

**ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING
QUARTERLY MEETING
MAY 23 & 24, 2007
NOEL WIEN PUBLIC LIBRARY
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA**

APPROVED

Wednesday, May 23, 2007.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Frank Appel called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Members in attendance: Frank Appel, Michael Black, Patricia Branson, Sharon Howerton-Clark, Lillian Boen Kasnick, Betty Keegan, Banarsi Lal, Iver Malutin, Paula Pawlowski, Ed Zastrow. A quorum was present. Member not in attendance: Rod Moline. DHSS representative in attendance: Bill Hogan. ACoA staff in attendance: Denise Daniello, MaryAnn VandeCastle, Rachel Malley.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA: Minor changes to the agenda were suggested, such as adding an explanation of Denali Kidcare. Motion: to approve the agenda as amended; motion passed unanimously.

CHAIR'S REPORT. Frank Appel reported that advocacy activities had been the primary focus for the past quarter. The Executive Committee has set the date for the fall (Kodiak) meeting, but it will need to be revised (later in the meeting). It also selected Dillingham as the location for the fall 2008 rural outreach meeting. Under the guidance of the Planning Committee, the final draft of the state plan for senior services has been submitted to the Administration on Aging. The By-Laws Committee has recommended some changes, to be dealt with later in the meeting. Frank and Denise attended a March meeting with Region X staff in Seattle for training and discussions related to the Administration on Aging. Denise gave a well-received lunchtime presentation to the Anchorage Rotary Club. Frank has been participating regularly in the Trust's workforce development focus area and the DSDS policy development committee.

VICE-CHAIR'S REPORT. Sharon Howerton-Clark reported that advocacy was also the focus of her activities for this quarter, including emails and phone calls on various legislation, and attendance at the ACoA's legislative teleconferences, the Trust's legislative teleconferences, and the Senior Advocacy Coalition meetings.

She visited the Homer senior center, where she asked people to call their legislators about the Senior Care program.

ACoA COMMITTEE & REPRESENTATIONAL REPORTS

PLANNING COMMITTEE. Banarsi Lal, chair of the Planning Committee, reported that he'd been gone for most of April on a trip to India, so had missed a few meetings. He did attend the public comment session for the state plan that was held in Fairbanks. [There were four state plan public hearings held in late March.] Not too many people attended, but the participants had good ideas to share. They wanted more support for services such as adult day and assisted living homes. There was a lengthy discussion of proposed changes in the state plan funding formula. With Alaska's growing senior population, we have three choices: (1) full and immediate implementation of funding formula changes [changed percentages for the various regions were computed based on current populations of various groups of seniors in each region]; (2) phase in the funding formula changes over more than one year; or (3) the "hold harmless" option, in which each region would continue to receive the same percentage of funding as under the current state plan's funding formula. [The option chosen for the final draft of the state plan was a compromise: to hold the regions harmless over the first two years of the new state plan period, and to phase in the funding formula changes over the last two years of four-year period.] Those attending the public hearing wanted to see more emphasis placed on prevention and health promotion.

The state plan advisory committee will continue to meet and to work toward implementing the plan's goals and strategies. An annual implementation plan will be created for each year of the plan's coverage. Other agencies will join us in an implementation plan meeting, probably in July. Each participating agency will work toward selected goals. Quarterly meetings will monitor progress toward the goals and strategies.

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY COMMITTEE. Ed Zastrow reported that participation in this year's ACoA legislative teleconferences was pretty good, at least till the end of the session. We picked up a few new sites and senior participants this year. The guest speakers, including Pat Luby of AARP, were informative. The teleconferences meet the needs of seniors and other advocates. The format seems to flow pretty smoothly. This year the teleconferences followed the WWAMI legislation, the Housing Trust, funding for Flexible Long-Term Care Supports – efforts that did result in success. The legislature's failure to fund Senior Care or the Longevity Bonus was a low blow, but hopefully it's not over yet. Pat Branson added that Ed did a fine job as facilitator of the teleconferences. Ed and Pat thanked Commission staff for helping to prepare the teleconference discussion

materials. Iver thanked Ed and Pat, and said he learned a lot from the teleconferences even if we didn't get all that we wanted.

DSDS REGULATIONS COMMITTEE. Rod Moline was not available for this report. Frank Appel reported that this committee had had one meeting, in March. The committee has broad representation. The March meeting was spent helping to outline specifications for an RFP for a project to develop methodologies for Medicaid waiver rate-setting. The RFP will be issued on June 15, 2007. The goal is to develop more logical, consistent methods of rate-setting. This was seen as one of the more important issues for the committee to deal with up-front. Pat Branson said that she was glad this was finally happening, and asked if there is a provider on the committee. Frank replied that there are three providers on the committee, including Connie Sipe. Bill Hogan remarked that this is just the first step for this committee's work.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOCUS AREA. Denise noted that this is a work group focused on enhancing the beneficiary workforce. Frank also is part of this group. Part of the aim is to enhance training for health care professionals and direct service providers. The Center for Human Development's Bev Tallman focused in identifying training needs, via an online survey sent to providers. One idea recently was the creation of health care clubs in the schools to educate youth on behavioral health careers. This is something done in other states. It's endorsed by the U.S. Department of Education and others. Activities in these clubs can include competitions and awards to encourage interest in health careers.

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES & SPECIAL EDUCATION. Banarsi Lal, ACoA's liaison to this board, reported that the Council had met in Fairbanks the previous week. It's one of the largest boards, with 28 members, and also has a large, very competent staff. They are very dedicated people, often with personal stories that have made them strong advocates. Banarsi serves on the Council's legislative committee. Their top priority this year was to preserve Medicaid program funding. Other priorities included the Infant Learning Program, autism, transportation, Bring the Kids Home, and the Housing Trust.

PIONEER HOME ADVISORY BOARD. Ed Zastrow, chair of this board, reported on its activities. The board has the duty to advocate for the Pioneer Homes. They do an annual inspection of the homes, the northern homes one year and southern homes the next. They have monthly teleconferences from January through May. This is working well to keep everyone informed. They have a particular concern with budgets. This year the Pioneer Homes maintained the status quo for their budgets. Last year they got additional funding for nursing staff, and all those positions are now filled. There was a glitch this year over SB 28, a bill that would

limit mandatory overtime for registered nurses. The bill would limit double shifts to 14 hours. Ed said the industry standard for a double shift is 16 hours. Nurses at the Pioneer Homes do work double shifts of 15 hours. This bill would create a financial problem for the Pioneer Homes. Betty Keegan noted that the shifts overlap anyway. Ed said he believed the bill was predominantly aimed at API. The Nurses Association is also involved.

Other issues for the Pioneer Homes include growing wait lists, and residents who a mental illness not apparent at the time of their entry into the home. There are no policies and procedures for admission and discharge of mentally-ill seniors. The homes are experiencing more and more cases of combative behaviors and more diagnosis of severe mental illness. Staff is too limited to deal with these issues. This problem is becoming more severe as the years go by.

