

Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, September 22, 2026
Nullagvik Hotel, Kotzebue, Alaska

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kendig called the meeting of the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority to order on September 22, 2026, at 10:01 a.m.

2. ROLL CALL BOARD MEMBERS

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

A quorum was established.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Eledge to amend the agenda to go into Executive Session. Motion seconded by Mr. Solie.

The motion to amend the agenda and go into executive session passed with no objection.

Executive Session: 10:02 a.m.

The Board reconvened its regular meeting at 10:17 a.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.

4. PRIOR MINUTES – August 26, 2026

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Solie to approve the Minutes of August 26, 2026, as presented. Motion seconded by Mr. Eledge.

The motion to approve the Minutes of August 26, 2026, as presented passed with no objection.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Kendig requested that speakers state their name and any affiliation they may have.

Jim Dowl noted that he is a resident of Kotzebue since 1988. He retired as a wildlife biologist

and pilot for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in 2016. Mr. Dowl stated that for the last 15 years of his employment with Fish and Game, he was the lead biologist for the Western Arctic Caribou Herd. Mr. Dowl strongly opposes the Ambler Road. He opposes the road because of his concerns for the impact to the Western Arctic Caribou Herd that the Ambler Road will have. Mr. Dowl explained that his work with Fish and Game followed caribou movements near Red Dog from 2000 until 2015, which unequivocally showed that caribou movements were strongly affected by the road. Caribou were delayed an average of about a month in years when more than 5% of the herd migrated through that area. It took sometimes up to two months for caribou to get across the road, and some caribou crossed the road relatively easily, as if the road had not been there, but the average over all those years was that more than 50% of the caribou were delayed by the road when they migrated by Red Dog. Mr. Dowl noted that in 2011, which was the worst year he saw while at Fish and Game, about 80,000 caribou were delayed an average of a month. The caribou did not walk back three to five miles from the road and then cross. Many of the caribou walked back all the way to Point Hope, which is over 100 straight-line miles. Caribou never walk a straight line, which means that some of the caribou probably walked 300 to 500 miles from the time they got down to the road and went back and finally negotiated the road.

Mr. Dowl expressed his concern that probably 2/3 to 3/4 of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd has been lost since 2003. He does not believe this is because of Red Dog. He believes it is because of climate change. One of his concerns about building the Ambler Road is his belief that the industrial mining complex will significantly contribute to further climate change. Mr. Dowl commented that Senators say that we need the mine in order to mine rare earth elements that will help create batteries. Mr. Dowl believes this comes with a terrible cost. Information is showing more and more that a very good way to fight climate change is to maintain intact habitat that sequesters carbon.

Mr. Dowl concluded by expressing his frustration that the entire discussion about the Ambler Road has focused on the Ambler Road. It has never been considered, at least publicly, the impacts from the industrial mining complex that the road is going to develop. Mr. Dowl is concerned that industrial mining in the Ambler Mining District is going to spread for decades and decades, just like Red Dog is expanding now. It is now going to go away in 13 years. Mr. Dowl is more concerned about how the industrial mining complex is going to affect the caribou, the traffic levels on the road, the water quality, and the fish.

Chair Kendig thanked Mr. Dowl for his comments.

Katagiq Sweetie Schaeffer noted she was born and raised in Kotzebue. She commented that people speak of the animals being affected. She discussed that when the colonizers invaded the people in the area, the people accepted 110% of all of the rules. The people followed the rules and said anything and everything to appease the government state. Ms. Schaeffer believes that needs to change. She speaks for concern of the people, and the medicine that is on the land. She discussed the colonized mentality of seeing the land as development versus seeing the land as medicine. She expressed concern for the well-being of the people, and fights for their well-being.

Chair Kendig expressed appreciation for her comments.

Cyrus Harris thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak. Mr. Harris noted that he is Inupiaq and was raised about 12 miles across the bay from Kotzebue. He has lived in Kotzebue for the last 30 years. He is recently retired from a fantastic program that he built, “The Hunter Support Program”, where able-bodied hunters are to hunt, fish, and gather for elders in need. The program has grown within the region.

Mr. Harris noted that he will read his some of his past comments and also the Tribe’s comments. He indicated that he is a Co-Chair of the Western Arctic Caribou Working Group. He noted that the first comments are regarding the Ambler Road and the caribou. He discussed the fall caribou migration that he grew up with. There were several families that lived in the place where he grew up 12 miles away from Kotzebue in the spring, summer, and fall. When a traveler passed through, the residents would ask about their observations of the caribou in their travels. Elders congregated to speak about the coming caribou migration. When the caribou began to migrate, the young men were always eager to hunt. The elders would tell them to hold off to allow the first caribou to cross and pave the way for the migration. After a day of heavy crossing, there was no stopping the caribou. The residents worked together and hunted for the winter food supply.

Mr. Harris explained that since his younger years, the residents noticed that the caribou now migrate much later. As was eventually discovered, the road that was developed for the Red Dog Mine turns the caribou back on their migration paths. When the caribou finally cross and come south, the residents are able to hunt, but the bulls are already bad from the rut. Mr. Harris noted that when he was growing up, he would get bulls when they were in their prime, plenty of body fat and good skin. He discussed that this recent year was the first time that he had no caribou. The caribou population is declining. This is a big challenge that the residents see around the Northwest Arctic today.

