

FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD OF EDUCATION  
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

Work Session

MINUTES

December 8, 2009

President Leslie Hajdukovich called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. in the Board Room of the FNSBSD Administrative Center at 520 Fifth Avenue for the Interior Delegation Briefing.

Present:

Leslie Hajdukovich, President  
Wendy Dominique, Vice President  
Kristina Brophy, Member  
Silver Chord, Member

Absent:

Sharon McConnell, Treasurer  
Sue Hull, Clerk  
Sean Rice, Member  
Jesse Johnson, Base Representative  
Timothy A. Jones, Post Representative  
Ella Rohn, Student Representative

Staff Present:

Nancy Wagner, Superintendent  
Roxa Hawkins, Assistant Superintendent-Elementary  
Kathy Hughes, Executive Director of Alternative Instruction & Accountability  
Bob Hadaway, Executive Director of Special Education  
Peggy Carlson, Executive Director of Curriculum & Instruction  
Ron Gherman, Executive Director of Instructional Technology & Library Media  
Clarence Bolden, Executive Director of Human Resources  
Dave Reilly, Executive Director of Technology & Information Systems  
Traci Gatewood, Director of Grants & Special Projects  
Bill Bailey, Public Relations Director  
Sharon Tuttle, School Board Executive Assistant

Interior Delegation Members Present:

Senator John Coghill  
Senator Joe Paskvan  
Senator Joe Thomas  
Derek Miller, representing Representative Mike Kelly  
Chris Birdsall, representing Representative David Guttenberg  
Representative Scott Kawasaki  
Representative Tammie Wilson

Others present:

John Ringstad, School District Lobbyist

Mrs. Hajdukovich welcomed everyone and facilitated introductions. The district presented each legislator with a piece of student art.

Mrs. Hajdukovich publicly thanked Dr. Wagner for her service to the district, as she would be retiring as superintendent at the end of the school year.

**Legislative Support**

Dr. Wagner presented a brief video overview of the school district. She thanked the delegation for their commitment to education and supporting the Joint Legislative Education Task Force (JLETF) recommendations to improve education and allowing for the support of many other programs due to the increased funding in the base student allocation and special education.

## **Special Education Improvements**

Dr. Wagner introduced Bob Hadaway, executive director of special education, to review the improvements that had been made over the past year in special education.

- ☑ Recent monitoring visit from the Department of Education & Early Development had resulted in the highest scores ever for the district.
- ☑ Internal review of intensive claims reflected a significant increase in students qualifying for intensive funding, which in turn meant increased revenues.
- ☑ The district's special education population had grown to 2,400. Stimulus funds were being used to provide teachers with training, curricular materials, and computers to meet the increased demand.
- ☑ Resource caseloads had decreased from 30 to 11.5 students. Teachers with more than 25 students had aide support.
- ☑ The district had implemented creative solutions to fill specialist positions such as speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists in light of national shortages.

The delegation had questions on the numbers and area of growth regarding special education. Mr. Hadaway reported the growth could be associated with a number of issues including better identification of needs, transient population, and increased student needs.

Board members, the administration, and delegation discussed special education in depth, including services provided to charter and regular schools, inclusion, stabilization support funds for staffing and materials, aide and teacher staffing, services provided, and federal funding.

The delegation requested additional information regarding specific classifications of growth in special education; on inclusion research and studies; special education enrollment numbers by school and classes; and enrollment numbers and costs associated with students attending Fairbanks schools coming from outside areas for special education services.

## **ARRA & State Fiscal Stabilization Funding**

Dr. Wagner reviewed the district's use of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) funds, including State Fiscal Stabilization, Title I, Title II, Special Education IDEA Part B & Section 619 Pre-School Disabled, National School Lunch Program Equipment Assistance, and Impact Aid Construction Formula funds.