The Pioneer Home Advisory Board is looking forward to seeing a long-term study on the future of the Pioneer Homes.

BY-LAWS COMMITTEE. A revision of our by-laws is long overdue, reported Frank Appel. An extensive revision has now been completed. Many of the changes reflect the transfer of grant-making responsibilities to DSDS. Some statutes no longer apply to the ACoA. The statutes themselves are also not up-to-date – they do not reflect Executive Order No. 108, which made the changes with regard to the responsibilities of the ACoA and DSDS. The ACoA may be asked to propose statutory changes in the coming year. Further information is contained in the meeting packet under Tab 2.

Some of the by-law changes include specifying that all ACoA members are now voting members, and that officers will not change in the middle of a meeting but rather the new officers will take office on July 1st. Descriptions of committee responsibilities have been added. The geriatric committee was changed to a representational committee, rather than a standing committee. A list of the executive director's responsibilities was removed from the by-laws, as that information is contained in the job description for that position. Paula, Betty, and Iver participated in this committee as well.

Pat Branson made a motion to accept the revised by-laws. Iver seconded the motion. The new by-laws were unanimously approved.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACoA OFFICERS FOR FY 08.

Ed Zastrow of the Nominating Committee to nominate Banarsi Lal as chair for FY 08, with Sharon Howerton-Clark to serve as vice-chair. Pat Branson seconded the nominations. The new officers were unanimously approved.

In a brief ceremony, outgoing chair Frank Appel was presented with a plaque honoring his leadership as chair. Frank handed the meeting gavel to Banarsi in a symbolic transfer of authority.

Frank encouraged the Commission to continue to set annual goals to help focus its activities. He advised Denise to request recommendations from Commission members for FY 08 goals.

DENALI KIDCARE. After a short break, Bill Hogan (deputy commissioner of the Department of Health & Social Services) explained the Denali Kidcare Program as requested at the start of the meeting. Denali Kidcare is Alaska's name for SCHIP, the State Children's Health Insurance Program, which is a federal Medicaid expansion program. It goes by different names in other states. It operates to expand Medicaid coverage of children and pregnant women from families with incomes under a specified level. The program provides EPSDT screening for children – including medical, dental, and mental health components. Based on the results of the assessment, a child may be eligible for an array of services. The contention has been over the income eligibility limit, which had been frozen. It had gotten down to 153% of the Alaska poverty threshold. If it were to go below 150%, it would jeopardize the federal match available. The legislature took it up to 175% this session, which is an improvement.

In response to questions from Commission members, Bill noted that there are about 22,000 people on Denali Kidcare, including a substantial number of children. He was unsure on the program budget, though the total Medicaid budget is \$1.2 billion. Pat noted that the program fills a gap for non-profit organizations and small businesses, which often can only afford to pay for insurance for employees, not their children. Iver said he talks to many people who receive Denali Kidcare and it's a blessing. He thanked Bill and the State for offering the program. Betty noted that doctors in Wrangell don't deliver babies; pregnant women have to fly to Ketchikan or Juneau and stay in a hotel for two weeks. Denali Kidcare gives them that option, while those not eligible have to sometimes stay with strangers.

SITE VISIT REPORTS & DISCUSSION.

Denise reported that her group visited seven agencies on Tuesday. **Fairbanks Resource Agency's Adult Day program** serves 12 to 15 people a day. They have a small wait list – four or five people. The program has ideas they want to implement in the future, including sending staff to clients' homes in the morning to

help people get ready. They'd also like to move to a two-tier program, with one group for newly-diagnosed ADRD clients, and another group for those with a more involved stage of the disease. There are not enough staff in the Fairbanks area to staff all the agencies with either professional workers or direct care providers. Agencies compete with less stressful jobs for the same wage at Wendy's, Wal-Mart, etc. Staffing is a real struggle. Changes in requirements are now coming down from the state, making it even harder to keep up with paperwork. And DD people are now aging, bringing in a whole new population.

The ***Fairbanks Native Association's Elders Program*** provides meals and transportation. They serve Native foods two days a week. They have 20 to 65 people per day for lunch. They would like to develop into a more complete senior center, and also offer adult day services.

The ***Nenana Senior Center*** served our group lunch on a non-lunch day (they now provide lunch only three days per week). Their \$58,000 grant covers four positions. Employees receive no benefits. They serve 20 to 30 people for lunch. They have no waiting list – everybody gets a slice of the pie, but the slices are shrinking. They provide transportation to Fairbanks twice a month for medical visits and shopping. They have an active board, a passionate director, and lots of volunteers – but they need more money!

The ***Lifelong Learning Institute*** offers a variety of classes for people age 50 and over. They also sponsor field trips and tours. They are in line for a \$1 million endowment from the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute – but ironically this could represent a cut to their current operating budget (if they were limited to spending just the interest on the endowment).

The ***Alzheimer's Resource Agency of Alaska*** has just one half-time staff member in its Fairbanks office – and she will be leaving soon. They offer a six-week class for family caregivers. They need at least another part-time position.

The group visited ***Southall Manor*** (40 units) and ***Golden Towers*** (96 units), both independent living housing for seniors and people with disabilities managed by AHFC. In speaking to a number of residents, we heard about problems with disruptive residents, usually non-seniors with alcohol and drug problems. However, all agreed that the on-site property manager was addressing the issues and evictions were being pursued where needed.

At every visit, we talked with program participants about Senior Care. People were sad, angry, and shell-shocked over the demise of the program.

Paula added that the most necessary activity of the ACoA is the site visits. What we've seen shows that places with long-term staff are the most successful. The Department of Labor says that \$39,000 per year is the average Alaska salary. So the \$10 to \$12 per hour caregiver salaries are significantly less than that. Fairbanks Native Association does have a long-term staff that is happy to serve. They need a bigger facility. They go the extra mile, for example helping their participants pay bills, and driving them to the bank. The Nenana Senior Center runs on volunteer power. They need more transportation. The upper apartments at Southall Manor were not handicap-accessible. A person would have to move if they had to be in a wheelchair. We asked to see a handicap-accessible apartment – and it was in disarray, with piles of stuff all around. It was unclear who made the mess, as the apartment's resident was confined to a wheelchair.

Betty agreed that Fairbanks Native Association is doing so much for its participants. She praised the delicious food at the Nenana Senior Center – and took note that they had no sign-in sheet and no donation can in evidence. She had to seek staff out to make a donation. Betty reminded us that disabled people qualify for “senior housing” now. We do hear about disruptions caused by some of the younger people. We met a young paralyzed man, living independently, at one of the housing facilities. He was living in a dark, dirty apartment. A little boy was there with him. He could easily have problems with pressure sores – he should be turned every two or three hours. It's disturbing that we're allowing him to be warehoused, with no physical therapy, etc. We heard about some troublesome youth living in the building, but were told it takes six months to complete an eviction. In Nenana, there was an issue with a disruptive senior gentleman; we need to communicate to the senior center there that they should refer him for a mental health evaluation.