Mr. Harris commented that he looks at the discussions about Ambler Road from the view of the caribou. The Ambler Road is a proposed 211-mile road that would cut the eastern part of the caribou habitat in half, and connect the region with the rest of the road system. Mr. Harris noted that caribou will start detecting the noise of the road from miles away. They will get closer cautiously and they will be hesitant to cross the road. This behavior has already been proven at the Red Dog Mine’s road. There are scientific studies to support his comments. The indigenous people stated that this would happen. There are many more consequences that would come with the Ambler Road and would affect not just caribou, but also water and fish species of all sorts. Mr. Harris noted that contaminants from the road and the mine will drain from the tundra to the creeks, and from the creeks to the Kobuk River.

Mr. Harris discussed that people making decisions about the Ambler Road don’t seem to understand that Kotzebue and surrounding areas are going to be highly affected. When people were first conducting studies and preparations for the Ambler Road, they claimed that there were no fish in a certain creek. Mr. Harris thought that was ridiculous. Fish migrate too. Scientists often come up in the summer, but later in the year, that creek would swarm with fish. There is a season for every species in a particular location. For instance, caribou heavily migrate in the spring and fall through the area where the Ambler Road would be. There are groups that stay throughout the winter.

Mr. Harris stated that he knows that once a road connects a community to the outside world, the place becomes urban. He asked what happens when Kotzebue becomes urban. They would end up back to zero and lose the right to subsist. Mr. Harris commented that once the road is developed, it will affect the lifestyle and will basically kill the culture. He noted that mining companies finish messing up another place and run out of resources, and then expand to this area. He does not understand why the world is designed that the majority of the revenue will go to another country, while his region will get scraps.

Mr. Harris believes that all parts of this land and sea are very sensitive and should not be disturbed by industrial development. Afterall, Alaska is the last frontier. For the sake of the future generations, Mr. Harris expressed his opposition of the Ambler Road to save the culture. He stated that the Ambler Road Draft Environmental Impact Statement was concerned about invasive species and subsistence resources. The native vegetation and species are important to our subsistence lifestyle. He noted that we rely heavily on traditional foods that are part of the staple diet that cannot be replaced by anything from the Western culture. Mr. Harris indicated that they are not accustomed to the Western diet of beef, chicken, or other farmed animals. They need traditional foods to be healthy. Particularly, they are concerned about the invasive plant species contaminating the wild edible plants.

Mr. Harris discussed that they rely on berries, wild edible roots, and other plants for their subsistence needs. The whole food chain for the wildlife in the region is reliant on these and many other plants. Caribou, moose, and many other species could be affected. As noted in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, non-native invasive species of plants occur in high concentrations in project areas immediately adjacent to the Dalton Highway. Environmental analysts reveal that the spread and establishment of these contaminants along the action alternative is considered likely. Mr. Harris expressed the concern about the effects of the invasive species on the subsistence lifestyle and health of the native vegetation, as the invasive species will likely crowd out the native vegetation. The native vegetation is a core part of their diet.

Mr. Harris expressed concern as to who will hold the responsibility for the damage of their habitat and Native subsistence ways. What will AIDEA do to prevent the damage? Who will be responsible for fixing the problems? Who will be accountable for environmental damage that will affect their future generations? Mr. Harris and others want to ensure subsistence rights for their future children. Mr. Harris noted that concludes his personal comments, and his next comments are from the Tribe.

Mr. Harris read a portion of the Tribe's resolution that was submitted: The Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority is moving forward with the Ambler Road project, which will construct a road from the Dalton Highway to the Ambler Mining District for the purpose of providing access to four currently identified mining sites. Construction of the Ambler Road, and likely additional spur roads, and development of these mine sites and associated industrial activity and tailing ponds will change the character of the Upper Kobuk environment, including the Kobuk River. These changes will negatively affect the caribou, fish, birds, and other wildlife directly through habitat destruction, habitat fragmentation, industrial disturbance, and contamination during the life of the mines and for centuries thereafter.

Mr. Harris continued that the wildlife and fish that will be harmed from the development sustain the cultural, personal, and spiritual way of life of the Tribal members. The Native Village of Kotzebue Council believes that the relatively short-term economic and other benefits of industrial development of the Upper Kobuk region is outweighed by the widespread, long-term, negative impacts to the fish and wildlife that will result from this development. Be it resolved that the Native Village of Kotzebue opposes the road.

Mr. Harris believed this was a great opportunity to provide these comments in case the submitted written comments were shoved under something else.

Chair Kendig expressed appreciation for Mr. Harris' comments.

China Kantner noted that she is a resident of Kotzebue and downriver from Ambler. She expressed opposition to the Ambler Road on the grounds of it being a really terrible idea as far as its attacks on subsistence, caribou, sheefish, and salmon. Ms. Kantner noted that her family is third-generation commercial fishermen. She is concerned about what the road and the mines are going to mean for the fish population, especially considering that the species are already being impacted by climate change and by resting rivers. This is not the time to add another huge industrial impact to the waterways.

Ms. Kantner does not believe that AIDEA is doing its due diligence in considering how the project will affect animals and people in the region, compared to the handful of jobs that are supposedly going to be created. She does not believe the consideration has been given to how people in the region are going to take advantage of those job opportunities. There is not enough attention being paid to skill levels in this region and how people are going to be eligible for those jobs. Ms. Kantner noted that the project is not going to benefit the region. It is only going to take away food sources and damage the water supplies.

Chair Kendig thanked Ms. Kantner for her comments.

