

Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
Wednesday, August 26, 2026  
via Zoom

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Kendig called the meeting of the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority to order on August 26, 2026, at 9:08 a.m.

**2. ROLL CALL BOARD MEMBERS**

Members present: Chair Bill Kendig (Public Member); Albert Fogle (Public Member); Julie Sande (Commissioner, DCCED); Janelle Earls (Commissioner, DOR); Randy Eledge (Public Member); Al Haynes (Public Member); and Rick Solie.

A quorum was established.

**3. AGENDA APPROVAL**

**MOTION: A motion was made by Vice-Chair Fogle to approve the agenda, as presented. Motion seconded by Mr. Eledge.**

**The motion to approve the agenda as presented passed with no objection.**

**4. PRIOR MINUTES – June 17, 2026 & July 8, 2026**

**MOTION: A motion was made by Vice-Chair Fogle to approve the Minutes of June 15, (sic) 2026, and July 8, 2026, as presented. Motion seconded by Mr. Haynes.**

**The motion to approve the Minutes of June 15, (sic) 2026, and July 8, 2026, as presented passed with no objection.**

**5. ALASKA RESOURCE EDUCATION PRESENTATION**

Alaska Resource Education's (ARE) Beki Toussaint, Executive Director, and Taylor Burgh, Operations Director introduced themselves. Ms. Burgh explained their mission is to educate students about Alaska's natural resources, and the vision is to empower students to be informed stewards of those resources. ARE's values are innovation, collaboration, flexibility, and fun. ARE currently has an eight-member team and is growing and expanding statewide. Most of the staff is located in Anchorage. The Interior Program Coordinator is located in Fairbanks, and the Southeast Coordinator is a newly hired position.

Ms. Burgh discussed the slide showing the ARE Board of Directors, who span a wide range of industries. They help develop the curriculum and get into the classroom to speak to students. Ms.

Burgh thanked Pete Stokes, ARE, for coordinating the meeting with AIDEA today. She continued the presentation and discussed that ARE teaches about natural resources with curriculum on rocks, minerals, energy, forestry, careers, economics, and technology. The statewide classroom outreach is for kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. ARE has youth programs, including after school programs, STEM nights, and camps. Additionally, ARE conducts teacher training. Ms. Burgh explained a slide showing a picture from the website of the ARE curriculum. There are over 100 lessons that are hands-on, STEM-based, and standards-aligned, including lessons regarding transportation, access, permitting, and lease sales. The lessons get students excited about Alaska's industries, how to get the resources, how to use the resources, what is done after the resources are used, and the careers associated with that process.

ARE prides itself on being the bridge between industry and education by bringing folks into the classroom to speak to students and taking students out into industry to see first-hand. There is no other organization in the state that currently conducts this level of outreach.

Ms. Toussaint discussed the workforce development high school programs, which called ARE Launch Programs. These programs consist of more than three contact hours with high school students and include a wide range of opportunities. The Rockstars and Amped Camps typically run as a week-long intensive where the students come to a hub community and are taken out into the industry to see the resources, the careers, the opportunities, and the training locations. The Our Alaska Program is the high school curriculum. This is growing. Seven sections are offered through the Academies of Anchorage in the Anchorage School Districts. There are currently about 250 students who are working through the curriculum. Additionally, ARE partners with Kusilvak Career Academy, which hosts students from across the Lower Yukon School District that come to Anchorage for a quarter at a time. ARE teaches two quarters of science, three days a week with those students to provide in-depth content curriculum.

Ms. Toussaint discussed the P.O.W.R. Program is Powerful Opportunities for Women in Resources. The program is focused on breaking down stereotypes that resources are for boys, and instead, engage girls in these types of careers. The AK Career Explore Program is a paid externship for students to conduct career exploration, build resumes, understand LinkedIn portfolios, training opportunities, and ultimately, careers that they can have here in natural resources. The Natural Resource Management Teacher Externship is directed towards teachers and counselors. It is a week-long, three credit university course offered in the summer. Twenty teachers from across the state are brought to Anchorage. They visit the North Slope and Fairbanks, and stay in the Pipeline Training Center to get the feel for camp life. They visit a coal mine, a gold mine, a plaster mine, and training centers. Guest speakers are brought in. The teachers and counselors get immersed for about 65 hours in natural resources and are provided the tools, the materials, and the understanding of natural resources in Alaska. They are then able to take that information and disseminate it across the state.

Ms. Toussaint showed pictures of different teaching sessions and hands-on curriculum. She noted that many teachers who participate in the externship have misconceptions about Alaska's natural resources. ARE gets the opportunity to show them the reality and how much people care about protecting Alaska's land and resources, while also responsibly developing the resources. Mr. Toussaint explained a slide showing how all of the programs are tracked to ensure the

process is working to increase student understanding of the impacts, the importance, the training opportunities, and the careers associated with natural resources.

Ms. Toussaint reviewed the slide listing the 2025 year-end numbers. She reiterated that staff is expanding and ARE is on track to exceed those numbers in 2026. She discussed the previous five years from 2021-2025, and noted that one silver lining of COVID was increased access to rural communities and the capability to Zoom into those communities. ARE was able to expand their reach with remote teaching. Boxes of materials can be shipped to students and teachers, and THE teaching can occur through online platforms.