Students, parents, and staff in the district were benefitting from approximately \$16.1 million in federal funds received as a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). The expectations from the federal government were that education funds provided through the ARRA for 2009-2011 would be used to jump start school reform and improvement efforts; save and create jobs; and stimulate the economy.

Through a thoughtful, intense, and focused planning process in which the district considered student data, district goals and priorities, federal and state guidance, and stakeholder input, the district developed a comprehensive plan that would lead to improved results for students, long-term gains in school and district capacity, and increased productivity and effectiveness.

The table on the next page outlined each ARRA funding type, amount received by the district, the intended use of the funds as prescribed by the federal government, and how the district would utilize the funds over the two year period.

**ARRA & State Fiscal Stabilization Funding (continued)**

ARRA Funding Type	Amount	Purpose	Use
<i>Title I, Part A Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged</i>	\$2,823,899	Funds were provided for schools that had high concentrations of students from families that lived in poverty in order to help improve teaching and learning for students most at risk of failing to meet state academic achievement standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement Response to Instruction/Intervention (RTI)</li> <li>• Provide additional support for the English Language Learner Program</li> </ul>
<i>Title II, Part D Enhancing Education Through Technology</i>	\$ 154,993	Funds were provided to improve student academic achievement through the use of technology in schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support ongoing implementation of the district's Technology Blueprint.</li> </ul>
<i>Special Education IDEA Part B &amp; Section 619 Pre-School Disabled</i>	\$3,694,429	Funds were provided to implement innovative strategies to improve outcomes for infants, toddlers, children, and youths with disabilities while stimulating the economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase in a reduction in case loads by adding additional special education staff</li> <li>• Update individual education plan (IEP) software</li> <li>• Provide professional development</li> </ul>
<i>National School Lunch Program Equipment Assistance</i>	\$ 2,619	Funds were provided to purchase school food service equipment to ensure children received healthy, safe meals at schools in which not less than 50 percent of the students were eligible for free or reduced price meals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase freezer for Salcha Elementary</li> </ul>
<i>Impact Aid Construction Formula</i>	\$ 438,937	Funds were provided for construction activities, including the preparation of drawings and specifications for school facilities; erecting, building, acquiring, altering, remodeling, repairing, or extending school facilities; and inspecting and supervising the construction of school facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modernize schools for broadband connectivity to schools and wireless connectivity within schools</li> </ul>
<i>State Fiscal Stabilization Fund</i>	\$8,987,103	<p>Funds were provided to support the five categories that reflected the priorities of ARRA:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Adopting rigorous college- and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments;</li> <li>b. Establishing data systems and using data for improvement;</li> <li>c. Increasing teacher effectiveness and equitable distribution of effective teachers;</li> <li>d. Turning around the lowest-performing schools; and</li> <li>e. Improving results for all students, including early learning, extended learning time, use of technology, preparation for college, and school modernization.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide intensive professional development in areas such as the RTI model, math, science, writing, and information literacy</li> <li>• Support a comprehensive, analytical review of the ELL program in order to implement program design changes in the updated ELL Program Plan of Services</li> <li>• Support the implementation of Smaller Learning Communities at Lathrop High School</li> <li>• Expand and improve the Career Technical Education program</li> <li>• Support the implementation of secondary education reform projects</li> <li>• Continue the district's Graduation Success Program</li> <li>• Implement programs that support freshman transition</li> <li>• Replace obsolete computer and library labs throughout the district</li> <li>• Replace aging band and orchestra instruments</li> <li>• Expand recruiting efforts to attract minority applicants</li> </ul>

## **District Accomplishments**

Dr. Wagner reviewed some of the district's accomplishments with the delegation. The accomplishments had been many, although there was still work to be done.

### **Overall Academic Accomplishments:**

- Students in the district outperformed students in the state and nation on standardized assessments.
- Students in the district exhibited smaller achievement gaps between subgroups on the Standard Based Assessments than students in the state.
- The district met 26 of the 31 targets for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as defined by the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act.
- District students' proficiency rates exceeded state averages in every subject (reading, writing, math, and science).
- 16 of 34 schools met AYP.
- Over half (10 of 18) of the schools that did not meet AYP missed only one of the 31 targets.