Susan Georgette indicated that she has lived in Kotzebue for 40 years. Her family has a camp on the Upper Kobuk. She is a member of Protect the Kobuk, which is a local grassroots group of Northwest Arctic residents and Tribal members who oppose the Ambler Road. There are over 700 members, all of whom either live in the region or are Tribal members from the Borough. Ms. Georgette discussed the phrase "social license" that Ambler Metal used at a Borough meeting last month. Ambler Metal claimed that they would not proceed with the Arctic mine unless they had the social license to do so.

Ms. Georgette looked up the phrase "social license" online and AI told her that it meant the ongoing acceptance and approval of a project by local communities, stakeholders, and the general public. Ms. Georgette commented that if a business like Ambler Metals claims to care about social license, she feels that a quasi-State agency like AIDEA should care even more about that. Ms. Georgette believes that AIDEA should be promoting projects that are in the best interest of Alaskans, and that include projects that Alaskans support.

Ms. Georgette emphasized that there is not social license in the region for the Ambler Road. The

residents of the Borough are highly divided about the road. There is support for it, of course, but there is also substantial opposition to it. There are people who feel resigned to it. Ms. Georgette believes the opposition, as others have said today, concludes that the risks and the negatives impacts of the project outweigh the benefits. She believes that AIDEA needs to recognize the opposition and the lack of social license. AIDEA should not push the project ahead.

Chair Kendig expressed appreciation to Ms. Georgette for her comments.

Saagulik Elizabeth Hensley asked Chair Kendig if the Board needs a break because there were a few people getting up. Chair Kendig noted that the members are good. He requested that she note any affiliation she has. Ms. Hensley noted that she is a resident of Kotzebue. She is representing herself. She welcomed the members to Kotzebue and explained that they have come at a really exciting time in the watershed when the animals are moving, and there is moose hunting. A bunch of people were blessed over the weekend. This is cranberry picking time. The fall herring will be coming in soon with seals. More and more seals will be seen. This is an active time for Kotzebue, even though it seems to be getting cold and dark.

Ms. Hensley noted that around town there are many projects occurring right now, and there is much economic development in the community. There are a lot of exciting things happening in Kotzebue. Ms. Hensley said AIDEA has come to the region that really kickstarted AIDEA's existence with the Red Dog Port Road, which the region is really proud of. She noted that when the region is united, they get stuff done, including land swaps in order to build the road and agreements with the Parks Service. Ms. Hensley reiterated that the region helped to get AIDEA up and running, and the region is proud of that history. She understands that AIDEA can help boost economic development through small business loans and other things. She encouraged the members to think about how AIDEA can be a good partner to help projects that have support get the funding they need. Ms. Hensley discussed there are all kinds of options, such as renewable energy projects that help reduce the extraordinarily high cost of living in Kotzebue, and housing projects to help bridge the tremendous housing gap in Kotzebue that prevents people who want to live in the region from living in the region. Ms. Hensley noted that she does not represent the Maniilaq Health Center in her comments, but stated that they do so much for the community and partner in helping with community efforts, such as building patient housing and staff housing.

Ms. Hensley commented that regarding the Ambler Road, there is no consensus that the region wants the road. That is why movement on the Ambler Road is not occurring such as with a project that has regional consensus. She noted that the Red Dog Road had consensus and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act had consensus in the region. Ms. Hensley encouraged AIDEA to continue listening and doing the work, and to continue the conversations. It is a violation of the fundamental human rights to free, prior, and informed consent, if projects happen without consensus and approval of the indigenous peoples of the land.

Chair Kendig thanked Ms. Hensley for her comments.

Chris Rose stated he is a community member and Northwest Arctic resident. Because of the delay of the meeting, his wife asked him to come. Mr. Rose focused on potential. He believes the Development Agency is looking for potential to develop things. He believes if the members were

to spend time in these spaces, 200 miles of space, that is undeveloped, they would understand that the potential is already at its fullest. The space could not have more potential. The space cannot be made better. It is wild. It is natural. Mr. Rose hopes that some of the members are born and raised in Alaska, so that they are familiar with wild spaces. If they are from Palmer, Valdez, Juneau, or Barrow, he does not know, but if a member has driven from Chicago to New York or from Chicago to L.A., or Austin to Seattle, there are not many spaces like these anymore.

Mr. Rose believes the previous commenters said it well that we are not opposed to progress. We are not opposed to things that serve our people or our region, but overwhelmingly, this feels like it is going to be one of those things that takes, and the dust will just never settle. It will never be reclaimed, and they will never make that space good again. They will never reseed it with thousands of years of ecological development. It will just be another scar, like Route 66 was when it was punched through or like the railroads. This is just another big pursuit of potential, but the potential is already completely whole in that space, and people have been using that potential, they continue to, and want to continue to use that space. Mr. Rose does not think that picture has been fully considered by the people seeking development. He believes that Ambler Metals has the burden of cost and profit and shareholders, but AIDEA is to do good projects for the State and Alaskans, and he does not believe this is one of those good projects.

Chair Kendig thanked Mr. Rose for his comments.

Randy Ruaro, Executive Director, expressed appreciation for the people providing public comments. He noted that AIDEA has a fair amount of work and studies that he believes would be good to be shared with the public commentors. He requested that public commentors provide their email to staff in order to receive additional information regarding the projects and to engage in more dialog.

Sheryl Meierotto noted that she is Zooming in from her home village of Evansville, Alaska. She is a Tribal member and is also the President of Evansville Corporation. Ms. Meierotto indicated that her testimony is to speak out against the Ambler mining road. She noted that her corporation and her Tribe have been in opposition to this project for 15 years. She believes that a good indication of the lack of knowledge or care or respect for the people who are involved is indicative of when this project was first proposed. She noted that the map of the proposed road was published in the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* and it included a section of the road that crossed over Evansville Incorporated lands. At the time, Evansville was not notified, not informed, not invited to the table, nor given any indication that this was going to happen, and only found out after the fact.