Ms. Toussaint indicated that this work could not be performed without the partners and donors listed in the presentation. She expressed appreciation to all of the folks across Alaska that support the work of ARE. Ms. Toussaint noted that ARE is on social media platforms outlined in the presentation. The QR code is also posted in the presentation, and members can sign up for the newsletter and stay engaged with the happenings of ARE. Ms. Toussaint reviewed that ARE always has great opportunities if people are looking to get in front of students to guest-speak, to conduct networking and careers, or to offer tours.

Mr. Solie commented that his day job is in the mining industry, and the ARE has been impactful for the mining industry by teaching young people about the value and importance of responsible mineral development because minerals are part of our life. Mr. Solie noted that years ago, he visited a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classroom and taught the students how to make toothpaste. He thanked Ms. Toussaint and Ms. Burgh for their presentation. Mr. Solie commented that the student contact numbers are impressive. He asked for more information regarding the statewide growth. Ms. Toussaint noted that she started with ARE in 2012, and approximately 2,000 students, kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, were taught per year. The full depth of the programs and opportunities were not yet developed. Expansions continued in curriculum, grade level through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and the workforce development component. Mr. Solie thanked Ms. Toussaint and staff for their efforts.

Mr. Eledge expressed appreciation to ARE for their work for industry. He believes it aligns perfectly with the responsibility of AIDEA Board members and of AIDEA's mission statement. Mr. Eledge stated that it appears to be a synergistic approach that could be used. He asked about ARE's funding, budget, and the financials. Ms. Toussaint explained that the current budget utilizes about a 1/3 fundraising efforts, including golf tournaments, clay shoot, live auction, silent action, and raffles. About a 1/3 of the budget is from corporate donations and corporate grants from the partnering organizations. Additionally, ARE writes grants for the other 1/3 of the budget. There is currently a small amount of State funding, that ebbs and flows based on who is in office and the status of the budget. She noted that ARE is also working as a leg of the Alaska Critical Minerals Accelerator that was funded through University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) with the National Science Foundation. ARE will be a main pillar of their workforce development. The hope is that funding will be sustainable. The biggest challenge is that ARE's funding is year-to-year and is very much aligned with the price of oil and the price of gold.

Mr. Eledge asked if there are more teachers requesting the scholarship externship than there are spaces available. Ms. Toussaint agreed, and noted there were 57 applicants for the 20 available

spaces for the teacher externship this year. She explained that the program consists of three credits through the University. The teachers pay a \$200 fee to hold their spot. The fee is reimbursed if they complete the externship. All expenses are paid during the externship, and those outside of Anchorage receive a stipend to use for airfare and lodging.

Mr. Eledge asked how staff determines what presentations to provide at which particular communities. Ms. Toussaint explained that the determination varies. There are times that teachers or the partners will reach out and request ARE to go into a region and teach about a specific topic. Mr. Eledge commented that it is nice that the community has input regarding the curriculum. He thanked ARE for presenting today.

Randy Ruaro, Executive Director, thanked Ms. Toussaint for all of the work she is doing. The work is promoting economic development and jobs in Alaska, particularly rural Alaska where unemployment is high. This is AIDEA's job and its mission statement in statute. The reason the Legislature said that is important is because there are bad things that come to people when they are unemployed. Mr. Ruaro asked what comments ARE receives from the rural Alaska high school students where the unemployment is high regarding needing and wanting opportunities in their villages. Ms. Toussaint commented that one of the things ARE tries to share is that a student does not have to go to a four-year college to get a good job. ARE tries to bring a wide range of ideas and opportunities to them, such as two weeks on/two weeks off. The hands-on opportunities, such as welding, heavy equipment, and diesel, is important to learn as a skill set. Ms. Toussaint noted that ARE finds that teachers, particularly in rural Alaska, are not necessarily from Alaska. Many are from the Lower 48 and from abroad, and if they do not have an understanding of what is happening and the opportunities, then they cannot share that and teach it to students. Ms. Toussaint explained that there are basically no career counselors in the state anymore. Many of the counselors are focused on schedules, mental health, and other issues, rather than careers. She noted that many rural students are interested in finding jobs that do not require them to have a college degree or do not require them to leave the community.

Mr. Ruaro asked if it is fair to say that young Alaskans in rural areas need and want an opportunity to do something. Ms. Toussaint agreed, and noted that ARE is trying to bring a lot more of the technology into the schools. ARE has a robot dog, drones, and VR headsets for autonomous truck driving. Students who are interested in gaming and video games are shown how to take those skills and interest and apply them into the industry. Additionally, the barriers are broken down surrounding the environmental pieces to show that students can work in permitting or environmental aspects with these industries to have a big impact to ensure that the land around their communities are protected.

Mr. Haynes agreed with the previous comments and believes ARE is doing a great job and is helpful and aligned with AIDEA's mission.

Commissioner Earls thanked ARE for their informative presentation.

Commissioner Sande noted she had an opportunity to see portions of this presentation previously. She is always impressed with Ms. Toussaint and her team. Commissioner Sande agrees that the mission of ARE is closely aligned with mission of AIDEA, and trying to get the

message out about opportunities in the state. She is highly supportive of the work being done in the schools with the teachers in such a meaningful way. Commissioner Sande commented on the aspect of ARE providing a perspective for those who want to protect the environment to focus on the permitting and environmental components of industry.

Chair Kendig expressed appreciation to ARE for their efforts of preparing the future. He agreed with the previous comments and keeping jobs for Alaskans. He stated that the young people that are being taught now will be decision-makers soon. This prepares them to make more informed decisions. There were no other comments or questions.

