

1 DENALI COMMISSION
2 PUBLIC MEETING
3 September 15, 2015
4 2:00 p.m.

5 Taken at:
6 Denali Commission
7 510 L Street, Suite 410
8 Anchorage, Alaska 99501

9 Commissioners Attending:
10 Joel Neimeyer, Federal Co-Chair
11 Jim Johnsen
12 Kathie Wasserman
13 Julie Kitka
14 Vince Beltrami
15 John Mackinnon

ORIGINAL

16 Staff Attending:
17 Sabrina Cabana
18 Also Participating: Mark Brzezinski; Simon
19 Stephenson; Melanie Peterson; Bob Glascott; Jay
20 Farmwald; Kevin Sweeney; Deborah Vo; Jay Eubanks;
21 Kerry Long; Khalial withen; David Sheppard; John
22 Whittington; Chris Allard; Gilliah Brinkman; Zack
23 Fields; Ted Knicker; Sandra Moeller; Tami Fordman.
24
25

1 PROCEEDINGS

2 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: So, we have a
3 quorum, this is Joel Neimeyer, Federal
4 Co-Chair. I'm calling the September 15 meeting
5 to order.

6 Commissioners, we have the agenda
7 before you.

8 I'd like to make an amendment. I
9 did not include here approval of the July 22nd
10 meeting minutes. I'd like to add that to the
11 agenda.

12 with that, are there any other
13 proposed changes to the agenda?

14 So, hearing none, let's move
15 forward to the July 22nd meeting minutes.

16 I will share with you that I got
17 feedback from our good friend, Mr. Weaver from
18 ANTHC, and he shared these two comments on page
19 6. A sentence that reads: Given the scope of
20 the threat, there is a great value in
21 "allying." He believes the word should have
22 been -- should be "aligning."

23 And then the sentence ends with
24 "adaptation and mitigation collusion." He
25 believes the word should be "mitigation

1 solution."

2 So, those are two proposed edits
3 to the July 22nd meeting minutes.

4 Are there any other proposed
5 edits or comments by Commissioners to the
6 meeting minutes?

7 May I have a motion to approve?

8 COMMISSIONER JOHNSEN: This is
9 Commissioner Johnsen. So moved.

10 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Do we have a
11 second?

12 COMMISSIONER WASSERMAN: This is
13 Commissioner Wasserman. I'll second.

14 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Are there any
15 comments about the meeting minutes?

16 Then we'll call for a vote. I'll
17 just call Commissioners' names.

18 John.

19 COMMISSIONER MACKINNON: Yes.

20 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Vince?

21 Hi, Vince, you're probably still
22 on mute.

23 Let's move on. Julie?

24 COMMISSIONER KITKA: Yes.

25 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Dr. Johnsen?

1 COMMISSIONER JOHNSEN: Yes.

2 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Kathie?

3 COMMISSIONER WASSERMAN: Yes.

4 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Do we have the
5 Lieutenant Governor on-line?

6 we have largely approval of the
7 minutes, and we'll come back to Vince when he's
8 back on-line.

9 Let's move, then, to the agenda.
10 We had some reps from the Arctic Executive
11 Steering Committee who are planning on calling
12 in.

13 MS. CABANA: They are on-line.

14 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: So the floor
15 is yours. Either Mark or Simon.

16 I'll let you both have the floor.
17 And please --

18 DR. BRZEZINSKI: Thank you, Joel,
19 it's Mark Brzezinski and Simon Stephenson from
20 the White House Science and Arctic Policy,
21 which is the home of the Arctic Executive
22 Steering Meeting. Thank you very much for
23 inviting us to your commission meeting today.

24 Simon ran through some of the
25 history of August 22nd and how it was

1 established by executive order. And so I'm not
2 going to repeat that now. But I will tell you
3 that I am very excited about serving the AESC
4 as its first executive director. The Arctic,
5 to me, is simultaneously a strategic challenge
6 and a human challenge; and the steering
7 committee has as one of its mandates advancing
8 engagement and coordination with Native and
9 tribal groups, local and state groups,
10 advancing national priorities. It really is
11 meant to bring a whole of government, but
12 really a whole of our people to the future of
13 the Arctic.

14 And so I'm very excited about
15 this role, and I thank you, again, for inviting
16 me to take part in this meeting.

17 Now, to the specific reason that
18 Simon and I have joined you this evening -- at
19 least this evening here in Washington -- and
20 that is the Arctic Executive Steering Committee
21 established the Coastal Erosion Working Group
22 to examine opportunities for improving federal
23 action that address, quote, the imminent threat
24 of coastal erosion and flooding impacting
25 Alaskan Arctic coastal communities.

1 That action was recommended by
2 the Department of Interior as one of the first
3 areas where the AESC could make an important
4 contribution.

5 The Coastal Erosion Working Group
6 quickly understood that focusing on coastal
7 erosion may be too limiting, so recommended
8 broadening the scope. Broadening the scope to
9 include the impact of climate change, including
10 coastal erosion, flooding, and permafrost
11 degradation.

12 At an Arctic Executive Steering
13 Committee meeting in June, the Coastal Erosion
14 Working Group delivered its set of
15 recommendations. There was strong support for
16 setting up additional village planning groups
17 after the model established by the village of
18 Newtok. The Department of Interior has since
19 funded three additional groups for the
20 villages, Shishmaref, Shaktoolik and Kivalina.

21 The Coastal Erosion Working Group
22 also began developing a catalog of federal
23 programs that was announced by the President
24 and which is now on the Denali Commission web
25 site. I believe it's also on the CET web site,

1 among other places.

2 The working group also
3 recommended -- consistent with the 2009 GAO
4 report -- that a lead federal entity with the
5 authority to collaborate with state agencies
6 and tribal representatives and oversee federal
7 engagement and voluntary relocation and
8 management retreat efforts to be selected.