### **Secondary Reform:**

- ⇒ Professional Learning Communities
- ⇒ Middle School Concept
- ⇒ Personal Learning Plans for all 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade students
- ⇒ School Resource Officers
- ⇒ Focus on Attendance
- ⇒ Improved Correspondence and Home Schooling Program
- ⇒ Career Pathways and Academies
- ⇒ Smaller Learning Communities for 9<sup>th</sup> grade students

### **Additional Accomplishments:**

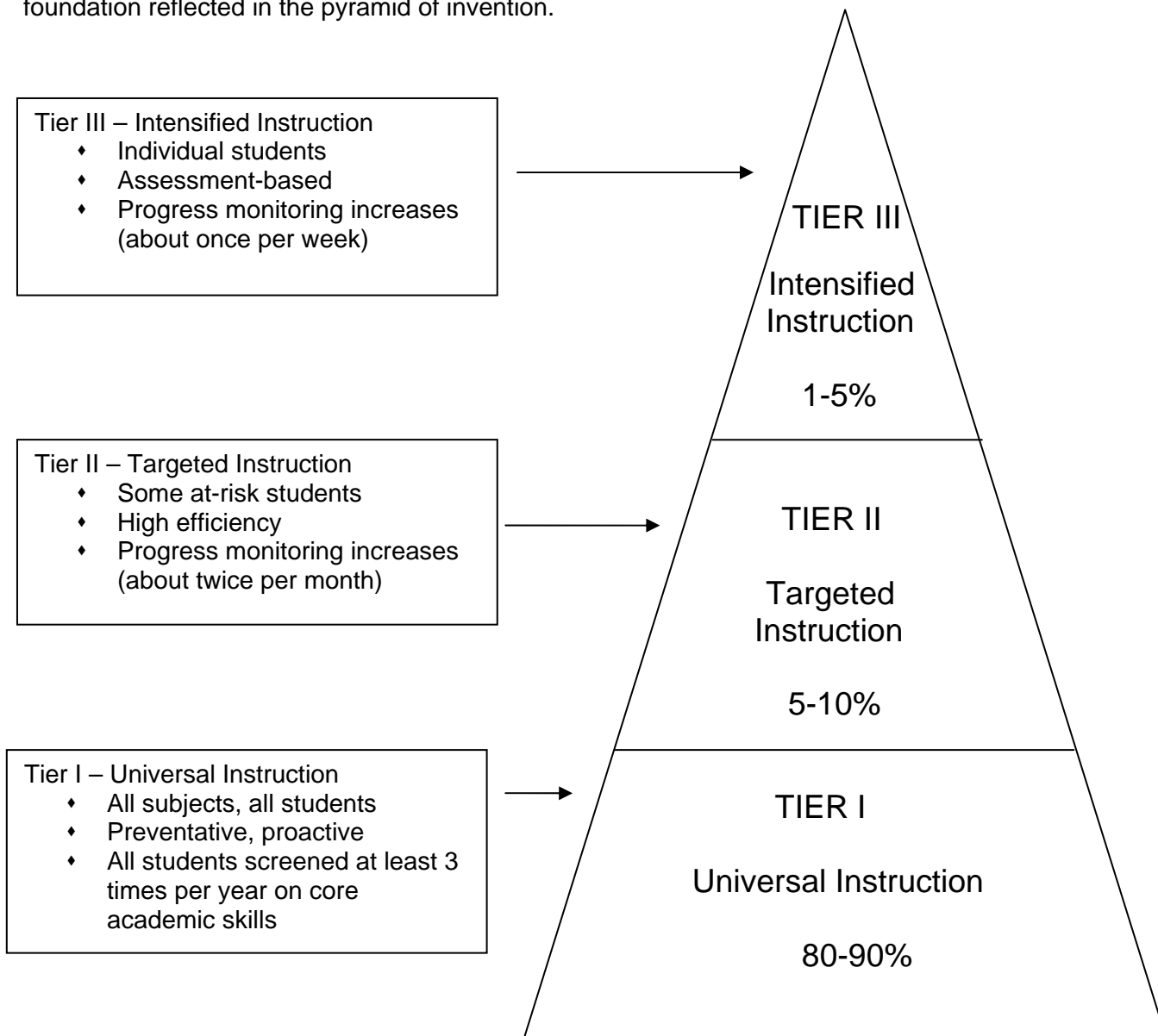
- Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI) – with Training and Universal Screening which began in 2009.