## **6. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Kendig noted that the public comment period is for comments only related to items on the agenda. It is not a question-and-answer period. Any questions can be submitted to [communications@aidea.org](mailto:communications@aidea.org). The public comment period is limited to one hour. Each speaker is limited to two minutes for comment. Chair Kendig requested that speakers state their affiliation, if any, and from what area of Alaska or outside of Alaska the speakers are from. Chair Kendig noted that there were multiple emails and submitted comments. He requested Mr. Ruaro to address some of those comments.

Mr. Ruaro noted he will review a few statements for the record. He said many of the public comments received were repetitive and seemed to be in a form letter format. There were a few issues repeated, such as the opposition to the use of State public funds by AIDEA in the development of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). Mr. Ruaro indicated that State public funds are not being used by AIDEA for anything. AIDEA is self-funding in its operating budget, and AIDEA uses returns and receipts from AIDEA's investments to advance the projects. This is set by Alaska law, and has been the law for 56 years. This law was upheld by the Alaska Supreme Court in the DeArmond case. Mr. Ruaro clarified this important point for both the commenters and for the general Alaskan public.

Mr. Ruaro discussed another clarification for the record that AIDEA's mission statement includes reducing unemployment. This is the job that the Legislature has given AIDEA by statute. It is the law that AIDEA is to promote resource development and economic development and jobs. That is the duty of the public corporation officials of AIDEA.

Chair Kendig thanked Mr. Ruaro for his clarifications.

Adam Crum noted he is calling on behalf of himself. He lives in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley. Mr. Crum expressed strong support of Resolution G26-09 and moving forward with the West Susitna Access Road. He commented that Alaska has an abundance of land, resources, recreational opportunities, and economic potential. He believes that Alaska too often lacks access. The West Susitna Access Road project would build a public road and connect Alaskans to millions of acres of State land west of the Susitna River. That means greater access for hunters, fishermen, families, landowners, recreational users, and future economic development. Most importantly, this is a public road. Public lands should be accessible to the public. Roads have always created opportunities in Alaska. They allow people to reach hunting and fishing

areas, build homes and businesses, access resources, respond to emergencies, and reach lands that otherwise remain effectively inaccessible.

Mr. Crum discussed that development and stewardship do not have to be opposing ideas. Alaska has a long history of developing resources and protecting the local environments, with the North Slope Borough being the perfect example. They have the vast majority of the oil and gas infrastructure and yet, still lead a subsistence lifestyle. The answer to environmental concerns should be good engineering and responsible development, not refusing to build anything. Mr. Crum referenced that his experience in the construction business and in State government has reinforced that infrastructure creates opportunities. Alaska cannot expect economic growth or expanded public access if Alaska is unwilling to build the infrastructure that makes economic growth and expanded public access possible. He believes Resolution G26-09 recognizes this. The West Susitna Access Road can expand public access, create economic opportunities, and serve Alaskans for generations. He encouraged the Board to support the resolution, address legitimate concerns through good design, and continue moving the project forward toward construction. Alaska was built by people willing to cross the next river and build the next road. He believes Alaskans should keep building.

Chair Kendig thanked Mr. Crum for his comments.

Father Randy Unidentified of Wasilla hoped that he is well understood. He noted that the left side of his face was affected by the COVID vaccine. He is speaking for himself. He agreed with Mr. Crum's comments that Alaska needs to develop the West Susitna Access Road within Resolution G26-09. He believes if the access roads are not developed in the Interior, the growth opportunity for the state will be shut off. He agreed that Alaska has always made sure that everything is done correctly. He gave the example that the recent oil sheen in Cook Inlet was tracked down very quickly. He believes that the West Susitna Access Road should be opened up to access the renewable resources. He thanked the Board for giving him the opportunity to speak.

Chair Kendig thanked the speaker for his comments.

Dan Kennedy noted he is speaking on behalf of himself and Janet Kennedy from Wasilla. He noted they are both retired Certified Public Accountants (CPA), and have been licensed in Alaska for over 42 years each. They are very much in support of the construction and continued development of the West Susitna Access Road to bring jobs from Alaskan resources. Mr. Kennedy entreated AIDEA to continue to support and fund the road. He noted their opinion is that the radical environmentalists from the Lower 48 continue to flood Alaska with opposition to Alaskans developing their resources in accordance with Article 8 of Alaska's Constitution. AIDEA is an amazing economic thrust for Alaska. Its successes range from building roads to tide water, from Red Dog Mine for zinc and shipping south to the southern tip of Alaska, for Ketchikan shipbuilding yards, which provides over 300 jobs to that remote community. Success stories range anywhere in between these two Alaskan locations, including recently, the oil lease acquisition on the North Slope.

Mr. Kennedy commented that the West Susitna Access Road would be very similar to other successful and carefully developed projects to bring Alaskan resources to Alaskan citizens and

world markets. He thanked the Board for the opportunity to offer their comments.

Chair Kendig thanked Mr. Kennedy for his comments.

Andrew Traxler noted that he lives in the West Susitna Access Area of Big Lake. He is Chairman on the Mat-Su Borough Road Board. He is calling in today to remind AIDEA that the Mat-Su Borough Road Board unanimously supports the West Susitna Access Road. It is just a road. Alaskans build roads in Alaska. Roads cross salmon streams. Alaskans know how to responsibly build roads. This road would bring economic development to the community that is desperately needed. The Mat-Su Borough Road Board has held many public meetings regarding the road, and this community supports building the road. Mr. Traxler encouraged AIDEA to build the road.