9 Further discussion among the Coastal Erosion
10 Working Group recognized the Denali
11 Commission's unique experience, authority and
12 relationship with the State of Alaska, local
13 and tribal agencies, making it an obvious
14 choice to facilitate coordination of federal
15 engagement and efforts to protect communities
16 and conduct voluntary relocation for other
17 managed retreat efforts.

18 So, the AESC agreed to approach
19 Denali to play this role to assist communities
20 in implementing short- and long-term solutions
21 to address the climate change, including
22 coastal erosion, flooding, permafrost
23 degradation. This summer, the Denali
24 Commission independently began developing a
25 related activity to commit approximately \$2

1 million to, quote, support voluntary relocation
2 efforts where appropriate and other resilience
3 strategies for vulnerable Alaskan communities.

4 we note that the Denali
5 Commission scope is potentially greater than
6 that of the AESC, the latter focusing on
7 climate resilience. That's okay. Many of the
8 programs that we will use to address climate
9 resilience in Alaska may have a broader or a
10 narrower scope, but it will be appropriate to
11 support specific actions. The key is to
12 coordinate them well, and that's the
13 opportunity of the AESC.

14 we would, obviously, prefer some
15 of the funding to be directed toward the
16 Coastal Erosion Working Group activity.

17 So I'm now going to ask Simon to
18 discuss how such a coordinating role might
19 look, at least in terms of its inception, at
20 least as we begin it going forward with this
21 latest announcement.

22 Simon.

23 MR. STEPHENSON: Thanks a lot.

24 Maybe there are some questions
25 for Mark before I sort of paint a picture of

1 how that coordination might look.

2 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Thank you,
3 Simon. I'll start with Kathie. She's in the
4 room with us.

5 So, do you have any questions for
6 Mark or Simon about the preamble about the
7 Arctic Executive Steering Committee and the
8 Coastal Erosion Working Group?

9 COMMISSIONER WASSERMAN: No.

10 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Thank you.

11 Any commissioners on-line? Do
12 you have any questions?

13 Hearing none, Simon, please
14 start.

15 MR. STEPHENSON: Okay. So, the
16 role we have in the President's announcement
17 was one of leading coordination, and I think
18 the key part of coordination that we can make a
19 lot of progress on quickly is in the area of
20 communication. That's communicating the plans
21 that different agencies, different villages,
22 the state of Alaska, already have, and I think
23 the two tools -- I could see the Commission
24 using one -- is its web site to link into the
25 web sites that are already holding this kind of

1 information. And the State of Alaska has a
2 good one, certainly pointing to the Newtok
3 village Planning Group. And now that the other
4 village planning groups are getting underway,
5 we hope that they will sort of manage their own
6 web sites. But to link these activities
7 together in a single place where people can go
8 get information, I think, is a key component.

9 The other piece of this
10 communication is to convene the -- both the
11 affected communities, State of Alaska agencies
12 and the federal agencies that are currently
13 participating in the Coastal Erosion Working
14 Group, and other experts that -- so we know and
15 actually, you know, the communities know and
16 the State knows, pulling in the University and
17 other engineering expertise. So, we had talked
18 about in sort of a brainstorming session
19 potentially holding a workshop, perhaps for the
20 first time bringing in this full range of
21 expertise and agencies that we have.

22 I think, also, picking up on some
23 of the Commission's discussions at the meeting
24 that I was at before, I think you would also
25 like to see things developing fairly quickly,

1 some concrete plans for actions that will
2 decrease the vulnerability of communities now.

3 So, this would be still a
4 short-term action that show -- that demonstrate
5 the partnership of the feds, the State, and the
6 local communities, and perhaps other entities,
7 too.

8 So, those are some things that I
9 think we could do together, you know,
10 relatively quickly. But this, clearly, is a --
11 you know, a learning experience for the federal
12 side. I know there's a lot of expertise on the
13 fed side in the state, but at the AESC level,
14 we are -- you know, very mindful that we
15 actually don't have the expertise necessarily
16 here, and we need to do this together.

17 So, we are, you know, very open
18 to hearing about Denali Commission's expertise
19 and that of other entities in the state and
20 local communities.

21 And one area where the State has
22 definitely led is the establishment of village
23 planning groups, for instance; and maybe there
24 are other communities that are trying to use
25 that tool to start planning their future.

1 So I'll stop there, and we'll
2 both be open for questions.

3 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Again, I'll
4 follow the same format. Do you have any
5 questions, Kathie?

6 COMMISSIONER WASSERMAN: No, not
7 right now. I may later, but not now.

8 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Thank you.

9 So, Commissioners on-line, do you
10 have any questions for Simon?

11 COMMISSIONER JOHNSON: No.

12 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: That was Dr.
13 Johnson saying no.

14 Hearing none, I would say that,
15 you know, obviously, there's been a lot of
16 discussion amongst our stakeholder agencies;
17 and we have a number of federal agencies who
18 locally we've been talking with about their --
19 they're curious about where do we go. What do
20 we do? How do we engage them? And I would
21 like to ask if any federal agencies want to
22 speak to the Commissioners about perhaps your
23 agency's thoughts on this and how you might see
24 it moving forward.

25 Please do so. And since we have

1 members from the Corps here, I'll call on them
2 first.

3 MR. GLASCOTT: This is Bob
4 Glascott with the Alaska Corps of Engineers. I
5 have to come to the big table. I'm in trouble.

6 And with me is Melanie Peterson.
7 And to most of you, Melanie is a known with the
8 Denali Commission, and, you know, with
9 subsequent meetings.

10 And where things line up now,
11 what really the Corps can offer is in 2009 --
12 you know, Simon and Mark both touched on three
13 things: Erosion, river flooding and storm
14 surge, and then permafrost. And in those three
15 things, the first thing that Melanie can really
16 address is in 2009 the Corps did an erosion
17 baseline survey around the state of Alaska; and
18 that gave a pretty good idea of what
19 communities really were threatened, and we have
20 maps and data that give a pretty good idea on
21 the erosion in the state of Alaska.