Frank noted that there is a difficulty with lack of resources in small communities. The growth in senior population added to the lack of increase in grants has resulted in cutbacks in services – for example, meals served only three days per week instead of five.

The other group (Ed, Sharon, Iver, Lillian, Banarsi, and Rachel, along with Bob Dreyer of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman's Office and Melanie Helmick-Murphy from Legislative Audit) reported on their site visits. Ed said that **North Pole Senior Center** could use some additional funds. They provide breakfast only, as a buffet. They typically serve 8 to 10 people. They have a \$35,000 budget. It's an all-volunteer organization. The city donates the building. The money comes from donations from seniors and others in the community – they receive no State funds. Iver added that nobody there had ever heard of the Alaska Commission on Aging. Again, this outreach is one of the best things that we do, he agreed.

The ***Holiday Heights Senior Apartments*** complex in North Pole is independent living, owned and operated by a non-profit organization. There are concerns with limited housing and assisted living in the area.

The ***Salcha Senior Center*** is an old senior center. They operate on about \$12,000 in donations, and have to pay \$2,600 in liability insurance. They said they work around the clock to answer phone calls from seniors needing help. Transportation is a big issue but, they said, “Don’t give us a brand-new handicapped van. We can’t afford the insurance.” Our visitors talked about Senior Care to a group of seniors meeting there. They said they would support continuation of the program. They will put the Senior Care information into their newsletter. Lillian noted that the further you get away from the city, the less information people have. The people in Salcha knew nothing about the Alaska Commission on Aging. The outlying areas know nothing about the programs available to them. Our outreach trips need to be preceded by a written document telling about who we are. Frank agreed and said in the future we’ll see that they get that information.

The ***Clear Water Senior Center*** in Delta Junction consists of a lounge. They offer limited programs. There are cultural differences in the community. Delta Junction pays for electricity, water, etc. for the center. They noted that the center is under-utilized.

Pat Branson explained that she was not able to go on the outreach visits. But she noted that agency coordination has to occur on transportation services. Nobody gets their own van anymore. You have to make referrals. And agencies have to ask for donations. Maybe some hub training needs to occur, to outreach to these more remote areas. She agreed with previous speakers that the successful agencies are the ones where they’ve had the same people in the positions for a long time.

Michael Black added that the ability of local governments to provide services is highly variable. Delta Junction receives \$1 million per year from the Pogo Mine. The mine may provide a tax base for the region in the future. Nenana is much more limited in its tax base. We need to recognize differences among parts of the state – some have a good tax base, while others don’t and are more dependent on donations.

Comments on ***Alpha Omega Life Care*** in Delta Junction were deferred.

[LUNCH BREAK]

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES REPORT. Bill Hogan, Deputy Commissioner, reported that at lunchtime he'd learned of a press release by Gov. Sarah Palin announcing that she has ordered Senior Care benefits continued for at least a month. Emergency regulations will be issued to continue cash benefits through July 31st and the Department will work to find money in the FY 08 budget (or a supplemental) to come up with a permanent fix. In response to a question, Bill said he was unsure whether recipients would have to sign up to receive the benefit in the new fiscal year. Many of them may have already gotten applications to complete for the new fiscal year. Pat Branson asked that the Department keep providers posted so that they can help. Denise noted that the ACoA had sent Gov. Palin a letter requesting that Senior Care be included in the agenda for the special session. The Commission will write a thank you letter to the governor, and individual seniors should as well.

Banarsi asked why the House held the Senior Care bill. Bill said he was not sure. Probably they thought they'd get either SB 4 or HB 198 passed. There could have been other things going on unrelated to Senior Care that caused the failure to bring the bill forward. Sharon asked if we should continue to hold our legislators accountable, and Bill responded, "Yes." Iver noted that according to Rep. LeDoux, Rep. Coghill held the whole thing up – though everyone went along with it.

Ed asked about wait lists for Medicaid waiver assessments, which are often mentioned as a big issue in our site visits. Bill responded that Arbitre' (the contractor performing the assessments) says everything is fine and they are all caught up. People with concerns should call the Anchorage office of DSDS. There will be no more assessments for those on the waiver, and their services will remain the same, till the current lawsuits are settled. It is not true that agencies need to do the assessments themselves.

Bill Hogan noted that the additional Flexible Long-Term Care Supports funding is in the FY 08 budget base. And a new roof for the Sitka Pioneer Home is in the capital budget. The Alaska Commission on Aging's enabling statutes need to be updated to reflect the removal of grant-making authority. Frank responded that the ACoA will produce some draft language for the statutory changes.

Bill continued that the new state plan for senior services is excellent. He appreciated the good bonding experience with the Region X staff in Seattle during the March meeting with Denise, Frank, Rod, and himself. The Anchorage effort to create an Area Agency on Aging should be on the Commission's radar screen. The Municipality of Anchorage has approved a senior services coordinator

position and that person will work on this issue. The ACoA, and perhaps the Trust as well, needs to be pro-active in this discussion.

ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH TRUST AUTHORITY. Jeff Jessee, Trust CEO, presented the report. He said the Senate Medicaid study offers a golden opportunity for the ACoA to get its agenda out on the issue of strategic long-term care planning. Sen. Green's aide Ginger Blaisdell is a key figure for this effort. As for the Medicaid ADRD waiver, Dulce Nobre (of the Alzheimer's Resource Agency) doesn't expect it to be a huge deal as her impression is that most of their clients have other qualifying health conditions that already allow them access to a waiver. There may be 10 to 15 percent who don't have access to that care now.

Frank asked if the State has data on the number of people turned down for Medicaid waiver services. Bill said he didn't know. Jeff suggested we could get the data from other states – the percentage of their senior population receiving an ADRD waiver. Pat Branson added that it really IS a problem in Alaska, and that providers can help gather the stats on this. Her impression is that it's a big hurdle for many. Jeff suggested the Commission take the leadership on this issue.

Jeff has spoken to Janet Clarke about the Senior Care meltdown. We did not get the governor's attention on this issue toward the end of the session. Her office had been saying they had a plan, but we never saw it. And the Department never understood what the governor's plan was. The Department was not in a position to cut a deal on its own. On the other hand, "when things hit bottom, it does create more political energy." There are opportunities now to push for enhanced Senior Care and throw a spotlight onto senior issues. However, the Longevity Bonus will not get funded in our lifetime. The Democrats made a poor tactical choice in the House [in refusing to give up the Longevity Bonus].

Some legislators believe there is already a safety net out there for seniors. Tell the stories of people for whom the safety net does not exist. And put the Keep the Elders Home Initiative front and center as well (though a new name would be a good idea). Because of the Senior Care uproar, there may now be more attention to senior issues. We should be planning to develop a continuum of services for this population. The Trust will support all this. Next session will be heading into re-election time.