Chair Kendig thanked Mr. Traxler for his comments.

John Almanrode noted that he lives in Cooper Landing. His daughter and her husband own a fishing and rafting company in Cooper Landing. Mr. Almanrode indicated that prior to his retirement, he worked for Cabella's for over 20 years. He is very concerned about hunting and fishing. He is concerned about the impact that the road will make on the beautiful area. Alaska being the last frontier does not mean that we have to exploit everything about Alaska by building roads everywhere. Mr. Almanrode believes it is important to preserve as many of these areas as possible for the future enjoyment of future generations to be able to see untouched areas. He thinks that the economic impact of what could be developed is not going to be worth what would be thrown away. He thanked the Board for letting him comment.

Chair Kendig thanked Mr. Almanrode for his comments.

Adam Cuthriell expressed appreciation for being allowed to give public testimony. He noted that he lives in Willow. He is a father and small business owner in the Valley. His business operates across the state guiding day trips in the Valley and multi-day trips in the West-Su. The proposed road would hurt his business and other businesses like his. Mr. Cuthriell said that the \$25 million would better help Alaskans if it was spent on current failing infrastructure and roads. The \$25 million would better help Alaska if it was spent on the school systems. The money would better help Alaskans if it was spent on fire and police services. The \$25 million to be spent on a road for a foreign mining company does not help Alaskans. The \$25 million does not help the dwindling Alaskan salmon population. The money does not help struggling wildlife Alaska populations. The \$25 million does not help Alaskan businesses that are already operating in the West-Su. Mr. Cuthriell stated that AIDEA was not designed to be corporate welfare for big foreign businesses. It was designed to help Alaska businesses. He strongly urged the Board to return to its roots and spend the money on Alaska small businesses and not the whims of a foreign mining company.

Chair Kendig thanked Mr. Cuthriell for his comments.

Matt Jackson noted that he is originally from Ketchikan and lives in Anchorage now. He is a born-and-raised Alaskan, not an outsider as some people have implied. He stated that he has

gone caribou hunting around Ambler and spent a lot of time camping on the North Slope and around the Mat-Su Valley. Mr. Jackson commented that when he went to AIDEA's calendar on the website to try to comment and find the information about joining the call, the information was incorrect. He had to find the agenda on the website and then copy and paste that link. Mr. Jackson commented it was rich that commenters were reminded to comment on items that are on the agenda, even though most of the agenda is in executive session, which includes AIDEA finances, Ambler Road, leases in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, West Susitna Access Project, and the Ketchikan Shipyard.

Mr. Jackson opposed the investment of the money into the West Susitna Access Road, into the Ambler Road, and into the Arctic Refuge leases. He agreed with the sentiment of the previous caller questioning what that money could be better spent on. Mr. Jackson considers the question of what is the highest use of this money. He believes that AIDEA does things that are really great, including the Renewable Energy Fund and small business revolving loans. Mr. Jackson thinks that AIDEA wastes a lot of money on the very expensive mega-projects and Alaskans are not getting the best return on investment for those. Examples of the projects are the Seafood Processing Plant that is now an athletic dome, the Seward Coal plant, and the millions of dollars spent in the Refuge with nothing to show for it. Mr. Jackson believes AIDEA would be better off spending the public dollars on things closer to home and smaller scale. He hopes AIDEA will consider his comments.

Chair Kendig thanked Mr. Jackson for his comments.

Norm Lawler noted that he is a resident of Big Lake since 1984, and has raised a family with his wife. During the past 42 years, Big Lake roads have significantly improved. He described the local rule in the 1980's on the two-lane Big Lake Road that was called "pothole dodge." Whichever vehicle flashed their headlights first, had the head-on right-of-way. Despite the road improvements during those 42 years, unfortunately, in the last 10 years, the Big Lake Road's conditions have deteriorated to the closest that can be compared with the 1980's again. AIDEA's partner, Department of Transportation (DOT), has not maintain Big Lake's roads in the last 10 years.

Mr. Lawler commented that now AIDEA and their DOT partner plan to continue the development of the West Susitna Access Road to turn the Big Lake community into an industrial trucking route for decades of the development of the WB Complex, Canadian Nova Minerals Mining. Prior to the development of the mine and hauling ore out of the mine, the road will be built, and gravel will be hauled in, and this will turn the Big Lake residential community into an industrial trucking route. Mr. Lawler stated to take the route out of the residential Big Lake community, and if needed, barge the ore down the Susitna River, and get the Canadian Nova Minerals to pay for the route. Mr. Lawler noted that AIDEA is a semi-governmental body, and the point is not whether or not AIDEA can pay for the road, he indicated his point is that AIDEA is turning a residential community into an industrial trucking route. Mr. Lawler requested that AIDEA publish the engineering executive report for the 95-foot ore trucks that are traveling from the Tetlin Manh Choh Mine through Fairbanks over bridges that cannot carry them.

Chair Kendig stated that comments are limited to two minutes, and thanked Mr. Lawler for his

comments.

Brittany Fintel noted that she lives in Wasilla. She expressed opposition to the roads, including Ambler and West Susitna. She agreed with other callers that it is going to be detrimental to those who hunt and fish, and who are backcountry guides in those areas. She believes the roads will impact wildlife. Ms. Fintel asked why the companies are not funding the roads, since the roads are being built for the companies. This is infrastructure that the companies should be building. Alaskans should not be paying for Terra Energy or other foreign mining companies to build the roads to make it easier for the companies to build coal plants or mining areas. Ms. Fintel discussed that when coal and other things are being transported through the waterways, that can also lead to pollution for the salmon and wildlife. This will again impact hunters and fishermen. Ms. Fintel does not see the point in Alaskans funding the roads when it is going to be detrimental to Alaskans.