Ms. Meierotto stated that at the beginning, when a project's proposed land route crosses over Native corporation land without informing that corporation or asking whether this section of the road would be allowed by the landowner, that gives you a good idea that this road was not a good idea in the first place, because the people involved did not recognize that they must include the people who live in this area. Ms. Meierotto believes that this project from concept to construction has grown far beyond the estimation of cost, and it also does not have widespread public support from the regions or from the state of Alaska.

Ms. Meierotto indicated that AIDEA is here to represent our people in responsible, sustainable projects. If AIDEA does not have the type of support, then she feels like this is a bad project to move forward. The numbers that AIDEA is projecting, even to her untrained eye, are based on AIDEA's hopes and dreams, and not on the people. She suggested that AIDEA go back to the drawing table and look at the numbers again and be transparent, because the people of Alaska are very smart, and the people do support development, but they support it in a way that is educated, responsible, smart, and beneficial. Right now, this road does not benefit the people of Alaska.

Ms. Meierotto does not understand why AIDEA lets foreign entities financially benefit the most from this road. She asked why Alaskans are not the ones who are going to benefit from this type of a project that is going to destroy so much of our vast wilderness in Alaska, and some of the last vast wilderness in the nation. She noted that she has asked this question a number of times and she has not gotten an answer.

Ms. Meierotto requested AIDEA to review the project again and think about it from a commonsense point of view, and ask themselves if this is really doing something that will benefit Alaska or are they doing something that is going to just make profits for outside entities?

Chair Kendig thanked Ms. Meierotto for her comments.

Ruth Iten of Saqauginn Creek noted that she is a resident of the Northwest Arctic Borough, a dog musher, and a commercial fisherman. She discussed that when the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement was released, she traveled to the villages and brought a petition to people in their homes and asked those people what they thought about the road, and if they did or did not want a road built. Ms. Iten noted those are the people who she is representing now. She expressed appreciation to all of the people who have commented, and noted that while she is not an eloquent speaker, she does relate to people in their homes and what they tell her. Ms. Iten noted that she first learned about man camps from these discussions, and then they reviewed the development along the road and the people it was going to bring in. This information was in the Environmental Impact Statement that was being presented. There are young women in the villages afraid of this, and they cannot be blamed. The oldest elder in Kobuk is against the road. Another woman in Norvik who works at the IRA told Ms. Iten that she tells her kids that everything comes down river, and she tells her kids about the circle of life. These are the people who Ms. Iten is talking about and who AIDEA might not hear from. These are the people who are against the Ambler Road. Ms. Iten reiterated that she is against building the road.

Chair Kendig thanked Ms. Iten for her comments.

David Leslie indicated that he is representing himself today. He lives in Fairbanks and his mother Lily Leslit was born in Kotzebue and his grandfather was John Schaeffer, Jr. Mr. Leslie indicated that he is a NANA shareholder. He expressed his opposition to the road. The 88 Tribes have stood against the road, and it is alarming to see this move forward without consideration for the Tribes. Mr. Leslie stated that he is deeply concerned about the federal government's strategic investment into Trilogy Metals that creates a clear conflict of interest where the federal government, who is issuing the permits, are the ones also financially benefiting from it. There has been no frank discussion about how this is not under the perception of a conflict of interest.

Mr. Leslie is worried that the project is being used to bully Alaska Native Corporations and other entities into development that is so harmful. The Supplemental EIS stated there should be no action taken due to the irreversible harm done to the environment and to the ecosystem. Alaska Native people are stewards of the land, and to see this road being forced through when it is known that it will cause harm is racist. Mr. Leslie is deeply concerned that this is moving without taking these issues into consideration and having very frank discussions.

Mr. Leslie indicated that the mines that are currently proposed won't even pay for the road. The project does not make financial sense. This makes him worried that there are other things at play that aren't being discussed. If people are not fully informed about why this road is being built, they cannot consent to it, which means the road should not continue to move forward.

Chair Kendig thanked Mr. Leslie for his comments.

John Gaedeke stated that he is calling from Iniakuk Lake, which is in the Brooks Range about 250 miles due east of Kotzebue. He commented that this morning, when the Board goes into yet another closed-door executive session to discuss how to spend more money for foreign mining companies to access the region, he requested that members take a minute to think about the legacy that each individual member is leaving behind. Mr. Gaedeke noted that members know that no one can see or hear what members are doing in the executive meetings. However, the public has to assume that the members are all in agreement. All the members appear to think that financially supporting foreign mining efforts with a proven history of bankruptcy and pollution is the way forward.

Mr. Gaedeke indicated that everyone has read the recent story in *Bloomberg*, and there have been other stories in *ADN* and *The News-Miner*, that have bluntly pointed out that the road permit was traded for stock shares. This can be seen and read. Another email about the numbers does not have to be sent. The information is available, and the members appear to support it. Mr. Gaedeke noted that the public sees shareholders getting rich, making millions overnight, and then selling out and leaving the proposal behind before it even starts. These are the facts from *Bloomberg*.

Mr. Gaedeke noted that it is hard to live and work in this region, but it does not mean that people are stupid who live here. The members' action to date treats the public as if they are stupid to live here and to try to make a living. He believes the members are sitting in a region that they do not appear to understand and are making decisions that will have far reaching impacts for the local people. There has been very little transparency or accountability under the Dunleavy Administration. That is just eight years. This proposal has been ongoing for 15 years. He noted that the public is hoping that changes with the next governor will happen to provide more transparency and accountability. For now, the public has to keep watching the AIDEA Board members individually make one bad decision after another.