The governor signed an administrative order to re-establish and expand the Council on Homelessness, to oversee the development of the Housing Trust. The next step will be enabling legislation. Housing and social service entities in communities are not prepared to ramp up for this project. Trust staff are going to propose that the Trustees put \$1 million into a Housing Trust start-up fund for this,

perhaps with matching funds from the Rasmuson Foundation. It would be used for capacity-building and also an evaluation component.

DIVISION OF SENIOR & DISABILITIES SERVICES. Rod Moline asked if there were any questions or comments on his written report. Pat Branson said she appreciated Pat Sidmore's email update on DSDS changes. Rod said these updates will be sent out twice a month. Pat Branson also asked about grants for infrastructure. Rod replied that these were mostly for the DD sector. Senior grants have never provided money for infrastructure. Pat noted that for senior services, buildings and infrastructure are a continual battle.

DSDS is contracting for a rate-setting methodology. Contractors will meet with the policy work group. Whatever happens it will be a radical departure from past DSDS means of establishing rates. The group will have to promote, sell, and create buy-in for the new process. They are creating a visual presentation, which he'll send to Denise. It includes a timeline and contractors list, and a CMS flow chart. It will also be posted online.

Sharon asked whether providers can do their own fingerprinting for purposes of PCA background checks. Rod didn't know and recommended she ask the licensing section of Public Health. He said there had been some talk of using fingerprint scanners. We may want to do this – it would mean getting results back within hours. There is reconsideration of background check variances going on. The regulations are being revisited. Banarsi asked about assessments, noting that some people may not know they will not be getting an assessment. Rod replied that letters just went out to all care coordinators explaining that the assessments are on hold.

PUBLIC COMMENT.

Marianne Mills of Southeast Senior Services testified telephonically. Older Alaskans waivers help providers meet the needs of older Alaskans. However, the reimbursement rates are frozen. Their agency is frozen at rates from six years ago, while the costs of food, fuel, etc. are going up. Please help providers by advocating for (1) lifting the freeze on Medicaid reimbursement rates, (2) establishing equitable rates for the different types of providers – DD, OA, etc., and (3) putting in place an automatic COLA similar to what happens annually with hospitals and nursing homes. Please keep AgeNet informed about our efforts on these issues. Frank responded that we will continue to pursue the Keep the Elders Home Initiative or increase to grant services funding. DSDS is hiring a contractor to explore new rate-setting methodology, which should address all these concerns.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT. Denise Daniello stated that the Alaska Commission on Aging is undergoing a legislative audit, a sunset review (the Commission is currently scheduled to sunset on June 30, 2008). This offers an opportunity for an outside reviewer to evaluate our work. We hope to receive the preliminary audit report in the next month or two. Melanie Helmick-Murphy, the legislative auditor, will speak to each commissioner individually. The final report will not be available for another three or four months. It will need to be approved by the Legislative Budget & Audit Committee. The legislature will then take up the statutory change which would extend the life of the Commission – Melanie said the ACoA doesn't need to seek a sponsor for this legislative change; however, we can do so if we choose.

The paperwork is in process for the Planner I hire. We are trying to change the minimum qualifications for the Planner I position.

We've met our goals – we completed the state plan, got the ISER study published, and entered a Memorandum of Agreement with DSDS and others regarding the ADRCs (Aging and Disability Resource Centers). Jeannette Lacey, our MSW student intern for the past school year, did a lot of prep work for the legislative teleconferences; she was a real asset to the office. Denise thanked Ed and Pat for co-chairing the legislative teleconferences. We had eleven of them this year.

We successfully advocated for the increased State funding for Flexible Long-Term Care Supports, a resolution on increasing Medicare reimbursement rates, a bill increasing the WWAMI slots for medical students. We carried out a senior center capital campaign, sending some letters on specific senior center needs to legislators.

Denise reported that she gave a PowerPoint presentation at an Anchorage Rotary Club lunchtime meeting. For Older Americans Month, posters and copies of an executive proclamation by the governor were sent to provider agencies statewide. Denise sat on a PEC for the Trust Beneficiary Group Initiatives (TBGI) grant proposals. There was one senior group among the successful proposals – Sitka Faith in Action. [Frank noted that TBGI had a grass-roots focus in the past, but is now opened to a broader range of proposals (caregivers can now be included as beneficiaries and there is some emphasis on prevention), though there still were not many proposals from senior groups.] Denise serves on the Trust's Coordinated Communications Committee, which is guiding the You Know Me marketing campaign to increase public awareness of beneficiary populations. Denise is on the PEC to select an advertising contractor for the Trust for the upcoming year. Denise and Sharon will attend the Trust meeting in Fairbanks next

week. Denise will give a presentation on the ACoA's activities of the past year and data concerning older Alaskans.

Pat Branson commented that the Anchorage Rotary presentation was excellent outreach on behalf of the Commission. Denise said they'd had no prior knowledge on seniors' economic value to the state. Frank noted that his public testimony on the Medicare reimbursement issue to Sen. Murkowski's committee received some national exposure in the primary care association newsletter.

Iver said that the Older Americans Month poster is excellent. Denise noted that Rachel was responsible for the design.

SITE VISIT REPORTS, CONTINUED.

Ed spoke about Alpha Omega Life Care in Delta Junction. They provided a packet of information. Lillian recommended deferring further comment until we can look into the information they provided. Iver said that everyone worked together to cover all the bases, thanks to Ed. Frank asked members of that group to coordinate with Denise to supply a brief written report on Alpha Omega. Lillian asked that Bob Dreyer's office follow up with further research.

Melanie Helmick-Murphy (Legislative Audit), who had accompanied that group, stated that everybody did a great job. Ed was wonderful, she observed. She was impressed by the Commission's inquiries about problems. It's clear that the Commission has an important role to play. Frank asked her to also provide her observations to Denise, who will share them with Bill Hogan. There is state funding involved here.

Rachel commented that the trip was fantastic. The people they talked to were largely positive. They got asked a lot of questions. People were very united.

Banarsi felt that Salcha and Delta Junction had the most potential to develop full services for seniors. The senior center in Delta was provided free by the city, but was underutilized. It was frequented by few people. Perhaps we could prevail on the city to develop it into a comprehensive senior center. There is a Slavic immigrant population – about 18% of the area – which is very isolated. We should target Delta for some kind of senior plan for the whole population. Denise added that part of the problem is a language barrier – the Slavic people don't speak English while others in the community don't speak Russian. She heard the Slavic people had come and enjoyed some potlucks at the senior center. Rachel added that she spoke to a lady at the Clear Water Senior Center who was hopeful about what the senior center could do. One negative individual may be the reason why the Slavic community may not use the center as much as they could.

FNSB TRANSPORTATION – COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION PROJECT.