Chair Kendig thanked Ms. Fintel for her comments.

Maddie Halloran noted that she is a resident of Anchorage who was born and raised in Alaska. She grew up visiting all of the areas discussed today. She echoed the concerns regarding the areas. Ms. Halloran discussed that her background is as a fisheries biologist and spent time studying the impact of mining and road building and how hard it is to recover fisheries from those activities. She stated that she has friends who have worked on culvert replacement projects across Alaska and it is incredibly difficult and expensive. Roads are not neutral to the landscape, and they have impacts that last a long time. Ms. Halloran pointed out for the record that while Resolution G26-09 is for \$25 million, the road has been reported as having public sections and private sections, with estimates beginning at \$300 million and increasing. This is just one small piece of the road that needs to be funded. She echoed other concerns that a State corporation should not be subsidizing the activities of foreign mining companies.

Ms. Halloran commented that she does not believe that discussion occurred in the opening comments regarding the 20,000-acre land transfer that is happening in a nearby area. She expressed concern over the land transfer and noted that the land transfer is not specifically on the agenda, but it is nearby and related to the information in the West Susitna Resolution. Ms. Halloran saw online that over 2,000 people have commented on the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) website related to the land transfer. She does not understand why AIDEA needs 20,000 acres of land in this area. The list of potential uses is long and confusing. Ms. Halloran commented that many people have concerns about data centers and other industrial uses on these important recreational lands. She requested that AIDEA address the land transfer, provide the reasoning for it, and answer why AIDEA is using an obscure State statute to take over the lands without paying for them.

Chair Kendig thanked Ms. Halloran for her comments.

Noria Clark noted that she is a resident of Alaska and is currently living in Anchorage. She expressed her deep concerns regarding public testimony with AIDEA by not receiving ample notification of when the meetings occur. She does not have this level of difficulty with the Legislature or the Senate. Ms. Clark commented that she was notified by a concerned group

about seven minutes ago. She agreed with a previous commenter that it is ridiculous that nobody can find the information easily online. Ms. Clark stated that it seems like AIDEA's representatives are in the business of trying to inhibit the ability of the constituents of this great state to communicate effectively their feelings against the measures.

Ms. Clark commented that when it comes to roads, especially this road, Alaska is not maintaining the current State roads. That needs to be taken care of first. There are too many potholes, and too many people are having accidents. Before Alaska starts producing more roadways for companies who are not even Alaskan companies, maintenance needs to occur on the roads that already exist. She reiterated previous comments that the companies need to pay for the road. The companies have plenty of money. She noted that Alaska clearly does not know how to operate a budget very well. Ms. Clark expressed that the pilfering of the PFD and other things that pay for the systems that are not working or systems that benefit somebody who does not live in Alaska, does not work in Alaska, or that gives profits to another state or country is ridiculous.

Ms. Clark stated that she takes great issue with the 20,000-acre land grab that is happening. That is ridiculous as well. Once again, public testimony has been extremely limited, and it is very hard to speak to anybody about it, which is infuriating. She continued her comments indicating that Representative McCabe spoke at a meeting.

Chair Kendig reminded Ms. Clark that everybody is limited to two minutes.

Ms. Clark thanked AIDEA for their time, and requested that AIDEA start making it possible for the public to listen to the meetings and to participate in the meetings because the public is becoming very upset.

Chair Kendig thanked Ms. Clark for her comments.

Sean Arnold noted that he is a resident of Wasilla and has lived in Alaska for 10 years. He has been fortunate to enjoy locations across the great state. Mr. Arnold stated that his research regarding AIDEA seems to show that AIDEA has written off millions of dollars for underperforming or failing projects. He commented that AIDEA is placing the public revenue at risk for a foreign entity to develop areas. Mr. Arnold agreed with previous comments regarding Alaska's struggles in maintaining the current road system. He does not believe it would be helpful to add maintenance to additional roads that do not really serve the public interest. Mr. Arnold discussed that the cost/return ratio for projects like these seem to have uncertain yields and the taxpayers carry a really high risk for not much of a guarantee of improving the lifestyle or communities.

Chair Kendig thanked Mr. Arnold for his comments.

Chair Kendig requested Mr. Ruaro address some of the comments. Mr. Ruaro explained that everyone is entitled to their own opinions, but they are not entitled to their own facts. He referenced the facts that AIDEA's meetings are noticed a month in advance at the prior meeting. There is significant public notice given. People have been calling in. Mr. Ruaro addressed the

issue of resource development. He explained that it is in Alaska's Constitution that the resources and lands should be developed. Those resources and lands are owned, not by individual lodge owners or others, they are owned in a trust for all Alaskans. Decisions have to be made to develop Alaska's lands to benefit all Alaskans. When the lands are developed, jobs are created, Alaskans are lifted out of poverty, and revenue is generated for the State Treasury. This is what pays for schools and roads and everything else. Mr. Ruaro discussed that AIDEA has also returned half a billion dollars to the State Treasury by following a model where AIDEA invests in roads, particularly the Red Dog Road and port. The return to Alaska from just that project alone runs into the billions of dollars. This is a great investment for AIDEA. Mr. Ruaro wanted to clarify these items and hopes to distinguish between the facts and the opinions.

