to the land and the sea. It includes efforts to build capacity to conduct science and research and advance innovation and technology in part by providing support to the University of Alaska for Arctic research consistent with state priorities. To employ integrated, strategic planning that considers scientific, local and traditional knowledge. To safeguard the fish, wildlife and environment of the Arctic for the benefit of residents of the state, and to encourage more effective integration of local and traditional knowledge into conventional science, research and resource management decision making.

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL turned attention to pictures of the final report.

CO-CHAIR MCGUIRE discussed the implementation plan, which is designated around four lines of effort. The first is to promote economic and resource development. With careful consideration and state investment, the Arctic region will continue to produce returns to the state and communities that ensure community health and vitality. The second is to address response capacity, which will require strong partnership and communication to prepare for incidents, to respond and develop best practices.

She related that the third line of effort is to support healthy communities. The quality of life can be improved for the whole Arctic region without compromising the economic security and well-being of other communities or the state as a whole. The final line of effort is to strengthen science and research. Alaska should pursue strategies to broaden and strengthen the influence of its agencies, its academic experts and its local governments and associations. Alaska should play a leading role in directing scientific research.

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL summarized the commission's work. It focused on mobilizing the state's human, natural, and financial resources to address current needs. It also recognized that adequate resources should be available for future generations. It understands that all of these might come in new and different forms as technology and demands shift over time.

CO-CHAIR MCGUIRE concluded that the final slide lists all commission members. She praised the members and their staff for their hard work. She noted that all members also served on subcommittees where they addressed important issues to the state. The resulting policy bill will be heard in this committee next week.

She opined that the issue of the Arctic is Alaska's next lifeline. It has been described as the next thing that will fill the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System. She noted challenges, such as global warming, but also opportunities for Alaskans. She stated that she is proud that Alaska put itself in the driver's seat; not the federal government. Alaska policies are being cited by others and Alaska is being recognized for the work it has done. The commission's work is a placeholder for future generations to use. There is a balance between healthy communities and environment and economic development. The focus of the commission's work is on the people, whereas, the federal government's policy was devoid of people.

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There being nothing further to come before the committee, Co-Chair McGuire adjourned the Senate Special Committee on the Arctic at 12:03 p.m.