David Leone spoke about this project, which is supported by the SAFE-T-LU legislation. The borough funds from a variety of sources for the project. The legislation requires communities to provide a unified strategy for serving three groups: (1) low-income people; (2) elders age 65 and over; and (3) people with disabilities. In 2000, the Fairbanks borough had 6,200 people living in poverty; 3,800 seniors; and 9,000 people with disabilities. Since 2000, there has been a 22% increase in the poverty population, and 11% increase in the number of seniors, and a 4% increase in the number of people with disabilities. These estimates are from a 2005 census estimate. The borough works with many agencies on this project. They have 8 buses, 6 para-transit vehicles, and 2 Parks and Rec vans. Some agencies get some support from Medicaid. Some providers are able to coordinate with the project – Fairbanks Resource Agency, North Star Council on Aging, Salvation Army, for example. Others are not able to participate – the Denali Center, Laidlaw (company with the school district contract), and others. Some agencies provide funding for their clients' transport – bus passes, taxi tokens, etc. Some 61% of clients live in the Fairbanks North Star Borough urban planning area. The other 39% live in the rural area, with less-available transportation services.

A total of 46% of the rides provided are demand/response. A demand/response type of transportation system is very expensive. Van Tran costs \$44 per ride, and riders pay \$2. Their challenge is to get people off the expensive transportation if they have the ability to use other forms of transit. They need to better assess individuals' capability of using different transportation modes, and train them to use those modes. A large percentage (66%) of their clients have unmet transportation needs. In order to receive agency services, you have to use transportation to get to the agency.

David said he was pleased that the local White House Conference on Aging community forum in 2005 identified senior transportation as overly fragmented and restrictive. That is still true. According to the national White House Conference on Aging report, the #3 issue was to ensure transportation options for older Americans. The borough wants to maximize transportation resources – to make them more available to more people, more frequently. They want to serve rural areas. Fairbanks is a regional hub. They have to bring people in from Healy, Nenana, Delta, etc.

The borough would like to leverage funding from more than just state and federal sources. They need to engage in more community outreach to increase awareness and support of these services. They hope to be able to replace some

vehicles that are no longer road-safe. And they would like funding for a travel trainer.

They appreciated the Older Americans Month posters – they put them on the buses and Van Tran. They can put signs on both the outside and inside of the buses. However, in the future we should request “landscape mode” posters to fit in the bus brackets. They had to tape up these vertical mode posters.

The Governor is creating a task force to bring the different departments together to ensure that coordination happens at the community level. The goal is equal access for everyone, 24/7. To develop all this, we need to bring everyone together. For some individuals, the bus may not be the best form of transit – it may be a neighbor, a church, or walking. Sharon asked if they are gearing up for the aging baby boomers. David responded that they can see something big coming their way – but they can’t do it alone. Everyone must begin working together NOW. Pat Branson noted that coordinated transportation is a lot of work, and asked what kind of funding they get from the borough. David responded that last year 60% of their funding came from borough general funds, and 40% from federal funds. Pat noted that that’s unusually good support from local government. David said that they have a supportive borough mayor.

Michael Black commented that it is local government that is providing (and making possible) this kind of service. He also noted that Delta Junction is not within the Fairbanks borough, and asked whether the borough would fund transportation outside the borough’s border. David responded that they would not go beyond that point, but could go to the borough boundary. Perhaps the Alaska/Yukon bus, bringing people in from Delta, could stop in Salcha to pick people up.

Michael noted that Anchorage’s People Mover got \$1.6 million in the capital budget this year. David acknowledged that Anchorage has quite a legislative team down there.

Paula thanked David for the plan he provided. She was pleased to note that the coordinated transportation plan includes the military bases.

PUBLIC COMMENT. Charles Biddle asked to speak to the Commission. He lives at Golden Towers. He stated that in the past few years, 70% of the incoming residents are disabled or mentally ill. There are problems, such as when one mentally ill man poured gasoline all over his apartment, trying to set it on fire. There is no security at these buildings. The police used to come by and check on things once per night, but they don’t do that anymore. There are lots of residents in wheelchairs who can’t defend themselves. Better security is needed for the

seniors. Frank assured him that we will pass his comments on to Alaska Housing. Ed asked if there is any type of security at Golden Towers. Charles said there is a security camera, and people need keys to go in and out. But keys can be copied. Lillian asked whether there is an on-site manager. Charles said no, there used to be but not anymore. Commissioners noted that other senior housing is experiencing similar problems.

FNSB COMMUNITY-WIDE SENIOR ASSESSMENT UPDATE. Kathryn Dodge, Economic Development Specialist, gave this report. The Fairbanks borough is doing a broad socio-economic survey. They want to know who the seniors are and what their needs are, and what influences their decision to stay or not to stay in the Fairbanks area. They first pulled together providers and others to see what data they have and what they need. They looked at the recent ACoA survey. They would like to help us implement our state plan via this survey. They are putting together an RFP. They hope to find a VISTA to help with this project. Pat Branson asked about their timeline. Kathryn replied that they hope to have the survey completed by the end of December. Pat asked how they see it as helping to implement the state plan. Denise suggested that the borough could identify how their current work projects integrate with the goals and strategies in the state plan. We need all our communities to want to encourage seniors to remain here. It makes good sense as economic development. We can involve them in our state plan implementation committee. We want to coordinate with other entities, not duplicate efforts. The Municipality of Anchorage also did a 2000 senior survey.

FAIRBANKS PIONEER HOME. Vicki Wilson, administrator of the Fairbanks Pioneer Home since 1998, presented this report. The Pioneer Home in Fairbanks stays full – it's always at 90 to 100% capacity. There are 95 to 100 people on the active wait list. At present there is a three- to five-year wait for a bed at the facility. Their biggest challenge is filling nurse aide and nursing positions, though recently the nurses were finally upgraded so that wages are competitive with the hospitals. Vicki asked that when the ACoA does a long-term care strategic plan it include the Pioneer Homes and their population. Over 50% of their residents are at the highest level of care. That requires more staff. This year, there were no increases in PCNs for the Pioneer Homes.

People are coming to the Pioneer Homes only when they need this higher level of service – which is a good thing. It means the home- and community-based services are working well.

Vicki also wanted to address the issue of fear and security in senior housing. Even in the Pioneer Home, they have to consider security. They have seen a steady increase in difficult and challenging behaviors. And they can't find psychiatric care

for these residents. They may need help to adjust to their medications, etc. It's a problem to put people into hospitals for mental health care, as they are often not well-versed in dealing with dementia. And doctors are not taking Medicare patients.

The average age of a Fairbanks Pioneer Home resident is 87. One individual is almost 101 – with a great memory. They have four 99-year-olds.

Vicki emphasized that the Pioneer Homes are a crucial piece of the continuum of care. Frank noted that we will visit the Pioneers Home the next time the Commission is in Fairbanks.

AGENET REPORT. Jodi Irvine gave the AgeNet report. AgeNet is an advocacy group comprised of senior services providers. There are 22 member agencies. They hold monthly teleconferences where they discuss how to advocate for seniors. They didn't do that well on this year's legislative priorities. They were able to bring individuals and family members who receive services to Juneau to advocate. They did receive the additional \$250,000 in the budget base for the Flexible Long-Term Care Supports.