Chair Kendig returned to the public comment session.

Sarah Thomas noted that she is a resident of Anchorage, and like many Anchorage residents, she considers moving out to the Valley one day, not because of the industrial building plans, but because of the mountains, water, space, recreational trails, and the vast beauty of the area. Ms. Thomas expressed concern about the facts of AIDEA's lack of transparency with the public regarding the plans. She is concerned about the Mayor not knowing about the datacenter that is planned in the area. Ms. Thomas is concerned about datacenters because she is concerned about the future of the water in the region. She stated that all around the states in the south, they are experiencing water scarcity, and it will become a reality if Alaska chooses to go down the same route. Ms. Thomas discussed that the chemicals that are used in datacenter production and in the closed loop systems is PFAS. She said PFAS is a chemical that is found in most bodies of water now, and is also found in most people's bodies. Ms. Thomas commented that we cannot continue to allow corporations to come in and wreak havoc on Alaska's environment and public health. She strongly opposes the deal that is happening because of the shadiness around it. Ms. Thomas hopes that AIDEA makes a good decision for the future of Alaskans today and for the next seven generations.

Chair Kendig thanked Ms. Thomas for her comments.

Lauren Windsor of Zeteo and The Undercurrent commented that she saw AIDEA's Board meeting of July 8, 2026 with Mr. Kreifels. She asked if her understanding is correct that there was public presentation that occurred with Mr. Kriefels, which she saw, and then there was a private, closed door executive session presentation from Vident.

Chair Kendig apologized that the public comment session is not a question-and-answer period.

Ms. Windsor asked if AIDEA is going to clarify in the panel packets that there was a private presentation from Vident.

Chair Kendig explained the format that any questions can be submitted to [communications@aidea.org](mailto:communications@aidea.org).

Ms. Windsor expressed her thanks for the information.

Chair Kendig thanked Ms. Windsor for her comments.

There were no other members of the public in-person or online who wished to make a comment. Chair Kendig closed the public comment period. There was no objection.

## **7. NEW BUSINESS**

**MOTION:** A motion was made by Vice-Chair Fogle to enter into executive session for the purpose of discussing the following items: AIDEA Finances and Investments, AIDEA Bylaws, ANWR, Ambler, West Susitna Access, Ketchikan Shipyard, AIDEA Legislative matters and other matters related to AIDEA and matters that are subject to specific legal advice, which is subject to attorney/client privilege. These matters, which if discussed publicly, could have an adverse effect on the finances of AIDEA, as well as are matters that are attorney-client privileged, and finally, matters involving consideration of issues and that by law are not subject to public disclosure due to the executive or deliberative process, privilege, or other law. The executive session and matters discussed therein are proper subjects for an executive session under the Alaska Open Meetings Act, reference Alaska Statute 44.62.310, Sections (C)(1), (3), and (4), and the Alaska Public Records Act. Motion seconded by Mr. Eledge.

The motion to enter into Executive Session passed with no objection.

**7A. Executive Session: 10:15 a.m. Confidential and deliberative matters related to: AIDEA Finances and Investments, AIDEA Bylaws, AIDEA Projects including ANWR, Ambler, West Susitna Access, Ketchikan Shipyard and others. All of which are subject to the deliberative process privilege, executive process privilege or other legal exemptions from the Open Meetings Act. Also, matters related to AIDEA subject to the attorney-client privilege will be discussed.**

The Board reconvened its regular meeting at 2:43 p.m. Chair Kendig advised the public that the Board did not take any action on the matters discussed while in Executive Session. The session was limited to discussion of matters directly protected from public disclosure by the Open Meetings Act.

## **7B. Resolution G26-09 West Su**

Mr. Ruaro indicated that Deputy Director Brandon Brefczynski and staff will review Resolution G26-09. Mr. Brefczynski introduced Project Manager Joe Kemp. Resolution G26-09 is a request to advance funding to the West Susitna Access Project for the purposes of geotechnical drilling, engineering and design work, permitting work with HDR, and other access related improvements along the route that will enhance the project. The request is for up to \$25 million. He noted that Mr. Kemp will discuss the geotechnical work. Mr. Kemp explained that approximately \$18.5 million of the funds is for geotechnical drilling. The costs were submitted by DOT. Chris Bruns, the Chief Geotech representative at DOT, is already conducting the work on the first part of the road and will continue those efforts. DOT is the premier entity in the state to complete the project quickly. Mr. Kemp believes a secondary benefit is the possibility of saving money by not

having a mark-up from a contractor to complete the work. Mr. Kemp believes the DOT will complete one or two of the bridges' seismic work this fall and the majority of the work will be completed next spring and summer. There will be two crews, with a total of 448 drilling days, including contingencies.

Mr. Brefczynski explained that the resolution requests up to \$25 million. Staff is striving to identify cost savings and will report to the Board of any funds that are not utilized.

Mr. Eledge asked if the DOT section is separate from AIDEA's 78-mile section. Mr. Kemp agreed. Mr. Eledge asked if the bridge work that Mr. Kemp mentioned is for the seismic and drilling for the bridges, rather than building bridges. Mr. Kemp agreed. He noted this is the first step in designing the bridges. This is the information that the geotechnical engineers will need in order to design the bridge. Mr. Eledge asked Mr. Kemp if the contractor he mentioned is the one that the DOT is using, and if there are synergistic implications for using the same contractor. Mr. Kemp explained that the DOT drill crews will do the majority of the work. The helicopters will be contracted. Mr. Eledge asked if the DOT is charging AIDEA for that work. Mr. Kemp agreed, and noted a reimbursable services agreement will be created, pending today's vote.

