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North Slope News
September 2014

Mayors’ Message

North Slope Borough working to protect our way of life

With whaling season upon us, I thought I would update all of you on the number of initiatives the North Slope Borough is participating in aimed at protecting our marine resources in an age of increasing Arctic maritime activities.

We are currently seeing rapidly expanding industrial activities related to offshore oil development and the opening of the Northern Sea Route due to declining sea ice coverage. While these represent some opportunities for us, they also represent a risk to our traditional food sources if they are not conducted safely and if we are unprepared in case of a marine emergency incident. We can have development for our economy, but it must always respect our culture and our traditions of being part of the land and sea.

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New Aerial Fire Truck for Barrow

At last the Quint has arrived…

After years of planning and the multiple CIP requests, all the negotiating and continuous effort put forth by several fire department Directors and Chiefs, through the due diligence of Mayor Brower’s administration the long anticipated purchase and the arrival of the new Barrow Volunteer Fire Department Quint Aerial ladder truck has been realized…

What is a Quint: According to the NFPA/ National Fire Codes 1901; Quint is a fire apparatus with permanently mounted fire pump, a water tank, a hose storage area an aerial ladder or elevating platform with permanently mounted waterway, and a compartment for ground ladders…This truck will allow the fire department to reach the top of our tallest buildings here in Barrow/ Browerville, manned or un-manned water can be directed towards a rooftop fire, a tank farm fire, and to reach over the widest school and preform rooftop rescues. Having this truck here in Barrow will also help reduce the insurance to commercial/residential property by lowering the ISO rating which is a measure used by the insurance industry. We are very excited here at the fire department to have received this truck and anxious to receive the certified training necessary to properly utilize this amazing tool…

Monday, September 29th 2014 marked the un-veiling of the Quint, a large crowd of Barrow citizens and NSB administrators assembled to officially receive this truck and to recognize and thank all the people that were involved with its acquisition…

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Lucy Aiken
Employee of the Month
September 2014

This month I am proud to present this tribute as Employee of the Month to Lucy Aiken who has been a valued employee of the North Slope Borough for over 18 years. Lucy was originally hired as a Dispatcher for the Health Department in 1996 then was hired in various positions such as Homemaker, Client Service Assistant, Child Care Assistant, and Custodian. She is now a Van/Para Driver for the Health & Social Services Senior Program.

Lucy has many years of experience working with elders and is very dependable, punctual, and knowledgeable. She has a willingness to work with courtesy to assist the elders. She safely drives them to their destination and to their medical appointments. She also transports them for congregate lunch. She also volunteers her time serving lunch.

Her service to the Senior Program is very commendable for all the work she does. She greets everyone with respect and provides valuable service for the North Slope Borough Health & Social Services Senior Program.

Quyanaqpak Lucy!

There is increasing awareness of the Arctic, the place we call home, and with increasing activity comes increasing responsibility. As a youth, Nicole would like to see that we continue to take responsibility to improve our well-being and resiliency.

Nicole Kannik Panigiq Kanayurak is the oldest daughter of Lloyd and Abby Kanayurak and the granddaughter of Bert* and Isabel Kanayurak and Lewis* and Jennie* Suvlu. Nicole is passionate about Indigenous and subsistence issues. She would like to employ her interests in Arctic and marine policy to help the community thrive in the Arctic.

Nicole is grateful to be a part of the North Slope community that is bountiful with culture and identity. With the support of her family and community Nicole graduated with her Bachelor’s Degree from Dartmouth College in 2013. This year she has been spending quality time with family and interning with the NSB Department of Wildlife Management. With support as an Anagi Leadership Award Scholar, Nicole is off to graduate school this year.

Nicole’s objective is to pursue her graduate education in the Masters of Marine Affairs program at the University of Washington. She would like to ensure that the Inupiaq perspective is effectively communicated in developing policies and regulations for our Arctic marine environment. Areas of interest within her graduate program include natural resource management, international ocean governance, and co-management. Nicole also serves as the Alaska youth representative to the Inuit Circumpolar Council. As youth representative she would like to communicate the importance of being a part of the stewardship of our natural resources.

Nicole would like to say quyanaq and urges folks to pursue their goals because it will make a difference in our community.

Who Is it?

Can you guess who these young kids are to the right?

The late Kate (Ungarook) Brower and her son Stanley Brower
Historically, those of us in the whaling communities have looked to our whaling captains for direction for what our policies should be surrounding oil and gas development. That is because if anything were to happen, they are the ones who go out and hunt the whales, seals, and walrus, and harvest from what they refer to as our garden. I have based my administration’s policies surrounding oil and gas development on the views expressed by our whaling captains and our experienced biologists.

As we move forward, we must be mindful of changing realities. Last year alone, over 800,000 tons of petroleum products were shipped through the Chukchi Sea and Bering Straits via the Northern Sea Route.

Meanwhile, my friend Admiral Robert Papp, the State Department’s Special Representative on the Arctic, says he’s been searching for a way to make the Arctic a priority for the nation, the way putting a man on the moon was in the 1960s, and building the Alaska Highway was in the 1940s. We have and will continue to have a positive working relationship with the State Department.