They plan to keep talking about the Keep the Elders Home Initiative. Next year, they'll get an earlier start to ensure they have a louder voice. They will finalize their 2008 legislative priorities in the fall. All the providers are working with the seniors in their communities who lost their Senior Care benefits.

They sat in on a Mental Health Trust Authority financial meeting, and got to see the DD side. They would like to work with DD advocates in the future.

AgeNet's annual meeting is June 27th at the Anchorage Senior Center. She asked that the Alaska Commission on Aging please let providers know what they can do to help. The Commission's answer: "Keep writing those letters!"

OTHER. Michael Black announced that the governor will be on "Talk of Alaska," a public radio call-in show, next Tuesday (May 29th).

Denise briefly discussed the Commission's FY 07 budget. Any leftover money will be spent by June 30th, on equipment or whatever we have the funds to purchase. Frank said he will work with Denise to re-organize the financial statement so that it will be easier to read. Michael remarked that the information was fairly typical of a State financial statement – but that possibly the information could be presented differently.

Frank Appel adjourned the meeting at 4:15 p.m.

Thursday, May 24th, 2007.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Frank Appel called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Frank reminded Commission members to turn in their ethics disclosure forms. And he asked them to turn in the travel receipts they have now to Rachel.

Rachel commented that if Commission members need advance checks, to let her know two weeks ahead. She can get a check issued to give them when we get together.

MaryAnn clarified that the state plan is not yet final. It is being reviewed by Region X staff, and then by the Administration on Aging staff in Washington, DC. Once it receives final approval by AOA, we'll have hard copies printed up and distributed.

CAREGIVER CREDIT CAMPAIGN. Diane Pagen and Theresa Funicello phoned in from New York to discuss this national campaign. They want to expand the child tax credit to include the care of adults – in other words, to become more of a caregiver credit. Financial costs to unpaid caregivers are great. They looked at Alaska's demographics and see an explosion of older people while the younger population is shrinking. People are going to need care. 80% of older Americans are cared for at home. No new bureaucracy is needed for this new law to be implemented. This is a fast solution – it does not create a whole new program. It would cover caregivers who work outside the home and those who don't. Money "from the feds" in the form of tax credits is known to double within the economy. This type of solution can be implemented at the federal, state, and local levels. It would have a huge effect on the well-being of families.

Commissioners asked a number of questions:

Q: How much is the credit?

A: It starts at the current level, for starters. It's too costly to start with actual costs.

Q: What are the qualifications to claim the credit?

A: It's not for professionals. It's like the child tax credit – you'd identify the person you care for by Social Security Number. There would be no procedure beyond that.

Q: Would it apply to distance caregivers who manage the finances?

A: The credit would go to the individual with “primary responsibility” – but multiple caregivers could agree to share the credit, with each claiming a fraction. Bills with lots of caveats and restrictions are costly. The money goes into administration, rather than to the caregivers.

Q: Are there any economic development or job creation benefits?

A: Research shows that state economies grow \$3 for every \$1 received from Food Stamps – whereas federal money put into constructing a building does not multiply. Everything depends on who it goes to, and what it’s used for. \$25 million is the total estimated cost of a caregiver credit. With that, you could expect over \$22 million in additional growth – which translates into lots of jobs – over 350,000 jobs spread among the states. And there would be tax revenues from those jobs. Money at the bottom has a greater economic effect.

Q: What can we do?

A: Support and endorse the legislation. Work for local support. The Caregiver Credit Campaign can supply you with information for talking to Alaskans about the campaign. They can help work out the details of the impact on the Alaskan economy.

Pat Branson noted that we already have Family Caregiver Support programs across the state. These groups could help advocate for this legislation.

LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN REPORT. Bob Dreyer reported that the VA sponsored a long-term care planning session regarding local military veterans. His office heard about this, invited themselves, and presented their expertise. They discussed how to keep people living in their own homes, and what kind of assisted living home care is available and what to look for. They also looked at guardianships and conservatorships for veterans, nursing home care, Medicaid and Medicare.

The LTCO gets together every six weeks with the State’s certification and licensing office. They have been in contact with the Anchorage police – there is an increasing problem with wanderers at long-term care facilities – alarms are needed on the doors. They attended a presentation on traditional foods in assisted living homes in January – a researcher found it is difficult to access traditional Native foods in Anchorage assisted living homes. Some homes serve tuna and view it as a traditional food (“it’s fish”). A big issue was the shut-down of three Anchorage assisted living homes when a deceased resident was found in one of them, with no staff in the building. This incident provided a good example of agencies working together in the aftermath to assist the remaining residents. All

were moved to other homes. Another issue is people with mental health issues inappropriately placed in homes not equipped to deal with their problems.

The LTCO gave a presentation at the Full Lives Conference. They discussed elder rights, reporting of abuse, and what can precipitate hostile reactions in older people – fears, anxieties, etc. They emphasized that caregivers should get to know the elders in their care. The LTCO hosted an interagency breakfast. And gave a talk at a CNA graduation ceremony.

The LTCO has 18 volunteer ombudsmen now, soon to be 23. Their goal is to have 30 by the end of 2007. The maximum needed would be 40.

Bob gave the Commission a heads-up regarding the Gastineau Apartments in downtown Juneau. They received a complaint. Most residents are elderly, on Section 8 vouchers. The new owners of the building are not responsive to concerns, and there is no longer an on-site manager. Residents now have to take their own trash out to the dumpster. The rents were raised. There is filth in the hallways. The fire alarm went off nine times in a month. There is no heat in the hallways. The building is no longer secure during the daytime. Robert Martin and Rod Moline went over to check it out. They found a lot of problems. The new owner decided to no longer accept Section 8 renters as of August. 27 out of 32 families currently residing in the building are on Section 8. HUD is going to take a look at the situation. There could be a shutdown. And there could be more than 25 families on the street, mostly elderly, with no place to go in Juneau's tight rental market. HUD may actually have to relocate them to other towns!

Pat Branson commented that the volunteer LTCO program is great. She asked Bob if he is hearing about more incidents involving senior housing problems, because the Commission seems to be hearing more and more such reports. Bob said he's heard about problems at Chugach Manor in Anchorage as well as issues in Ketchikan and Juneau – all at AHFC facilities – regarding mentally ill residents disturbing seniors. Ed asked Bob to define Section 8. Bob replied that it's a HUD-subsidized rent subsidy, put in place in lieu of creating low-income housing projects. The landlord has to agree to accept the subsidy and abide by certain conditions. HUD is currently looking at whether the Gastineau Apartments landlord is complying with all HUD agreements.

Iver stated that he appreciates the LTCO volunteers in Kodiak and the villages. People in remote locations are starving for information.

REPORTS FROM FAIRBANKS SENIOR PROVIDERS

FNSB SENIOR ADVISORY COMMISSION. Bob Sawyer, Commission member, reported that the Commission was established in 1994 to advise the mayor and assembly, provide information, and help seniors. There are nine commissioners. They conduct surveys for the benefit of seniors and disseminate information on available services. Bob reported that the borough does a great job on senior transit.