### **Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI)**

Roxa Hawkins, assistant superintendent – elementary, would be leading the district through the development and implementation of a districtwide Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI) framework for addressing student instructional needs. Mrs. Hawkins gave the delegation a brief overview of the RTI program and implementation. Tier I of the implementation included the introduction and completion of Universal Screening and creating and training data teams for each school to review the screening data and conduct problem solving support.

## **Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI) (continued)**

The district's framework was based upon a Three-Tiered Model of RTI Service, a theoretical foundation reflected in the pyramid of invention.



### **Universal Screening**

At Tier I, the Universal Screening aspect of RTI for all students was conducted at least three times during a school year: fall, winter, and spring. The goal was to provide an indication of an individual student's performance and progress compared to the peer group's performance and progress to indicate whether students had achieved the benchmark skills required for the specific grade and time of year. The district had selected AIMSweb as the tool used for this process.

### **Data Teams Support Data Based Decision Making**

As noted in the state guidance for RTI, "data must be used to track student progress at all tiers and to make decisions about changes in instruction, appropriate interventions, and movement between tiers. Decisions within an RTI system were made by collaborative teams of educators using problem solving and/or standard treatment protocol techniques. The purpose of the teams was to find the best instructional approach for a student with an academic or behavioral problem. Problem solving and standard treatment protocol decision making provided a structure for using data to monitor student learning so good decisions could be made at each tier with a high probability of success."

## **Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI) (continued)**

### **Planning Support**

Before implementing RTI systems, the district's or school's preparedness had to first be addressed. Districts should develop a comprehensive plan for implementing RTI that should include an evaluation of the current infrastructure relative to leadership, teaming, curriculum, screening, and professional development. The district was drawing on resources from the "State Guidance – Using Response to Instruction/Intervention (RTI) for Alaska's Students" revised July 2009; CORE RTI: Response to Instruction and Intervention Institute Training; and, resources from Dr. John McCook, including, "Leading & Managing the Framework" and "The RTI Guide: Develop and Implementing a Model in Your Schools".

### **Conclusion**

Successful implementation of an RTI framework was a two to five year process. By beginning with awareness, commitment building, and team development, the administration believed the district was using a wise timeline, one that could build capacity and an effective implementation with strong support.

### **Questions & Comments**

Delegation members asked about the time lapse between testing and the availability of tutoring services, which Mrs. Hawkins stated could begin within two-three weeks of the assessments. Concern was voiced about pulling students out of their regular class for tutoring, possibly missing other instruction. Mrs. Hawkins said schools were sensitive to the issue and attempted to schedule tutoring appropriately. There might be times where students would have less time with other studies, but research had shown if students had a solid foundation in the core subjects of reading and math, they did better down the road.

The delegation asked about the number of special education students in the program. Mrs. Hawkins explained the assessments were for all students and they would continue to be assessed in quick assessments throughout the year. If after intervention programs had been tried, students were still not making the progress they needed, they could be referred to special education for testing.