Mr. Gaedeke suggested that the Board members do better starting today in Kotzebue. He requested that the Board members show the public with their actions that they are paying attention, rather than treating the public like a third-world backwater where political connections turn into paydays. This is what the Board members said would not happen. They said the reason to mine in this area is responsibility, and yet, all of the Board members' actions are irresponsible.

Mr. Gaedeke commented that if the road was connected to the Dalton tomorrow, the Board does not even know what tidewater they are going to, which is inconceivable after this amount of time. For the people that live in the region and have to stay and be accountable every day for their own actions, what the people see the individual members of the Board are doing is very difficult to understand. The public is watching because their land and their livelihoods depend on that long after the members resign from the Board. Mr. Gaedeke requested that each of the members be more individually accountable.

Chair Kendig thanked Mr. Gaedeke for his comments.

Mr. Ruaro added a few notes to the record that AIDEA visits communities near the road. AIDEA has resolutions of support for the project from some communities near the road. Those communities are saying that they need jobs for their youth and they need people living in the Villages to keep the Village alive. They need work and jobs. There is a subsistence committee that has representatives from residents in the communities that also are supportive of the project. Mr. Ruaro understands that there is not a consensus, but AIDEA is charged by statute in Alaska law to try to develop resources, jobs, and economic development. When AIDEA earns money from projects like Red Dog, 25% to 50% of those earnings goes back to the State where everyone, including schools and Medicaid, benefit in Alaska. The issue is not 100% either way. The Alaska statutes charge AIDEA with looking out for the entire state economy and communities.

Mr. Ruaro noted that he finds Mr. Leslie's comment about AIDEA being racist as very offensive. Mr. Ruaro indicated that is a very dangerous allegation. It is unfounded, and he hopes that Mr. Leslie will retract that comment at the next meeting. Mr. Ruaro stated that there is no racism in AIDEA at all. Mr. Ruaro reiterated that the comment was highly offensive.

Ms. Schaeffer asked if she could finish her comment. Chair Kendig noted that request is unusual, but he agreed to let her comment again.

Ms. Schaeffer gave a quick snapshot that her grandfather was born at the family camp. She noted that she was married to a Caucasian man for many years. What sustained her sanity was coming home and making sure that she was on a plane, on a snowmachine or in a boat within an hour to go to camp. That time helped heal her, being on the land and being with her family, and the connection and conversations. Ms. Schaeffer indicated that she recently proposed to the Borough that the tundra tea has a high anti-cancer rate. She suggested to bag the tea up and sell them or gather in bulk for pharmacy companies to use. There is no reason why we cannot look at the natural resources versus the mentality of needing to build and destruct.

Ms. Schaeffer believes this goes along the lines of the patriarchy leadership versus the matriarchs. She proposed working together to come up with a better solution, not only for the communities, but for the people, the land, and the animals.

Chair Kendig thanked Ms. Schaeffer for her comments.

Mr. Harris thanked the members for allowing him to provide a follow-up comment regarding Mr.

Ruaro's discussion of jobs and the local people seeking jobs. Mr. Harris stated that the jobs will be short-term. When the Ambler Road is being developed, there will be a small handful that get hired. When the mining companies get developed, there will be a lot of other folks that are overriding the jobs that local people do not qualify for, the high-paying jobs. Mr. Harris noted that, of course, the locals can get the broom and shovel. Mr. Harris supposed that the mine runs strong for 20 years. What happens after 20 years? His children might benefit and his grandchildren are going to live with the damage that got left behind.

Mr. Harris indicated that this information is what needs to be shared with the folks that do not understand which direction they are going with the jobs. Mr. Harris stated that jobs are good, but not in this scenario.

Chair Kendig encouraged Mr. Harris to get on the email list because there may be some job training associated with the longer-term projects.

Mr. Harris asked if AIDEA has the email for Native Village of Kotzebue. He is a Tribal Council Member and receives those communications. Chair Kendig agreed.

Mr. Harris thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak. He commented that when he first started meeting with people, he felt intimidated and small, but he was totally wrong. Mr. Harris said an elder told him that once he comes into the meeting, he comes in looking at everybody level and even, not up and not down. Mr. Harris believes that is why a lot of his people are not speaking up and not used to these meetings. They are also in the fish camps getting ready for winter, and that should continue.

Chair Kendig noted that AIDEA will hold a representative meeting at the Assembly meetings every two weeks to provide the status update.

Mr. Harris indicated that he found out about today's meeting last night at 11:00 p.m.

Chair Kendig stated that AIDEA is working on communicating more efficiently. 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.

An at-ease was taken.

6. NEW BUSINESS

6A. Resolution G26-10 Alaska Sustainable Energy Conference

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Solie to approve Resolution G26-10, Alaska Sustainable Energy Conference. Motion seconded by Mr. Eledge.

Mr. Ruaro indicated that Resolution G26-10 proposes to authorize the Executive Director to spend up to \$400,000 in funds to support the annual Alaska Sustainable Energy Conference (ASEC). This is an event that has been sponsored by the Governor for a number of years. It has been extremely successful, bringing hundreds and hundreds of people from all over the world,

the United States, and Alaska together annually to discuss opportunities and options for new energy development in Alaska. Energy and fuel are major issues in all communities. There is a potential shortfall of gas in Cook Inlet. All around the state, energy and fuel are cost-of-living issues. AIDEA's statutes direct it to assist in energy development. Mr. Ruaro believes this conference helps progress towards lower energy costs for Alaskans and is a worthy cause for the Board. Mr. Ruaro recommended support of the resolution.