22 That's a little dated right now.
23 And the one thing that might lay up nicely --
24 and, again, there have been some talks about
25 some scope and things that possibly we could

1 do -- would be additional data collection to
2 make that dataset a little bit more robust to
3 figure out what has changed since 2009 to give
4 perspective on these issues with regard to
5 erosion.

6 Similarly, with the flooding, the
7 Corps of Engineers maintains a database that
8 has historical flooding information. Some of
9 that, again, needs to be revisited. Some of
10 that data is a little old. Some of the
11 records, as I was looking at them, you know, go
12 back to the '70s and that's really it. There's
13 a FEMA flood map that are from the 1970s, and
14 that's really as good as it gets.

15 Again, we have the ability to do
16 that -- to do those types of data collection
17 activities. To go out and talk to these
18 communities, find out historically where the
19 impacts have been, look at high-water marks in
20 these communities, survey them in.

21 Again, all under the notion of,
22 you know -- again, some sort of scope that
23 would allow us to prioritize different --
24 different -- these different factors in these
25 different communities, to figure out if you've

1 got to start and make a list, to start, you
2 know, and say, hey, this is the No. 1 community
3 today with this snapshot, and kind of go from
4 there.

5 And, you know, the last thing is
6 the permafrost, and the permafrost I really see
7 as a subset of erosion because typically what
8 you see in these areas where we have big
9 erosion taking place as it relates to
10 permafrost is you have undercutting and you
11 have big bluffs falling off. And in most
12 instances -- and, Melanie, let me know if I'm
13 going off the reservation here -- in most
14 instances, those have happened in areas that
15 are really uninhabited; but all of a sudden
16 it's noticed because they have lost 50, 70, 100
17 feet of shoreline. Because the wave action
18 undercuts that permafrost, basically that
19 frozen soil, that huge mass falls into the
20 ocean and disappears.

21 Again, the Corps, we are very
22 good at these types of activities. We do have
23 a vast history. But, again, we're engineers.
24 I'm not an engineer, but our engineers, they're
25 linear thinkers. They like to have scopes

1 on -- sorry, Jay. They like to have scopes.
2 They like to know how they're constrained,
3 because, again, we -- you know, we set out to
4 have some quality data objectives; and we try
5 to achieve those objectives.

6 And with that, I'll ask Melanie
7 if you have anything to add.

8 MS. PETERSON: No, that's good.
9 You covered all the key points.

10 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Commissioners,
11 any questions for our Army Corps
12 representatives?

13 Kathie?

14 COMMISSIONER WASSERMAN: So if
15 you did additional studies, it would be to
16 reprioritize or to prioritize, maybe "re" is
17 not even a --

18 MR. GLASCOTT: It's really up to
19 what the Commission wants. Because, again,
20 we're trying to -- absolutely, we would try to
21 come up on -- think of it this way: whatever
22 we do now is in the public spectrum, and
23 there's going to be a lot of eyes on this. And
24 if we do start saying, okay, your community is
25 No. 1, you're No. 2. No. 2 may take issue;

1 and, you know, whatever we do, I think it's
2 really going to be incumbent on us as we move
3 forward to have a very clear, accepted
4 prioritization scheme that's well thought out,
5 is defensible. If that answers.

6 MR. FARMWALD: This is Jay
7 Farmwald. I would actually see it as a
8 two-step process. One would be data collection
9 to -- filling in the data gaps around the state
10 that exist, and then once that data is in hand,
11 then beginning to think about, you know, how do
12 you turn that data into metrics that can
13 prioritize projects. And that was the thought
14 behind the original July framework, that we put
15 together at the very beginning of this journey.

16 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Kathie?

17 COMMISSIONER WASSERMAN: Okay.
18 That answered my question.

19 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Commissioners
20 on-line, do you have any questions for Bob?

21 Hearing none. Thank you.

22 So, do we have any other federal
23 folks who wish to speak in the room?

24 No?

25 Okay.

1 How about on-line? Do we have
2 any other federal representatives who would
3 like to speak to the Commissioners about this
4 initiative?

5 COMMISSIONER KITKA: Joel, this
6 is Julie.

7 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Yes, Julie.

8 COMMISSIONER KITKA: I'd like to
9 know whether or not you invited our
10 Congressional delegation to the conference like
11 we requested, or did you not?

12 MR. SWEENEY: This is Kevin
13 Sweeney. I'm here representing Senator
14 Murkowski. And Deborah Vo is here, as well.

15 COMMISSIONER KITKA: Thank you.

16 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Kevin declined
17 to comment, but now he did. Thank you, Kevin.

18 So, any other feds on-line who
19 wish to address the Commissioners?

20 Moving from there, are there any
21 members from the public who would like to speak
22 to Commissioners about this? And we'll start
23 with folks in the room.

24 Hearing none, let's move to folks
25 on line. Is there anyone on-line who would

1 like to speak to the Commissioners?

2 I thought I heard someone.

3 I did not.

4 So, Commissioners, let me share
5 with you some thoughts that I had. The
6 fundamental questions -- one of the fundamental
7 questions we were addressing early on is: Do
8 we have sufficient direction with the 2 million
9 so that I can obligate the funds for a specific
10 purpose?

11 We believe we're close, but I
12 would like some additional direction from
13 Commissioners. It would be helpful, but I
14 believe John -- follow up with me on this. We
15 probably do have enough to obligate the funds.
16 Sufficient scope and budget time line, and
17 vendors.

18 COMMISSIONER KITKA: Joel, this
19 is Julie.

20 I would like to object to this
21 discussion about the spending of that. The
22 purpose of today's meeting was to allow the
23 Commissioners to fully understand the Arctic
24 Executive Committee and its role and how it can
25 help us make the decisions on that. I raised

1 in previous e-mails my concerns with the lack
2 of metrics and goals and the spending on that
3 issue, and I'd like to have that put off.

4 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: I understand,
5 Julie, but I have to obligate the money between
6 now and September 30. I've got 15 days to
7 obligate. My point I have is that I believe we
8 have sufficient information for me to obligate
9 the funds. We don't want to carry over into
10 the next fiscal year 2 million showing
11 unobligated and risk the threat that Congress
12 would sweep those funds as they did in 2011.