### **Student Readiness**

Discussion on the RTI program led to a lengthy discussion on student readiness for college and the work force after graduation. Discussion centered on the relationship between the school district, the university, and the trades. The delegation, board, and administration's discussion focused on the overall readiness of students going on to college and the work force, the need for remedial classes at the college level, the need for course planning through high school to help with student readiness, and the level of readiness of district students compared to other students throughout the state. The delegation was concerned, and rightfully so, about getting the biggest "bang" for the buck. The delegation had many questions and asked for additional information on district students compared to other students in the state in regards to college readiness; at what point district students attending UAF needed remedial help; and by UAF standards, from which community were students best prepared for college. The administration would work with UAF to research the delegation's questions and forward the information to them.

The district had implemented programs to help students and parents plan their educational career – career pathways, 4+2 plans, etc. In middle school, all students, their parents, and school counselors met to discuss career aspirations and develop a course of academic plan to reach those goals. Students would then have a plan and know what they needed to take in high school to either go on to college, into the trades, or the work force to reach their goals. Counselors worked with students throughout their high school career to track progress and make adjustments as needed. They also met during high school to plan their first two years after high school.

## **Student Readiness (continued)**

The delegation, administration, and board agreed on the need for rigorous courses, student and parent engagement, and keeping students in school. The Governor's proposed scholarship program which would require students to take more science and math courses and maintain certain grades for scholarships could be a good incentive for students to stay in school and continue with more rigorous courses.

## **Additional District Accomplishments**

Dr. Wagner continued to review the district's accomplishments with the delegation.

- The Board's Vision for Using Technology to Improve Instruction Continued
  - ◆ PowerSchool Premier
  - ◆ Technology Instruction Integration

The district's biggest accomplishment had been the increase in its graduation rate:

- 70% Graduation Rate in 2009, increased by 8% from 2008

Dr. Wagner was extremely proud of the 8% increase in the district's graduation rate in 2009.

Dr. Wagner reviewed the reasons for improvement.

- Board Priorities and Performance Goals drove all decision making and allocation of funds.
- What the district had been doing:
  - ◆ Raising expectations (attendance, fewer excused periods, focus on achievement and graduation, etc.)
  - ◆ Reducing special education case loads
  - ◆ Monitoring instruction and assessing student progress
  - ◆ Providing high quality professional development
  - ◆ Revising curriculum and updating resources
  - ◆ Allocating resources with a focus on Priorities
- State Fiscal Stabilization Funding – focused on school reform
- Spending dollars wisely – with student achievement in mind

## **District Challenges**

Dr. Wagner reviewed the challenges the district still faced.

- Addressing capacity issues with a growing population of students in the North Pole area
  - short term adjustments
  - long-term plan
- Increasing parent engagement in children's education
- Improving attendance to impact student achievement
- Implementation of district initiatives
- Increase graduation rates and reduce dropout rates
- Meeting the requirements of NCLB presented many of its own challenges:
  - Closing the achievement gap
    - Good News...most achievement gaps in the district were smaller than those across the state

## **Research-Based School Reform**

Dr. Wagner reviewed measures and programs the district was developing and implementing to increase rigor, relevance, and relationships in education in the Fairbanks community.

1. Middle School Concept
2. Smaller Learning Communities
3. Student Advisories
4. Research on Best Practices
5. Career Academies
6. Personal Education Plans (4+2)
7. Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI)

## **Legislative Priorities**

Mrs. Hajdukovich reviewed the Board's Legislative Priorities with the delegation.

### **1. Support forward funding of education at adequate funding levels, and early legislative commitments to that funding.**

The Fairbanks North Star Borough Board of Education recognized the difficult challenges facing the legislature each year with regard to funding priorities, and appreciated the high priority placed on providing all children of Alaska a strong education.

To help school districts across the state better plan for the educational programs they provided, the board supported the recommendation that the legislature expedite school funding by passing a stand-alone appropriation to the Base Student Allocation (BSA) by the 60<sup>th</sup> legislative day. The appropriation should just not confirm the availability of the BSA, but should reflect meaningful increases that would enable districts to maintain educational programs and continue to meet the needs of all students.

