

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE

March 21, 2023

1:32 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator James Kaufman, Chair
Senator David Wilson, Vice Chair
Senator Löki Tobin
Senator Jesse Kiehl
Senator Robert Myers

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING

Board of Marine Pilots:

James Cunningham - Homer

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

SENATE BILL NO. 105

"An Act authorizing the Alaska Railroad Corporation to issue revenue bonds to finance the replacement of the Alaska Railroad Corporation's passenger dock and related terminal facility in Seward, Alaska; and providing for an effective date."

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

JAMES CUNNINGHAM, Appointee
Board of Marine Pilots
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as an appointee to the Board of Marine Pilots.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:32:08 PM](#)

CHAIR JAMES KAUFMAN called the Senate Transportation Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Wilson, Tobin, Kiehl, Myers and Chair Kaufman.

CONFIRMATION HEARING
BOARD OF MARINE PILOTS

[1:32:55 PM](#)

CHAIR KAUFMAN announced the consideration of governor's appointee to the Board of Marine Pilots. He welcomed Mr. James Cunningham to the committee as an appointee to the Board of Marine Pilots. He noted that Alaska Statute 08.62 establishes the Board of Marine Pilots and the duties. The board adopts regulations to conduct its mission to provide efficient and competent pilotage service for the protection of shipping, the safety of human life and property, and the protection of the marine environment. The board makes final licensing decisions and takes disciplinary action against people who violate the licensing laws. The board meets three times a year and offers a public comment period at each meeting. He noted that Mr. Cunningham was appointed to the board on May 25, 2022. If confirmed, his term would expire March 1, 2025.

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JAMES CUNNINGHAM, Appointee, Board of Marine Pilots, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED), Homer, Alaska, shared that he is a graduate of the Maine Maritime Academy. He stated that he grew up in Washington and spent time as a child in Ketchikan. He reported working on seine and fish tender boats along the Alaskan coast. He added that he shipped container boats all over the world and was able to meet and get to know the pilots. He moved his family to Homer where he enjoys working as a first class pilot.

[1:36:07 PM](#)

CHAIR KAUFMAN expressed appreciation for Mr. Cunningham's extensive resume with related experience and professional development.

[1:36:30 PM](#)

SENATOR WILSON expressed appreciation for Mr. Cunningham's willingness to serve on the Board of Marine Pilots. He asked for a definition of the "far east" listed in his resume.

MR. CUNNINGHAM replied that he worked on tankers in the Mediterranean regions, Israel and the Black Sea. He stated that he also worked on container ships traveling to Singapore, China and Japan.

SENATOR WILSON asked about challenges for marine pilots in Alaska.

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MR. CUNNINGHAM replied that attracting qualified pilots to Alaska can be problematic. He spoke to the challenge of moving new recruits to Alaska to train and stay. He expressed additional challenges such as maintaining equipment and improving established policies and docking facilities. He shared that he initially began visiting Alaska while working on container ships. The container ships utilized anchors for towing because tugboats were not available. He stated that Anchorage currently had two tugboats in the winter. He hoped to help streamline and modernize the Port of Anchorage and Homer Port and Harbor.

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CHAIR KAUFMAN asked how his work on the board touches his priorities.

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MR. CUNNINGHAM responded that he prioritizes streamlining archaic rules related to training and qualifications for new pilots. He stressed the priority of updating the Pilot's Association Training Program. He explained that many rules were established before electronic capabilities existed. The modern age requires rules that reflect new technology. He reminded the committee that the board position was new to him. He shared that he was learning how to participate by providing industry knowledge to streamline state and Pilot Association regulations.

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CHAIR KAUFMAN expressed appreciation for Mr. Cunningham's priority to streamline processes.

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CHAIR KAUFMAN opened public testimony on James Cunningham's appointment to the Board of Marine Pilots. After ascertaining

that no one in the room or online wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

[1:45:40 PM](#)

CHAIR KAUFMAN thanked Mr. Cunningham for being willing to serve on the Board of Marine Pilots.

[1:46:06 PM](#)

CHAIR KAUFMAN stated that in accordance with AS 39.05.080, the Senate Transportation Standing Committee reviewed the following and recommends the appointment be forwarded to a joint session for consideration:

Board of Marine Pilots

James Kaufman - Homer

Signing the reports regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees; the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

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At ease

[1:47:54 PM](#)

CHAIR KAUFMAN reconvened the meeting.

[1:48:41 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Kaufman adjourned the Senate Transportation Standing Committee meeting at 1:48 p.m.