13 what I'm looking for is if
14 Commissioners wanted to give anymore thoughts
15 on that.

16 But if you don't, then I'm happy
17 to move forward with what we have today.

18 COMMISSIONER KITKA: Well, I will
19 tell you one of my concerns that I've had with
20 the Denali Commission is the waiver of the 5
21 percent cap. I would like the Denali
22 Commissioners to reinstate and direct the
23 Federal Co-chair and the Administration from
24 here on out to adhere to that cap and seek no
25 more waivers. I think that's one of the

1 compelling reasons for having the Denali
2 Commission is being able to demonstrate that we
3 can work down under that administrative cap,
4 and I'd also like, in regards to going forward
5 with obligating these funds, for us to consider
6 putting an RFP out to solicit proposals and --
7 I would like a lot more metrics and goals and
8 accountability in that, as opposed to the way
9 that it was presented to date.

10 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Okay.

11 Any comments from Commissioners?

12 well, let me speak to the 5
13 percent cap. Several things that we're doing
14 here we are looking at -- is based upon the
15 March 2015 GAO report which identified our
16 indirect rate is 24 percent. We've been
17 looking at that trying to identify how much of
18 that is program and administration, and so we
19 are doing that as we move forward. We have
20 talked to the Alaska delegation earlier this
21 summer about that, so they're aware of what
22 we're trying to do is -- what we're trying to
23 do is define what that number is.

24 we have previously been putting
25 all of the costs of the agencies under one line

1 item being admin, whereas we think a number of
2 the line items actually belong in program.

3 That's one thing we're doing.

4 And I would say that it isn't --
5 it hasn't been my practice to seek the 5
6 percent waiver, and I don't know if it was
7 George's practice, but routinely, that is
8 Federal Office of Management & Budget who puts
9 that in the President's budget.

10 But I'm certain that we can
11 collect a letter of the Commissioners'
12 desires -- to send a letter to OMB that that's
13 your desire.

14 COMMISSIONER KITKA: From my
15 perspective, is I'm taking a look at how do we
16 capture what the Denali Commission does really
17 well and how do we put together a report that
18 talks about what we've accomplished in bulk
19 fuel and health clinics and energy upgrades and
20 all of our major partners and what the success
21 has been and what we've accomplished, but
22 what's -- we were still not seeing some reports
23 that capture the best of what we've done with
24 specifics. I do believe that the Denali
25 Commission being tasked with this is going to

1 need additional streams of revenue in order to
2 meet our missions and goals on that. In order
3 to seek streams of consideration of our
4 revenue, we need to tell our story of what
5 we've accomplished, and I don't think we have
6 that resource yet.

7 I think we're under -- my reading
8 of the thing, we're under a very tight time
9 frame, and the time frame between now and when
10 the President's new budget comes out to
11 identify what could come up in the President's
12 budget that could help us in this mission, and
13 to set that up working with our Congressional
14 delegation, make it a little bit easier for
15 them to try to help us try to get our
16 priorities done on that. I think that ought to
17 be one of the key things that we go up as we
18 have a very short -- focus in on a very short
19 time frame. That's part of the reason why I
20 didn't want us to kind of go down a path. I
21 think having to retool the Denali Commission,
22 we have to retool possibly our staff at the
23 Denali Commission, what kinds of partners are
24 the ones that rise to the top that need to be
25 involved. There's a lot of internal

1 considerations we need to have with this
2 condition, and I think when we went through our
3 whole planning session in the Denali Commission
4 we identified some of the frustrations that the
5 Commissioners had that things were not --
6 facing the Denali Commission themselves were
7 involved in and that they wanted a greater
8 decision-making role in that, and I'd like to
9 see the Denali Commission -- the Commissioners
10 remain in a decision-making role in this new
11 reset and not be relegated to reading about it
12 in the paper or some e-mail.

13 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Okay.

14 COMMISSIONER KITKA: I know that
15 sounds more critical than I mean it. I don't
16 mean it critical. I just mean it -- this is a
17 very important opportunity for us. Other
18 Denali Commissioners want to be involved in the
19 decision-making. I don't want to rubber-stamp
20 the decisions. I want to be very, very
21 thoughtful; and I want to make sure my fellow
22 Commissioners are totally involved as well,
23 because they've got their names and reputations
24 on the line. And I want them to feel
25 comfortable that they're up to speed and making

1 good decisions.

2 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: I have no
3 objection to that.

4 COMMISSIONER WASSERMAN: Julie,
5 this is Kathie. Thank you for that. Because,
6 you know, since this has come out in the news,
7 I know I've been asked questions. I haven't
8 had any answers, and I don't want to look like
9 an idiot or like things are happening around
10 us; and I think there are just some
11 questions -- you know, just some simple
12 questions that probably all of us need to ask
13 and get answered so that we know what direction
14 we're headed and what our role -- you know,
15 what the Denali Commission's role is. And I'm
16 not real clear on that yet.

17 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: What are those
18 questions?

19 COMMISSIONER WASSERMAN: Well,
20 you know, just even today, you know, just
21 because it's my line of work, as well, I look
22 at these communities and I think, okay, do
23 we -- are we bound to use our sustainability
24 policy when we look at these communities? If
25 so, that might put a whole different light on

1 things. Or do we -- do we toss that aside
2 because this is a directive from, you know,
3 from the White House or the Federal Government?
4 I'm not saying one way is wrong or right. But
5 there's just a lot of questions, and I don't
6 know who makes those -- those decisions; and I
7 just have a few questions over the last couple
8 of weeks. I couldn't come up with them now.
9 I've had a lot of people say: So, what's the
10 Denali Commission going to do and what are you
11 going to do with \$2 million? And all of my
12 answers have been: I don't know.