Chair Kendig commented that without additional help, the conference would put a burden on the staff. He asked if this was taken into consideration when choosing the amount requested. Mr. Ruaro agreed, and noted the amount is up to \$400,000. The hope is to spend less than that amount and to get other financial support from sponsors and participants in the conference.

Chair Kendig expressed his concern regarding the staff who already have a heavy workload. He wanted to ensure that the staff can get additional assistance to coordinate the conference program. Mr. Ruaro agreed. He noted that AIDEA will reach out to AEA for their assistance, and will reach out to the Governor's Office for their assistance. Mr. Ruaro indicated that care will be taken so that staff is not stretched too thin.

Mr. Solie asked Mr. Ruaro for an estimate of what has been spent net bottom line after sponsorships in the recent past for the very successful energy conference. Mr. Ruaro deferred to Andrew Jensen, Policy Advisor for Governor Dunleavy, to provide additional details. Mr. Jensen noted that he has been in charge of coordinating the ASEC for the past five years. Regarding financing, the Governor has always had a goal for this to remain an affordable conference for attendees. Some level of subsidies have been provided for the past five years. Mr. Jensen discussed that the largest outlay from the Governor's Office was in 2023, of approximately \$378,000. The outlay for the Governor's Office this year was about \$211,000. As the attendance has grown and as sponsorship has grown, the level of outlay has decreased. Mr. Jensen believes the requested up to amount of \$400,000 is a conservative estimate. The highest cost for the conference is catering, food and beverages, which is attendance-driven.

Mr. Jensen responded to Chair Kendig's concerns regarding staffing and resources. Mr. Jensen noted that Martha Keele is the event contractor and she is on the line. He requested that she discuss the contracted support services for the Governor's Office in terms of planning, logistics, working with the vendors, handling the invoices, and sponsor perks. He believes her comments will help alleviate some concerns regarding required staffing resources from AIDEA. There was no objection.

Ms. Keele indicated that the information on the screen is included in the Board members' packets. She included a few additional photos of previous conferences for reference. She discussed the proposed roles for the contractor team and for AIDEA. The contractor team serves as the full event management, speaker management, website designer and manager, registration, vendor management, budget tracking of revenues received, expenses paid, marketing, exhibitor and sponsorship, and AV production management. Ms. Keele discussed that AIDEA provides assistance with program direction and the strategy of how to build the speaker list, invitations, topics, and theme of the conference. The contractor team prepares the speaker agreement, publishes the agreed upon deadlines and presentation guidelines, conducts ongoing

communication and tracking regarding logistics, receives the speaker materials ahead of time, and publishes speakers' biography information for the website, the application, and other marketing materials.

Ms. Keele noted that the PR element of marketing could be subcontracted to a third-party agency if there is a concern. Sponsorship is a team sport. Assistance is required to curate the list and to help with the solicitation and administration. Ms. Keele reviewed the contractor's scope of work included in the Board members' packets. She discussed the timeline of the event management. Her team attends and provides an agenda for all of the meetings. Weekly action items are submitted to AIDEA.

Ms. Keele continued explaining that the contractor team helps AIDEA create the conference agenda, the script for the emcees and the breakout room moderators, the post-event evaluation survey, and coordinate the debrief meetings to ensure the project close-out. Additionally, the contract team is a liaison to all external parties to facilitate that all is moving forward successfully. Ms. Keele highlighted that the contract team stores all of the presentation materials from each year. She noted that Board members could request, for instance, the information provided at a breakout session from the 2025 ASEC, and her staff could provide that information. All of the speaker presentations are published on the website after the conference.

Ms. Keele discussed the website, alaskasustainableenergy.com, that the contractor team manages before the event and up to six weeks after the event. However, since the event continues to the next year, the contractor continues to manage the website into the next year. The Governor's Office helped to ensure that the website remains up for an extended period of time. Ms. Keele explained that the contractor uses Eventbrite for the registration management platform. The contractor handles all conference logistics. All the information details are provided to AIDEA, as well as the analytics post the event. Ms. Keele discussed that an excellent brand has been created for ASEC. The contractor completes the graphic design work and the printing and production work. Those expenses are embedded in the project budget.

Ms. Keele continued her presentation discussing the proposed marketing materials, event logo, program flyer, event program booklets and signage, promotional emails, and internal communication timelines to registered attendees. She gave an overview of the communication with the speakers, sponsors, and exhibitors, including tracking logistical items, payments, and benefits. Ms. Keele reviewed the audio/visual and program management included in the proposal.

Mr. Eledge asked if there will be a compressed schedule since the conference is in May. Mr. Jensen confirmed that the conference dates are scheduled for May. He noted that the planning process is almost year-round. Sponsor renewals occur in the fall as most companies set their budgets for the next year. Venue deposits also occur during the fall. Mr. Jensen discussed that the Governor wants a very smooth handoff of the conference to the next Administration. Mr. Jensen discussed that every State agency and every State corporation is working on transition materials. Having this financial infrastructure and planning in place for the conference is critical to be completed at this time before the next Administration is in office. Mr. Jensen commented that the Governor looks to AIDEA as a natural entity with its mission and active participation in

the conference since inception to ensure that there is a plan in place for the next Administration.