Next year Shell is planning on moving forward with its Chukchi Sea development plans. As Mayor, I will continue to listen to our whaling captains and subsistence hunters to decide on the proper course of action that the Borough should take. That is why my administration is committed to forming the North Slope Port Authority and the Arctic Waterways Safety Committee so that their input can be heard as we discuss policies surrounding off-shore development.

We have also participated in development of the Polar Code being considered by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). This code specifies ice strengthening for construction of vessels operating in the Arctic, requires ice training for mariners involved in Arctic operations, and prohibits the discharge of garbage, sewage and oily wastes in Arctic waters. The construction and training requirement could be adopted as early as this November. The environmental restrictions are still a work in progress.

In May of this year, I wrote a letter to Mayor Reggie Joule of the Northwest Arctic Borough and Mayor Denise Michaels of Nome, inviting them to join us and others in forming an Arctic Waterways Safety Committee. Similar committees have been formed in other maritime jurisdictions of the United States to provide local requirements for safe operations in their local waters.

These include safe shipping routes, sensitive areas to be avoided, conflict avoidance agreements, marine pilotage, aids to navigation, emergency response and communications systems and protocols.

On August 28th we met in Anchorage with the US Coast Guard, State of Alaska, members of the maritime industry, Northwest Arctic Borough, Nome and the leadership of our Arctic marine mammal hunting groups to begin the process of setting up the Arctic Waterways Safety Committee. A steering committee is being formed to determine the makeup of the safety committee and a budget and funding strategy. We expect this committee to be operational by this coming spring.

On July 7th, the North Slope Borough Assembly voted to place the issue of forming the North Slope Port Authority before voters in the October 7th election. I brought this issue to the Assembly because Arctic experts agree that a lack of infrastructure in the Arctic will hinder emergency response capabilities and act as an impediment to local people benefitting economically from offshore development. The Port Authority can provide technical assistance and financing for port developments in the Arctic to help us be prepared for challenges and opportunities.

The proposed board for the Authority includes representatives of village corporations, tribes, ASRC, the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission, city governments, the maritime industry and the North Slope Borough.

In summary, there has been enough talk about Arctic policy. It is time for action and we cannot wait for others to act on our behalf. We must take control of our own future on the water just as we did on our land when we formed the North Slope Borough.

There will be many opportunities for North Slope residents and organizations to participate in the deliberations of these organizations and I would encourage you to do so. We will make a concerted effort to keep you all informed on the progress of these initiatives.

North Slope entities planning for the future

Representatives of the North Slope Borough, UIC and BUECI gathered on September 30 and October 1 to discuss options to improving utility infrastructure and services to NARL. Due to the potential off shore oil activity, and transcontinental shipping, all parties recognize that NARL will likely draw a great deal interest as an area which can be used for industrial expansion. All parties agreed that such expansion will be of great benefit to our community, as it will create job opportunities for our residents, bolster our economy and increase our tax base.

While several areas of agreement were reached, much work remains. All parties agreed to reconvene in one month’s time, when it is hoped that final agreements can be achieved, and work can progress toward making these improvements a reality.
Municipal Advisory Gas Project Review Board

Earlier this week the Municipal Advisory Gas Project Review Board completed a series of meetings regarding the proposed development for a natural gas pipeline from the North Slope to Southcentral Alaska. This Board was formed at the request of Mayor Brower earlier this year as a way to discuss future opportunities for communities to have access to low cost energy, and also find ways to help mitigate the cost of development impacts. The North Slope Borough, at Mayor Brower’s request, was guaranteed a seat on the Board along with all the other municipal governments along the pipeline corridor.

The Mayor’s Office has attended all of these initial meetings, where broad overviews of the project were given by Exxon Mobile, the Alaska Gasline Development Authority, the Alaska Energy Authority, and the consulting firm of Gaffney Cline. No decisions or specific proposals have been put forward yet, but the next scheduled meetings for later this month are expected to talk about tax policy and potential ways for communities to access the natural gas. We are already working on some ideas and strategies to maximize our opportunities from this project.

Development of a natural gas pipeline from the North Slope has been discussed for many decades. It is a massive project, with cost estimates ranging from $60 - $65 billion. In other words, this project has been a dream of many people for many years and will likely be many more years before we see actual construction. But as the world looks toward developing cleaner sources of energy, the demand for natural gas is making a natural gas pipeline project appear to be getting closer to reality than in the past.

A group of Barrow Residents tour the USCGC Stratton

A group of ten, including two Search and Rescue Pilots were given a detailed and interesting tour of the vessel. After dinner with the crew, the group dispersed among the crew and had what can be viewed as “a cultural exchange”. The tour of the Stratton was beneficial to all. The community members got the opportunity to learn about the Coast Guard and the vessel and the crew members who were at sea for 6 weeks got the opportunity to learn about the Inupiat culture and way of life.