13 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: I'd say that's
14 a great question; and my answer to that is the
15 sustainability policy was put in place by
16 Commissioners, so it would be up to the
17 Commissioners to determine whether you want to
18 continue using it in this initiative or not.
19 Or do you want to look at it and say: what
20 elements of the sustainability policy make
21 sense? And we'll take those. And the other
22 ones don't make sense for this and we'll move
23 those on.

24 COMMISSIONER WASSERMAN: That's
25 true, but I think we need this presented as a

1 group rather than take little snippets, let's
2 now decide on the sustainability policy. We
3 need to put this thing together, because -- for
4 me, anyway, I need to look at the whole project
5 before I can make sense as to whether
6 sustainability works or not and what it is
7 we're trying to accomplish, and what happens if
8 we don't accomplish these things. I just think
9 at some point I would certainly like a -- as
10 clear a grasp as to where we're headed and what
11 we're doing.

12 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: I would say --
13 this is Joel again -- I'm happy to try to put
14 that framework -- framework, that dialogue
15 together; but I think you all know for the past
16 year it's been very difficult scheduling
17 meetings. And if that's what Commissioners
18 want, I'll work with staff and stakeholders and
19 program partners so that we can get you the
20 information so that you can make these choices,
21 you can make these decisions; but my challenge
22 has been how do I get you all together for a
23 long period of time for you to truly appreciate
24 what this issue is. And I can tell you, I've
25 been looking at this issue now since June; and

1 I've spent a lot of time on it, and I really --
2 I'm at a loss at trying to figure out how to
3 move forward on the 2 million. I'm at a loss
4 at how we engage with our friends from D.C.
5 on -- how do we bring the full family of
6 federal agencies together, and I believe we
7 need to have an understanding with the -- how
8 the family of federal agencies and the State
9 and regional and tribal partners and local
10 governments have a voice in this. So there's a
11 lot of things in play, but one of my struggles
12 has been: How do I put this in front of you
13 and we -- and you have the available time to
14 actually absorb all these details?

15 COMMISSIONER KITKA: I think,
16 Joel, the next step that we need to do is we
17 need to invite our Congressional delegation to
18 address us as Commissioners on that. This is
19 going to take a partnership between us and the
20 delegation in resetting this mission and
21 working carefully with the White House in order
22 to do that. But also identifying those
23 additional resources. I do not want to raise
24 people's expectations thinking that \$2 million
25 is going to make magic happen, because it's not

1 going to make magic happen. But it can point
2 us in the right direction, but only if we're
3 going to be aligned with our delegation, too.
4 So I think our next step is our next meeting
5 that we have, we can invite them to address us
6 and give us their thoughts on how we make this
7 alignment and this shift. I'm putting on the
8 table I think keeping that 5 percent cap is
9 essential because otherwise if we don't cap
10 that as part of our core thing on that, there's
11 an awful lot of other agencies that can give
12 direct funding in this mission that are set up
13 to do it.

14 Our No. 1 thing that we could do
15 better at the Denali Commission was keeping
16 that cap and keeping those costs and
17 accountability on that. When that exploded and
18 increased on that, it really weakened our
19 argument for having resources flow through the
20 Denali Commission. That's why I'm arguing that
21 that's got to be put back, and we've got to get
22 aligned with our Congressional delegation so
23 we're all moving forward.

24 It's a wonderful opportunity from
25 the President and the White House. It's

1 critically needed. But we need to have that
2 alignment in order to be effective because we
3 don't want to be fighting against each other.

4 MR. STEPHENSON: Could I make a
5 comment? This is Simon.

6 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Please, Simon.

7 MR. STEPHENSON: To some degree,
8 I appreciate Julie's comment there about this
9 is a wonderful opportunity; we see it as a
10 wonderful opportunity, but we have to recognize
11 also that the Denali Commission has been
12 brought into this whole conversation very, very
13 recently; and I am hearing the Commissioners
14 themselves, you know -- in a position where
15 this has been announced and not able to answer,
16 as you just said, Joel, some very reasonable
17 questions about "So what is the plan?"

18 we don't really have a concrete
19 plan for the whole issue or for specific --
20 specific actions.

21 we are very pleased that the
22 village planning groups have gotten underway.
23 we're very pleased about the catalog. But it
24 really is going to be a dialogue over the next
25 few months I hope that starts to create a clear

1 plan of actions and using the Denali
2 Commission -- that's the staff and the
3 Commissioners' expertise and insight on how to
4 move the issue of environmentally vulnerable
5 communities forward.

6 I think Julie's right; there's
7 some real opportunities in the short term, but
8 this is also a -- it's a decadal issue. This
9 issue will have to be addressed over multiple
10 years before we're done.

11 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Thank you.

12 Other --

13 COMMISSIONER BELTRAMI: Joel,
14 this is Vince.

15 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Please, Vince.

16 COMMISSIONER BELTRAMI: I don't
17 disagree with anything that Julie said in terms
18 of the cap. But the questions that I have, and
19 I thought -- and I might have missed it because
20 I got disconnected for the first couple of
21 minutes -- the conversation -- to call back --
22 is understanding the Arctic Executive Steering
23 Committee's interaction with us. On our web
24 site when we made the announcement it basically
25 said the Denali Commission's efforts are going

1 to be overseen by the AESC. When you look at
2 the executive order establishing the AESC, it
3 provides guidance to executive departments and
4 agencies, et cetera. So what I think would be
5 helpful, especially in light of the fact that
6 we don't get very many opportunities or we have
7 trouble scheduling any lengthy meetings is I'm
8 not sure what the structure is on how
9 everything is going to come together; and I
10 wouldn't mind seeing, if it's possible, either
11 between you and in consultation with the
12 executive steering committee folks, to come out
13 with kind of a producing paper that kind of
14 outlines how it's supposed -- or what the
15 vision is to see how we're going to work in
16 conjunction with them going forward on
17 coordinating all these efforts.

18 Because right now, as Julie said,
19 I mean, I want to learn, you know, exactly what
20 the role is here. I want to get as educated as
21 I can to help make an informed decision on
22 things going forward.