Mr. Eledge asked if the resolution is authorizing the transfer of the existing conference from the Governor's Office to AIDEA. Mr. Jensen agreed. He noted that the resolution directs the Executive Director to maintain the partnerships and continuity with Alaska Energy Authority (AEA), the Governor's Office, and Department of Energy's Arctic Energy Office, all of whom have contributed to the success of the conference.

Commissioner Sande commended the Governor, Mr. Jensen, and Ms. Keele and her team for their efforts on ASEC. Commissioner Sande noted she is impressed by the individuals who participate through the programming and she is impressed with the interest that has been generated both domestically and internationally. She related comments from several of last year's participants indicating that this was the best conference they have attended. Commissioner Sande noted that participants appreciate the direct access to the Governor's Office. She hopes that the next Governor would remain very involved. Commissioner Sande supports the partnership with AEA, and agrees that it is important to maintain the momentum and the work that Mr. Jensen's team has achieved. Commissioner Sande believes AIDEA is sensitive to the team and to the manpower available to dedicate to the participation and planning of the event.

Commissioner Sande discussed that when she originally took the positions on the Boards of AIDEA, AEA, and as the Commissioner of Commerce, she did not fully appreciate how important energy is related to economic development. Commissioner Sande expressed appreciation for the resolution before the Board.

Mr. Haynes expressed his support.

Vice-Chair Fogle expressed appreciation for the presentation.

A roll call was taken, and the motion to approve Resolution G26-10 passed, with no response from Deputy Commissioner Cruise.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Eledge to enter into executive session for the purpose of discussing the following: AIDEA Finances and Investments, and other matters which are subject to specific legal advice, and matters subject to the executive and deliberative process privileges. These matters, which if discussed publicly, would have an adverse effect on the finances of AIDEA, are matters that are attorney-client privileged, and matters involving consideration of issues and that by law are not subject to public disclosure due to the executive or deliberative process, privileges, or other laws. The executive session and matters discussed herein 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. The Board will discuss AIDEA finances and Investments, ANWR, Ambler, Red Dog Mine, 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 the attorney-client privilege. Motion seconded by Mr. Solie.

A roll call was taken, and the motion to enter into Executive Session passed, with no response from Deputy Commissioner Cruise.

6B. Executive Session: 11:54 a.m. Confidential and deliberative matters related to: AIDEA Finances and Investments, AIDEA Projects including ANWR, Ambler, Red Dog Mine, 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 3:04 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.

6C. DRAFT 2027 Board Meeting Dates – Included in Packet

7. DIRECTOR COMMENTS

7A. Project Updates

Mr. Ruaro indicated that he will limit his comments to the Red Dog Mine project that the Board visited in Kotzebue. He believes this is the best project that AIDEA has ever invested in. The mine is winding down, which is a concern for residents in the area and the Borough. The mine provides much of the revenue for the Borough and provides jobs to residents. He noted there will be a drop, but he believes Red Dog is developing the adjacent deposits quickly, and hopes the drop will be short-term and temporary. The Red Dog Mine has provided billions of dollars in benefits through ANCSA's Section 7(i) revenue sharing and economic development, taxes to the State, PILT to the Borough, and revenue to AIDEA that is then shared back to the State.

Mr. Ruaro noted that the Assembly and residents provided feedback that job training and infrastructure benefits for Villages is critical. AIDEA will follow-up with the Borough and will work with communities on ways to train as many people as possible, and will work with Villages on infrastructure benefits. There were no comments or questions.

7B. Loan Dashboard Report – Included in Packet

7C. Statistics Summary– Included in Packet

7D. Next regularly scheduled AIDEA Board Meeting: Wednesday, October 21, 2026

8. BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Haynes asked when the office is moving. Mr. Ruaro indicated that the physical move is scheduled for February 1, 2027. Mr. Haynes commented on the good meeting today. He expressed appreciation for the reports provided. He remains concerned about the legislative piece regarding dissolution. Mr. Haynes asked if staff replied to Prospr Alliance (sic) since the

discussion at a previous meeting. Interference with audio occurred, and no response was heard.

Vice Chair Fogle apologized for not being able to attend the Kotzebue meeting in-person. He is thankful that members were able to visit and to engage with the community, and tour the successful Red Dog Mine. Vice Chair Fogle thanked the staff for organizing the trip and for all of their impressive efforts. He encouraged everyone to understand that AIDEA needs to move at a lightening pace because the timeframe is closing rapidly.

Mr. Solie expressed that this was a delightful trip to spend in the community of Kotzebue, to visit the Red Dog Mine, and to get to know the people of Kotzebue. He was particularly impressed by the discussion regarding the mine and the period of time when the community reached consensus before the development of Red Dog Mine. He believes it was about 10 years that the NANA region communicated with one another about advancing the big mine, which has been positively transformative for the area. Mr. Solie highlighted the tension and the need to move at light-speed to advance an agenda that AIDEA believes is good for the state and for this region, yet to take the time that is needed to build consensus. He believes that the bedrock principles of trust and respect are the ways to bridge that gap, and that this meeting advanced the mutual trust and respect. He thanked everyone for a great meeting, especially to staff for their efforts.

Mr. Eledge expressed appreciation to staff for the good job on their work. He commented that the Kotzebue community has been exemplary for decades. His understanding is that Kotzebue was the first community that installed a wind farm above the Arctic Circle. Their history is steeped in innovation. Mr. Eledge noted that Kotzebue has been the testbed for the Arctic. He noted that Kotzebue also installed a solar array. Both the wind farm and the solar array has reduced their liquid fuel consumption by 30%. This is a huge number when considering today's cost of liquid fuel at \$26 per gallon for diesel in some communities in this area. Mr. Eledge commented that the conservation effort by using innovation has made a difference in their lifestyle.