The board also supported the continued funding and use of the Public Education Fund. The board supported setting aside the maximum amount possible in the Public Education Fund to establish a funding mechanism for public education.

### **2. Support year three recommendations of the Joint Legislative Education Task Force (JLETF).**

The Fairbanks North Star Borough Board of Education recognized the significant challenges faced by the JLETF, and appreciated the thoughtful consideration given to all of Alaska's children in their final recommendations.

The JLETF's report to the governor and legislature addressed a number of important issues, and the board did not disagree with any of the recommendations included in the report.

The district was in great need and strongly supported the funding provisions provided in year three of the recommendations, which included continuing to phase in district cost factor increases, increasing the intensive needs funding factor to thirteen times the base student allocation, and increasing the base student allocation by one hundred dollars.

The board also supported review of the adequacy of the foundation formula's twenty percent block funding component. Meaningful support of Career Technical Education (CTE) initiatives might require an increase to the formula variable or possibly dedicated categorical funding for CTE.

The board recognized there were legitimate concerns with the geographic cost differential study conducted by the University of Alaska's Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), and had expressed concerns on various occasions. But because the study was such an important component of the committee's comprehensive recommendations, the board supported the continued phase in of the ISER cost factors as recommended by the JLETF.

However, the district also supported the JLETF recommendations that a dedicated commission continue to address the district cost factor issue in detail.

## **Legislative Priorities (continued)**

### **3. Support significant funding of school capital construction needs, particularly in the area of major maintenance.**

The Fairbanks North Star Borough Board of Education supported the legislature's consistent efforts to address on-going school facility needs throughout the state.

The board had always placed a high priority on the upkeep of the thirty school facilities entrusted to them. Significant operating resources were devoted to the effort on an annual basis. Additionally, borough citizens had an unbroken record of ten years of support of major maintenance bond issues.

Historically, the state had played a major role in the funding of school facility capital needs. The board supported and urged the delegation and the legislature in general, to continue to devote resources to the effort.

The first goal of the board was student safety, comfort, and accessibility. The second goal was to extend the economic life of our facilities for the maximum benefit of borough citizens. The third goal was to match our facilities as nearly as possible to the educational needs and programs of our community. The board believed the legislature had the same goals. The board pledged to continue to work with the legislative delegation to fund local capital needs.

### **Legislative Priorities Discussion**

The delegation had questions on the overcrowding issue in North Pole. They were interested in obtaining the current enrollment of all schools and building capacity information. The administration would gather the information for the delegation.

The district had been very disappointed with last year's capital project funding. The delegation believed this year it would be very helpful for the district to show how much funding locally (district, borough, bonds) had been put towards capital improvement projects. It was important for the legislature to know the community supported the projects.

### **General Discussion**

The delegation asked about dual credit options, tech-prep agreements, and the Cisco Career Certification program. In the past, the Cisco program had been utilized in the district, but was not currently offered due to the lack of certified staff. The delegation was interested in additional information on the past program and the possibility of re-instating it. The administration would research the program.

Dr. Wagner and Mrs. Hajdukovich thanked the delegation for their support throughout the year, especially in the securing of funding for the district's new Central Kitchen. Dr. Wagner showed part of a short video on the new facility for the delegation.

Mrs. Hajdukovich thanked Bill Bailey, public relations director, and Robinson Duffy, public relations coordinator, for their work on the video and PowerPoint presentation.

Dr. Wagner acknowledged the district could not fulfill their mission without the support of all stakeholders. The Fairbanks Interior Delegation had played a vital role in supporting the district's efforts to provide an excellent and equitable education for students in the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

**General Discussion (continued)**

Representative Kawasaki, on behalf of the entire Interior Delegation, thanked the district for their presentation and their gift of student art. They looked forward to the art piece each year.

Board members and district administrators thanked the Interior Delegation members for taking time to attend the briefing and their support over the past year.

The meeting adjourned at 5:13 p.m.

Submitted by Sharon Tuttle, executive assistant to the Board.