23 DR. BRZEZINSKI: Joel, this is
24 Mark Brzezinski. Can I say something?

25 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Please, Mark.

1 DR. BRZEZINSKI: Simon has been
2 working on a draft charter that lends itself a
3 little bit to that. That's meant to kind of
4 transparently openly kind of align how it's
5 supposed to work.

6 So, Simon, go ahead.

7 MR. STEPHENSON: Just to be
8 clear, that's a draft charter of the Coastal
9 Erosion Working Group, and it would lay out the
10 membership and the goals of the group, and it
11 would bring in now the Denali Commission in
12 this coordinating role. So, that is what we
13 are going to suggest to the chair of the Arctic
14 Executive Steering Committee, John Holdren.
15 The AESC is sort of so new that it actually
16 hasn't needed to this point such a
17 documentation; but this group, the coastal
18 erosion issue and the sustained efforts of the
19 agencies involved, and the enthusiasm of the
20 agencies involved, you know, it clearly -- this
21 activity is going to go forward; and we see
22 it's needed to answer the kind of questions
23 that the Commissioner just said, to lay out the
24 roles and the responsibilities.

25 very briefly, though, we do see

1 the Coastal Erosion Working Group -- it might
2 change its name -- but it continuing as the
3 agent for the Arctic Executive Steering
4 Committee. It will be the multi-agency effort.
5 And the work that the Denali Commission will do
6 will be, you know -- work along -- well, inside
7 that working group. That's the suggestion
8 right now. It's not concrete. I know this is
9 another fuzzy issue, but we sort of have to
10 kind of give each other some room here to work
11 through these issues.

12 COMMISSIONER KITKA: Simon, this
13 is Julie. That sounds very interesting; and I
14 just wanted to say for you and your other
15 colleagues, kind of the reason why it's so
16 important for us individually as Commissioners
17 to understand how this is going to work and how
18 it's rolled out is because everybody at the --
19 the Commissioners have a constituency that they
20 are bringing to the table and being involved in
21 this; and we all have groups that we have to
22 explain it to, whether or not it's the
23 municipal governments on that, for Kathie, or
24 the whole university family for the president
25 of the university or the unions or the Native

1 communities or whatever. The Denali Commission
2 is really unique, and each one of the
3 Commissioners is not here as individuals on
4 that. We have big groups of people behind us
5 that we're trying to bring with us to try to
6 make the maximum of these opportunities.

7 MR. STEPHENSON: That makes a lot
8 of sense. And, as I say, this is the first
9 group that we felt we needed to sort of write
10 this out in a more formal way because it is
11 something that I think is going to be
12 sustained, and it needs the goals that you
13 talked about earlier.

14 COMMISSIONER KITKA: Well, for
15 example, Dr. Holdren's PowerPoints that he did
16 at the GLACIER Summit on that, I don't know if
17 that has been widely circulated to the Denali
18 Commission or not. But that would be a good
19 background for people to understand where the
20 Administration is going and the science on
21 that. I don't know if, Joel, you've got that
22 or sent it out to anybody.

23 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: I do not. But
24 I'd be happy to do that. I did talk to the
25 doctor. I thought he was an incredible

1 presenter, because he never referred to his
2 PowerPoint. He said that's what being a
3 professor for 36 years will do for you.

4 COMMISSIONER KITKA: I thought it
5 was the most awesome presentation I've seen in
6 a long time. I think the other Commissioners
7 would enjoy looking at that and kind of getting
8 involved with the Executive Steering Committee.

9 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Mark, can you
10 get that for us?

11 DR. BRZEZINSKI: We'll get it for
12 sure. He's doing a presentation tomorrow that
13 talks about the outcomes of the visit.

14 COMMISSIONER KITKA: Where is he
15 doing that at?

16 DR. BRZEZINSKI: That's at -- I
17 don't know his name -- CSIS, the Center for
18 Strategic and International Studies.

19 And he is very keen when he does
20 a PowerPoint to get it into the public domain
21 quickly. That's one of the communication tools
22 he uses. As soon as we get that PowerPoint --

23 COMMISSIONER KITKA: That would
24 be great.

25 MR. STEPHENSON: -- we'll forward

1 that to the Commissioners, also.

2 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Thank you,
3 Simon.

4 COMMISSIONER KITKA: One of the
5 issues that I raised with the Denali Commission
6 that I'd like to understand a little bit more
7 is how you see the national security role
8 playing out with the Arctic Steering Committee
9 and the attention that's being paid up here.
10 I'm not asking for briefings, but can you give
11 us a sense of -- is that a separate working
12 group that's dealing with that? How does that
13 work?

14 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Mark, would
15 you take that?

16 DR. BRZEZINSKI: Julie, could you
17 repeat the question? We were looking for the
18 PowerPoint just as you were speaking.

19 COMMISSIONER KITKA: Yes. Okay.
20 we have had the opportunity to meet with Alice
21 Hill representing the National Security
22 Administration, and we know that they have an
23 important role in this reset of what's going on
24 in the Arctic on that. All this national
25 security and Homeland Security interface with

1 this whole Arctic Executive Steering Committee
2 and what efforts are going forward. Is there
3 other separate working groups on that? How
4 does that work?

5 MR. STEPHENSON: Yes, Julie, it's
6 fully integrated, actually. The Arctic
7 Executive Steering Committee is meant to bring
8 around one table these separate components.
9 The chair of the Arctic Executive Steering
10 Committee is John Holdren. And the deputy
11 chair is Amy Pope, who is the Homeland Security
12 deputy adviser. It's meant to bring together a
13 unified approach so that there isn't gaps and
14 overlaps between different efforts within the
15 federal government.

