

# ALASKA MINERALS COMMISSION

## Meeting Notes

October 29, 2024

### IN ATTENDANCE:

**Alaska Minerals Commission (AMC):** Vice Chair Justin Seavey, Chris Kennedy, Kyle Beebe, Tisha Kuhns, Victor Ross

**Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED):** Sara Chambers, DCCED boards and Commissions Advisor; Sally Russell Cox, Division of Community and Regional Affairs Staff to the AMC

**Members of the Public:** Bill Kane, Igiugig Village; Allan Nakanishi, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation; Leila Kimbrell, Resource Development Council for Alaska, Inc.

### I. Call to Order

- a. **Acting Chair Justin Seavey** opened the meeting and acknowledged **Sara Chambers** and **Sally Cox** for addressing regulatory issues affecting the Commission's operations, notably around public meeting notices and transparency.
- b. **Roll Call:** Commissioners Chris Kennedy, Justin Seavey, Kyle Beebe, Tisha Kuhns, and Victor Ross were present, making a quorum.

### II. AMC Governance and Operations

- a. **Public Meeting Requirements and Procedures**
  - i. **Sara Chambers** emphasized the need for all Commission meetings, even small committee meetings, to be publicly noticed and accessible to comply with state regulations. This ensures transparency, allowing the public to observe and participate in the Commission's decision-making processes.
  - ii. **Sara Chambers and Sally Cox** will assist in coordinating and reviewing public notices to ensure compliance.
- b. **Commission Membership**
  - i. **Sara Chambers** noted some uncertainty about current Commission membership due to retirements, shifts in roles, and upcoming vacancies.
  - ii. **Sara** discussed a unique element in the Commission's statute which allows commission members to continue serving as a member until a replacement is formally appointed.

### III. Annual Report

#### a. Annual Report Development and Approval

- i. **Sara Chambers** outlined options for drafting and approving the Commission's annual report. Options include delegating the draft to a small group or handling edits in publicly noticed meetings to ensure accountability.
- ii. The finalized report should reflect the Commission's stance and meet official standards, with all members given the opportunity to review before publication.

#### b. Public Comment Procedures

- i. **Bill Kane, Igiugig Village** asked if it is possible to increase public facing information on the commission's activities. He noted the public notice system wasn't a perfect way to disseminate information to the public. He suggested placing something on the landing page of the Alaska Minerals Commission website that allowed people to sign up for a listserv or for updates.
- ii. **Chris Kennedy** suggested the AMC website provide clear information on the Commission's mission, accessible through the public notice website, to educate the public on its goals and duties.
- iii. It was also suggested a dedicated email be created for public comments.

### IV. Public Comments and Testimony

- a. **Alan Nakanishi** with the Department of Environmental Conservation highlighted a critical continuity issue in the Wastewater Discharge Authorization Program due to upcoming retirements of experienced staff. He stressed the importance of training new hires under the guidance of current senior staff to retain essential knowledge in mining permitting. He provided the following testimony regarding the importance of experienced permit writers in maintaining permitting efficiency:

*I'm Alan Nakanishi. I'm a resident of Chugiak, Alaska. I'm employed by the Department of Environmental Conservation, and I've been the lead engineer and permitting manager for the Waste Water Discharge Authorization Program. The mining section, well, I'll be calling it, for the last 15 years. My purpose is to notify the commission and the minerals industry as a whole, the continuity of the waste slaughter permitting program, the mining section. The section that has served the hard drive mineral industry and placer mining industry since, as early as the 1990s, is in jeopardy of losing all institutional memory at any time. the mining section now consists of exactly three engineers.*

*David Khan, Tim Pilon, and I, and one senior scientist, Nick Dallman, all knowledge and experience in developing wastewater discharge permits and*

*familiarity with the mining industry are contained within these long term employees. Each staff member represents decades of experience and specialized training to develop permits and have the familiarity of the industry they serve.*

*I'm just quickly going through who these people are because I'm sure you're individually familiar with one or all of them because you have worked with these people for a long time.*

*Tim Pilon was my first hire out of the Fairbanks office in 2009. He's a lead engineer primarily for Northern Alaska mines and exploration projects that his expertise is often brought into other projects across the state. He's got well over 20 years of experience as a fully trained permitting engineer and Tim is currently eligible for full retirement.*

*Nick Dallman, my second hire in the mining section in 2010, is a lead permit writer and coordinator for all placer mining permits across Alaska, is an army of one not only developed the placer permitting program as we know it. He's the only one assigned to run it. He has experience and qualifications of a managerial promotion outside of the mining section.*

*And then David Khan is a senior engineer to join the mining section in 2017, he's my newest member. He came to me from the drinking water program with over 20 years of engineering experience and it took me over two to three years to get him fully trained an engineer to lead permit writer in the Southeast region.*

*For myself, I'll be retiring from the state September 1, 2027, and nothing's going to stop me from doing that. So based on staff retirement status alone in promotion potential, I believe that the police staff overturned over as more likely than not within the next two to three years.*

*In order to prevent the loss of institutional knowledge from departing staff we must have incoming staff assigned a mentor under the senior staff with the goal of replacing them. I ask the Commission to check in with your industry environmental managers to inform yourself directly of the need and importance of working with fully trained regulators. And that's what I wish to convey to the Commission. Thank you.*

- b. Moving forward, the Commission will consider implementing both written and virtual public comment options to allow wider public input, especially during report drafting.

**V. Future Meetings to Review and Approve**

- a. Commissioners discussed options for future meetings, deciding that virtual meetings would continue until the annual report's completion. They also agreed to establish a public comment framework.
- b. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for **November 14, 2024**. **Justin Seavey** will coordinate the agenda with Sally Cox and she will send the draft agenda to commissioners to review and send out calendar invitations.

**VI. Adjourn**

- a. The meeting was adjourned by Acting Chair Justin Seavey at approximately 11:00 am.