May 8th was Senior Recognition Day. There were over 400 seniors in attendance at the celebration. Outstanding Senior Volunteer awards were given. A lifetime fitness award was given to those dedicated to health and fitness. They could still do more and intend to do more to help Fairbanks seniors – there are a lot of needs out there. A priority is to help young people, via prevention, to avoid a lot of the problems seniors have now.

Bob was asked whether Fairbanks had ever considered creating an Area Agency on Aging, as Anchorage is doing. Bob said the issue has not been addressed here, but he will bring the idea to the local Commission.

FNSB PARKS & RECREATION PROGRAM. Michelle Leonard, Aquatics Manager, addressed the ACoA. Michelle said she doubles as the Senior Activities Program Manager. They send out over 600 newsletters monthly. They have free exercise classes twice a week at three different locations. They offer a walking club, which meets twice weekly, with free transport. There are senior aqua-fitness (water aerobics) classes – with a charge of \$2 per class. And there's a weekly community outing – to a museum, greenhouse, park, etc. The group often receives reduced admission fees on these outings. They recently added a twice-monthly shopping trip. Transit is a big issue for a lot of seniors. It's hard to get out and around.

Senior Recognition Day is held each year – it's a great event. There's a senior picnic and potluck. The borough provides hot dogs and drinks. They sponsor an ice fishing trip in March. Seniors keep the fish they catch. There is an old-timers' day at the fair, a trip to Delta, a trip to Chena Hot Springs, an elders' Thanksgiving dinner. This is all accomplished by one full-time and one part-time employee. They are trying to find a way to work in evening and weekend outings. They have had 430 classes with 4,300 participants (duplicated count), so far this fiscal year.

Pat Branson asked how the borough, non-profits, and other senior providers work together. Michelle responded that the borough does the coordinated transportation. They try not to duplicate services and to reach out to more people. The borough often does the activities at the non-profit agency sites.

Pat asked Michelle about her budget. Michelle said the budget for all this is \$200,000 – which includes staff, transport expenses, food for events, etc. The borough does not do a youth services program, but does serve people with disabilities.

Iver asked about whether the program has support from the local assembly. Michelle said yes. She said the senior programs had a huge wait list, but they got extra money from the assembly and mayors in order to expand.

Lillian asked about whether the program coordinates with Mary Binkley and the Riverboat Discovery. Michelle replied that they do and that, in fact, their program coordinator was on the riverboat right now with a group of seniors.

DENAKKANAAGA. Jennifer Maguire, Executive Director of Denakkanaaga, spoke to the Commission about her agency. This agency serves the same area as Tanana Chiefs Conference – 42 interior villages – but focuses on the elders. They got an AoA grant to provide services in several villages. They have elder outreach coordinators. On June 5 – 7 they'll be holding an Elders and Youth Conference in Fairbanks – this is an annual event. They collaborate with Fairbanks Native Association, Tanana Chiefs, and Interior Regional Housing Authority, which offer meal and housing programs for elders. “Denakkanaaga” means “our language” in Koyukon Athabascan.

The program has two full-time staff. They are scheduled to move to a new building soon. Part of their budget comes from a gaming program. They have an Elderhostel coordinator, with 300 tourists per year coming up. This starts in March. They receive \$200,000 per year from the tuition. The people have lunch with Denakkanaaga seniors once a week. They are very interested in services for Fairbanks area elders. This program started in 1981 at UAF, then moved to Denakkanaaga in 2001. They are very happy to have it; it fits well with what they do.

ALASKA LEGAL SERVICES. Inez Wright, Advanced Paralegal, spoke on behalf of her agency. Alaska Legal Services is a private non-profit agency that assists low-income individuals with civil legal matters such as consumer, family law, income maintenance issues (Food Stamps, SSI, Social Security appeals, etc.) and housing concerns (long-term care, subsidized housing, etc.). They do power of attorney delegations, wills, and health care directives, and offer self-help clinics on bankruptcy and family law. They have a legal learning lab where people can look up information on computers. They cannot represent everyone who comes in. They encourage self-help. They help all seniors (age 60 and over) regardless of income – at least with advice. There is only one attorney in Fairbanks now, but

they expect to be getting two more. They handle Fairbanks and about 70 villages. Alaska Legal Services has seven offices statewide, each covering a certain area. They have a huge caseload.

When asked about the purpose of the legal learning lab, Inez answered that the lab has ten laptops on which people can download forms for divorce and other actions – these would be the people who don't qualify for ALS representation. In response to a question about funding, Inez said they are still having problems. They recently received funding for a domestic violence position in two offices (Fairbanks and Bethel). It's still a struggle every year to maintain services statewide. Clients do not pay. Services are free if they're income-eligible.

ACCESS ALASKA (ADRC). Jim Kreatschman reported that Access Alaska is now an ADRC (Aging and Disabilities Resource Center), serving seniors as well as people with disabilities. The staff transitioned easily. They helped over 300 people get Medicare Part D. Their current intake procedure does not ask about disabilities – just health issues. They provide vision services, helping people to maximize whatever sight they have remaining. Assistive technology, adaptive equipment, transportation training, a loan closet for medical equipment (they give out 300 pieces per year in Fairbanks and surrounding villages – hospital beds, wheelchairs, walkers, etc.) are some of the other services they provide. They work closely with senior centers and area hospitals. They do home modifications – they can spend up to \$10,000, provided by a Trust grant. They offer PCA services, either with Medicaid billing or private pay. They provide information and referral services, with 800 contacts so far this year. They help people fill out paperwork. They respond to all requests for services. They do outreach outside Fairbanks; this rural specialist position was not funded this year, but staff are making more rural contacts. They've set up some nice funding streams – for example, some money goes directly to the Nenana Senior Center, etc. The Fairbanks office provides an interpreter referral line for the deaf.

In response to a question about their budget, Jim replied that it's \$1 million per year for the Fairbanks office. A small amount of this comes from the ADRC grant. The total Access Alaska budget is about \$10 million. This represents an average of about \$1200 per consumer per year.

Pat Branson remarked that the ADRCs have been controversial with respect to how they work with senior centers' information and referral services. She asked how they work with the senior centers, given that many of them are so much more established. Jim gave Medicare Part D enrollment as an example. Senior center staff came in and toured their facility, and were told, "Send 'em over here." Fairbanks agencies work well together.

Nancy Burke added that Access Alaska has a well-established record of serving seniors with disabilities. Denise noted that Access Alaska has participated in the Fairbanks senior provider network, which meets monthly.

Jim suggested that maybe Access Alaska staff should go to the senior center once a week to provide information and referral services to seniors there.

Iver asked about PCA salaries. Jim replied that when they started supplying this service, they paid \$13 per hour and the agency made money. But they have lost consumers to other companies who pay slightly more. When their PCA moves over, the consumer switches companies too. There comes a point when you can't make a profit anymore.

