

DENALI COMMISSION MEETING

via ZOOM videoconference:
Anchorage, Alaska

March 28, 2022

MEETING MINUTES

PRESENT:

Commissioners

Garrett Boyle, Federal Co-Chair/Meeting Chair
Tyson Gallagher, State Co-Chair
Nils Andreassen, Commissioner
Joelle Hall, Commissioner
Julie Kitka, Commissioner

Absent

Alicia Amberg, Commissioner
Pat Pitney, Commissioner

Staff/Others

John Whittington, General Counsel
Jocelyn Fenton, Director of Programs
Janet Davis, Grants Officer
Katie Conway, Energy Program Manager
Kristen Reardon, Water/Sanitation, Victims of Crime, and Health Facilities Program Manager
Erik Obrien, Community and Economic Development Program Manager
Anne Stanislawski, Administrative Officer
Betty Caudle, Kron Associates

CALL TO ORDER

Federal Co-Chair Garrett Boyle called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. and welcomed the Commissioners. A quorum was established to conduct business.

FISCAL YEAR 2023 WORK PLAN APPROVAL

Federal Co-Chair Boyle introduced the revised Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Work Plan. He stated that this work plan was revised according to the meeting and discussion the Commissioners had the previous week on March 21, 2022, and asked the Commissioners to review the draft work plan to make sure staff captured the will of the Denali Commission correctly.

MOTION: A motion was made by Commissioner Kitka to adopt the Fiscal 2023 Work Plan as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Andreassen.

VOTE: 4 yeas; 0 nays - motion passed unanimously

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT (IIJA) WORK PLAN APPROVAL

Federal Co-Chair Boyle introduced the revised Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Work Plan. He stated that this work plan was also revised according to the meeting and discussion the Commissioners had the previous week on March 21, 2022, and asked the Commissioners to review the draft work plan to make sure staff captured the will of the Denali Commission correctly.

MOTION: A motion was made by Commissioner Kitka to adopt the IIJA Work Plan as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Andreassen.

VOTE: 4 yeas; 0 nays - motion passed unanimously

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Federal Co-Chair Boyle stated that he had no further business with the Commissioners and opened the floor for any comments or questions that the Commissioners may have.

Commissioner Kitka asked if at the next meeting the Commission, could we draft and approve a motion to rename the transportation program in honor of Don Young, since both he and his staff worked very hard to get the transportation bill re-authorized. It was an issue that he always cared about on behalf of Alaska. Federal Co-Chair Boyle thought that was a great idea. He asked if there were any objections to the name change. Hearing none, the transportation program is now known as the Don Young Transportation Program.

Commissioner Gallagher gave an update to the discussion last week about the State of Alaska contributing money to the Denali Commission work plan for infrastructure projects. He stated that he has spoken with the Governor and with staff and all are supportive of sending money over to the Denali Commission, subject to the legislative appropriation process. As they put the infrastructure bill before the legislature, they will be sure to include the Denali Commission in the conversation and bring up the request.

Commissioner Kitka asked if the Governor has any preference for certain types of projects. Commissioner Gallagher responded that the Governor is interested in energy resiliency, reliability, and independence. So, investments in renewable energy. However, for this purpose, they would propose more generic projects to see where the interests lie with both the legislature and the Denali Commission.

Federal Co-Chair Boyle stated that he and Commissioner Gallagher have had discussions on this topic, and he does not believe there is any other federal agency out there willing to assist our rural villages. So, anything the State can do to partner with the Denali Commission in support of

our rural Alaskan communities would be a positive step forward. Federal Co-Chair Boyle asked that Commissioner Gallagher let him know if he can be of any assistance working the legislature or anything he needs from the Denali Commission to support that effort. Commissioner Gallagher thanked him for his offer.

Ms. Jocelyn Fenton stated that Katie Conway has brought a current situation with Noatak to her attention, and she wanted to share it with the Commissioners. Everyone is aware that there is a chronic problem bringing in fuel to the village which has been exacerbated by COVID and fuel prices. They think this is just the tip of the iceberg for our rural villages. This is the first community to come to us and they've also contacted the Governor's office for assistance. But we think we're going to hear from more communities in the coming months. So, we're happy to pull together a task force or something to help these communities that are going to be facing these same issues with the high fuel prices.

Commissioner Gallagher thanked Jocelyn for bringing up this issue. The Governor's office is aware of this growing concern, especially as communities get ready to make their spring fuel purchases. Even though the Governor is personally interested in energy, he has put it back on us to see what we're hearing from the public. And the situation is pretty fluid. So, whether it's energy, water/wastewater projects, and so on, we think we can be successful in leveraging state infrastructure funds and Denali Commission funds to make the money go farther and get some things done.

Commissioner Andreassen agreed with Jocelyn. He thinks we're going to see incredible urgency around some of these issues in the very near future--whether it's fuel prices or workforce or supply chain issues. All of it's going to come quickly. So, the sooner we can have the work plan in place, the better.

And he thinks that, from an operational point of view, the Denali Commission is in a position to support communities. The ability to identify needs and to somehow connect the dots between those needs and other resources is going to be really important. So, the more we, as Commissioners, have a sense of what that looks like, the more we can close any gap in understanding that might be out there and be supportive overall of our mission. Glad to see the work plan in place so we're in a good position to support Alaska communities.

Federal Co-Chair Boyle asked if there were any other comments. Hearing none, he adjourned the meeting at 4:13 p.m.