**MOTION: A motion was made by Vice-Chair Fogle to approve Resolution G26-09, resolution of the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority authorizing funding for the geotechnical drilling program and directly supporting predevelopment work on the West Susitna Access Road Project. Motion seconded by Mr. Haynes.**

Mr. Eledge apologized for asking questions before the motion was on the floor.

Commissioner Sande requested Mr. Brefczynski discuss the economic development benefits for this access and how many acres of State land would be available or unlocked because of the road. Mr. Brefczynski discussed that the whole initiative to unlock the West Susitna has evolved and grown in economic potential for the State. Originally, the plan was for a couple of mines at the end of the road and a potential coal project. The gold mine, U.S. Gold Mining, submitted their latest minerals report showing a tremendous deposit of gold. The Nova Minerals mine began as a gold project, and they have discovered that there is an abundant amount of antimony (Sb). Mr. Brefczynski explained that without antimony, the United States military is not making bombs, bullets, munitions, and computer chips. The U.S. was getting 90% of its antimony from Russia and China. There is enough antimony to essentially provide the U.S. with a domestic supply. This has attracted Department of War interest. He believes that thousands of jobs will be created from the mines.

Commissioner Sande noted her understanding that in addition to mining, the road will create opportunities in recreation, agriculture, and forestry. Mr. Brefczynski agreed. Commissioner Sande asked how many acres of access the road will open. Mr. Brefczynski noted the road will open hundreds of thousands, if not millions of acres of State land to access. The road will be 100% public access and all of the stakeholders involved have agreed. The road is 100% on State land. In 2022, a report was commissioned from McKinley Research on the economic benefits. The report is on AIDEA's website. The report included the mineral potential, the forestry and recreational potential. On the front end of the road, there has been identified potentially 60,000

acres of agricultural land that could be developed. Where the DOT's portion of the project ends, there is a platted subdivision. There are settlement lands all throughout the route. Mr. Brefczynski explained that there is only about 100 acres of federal land in proximity, but the road is 100% in State land. The reason that the Corps of Engineers are involved is because the route involves federal jurisdictional wetlands, waters of the U.S. There were no other comments or questions.

**A roll call was taken, and the motion to approve Resolution G26-09 passed unanimously.**

## **8. DIRECTOR COMMENTS**

### **8A. Project Updates**

Mr. Ruaro discussed that JAG at the Ketchikan Shipyard received an additional \$94 million contract for work on the NOAA vessel Bigelow. It will follow the work on the NOAA vessel Oscar Dyson that arrives in the yard in November, which is another contract worth approximately \$90 million. There are three more NOAA ships that could potentially be in the queue, providing steady work for the Shipyard for the next eight to 10 years. This is a tremendous increase over the prior operator's performance. The Shipyard has capacity with four of the 15 icebreakers under contract to be built in Alaska. The Shipyard would like to expand capacity to a third dry dock that is large enough to take the current vessels and the Arleigh Burke-class Navy destroyers. AIDEA will be working with JAG and others to identify options on ways to complete the third dry dock. It will take federal assistance and funding. Mr. Ruaro believes that the congressional delegation is aware of the expansion request.

Mr. Ruaro explained that the additional revenue in Ketchikan and the year-round employment in Ketchikan has been a huge boost to the community and the surrounding region. The vocational technical center in Prince of Whales Island continues the process with its first class of Alaskan students to work at the Shipyard. Mr. Ruaro highlighted that economic development in a community lifts all the small businesses in the community and allows people to afford better housing.

Mr. Ruaro discussed the announcement by Senator Sullivan that an icebreaker is coming to Seward, along with fast response cutters. They need housing. They need onshore infrastructure. AIDEA is considering the possibility of being part of that process. Mr. Ruaro reiterated that the West Susitna Road is advancing. Regarding the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), the seismic efforts are advancing, and the expectation is that crews will be in the field shortly. The seismic is expected to unlock the full picture of the resources at ANWR. The current consultants indicate there are likely very significant deposits of oil and gas. AIDEA looks forward to completing the seismic and partnering with other companies to get it developed. There were no comments or questions.

### **8B. Loan Dashboard Report – Included in Packet**

### **8C. Project Fact Sheets– Included in Packet**

**8D. Statistics Summary**– Included in Packet

**8E. None**

**8F. None**

**8G. Next regularly scheduled AIDEA Board Meeting: Tuesday, September 22, 2026, Nullagvik Hotel, Kotzebue, Alaska**

## **9. BOARD COMMENTS**

Commissioner Sande expressed appreciation to staff for their efforts and for the discussions and accomplishments today. She believes it is important for Board members to consider their oath of office to support and defend the Constitution of the United States, the State of Alaska, and to faithfully discharge their duties. Commissioner Sande thinks about the oath at every meeting, especially during discussions weighing what is the right thing to do versus the challenges. Article 8 of the Constitution does not call for the preservation of Alaska's resources. It calls for the utilization, development, and conservation for the maximum benefit of its people. Commissioner Sande thought a lot about Article 8 for today's discussion and today's vote. As it was presented, the West Susitna is an example of putting principles into action, creating access for millions of acres of State land, and unlocking opportunities in recreation, agriculture, forestry, minerals, energy, and other developments. She believes AIDEA has an obligation to unlock those opportunities.

