

TRIP REPORT

Traveler Name: Shari Coleman

Department: City Council

Dates Traveled: 13 – 16 November 2018

Destination: Anchorage, Alaska

PURPOSE OF TRIP:

Alaska Municipal League (AML) 68th Annual Local Government Conference

NARRATIVE:

The opening session began on Wednesday with reports from numerous associations, mayors and administrators. This was followed by the State of the State address and then the legislative review. I was not in attendance for this section, as I was terribly sick that morning.

For that afternoon and Thursday, I attended the following concurrent sessions:

Cybersecurity Risk and Protection. The panel was Peter House (Deep Tree Consulting), Elke Doom (Valdez City Manager), John Moosey (Mat-Su Borough Manager), Tom Wilder (DHS). Wilder spoke about the vulnerability of the election infrastructure, both the cyber and physical security. Places of risk is the voter database, and even if just a paper ballot or hand counted, the optical scanners are at risk. Best option is to be defensive in depth: multiple layers of defense. DHS is able to provide cybersecurity assessment services to municipalities. Doom and Moosey shared their experiences as both of their city's data were held for ransom, and how each dealt with the incident. All highly recommended cyber insurance, and to set aside money for such an emergency. Also recommended was to get a security audit. Treat the attack like a physical emergency (ICS), and teach the users how to recognize an attack. The data cloud may be considered more secure, as they have better third party tools.

A responsible Municipal Fiscal Policy. The panel was Jay Sweeney (Sitka Finance Director), Max Mertz (Principal, Mertz CPA and advisor), Deven Mitchell (Alaska Municipal Bond Bank Authority Director). Discussions about a municipality having a fiscal policy. The policy is designed to be a long-term (20 years) centered approach, and should be adopted to code, as well as establishing benchmarks. The goal is to have a sustainable budget, in that you can replace assets when needed, along with meeting the current needs and reserves. The GFOA has the financial stability reserve center to help with implementation. Few municipalities have adopted this strategy, but the group was encouraging cities to look at this option as an added layer of fiscal responsibility and strengthening the overall policy.

Municipal Innovation. The panel was Ben Matheson (Anchorage Data Analyst), Cheryl Burnett (Nation Assoc. of Counties Director), Margo Fliss (UAA Business Enterprise Institute). The panel discussed a multitude of ways of rethinking design and processes to local government. Unlike the namesake, it is more like putting a name to ways of problem solving that may have

been used before for years. Structure annotation of designing the thinking process, or design thinking techniques. It's a chance to rethink the process and use different tools to address problems, such as the use of prototypes, mapping and design sprints (Google approach). Diversity drives innovation!

Effective Economic Development Strategies. The panel was Robert Venables (Southeast Conf. Director), Chris Beck (Agnew, Beck Consulting), Britteny Cioni-Haywood (DCCED Director), Wanetta Ayers (Prince William Sound EDD Director). The panel talked about recognizing the rapid change in technological advancements and how to plan for future needs. It's important to visualize region wide resource utilization, such as outdoor recreation and mariculture. Outdoor recreation is considered to be a 'sleeping giant' in terms of potential area of development and revenue source. The backbone of the presentation was to build community through economic development.

Thursday final session was an Agency Update and Federal Advocacy. Representatives were from the EPA Region X, USDA Rural Development, Office of Senator Murkowski, Office of Senator Sullivan, Small Business Administration.

As a final note, more attention is being given to taxing online sales.

Friday morning was elections and the annual business meeting. All of the propositions were not rubber stamped, and much debate was given to fish permitting, as well as some of areas of state interest. As the sole voting representative for Unalaska, it would have been most appropriate that the entire Council had reviewed and discussed all of the propositions prior to this meeting.