

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ARCTIC POLICY,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM**

February 23, 2024

8:07 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Thomas Baker, Chair
Representative George Rauscher
Representative Cathy Tilton
Representative Maxine Dibert

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Laddie Shaw
Representative Jesse Sumner
Representative Jennie Armstrong

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

SAM ENOKA, Founder & CEO
Greensparc
San Francisco, California

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave the Bridging the Digital Divide presentation.

RACHEL KALLANDER, JD, Founder and CEO
Arctic Encounter
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave the Arctic Encounter presentation.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:07:04 AM](#)

CHAIR BAKER called the House Special Committee on Energy meeting to order at 8:07 a.m. Representatives Baker, Rauscher, Tilton, and Dibert were present at the call to order.

PRESENTATION(S) : BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

8:07:51 AM

CHAIR BAKER announced that the first order of business would be the Bridging the Digital Divide presentation.

8:08:12 AM

SAM ENOKA, Founder & CEO, Greensparc, commenced the Bridging the Digital Divide presentation via PowerPoint [hardcopy included in the committee packet]. He began on slide 1, which explained what a data center is. He moved to slide 2, which describe what the term "the edge" means with regards to data storage. He continued to slide 3, which gave a brief history of Greensparc's involvement in Alaska's data industry. He moved to slide 4, which displayed a photo of Greensparc's cooperative electric building in Cordova, Alaska.

8:15:52 AM

MR. ENOKA responded to questions from Representative Rauscher. He explained that the word "latency" refers to any delay in internet service. He said more communities in Alaska are served by satellite Internet service than fiber-optic Internet service.

8:18:06 AM

MR. ENOKA resumed the presentation on slide 5, which displayed a series of companies currently in the market for "edge" Internet services. In response to Representative Rauscher, he advised that fiber-optic Internet services are the fastest but also the costliest. He moved on to slide 6, which described challenges of equity faced by Internet providers in Alaska. He continued to slide 7, which described Greensparc's individual economic impacts at each of its locations in Alaska. He moved to side 8, which posed the question of the necessity of Internet services in rural communities. In response to a question from Representative Rauscher as to why Greensparc is putting itself forward as an Internet provider in Alaska, he said Greensparc's infrastructure is highly energy efficient and comparable to that of the University of Alaska system's energy and Internet grid. He then concluded his presentation on slide 9 and offered to answer any questions from the committee.

8:27:04 AM

REPRESENTATIVE DIBERT asked how Greensparc's internet prices compare to the average rate currently being paid in Alaska.

MR. ENOKA responded by characterizing his business model as "wholesale" and meant to serve Internet providers directly, not individuals. In response to a follow-up question, he said Greensparc infrastructure would enable Internet providers to have better connectivity in "dead areas" such as an area in Fairbanks, Alaska, mentioned by Representative Dibert.

CHAIR BAKER thanked Mr. Enoka for his presentation.

PRESENTATION(S) : ARCTIC ENCOUNTER

[8:34:23 AM](#)

CHAIR BAKER announced that the final order of business would be the Arctic Encounter presentation.

[8:35:01 AM](#)

RACHEL KALLANDER, JD, Founder and CEO, Arctic Encounter, began the Arctic Encounter PowerPoint presentation [hardcopy included in the committee packet]. She showed slide 2, which explained the relevance and history of her company, Arctic Encounter. She moved to slide 3, which highlighted the role that Alaska plays in the changing physical and political landscape of the Arctic. She continued to slide 4, which touched on Arctic Encounter's flagship annual convention in Anchorage, Alaska, and moved to slide 5, which highlighted international meetings in which Arctic Encounter has engaged. She continued to slide 6, which called attention to Arctic Encounter's engagement abroad with other Arctic nations. She moved to slide 7, which explained the importance of the international meetings on the Arctic.

[8:43:54 AM](#)

MS. KALLANDER continued to slide 8, which explained how the Arctic is changing and the role that Alaska plays in its future. She moved to slide 9, which highlighted the role that Alaska and the Arctic play in national security. She continued to slide 10, which displayed an image of a child's handwritten message to world leaders about the state of their community as it is being affected by climate change. Ms. Kallander concluded her presentation on slide 11 and offered to answer any questions from the committee.

[8:49:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DIBERT commented that she appreciated the long list of international stakeholders visiting Arctic Encounter's convention but wished to ensure that Indigenous elders are included in Arctic Encounter's convention.

MS. KALLANDER echoed the importance of including Elders in Arctic Encounter's conferences. In response to a follow-up inquiry from Representative Dibert, she said she does not know any of the implications regarding the University of Alaska Fairbanks' (UAF's) push to become a tier 1 university.

[8:53:14 AM](#)

CHAIR BAKER thanked Ms. Kallender for her presentation and delivered committee announcements.

[8:53:42 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee On Arctic Policy, Economic Development, and Tourism meeting was adjourned at 8:53 AM.