Commissioner Sande expressed appreciation for the public comments. The Board reviews the public comments and considers the comments, especially when the comment is coming from folks that are in and around the areas related to the projects being discussed. She thanked the members of the public for taking the time either submit public comments or to call in with public comments. Commissioner Sande stated that she appreciates Executive Director Ruaro's distinction about public funds. She believes this point continues to reoccur, and she is thinking about ways to dispel some of the confusion. AIDEA is a public corporation of the State. She believes that may be part of what is confusing. When AIDEA was created, the Legislature deliberately gave AIDEA separate and independent legal existence, so that it could be the economic development fund for the State of Alaska. The statute specifically says that AIDEA funds, income and receipts may not be considered or constitute money of the State. This was reaffirmed in the Supreme Court case. Commissioner Sande explained that in the same way that the State of Alaska is not responsible for AIDEA's debts, AIDEA revenue is not to be used for the general fund. AIDEA does not just give the money that is earned from AIDEA's investments to the general fund. AIDEA does give a dividend every year to the State. She believes the latest figures are that AIDEA has given a half a billion dollars to the State as dividends. Those funds have been used for things like maintenance of roads, schools, and healthcare. AIDEA is contributing to the benefit of Alaska through its dividends for some of the services that were discussed in public comment. She believes this is important for her to say.

Commissioner Sande discussed that AIDEA's revolving loan funds have the highest credit rating in its history. She praised the executive team and members of the Board who take time away

from their families and their businesses to deliberate and make decisions for the benefit of Alaskans. Under her standard, knowing that an independent analysis shows that AIDEA has the highest credit rating in its history and is producing some of the strongest financial results in its history, shows that the model is extremely successful. Commissioner Sande reiterated her appreciation to staff and to the members of the Board for their efforts.

Commissioner Earls echoed Commissioner Sande's comments of appreciation and thanks.

Mr. Haynes commented that he has two trusts and is mostly aware of that discussion. He noted that most of the other items are wait-and-see situations. He asked who writes the proposals. Mr. Ruaro explained that proposals for projects come in from project sponsors and then go through the AIDEA process. Mr. Haynes thanked Mr. Ruaro for that explanation.

Mr. Solie thanked AIDEA for treating him to a great first Board meeting. He stated that AIDEA is a wonderful organization and at the heart of it is the development of Alaska for the betterment of Alaskans. He is excited to be a member of the Board. Mr. Solie commented that he was encouraged today with the West Susitna Project and the passage of the resolution that allows for the geotechnical drilling to kickstart the project, and for hearing from many people that see this development as positive. He also noted the many positive comments today from people that understand that opening up the country is good and will allow for jobs, economic opportunity, and increase recreation. Mr. Solie thanked the Chairman and the staff for their preparations for today's meeting.

Mr. Eledge commented that AIDEA is committed to responsible development of the resources in the state of Alaska. The resource development creates jobs, creates wealth, feeds families, brings happiness, and increases a person's self-worth. All of those things together is what AIDEA is after and what AIDEA has developed thanks to the hard work of the staff. Mr. Eledge is pleased to be part of AIDEA. It is great to see that AIDEA is able to responsibly develop the resources that the good Lord has blessed Alaska with and to create jobs. He noted that in review of the information for today's meeting, there were over 10,200 permanent jobs created by AIDEA through its development. Mr. Eledge foresees that number will be doubled in the near future. When he thinks of the number of mega projects that AIDEA is currently working on, he sees the construction jobs that create the infrastructure to have the permanent jobs to feed families. He sees this as a phenomenal opportunity for AIDEA and Alaska's growth. Mr. Eledge noted there are 49 of the 50 federally deemed critical resources in Alaska. He reiterated that this is a phenomenal opportunity for Alaska.

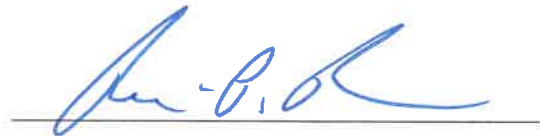
Vice-Chair Fogle thanked Mr. Ruaro and staff for their amazing job of providing all the information at each Board meeting. He reiterated that Mr. Ruaro has done an amazing job of shepherding the organization through his tenure. Vice-Chair Fogle discussed that he has started thinking about all of the things that AIDEA has done over the last eight years to help future generations. He is reminded of the proverb that society grows great when old men and women plant trees whose shade they know shall never sit. Vice-Chair Fogle commented on the seeds that AIDEA has planted for all of the businesses that received loan modifications during COVID and to-date that saved jobs and businesses across Alaska. He noted the efforts to further Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, to further Ambler, to further West Susitna, to help with the Ketchikan

Shipyard, and all of the loans that AIDEA has made are going to continue beyond this Board's tenure and will produce revenue and jobs to the state that are sorely needed. Vice-Chair Fogle commented that Alaska cannot become a state that just locks itself up and only cares about parks, forests, and keeping everything pristine. There must be a balance of some development and conservation like the Constitution states. Vice-Chair Fogle believes that the roots AIDEA has planted the past eight years are going to pay dividends in the future that are sorely needed for the state.

Chair Kendig echoed all of the Board members' comments. He reiterated the compliments to Mr. Ruaro. Chair Kendig commented that it is an incredible privilege to be associated with AIDEA's professional staff.

#### **10. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business of the Board, the AIDEA meeting adjourned at 3:13 p.m.



Randy Ruaro, AIDEA Executive Director

Secretary