

Juneau Lobbying Trip Report Alejandro Bong Tungul

March 19-21, 2018

I left Unalaska on Saturday March 17th and arrived in Anchorage in the afternoon, stayed overnight and left the following morning for Juneau.

On the first day, everyone had breakfast with our lobbyist Ray Gillespie and his secretary. As well as Kathie Wasserman from AML to give us an overview of what they are all about. She expressed her gratitude toward us for being long time members and supporters of AML. The rest of the council, assistant city manager, and I headed to the capitol after breakfast.

The Unalaska council was formally introduced at the house chambers by Rep. Chris Tuck. Then we began to meet and lobby with senators and representatives in their offices. The senators we met with were Sen. Lyman Hoffman, Sen. Donny Olson, and Sen. Gary Stevens. The one and only representative we paid a visit to was Bryce Edgmon. The first item we lobbied for was extensive work to be done on Captains Bay road. We voiced our concern about the road's safety, frequent use of commercial drivers and pedestrians, and the lack of utilities. We were told there is a good possibility that we could apply for the Matching Grant after we complete the detailed plans for the project. The next project talked about was Robert Storrs Boat Harbor Improvement. According to their response, it is hard to tell if we can receive funds because the fiscal budget has not been met yet. However, they mentioned we can look into the Harbor Grant. There was further discussion on the ferry system, PFD, education, and public safety issues later on in the report.

Day two of our visit to Juneau, we gather at the capitol to meet with the Special CMTE on the Arctic to talk about the ferry system. The funds are secured waiting to be approved by Governor Walker. We briefly met with Representative Paul Seaton's aid, Arnold Liebelt to speak about any funds or grants for our capital projects. Right after, we saw Representative Stutes and filled him in on our projects and initiatives. With Commissioner Monegan, we had a conversation about the shortage of state troopers and he assured us that we will receive a replacement when our current trooper retires. Following our lunch break, we met in Ray Gillespie's office with Commissioner Lulken from Dept. of Transportation. In his office deliberated about Captains Bay Road, Robert Storrs Boat Harbor Improvement, and the ferry system once again. Commissioner Lulken told us we can look into the Federal Community Transportation Program and the Harbor Matching Grant. The funds are secured to replace the ferry. We met with Governor Walker to discuss PFD, education, our capital projects, Derelict Vessels, and ferry systems. Governor Walkers says that he is not looking to cut anything until the fiscal year is put together. So it is difficult to say what funds are available for any of our projects. He also told us he is a great supporter of Unalaska.

In the evening, we had the Crab Feed with all state senators and representatives together with their staff and families. At the dinner, the Coast Guard, Rear Admiral McAllister presented Unalaska with a plaque of appreciation. Everyone had a great time and loved the food, especially the crab.

On the last day, we met with Doug Wooliver of the Alaska Court System. We talked about the staffing at our court because we don't have magistrate and deputy magistrate. Doug Wooliver said the court system is in the process of hiring a new deputy magistrate in addition to the clerk. We met with Commissioner Johnson on education funding, supplemental funding, any increase per student, and preschool funding. Also if there are cuts on education. Again, there cannot be any decisions made until the fiscal year is put together. He assured that there is flat funding and no cuts. Then we went to the senate floor session at the capitol building and we were introduced by Sen. Hoffman and Sen. MacKinnon. After that, we went to the Alaska's Department of Fish and Game to meet with Forrest Bowers, who is a long time resident of Unalaska. We talked about fisheries, increase or cuts on crab and ground fish. We asked for any available funding to do a survey. We went to the NMFS and met with Doug Mechham and Glen Merrill to talk about NOAA and Federal funding and doing a survey. He said the survey could happen in May, June, or August. No funding available until the end of the year. The last group we met with were coast guards, including Rear Admiral McAllister and they did a quick presentation about what they do around Unalaska. They really love Unalaska because they like how the citizens treat them. Lastly, we were given the opportunity to visit the Museum and meet with the Chief Curator, Addison Field.

This was an eventful and a good experience for me. I am thankful to be a part of this trip and to represent Unalaska.