Mr. Eledge noted the significant amount of construction that is occurring in Kotzebue right now, and he commented that the community of Kotzebue is development-minded, and they know what innovation does to the lifestyle. Mr. Eledge discussed that even the hotel where the meeting is being held, has conservation efforts with automatic lights in the hallways. They are mindful of energy, what energy costs the community, and its impact to their livelihood. Mr. Eledge commented that when he looks at Kotzebue, he thinks of prosperity and the happiness that is seen on the faces of the people. He was greeted with a smile when he walked into the hotel and at a local restaurant. Mr. Eledge was privileged to tour the powerplant solar array.

Mr. Eledge discussed that Kotzebue has a training center with simulators for heavy equipment. The community is preparing the people to take those high-paying jobs of road building and construction. He believes the challenge is that those jobs in some of the regions are on a rotational basis and the workers have to fly to their jobsites out of region. Mr. Eledge thinks if AIDEA can help with the population in the smaller communities, that would be a monumental effort and would help Alaska.

Deputy Commissioner Cruise commented that he is happy to be on the Board for at least the next few months. He expressed that it was a pleasure getting to know the Board members and getting to spend time together yesterday. He apologized for not being in-person today. Deputy Commissioner Cruise thanked the staff for their efforts and for the informative meeting. He hopes that good projects can move forward in the next few months. He noted that he has many good relations with representatives from DNR and DEC that could be helpful.

Commissioner Sande echoed the previous comments of appreciation for the warm welcome provided by community members of Kotzebue. She is impressed by the hotel, the accommodations, and the staff. Commissioner Sande thanked the participants during last night's dinner and AIDEA's staff who participated and reported during the Assembly meeting. She expressed appreciation for the staff's commitment to hear the concerns of the community, the willingness to address their concerns, and the further commitment to the community members by traveling to Kotzebue more often.

Commissioner Sande highlighted the comments from folks last night talking about the ways in which AIDEA and the staff are contributing in their communities and how much the folks appreciate those contributions. She commented that it is not often that community members particularly thank AIDEA staff for their efforts. Commissioner Sande noted that those expressions of appreciation had an impact, and she thanked the community members for being willing to attend and to provide both positive and negative feedback.

Commissioner Sande was very impressed with the tour of the mine yesterday. For the last eight years, she has wanted to see the example of what AIDEA participation means and can do for the state. AIDEA is intentionally meant to be much more nimble than a State agency, and is able to respond in separate ways than the State in order to create opportunities for the economy and for Alaskans. AIDEA uses Red Dog as a great example of successful involvement. The tour had significant meaning for Commissioner Sande both personally and professionally. She highlighted that the mine began as a small creek and advanced to the world's largest zinc mine, and the nation's largest critical mineral mine. This is possible and based on Alaskans working together to develop the resources in a sustainable manner.

Commissioner Sande commented on the multiple services offered at the mine for their team members, which includes mental health services. She was impressed by the services provided. Commissioner Sande thanked the members of the AIDEA Board who were involved at the time and voted yes to over \$100 million investment at a time when the price of oil was under \$10 a barrel and the price of the ore was at an all-time low. She appreciates visionaries and pioneers, and hopes that she would have had the courage to vote the same way.

Commissioner Sande noted that we often hold the Red Dog Mine as a model for what AIDEA wants to do in the future. Part of the reason the AIDEA Board members have been working so hard on the Ambler Road is because AIDEA looks ahead to the time when the life of the mine is winding down, and hopefully, through expansion, that will not happen for a while. Members must be realistic and consider what can be done to help better the lives of Alaskans and to try to replace and restore that revenue if it were to stop. She noted that AIDEA focuses on the Ambler Road and the Ambler Mining District because AIDEA realizes the potential in that area. She

believes that as a model, Red Dog is a starting point. Commissioner Sande feels that the face-to-face conversations have been so important and the feedback from community members is taken to heart. She thinks there are ways that AIDEA can improve the model that was used in Red Dog so that the communities can benefit in a more meaningful way. She believes that these productive conversations will continue.

Commissioner Sande expressed appreciation to the community members of Kotzebue, to the Red Dog team, and to the staff for their efforts during the entirety of the trip.

Chair Kendig advised that the next regularly scheduled meeting is Wednesday, October 21, 2026. He reiterated that there is a lot to get done in a little time. There may be special meetings called to reach the goals. Chair Kendig requested Mr. Ruaro to utilize the resources available to get the job done.

Chair Kendig commented that this was a really nice and eye-opening trip. Views were expressed that were both in favor of and opposed to projects like the Ambler Road. He was impressed with the respect shown by the people who were not in favor of the Ambler Road and by the way they presented their case without getting emotional. Chair Kendig gave another example of a comment that moved him regarding a village that just got water all year round. He noted that is the only infrastructure the village has. Chair Kendig stated the he and other members discussed creative ways in which projects can help communities can develop their infrastructure. He hopes that some kind of formula can be developed. Chair Kendig believes that in-person meetings such as this one are important and serve both the Board and the community.

Mr. Elledge commented on the Draft 2027 Board Meeting Dates. He noted that September 15, 2027 is during moose season. Chair Kendig requested that a note of that date be made. There was no objection. There were no additional comments or questions.

9. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business of the Board, the AIDEA meeting adjourned at 3:28 p.m.

Randy Ruaro, AIDEA Executive Director

Secretary