TANANA CHIEFS CONFERENCE ELDER NUTRITION PROGRAM. Val Dewey, Project Coordinator, spoke about her program. The Elder Nutrition Program serves over 490 elders in a large area. Art Nash, who just resigned, was doing the Title VI, part (C) (Older Americans Act) elder home care in the villages. There are five sub-regions, each with up to 162 elders. Problems occur – for example, food shipments can get lost and end up in another village. Funding for this program is cut every year – this year is the lowest yet. They are also trying to prepare the villages for a possible avian flu outbreak – anticipating emergency needs. They pay a cook \$10 an hour for ten hours a week – to serve 70 to 80 elders. Cooks don't last long – that's one of the major challenges. Some have never cooked before. Still, it's a pretty good program. Some elders receive \$300 a month and are in their 80s and 90s – they really need the program's support. The program does referrals to agencies all over the Fairbanks area. They'll hear, "I got cancer, but I don't want to leave home." They'll get the person a PCA, a ramp, etc. Art did the home visits. Denakkanaaga handles all the villages on the road system, and Tanana Chiefs handles villages that can only be reached by air. They watch for elder abuse and refer people when necessary.

Ed asked about the impact of Senior Care's demise in their area. Val said the impact will be great. A lot of the elders receive Senior Care.

Food costs are astronomical due to shipping costs. They are trying to figure out how to keep their program going now that postage and freight have tripled. She's not sure how much the program gets in reimbursement per individual from USDA. The elders pay nothing. They don't have any money. Tribes sometimes donate fish, etc. The program receives no Title III money. They've been too busy to apply for these funds. Denise suggested that this could help supplement the program's income. Pat Branson said they do this in Kodiak – the villages get some Title III

money through the senior center. Iver suggested approaching the Native corporations for money. He said ANTHC ran out of money, but he thinks there is something out there – perhaps in Doyon Corporation. Their best bet might be the AFN convention in October – he suggested they get on the agenda for youth and elders day there. Val said they get commodity food boxes from the Fairbanks food bank and the tribes pay to ship them out to the villages.

Michael Black noted that costs are rising for food, fuel, and “bypass mail.” There needs to be some income data gathered. Gas was \$11 per gallon in Newtok this spring. There will be a breaking point where people can no longer afford to live in the village. But, Val responded, they don’t want to leave – they want to die at home.

MATURE ALASKANS SEEKING SKILLS TRAINING (MASST). Tom Howard, Program Director, addressed the Commission. Denise mentioned that the ACoA works closely with MASST on the state plan, older employee and employer of the year awards, etc. Tom said there are three eligibility requirements for the MASST program: the individual must be age 55 or older, low-income, and an Alaska resident. Most participants are between the ages of 55 and 65. Only 21% are over 65. 34% are members of minority groups. The goal of the job training is to help people transition into non-subsidized employment. They assess the person first, to choose the appropriate job goal. Host agencies – which must be 501(C)(3) organizations – are the lifeblood of the MASST program. (This Older Americans Act program is called SCSEP in the lower 48.) They have many partnerships – in Fairbanks, agencies partner very well. The Department of Labor’s job center is one partner. They offer a “job club” where participants learn interview techniques, etc. This MASST office covers all the way to St. Lawrence Island. They have three participants in Teller! They reach out to economically depressed areas, including many villages. Thirty-six percent of those who exited the program got a job. That is considered good – many of the participants are disabled or in some way considered “hard to employ.” Statewide last year 51% of those exiting the program got jobs.

Recruiting is a big factor – but it takes money. They’d like to run an ad in the Sunday papers – but it’s very spendy. In response to a question about the reasons people exited the program other than finding a job, Tom responded that some may retire, there are other voluntary exits, a few passed away, and a few may be exited from the program for cause. The work that most participants do is clerical and office work – often reception, filing, and data entry. There are no time limitations for a person in the program. Under the new law, they can receive up to 48 months of subsidy, but the program average cannot exceed 27 months per person. People need varying amounts of support.

With Title V money (Older Americans Act), the program has to spend 75% of it to pay the trainers in the host agency. There is 25% left to pay for MASST agency staff. The new law will change these percentages.

NEW BUSINESS.

MEETING SCHEDULE. Commission members spent some time discussing the best dates for this fall's rural outreach meeting in Kodiak. They set the meeting dates for August 29th through the 31st. The winter meeting in Anchorage was tentatively set for Nov. 27th and 28th, the week after Thanksgiving. And the legislative advocacy meeting in Juneau was tentatively scheduled for Feb. 12th through the 14th. The spring 2008 meeting was set for May 21st-22nd in Anchorage, and the fall 2008 rural outreach meeting was scheduled for Sept. 16th-18th in Dillingham.

RETIREMENT COMMUNITY OF FAIRBANKS. Nancy Jones gave a presentation about a new senior housing project which is planned for the Fairview Manor area. They couldn't get the Chena River land they originally wanted from Fairbanks. Instead they purchased this 12.9 acre parcel. It will contain affordable housing, with one development for seniors. Then, there will be a 72-unit market-rate housing project for seniors. In Phase II, they will add an assisted-living facility. In Phase III, they plan commercial development such as a facility for physical therapy, etc. The idea is that once you move in, you'd get services in your home till you need care 24/7, at which point you'd move over to assisted living. They will provide all assistance as needed.

Plans are currently being re-drawn for the new site. There will be a common dining room, three residential buildings joined with covered walkways, and space for classes and recreational activities. It will be managed by the residents and by the Retirement Community of Fairbanks. They are about to hire a professional fundraiser to help raise the needed \$21.8 million for the project. Betty mentioned that a similar senior housing project is going up in Wrangell – Tlingit & Haida is building it. Another one is going up in Wasilla. People want the security of not having to move again.

Nancy noted that the Retirement Community of Fairbanks is a 501(C)(3) organization. They get funds from public donations. It is the brainchild of Karen Parr and MaryAnn Eininger. It arose from the observation that there is no place for non-low-income seniors to live. An ISER study showed seniors contribute \$1.5 billion per year to the state's economy. We need to keep our seniors here – "we are the brain trust."

Rent for the senior apartments would start at \$1600 to \$2000 per month. It sounds like a lot, but most are paying \$2000 per month now for their home, including mortgage, utilities, etc. Counterparts in the lower 48 are running \$3000 to \$6000 per month. "It's a steal!" Current average rent in Fairbanks is \$950 to \$1200 for a two-bedroom apartment. The largest apartment will be 1,050 square feet, and the smallest will be 650 square feet. Total costs will amount to \$2500 per month, including meals, transport, call system, 24-hour nursing assistance, etc.

The project will be breaking ground this summer. They hope to start building next year. There are lots of contaminants on the site, so there will need to be a major clean-up done first. It's possible they may not be able to start construction till 2009 or 2010. The architect for the project is C.D. Bettisworth of Fairbanks.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.