16 COMMISSIONER KITKA: Okay.

17 MR. STEPHENSON: Just to
18 illustrate that there are other efforts going
19 on, there was another effort set up at the same
20 time looking at the potential of a competition
21 for efficient energy in rural Alaska; and that
22 was also an announcement on -- now that started
23 off very much an interagency effort, but given
24 the time lines, it -- it's going forward really
25 at DOE, a Department of Energy effort. But it

1 started very much the same way as the coastal
2 effort, as an interagency activity. We hope
3 what we learn there at the beginning of the
4 energy effort will actually continue down to
5 multiple avenues, not just this one
6 competition. Because, certainly, the AESC
7 learned a lot in that process.

8 COMMISSIONER KITKA: Uh-huh.

9 One of our new commissioners is
10 the president of the university. Could you
11 give us any clue on how you see the university
12 of Alaska fitting into this?

13 COMMISSIONER JOHNSEN: Yes, when
14 we visited Alaska two weeks ago, we went and
15 spent the day at UAF. I then separately spent
16 a day at UAF, and then we went to the
17 University of Alaska Anchorage for an afternoon
18 of briefings, meeting with the chancellor, a
19 number of key professors, the new Department of
20 Homeland Security Center of Excellence that
21 will be having the ribbon-cutting in October.
22 So, we see as an absolute necessity a
23 continuing dialogue and conversation with the
24 University of Alaska system.

25 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Dr. Johnsen,

1 would you like to respond to the question, as
2 well?

3 COMMISSIONER JOHNSEN: Yeah,
4 thank you very much, Joel, and thanks for
5 raising it, Julie. Yes, I had -- I actually
6 had the opportunity to meet with Mark and a
7 number of our top researchers on his visit here
8 in Fairbanks. He actually spent a whole lot
9 more time with those folks than I did. But we
10 got a real flavor for the interest areas and
11 the capabilities of our researchers both on the
12 physical science side of things, primarily
13 based on our Fairbanks campus, and then a
14 little bit more on the social/cultural/economic
15 side of things at the Anchorage campus.

16 So I thought they were very
17 constructive conversations. I think Mark
18 learned a lot about our capabilities and
19 interests. And our folks, I think, were
20 excited about the opportunity, really, for what
21 Mark called this whole of government approach
22 that the -- that he sees for the federal role
23 here. And I, in particular, was interested in
24 that because, you know, we have an educational
25 mission in addition to our research mission;

1 and so the opportunity to actually bring in
2 agencies at the federal level that has not been
3 engaged was exciting. Department of Education,
4 for example. We talked about the areas of
5 infrastructure might not have been typically
6 within the scope of the Denali Commission --
7 although I plead ignorance because I'm a new
8 commissioner. And that is, in particular,
9 telecommunications and how critical it is as an
10 infrastructure, particularly for rural Alaska
11 as climate impacts us, you know, in the
12 Interior, but all across the state.

13 So I think it was a very fruitful
14 discussion. Mark also was very open, I
15 thought, to visiting with him back in D.C. to
16 further the discussion about how we might
17 collaborate.

18 But I would ask Mark if there's
19 anything else you picked up on your visit that
20 might help the question.

21 DR. BRZEZINSKI: well, I think
22 that we gained a lot; and we have since been in
23 touch with different professors with whom we've
24 met with, including on a number of both
25 substantive, as well as others that are more

1 symbolic, high visibility events pertaining to
2 the Arctic. And so it was a great resource.
3 But really this is just the tip of the iceberg,
4 as they say. We have to meet with the
5 university system, continuing to engage with
6 them, and see this as part of a continuing
7 conversation.

8 But I will say that some of the
9 best ideas in terms of how to implement them
10 regarding -- and following on from the
11 Presidential announcement made over three days
12 at GLACIER pertain to some of the advice and
13 perspectives we got from professors at the
14 different universities with whom we met.

15 And also, not just from them, we
16 met with the ANSEP program, the Native American
17 students who are studying science and
18 technology at the University of Alaska at
19 Anchorage. I mean, so many important
20 narratives that give us as partners to this
21 effort more texture that hopefully will produce
22 better policy and better results for the people
23 of Alaska is kind of the product of that.

24 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Thank you.

25 Any other comments or questions

1 from Commissioners?

2 COMMISSIONER WASSERMAN: Joel,
3 you know, this may not always work well; but,
4 you know, I appreciate your -- well, especially
5 Sabrina's efforts to try to get us all
6 together. But to try to get seven of us who
7 all have really busy jobs, together, I mean,
8 you could throw the dice up, it just doesn't
9 happen. And can't we just require a quorum? I
10 mean, I know that might leave some people out,
11 but I don't --

12 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Let me be
13 frank with you on that point. I have received
14 criticism early in my tenure, my first term,
15 that I scheduled a meeting; and it appeared I
16 was doing so to disenfranchise the
17 Commissioners that could not attend. I take
18 that very serious, that statement; and so I've
19 been very concerned since then not to
20 disenfranchise Commissioners by scheduling
21 meetings when they cannot attend.

22 what I need is I need the
23 Commissioners to tell me they are good to
24 attend, they are good with not being able to
25 attend -- that perhaps I will brief them; I'll

1 send staff to brief them; I'll do everything I
2 can to get them up to speed so they can provide
3 their input so it is represented during a
4 discussion, but that is what I've been
5 operating under is that framework that I don't
6 want to disenfranchise Commissioners. I
7 actually need to hear you say you are good not
8 to attend meetings.

9 COMMISSIONER BELTRAMI: Joel,
10 this is Vince.

11 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Yes, Vince.

12 COMMISSIONER BELTRAMI: I think
13 at the July 22nd meeting, I thought we had this
14 discussion; and that is kind of what we agreed
15 upon is we need to set a date, or a series of
16 dates, and that that's the principle we're
17 going to operate on, if people are going to
18 make it if they could. It's not going to hold
19 us from going forward on the meetings. Unless
20 I'm not remembering that correctly.

21 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: well, I
22 need -- I need a confirmation on the November
23 time line; that is still out there, and once we
24 have the confirmation on the November time line
25 of proposed meetings, then we can then move

1 forward to the next one, being the monthly
2 meetings.

3 what I understood that to mean is
4 that we were going to all come together one
5 last time that would outline what our efforts
6 were going to be on this and other matters over
7 the next year, year and a half; and then
8 thereafter there would be the monthly meetings
9 in which -- or periodically, thereafter, in
10 which commissioners agreed that they would not
11 attend.

12 So, I'm still trying to get us
13 all together in November.

14 So, let's pursue that; and then
15 we'll see then where it takes us.

16 But, to your point, Kathie,
17 that's why I've been behaving this way, trying
18 to get all the Commissioners together, because
19 I don't want you to represent that I'm trying
20 to disenfranchise your constituency.

21 I'm not saying it was you; but
22 I'm saying, in general, the constituency the
23 Commissioners represent.

24 COMMISSIONER WASSERMAN: well, I
25 also think -- and this is not -- this is not

1 anyone's fault, at least not at this table, at
2 least not in this whole teleconference -- that
3 it was even more difficult in the past to get
4 people together because we spent a lot of time
5 not being relevant to what the Denali
6 Commission was intended to do because we were
7 fighting other outside battles.

8 I think most of us attempted to
9 get there, but I think it would put a different
10 spin on things if we knew that the Denali
11 Commission was actually doing something other
12 than fighting a bureaucracy or a bureaucrat --
13 trying to be politically correct here.

14 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: well, let's
15 hope those days which we all are referencing
16 are past us.

17 COMMISSIONER WASSERMAN: Okay.
18 well, it was a little bit hard to get excited
19 about going to a meeting when things were all
20 so negative, so that could take on a -- just
21 trying to be very honest.

22 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: So we have two
23 minutes left -- thank you, Kathie -- here's
24 what I propose is that we will get the November
25 meeting down. Between now and then, what I

1 will do is I will work on getting the
2 PowerPoints. I'll work on the communication,
3 desires that each of you want, and try to see
4 if we can deliver that so it's not that we --
5 you don't have anything from the Commission
6 between now and November. I think we have
7 to -- that means I'm coming visiting you one on
8 one; I'm sending staff; we're visiting one on
9 one. It's important that the Commissioners are
10 engaged on this. It's important that you guys
11 are in the deciding role. I hope you
12 appreciate this whole effort on the prior-year
13 unobligated funding that we've taken on in 2015
14 has been my effort to try to get the
15 Commissioners engaged in that decision-making
16 role, and I want to make sure that that
17 continues.

18 COMMISSIONER KITKA: Joel, this
19 is Julie. why don't we just set up a committee
20 of Commissioners to get organized for that
21 November meeting, right? So, if we have a
22 committee and have the State Co-chair involved
23 in that, the president of the University, maybe
24 somebody else on that. But I'm really
25 concerned that the Denali Commissioners be

1 involved in the decision-making, and I don't
2 like the idea of staff going one by one to
3 Commissioners on that. It's too easy for
4 Commissioners to only see one side of the
5 picture. I would be comfortable with a
6 committee set up to prepare and make that
7 meeting be as smooth as possible.

8 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Our limitation
9 on that is we can have no more than three
10 Commissioners in the room. Once we have four,
11 it's a quorum; and then it becomes a meeting
12 that needs to be made public notice.

13 Although I'm happy to have
14 public-notice meetings with Commissioners
15 between now and then, those that can attend.
16 Maybe that's the way to do this.

17 COMMISSIONER KITKA: I think we
18 just set up a committee, and if we have to,
19 because of the numbers, publish it by public
20 notice, it's okay. Committees can -- as long
21 as they're working committees, I think that
22 makes sense.

23 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Okay.

24 COMMISSIONER KITKA: It wouldn't
25 be making any final decisions before the

1 November meeting. It would just be setting up
2 to make sure that all the different
3 perspectives are being looked at and the
4 different approaches.

5 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Yes, I'm good
6 with that.

7 COMMISSIONER WASSERMAN: Also, a
8 suggestion I might make -- okay, real
9 quickly -- if you can send out now and then a
10 reading list of places where we can get
11 information. I mean, most of us take stuff
12 home at night to read. Our lives are so
13 exciting.

14 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Yes, I'm happy
15 to do that, as well.

16 I'm happy to try to put together
17 some organization of all this so that you guys
18 have some primers that, if you want to, you can
19 access them. I'm happy to do that.

20 So, do I by e-mail ask for
21 volunteers, or do you all want to think about
22 this -- I mean, are you ready to volunteer to
23 be on a work group for the November meeting?

24 COMMISSIONER KITKA: I think you
25 ought to just sit down with the State Co-chair

1 and work that out.

2 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Okay. Happy
3 to do that.

4 COMMISSIONER BELTRAMI: Joel, do
5 we have a date for the November meeting? I
6 just looked through the notes and don't see
7 anything at this point.

8 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: We do not have
9 a date. It's one of four dates, right now -- I
10 appreciate everyone holding them -- it's
11 November 5 or 6 or November 10 or 11.

12 COMMISSIONER BELTRAMI: Thank
13 you.

14 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: we'll try to
15 get that to you shortly.

16 COMMISSIONER BELTRAMI: Okay. I
17 appreciate that, Joel.

18 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: well, I just
19 heard that there may be a Commissioner who
20 can't --

21 MS. CABANA: Various
22 Commissioners on various days.

23 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: Okay. well
24 Sabrina will be working the phone, still.
25 Sorry, Sabrina.

1 We have gone past by two minutes.
2 I would ask that if there's something
3 Commissioners want to continue talking about we
4 should ask for a motion to extend. If we don't
5 need --

6 COMMISSIONER KITKA: I'll make a
7 motion to adjourn under the understanding you
8 and the State Co-chair will set up a committee
9 between now and our meeting in November and
10 we'll hear from you. That's my motion to
11 adjourn.

12 COMMISSIONER JOHNSEN: I'll
13 second that.

14 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: All
15 Commissioners in favor?

16 COMMISSIONERS: Aye.

17 FEDERAL CO-CHAIR: We are
18 adjourned.

19 (Meeting adjourned at 3:02 p.m.)

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