

ALASKA PIONEER HOMES ADVISORY BOARD

Bob Sivertsen, Chair
3817 Alaska Avenue
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

March 6, 2015

The Honorable Bill Walker
Governor of Alaska
Post Office Box 110001
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0001

Re: Alaska Pioneer Homes Tours

Dear Governor Walker:

On behalf of The Alaska Pioneer Homes Advisory Board (APHAB), please accept our sincerest congratulations on your successful election. We appreciate your continued public service. This letter is written to provide you with a report on tours conducted by the APHAB in Northern and Southeast Alaska followed up by suggested policy recommendations.

Northern Tour | Palmer / Anchorage / Fairbanks | September 30 – October 2, 2014

The APHAB completed a tour of the three northern homes located in Palmer, Anchorage, and Fairbanks on October 2, 2014. All of the tours consisted of board business, a meeting with administrators, and discussions on maintenance concerns. We also toured with maintenance staff, met with the resident councils of the homes, had open meetings with residents, and held telephonic public comment periods. We spent time with the department director and staff discussing various reports and data for the year to date.

The Board was pleased to see that the Pioneer Home Staff continues to provide excellent care to the residents in all of the homes we visited. We found all homes neat and well-kept and the meals to be attractive, tasty, and well balanced.

The Administrators provided insight into the operations of the homes while reporting many positive projects and programs serving their resident population. One of the most positive projects was a new Medical Records Program called 'Point, Click, and Care' (PCC). The system has integrated well into the daily work flow of care and the data captured will enhance the overall management and understanding of individual resident's care or needs. The Division did a fantastic job of rolling this project out.

The Board split into two groups. One group conducted facility infrastructure tours and the other resident facility tours. The APHAB's goal is to conduct effective property inspections resulting in informed recommendations.

After a review of maintenance issues, the primary concern is a roof system failure at the Palmer Home. There is considerable rot in the fascia support beams and water intrusion in a number of

areas. The leaks caused the abandonment of electrical circuits, damage to glue-lam beams, ceilings, wall coverings, and window casements.

A second maintenance concern is the sewer piping at the Fairbanks Home. The piping runs in the crawl space under the facility and has deteriorated to the point that staff is concerned about failure, potentially allowing raw sewage to leak into the crawl spaces resulting in potential health and safety issues.

The Anchorage home has recently taken ownership and operations of three new boilers. The upgrade has added reliability and efficiencies. There are still two more boilers within the facility that should be evaluated for future upgrades or replacement.

Other noncritical items noted were covered entrances where vehicles transferring residents could avoid slippery, uneven exposures, power generator upgrades to meet full facility needs and transformer replacement for phase protection and reliability, and facility remodeling projects where appropriate, to better address the level of care needed within the facility.

The APHAB had an opportunity to meet with Commissioner Streur in Anchorage to discuss various topics moving forward, including wage rates, the current competitive caregiver market, and the rising population of seniors in Alaska. We had a broad discussion on Medicaid and Medicare, and discussed regulations and their unintended consequence.

We would like to express our thanks to the Commissioner for management of the great service we are able to provide and to the Pioneer Home Director for the data, information, and support that allows the board the ability to better meet its requirements. We would also welcome the opportunity to meet with your office to address any questions, concerns or suggestions you may have for better management of the Pioneer Home residents' needs.

Southeast Tour | Ketchikan / Sitka / Juneau | February 17 – 2015

This year the Southeast tour started in the Ketchikan Home. The board discussed the state's budgetary shortfall at the beginning of that meeting and it was always the driver as operations and maintenance were reviewed. Considerable discussion took place on the effects of the five percent reduction that was requested and how it relates to the health and safety of the residents. As we reviewed staffing levels that were questioned, we found that all of the homes had a slightly different physical layout that played into the staffing equation. Another factor was the level of care supplied due to the present acuity in the individual facility. The board found that when considering staffing, the first priority is safety for vulnerable residents.

Overall the homes are in good general repair. The five percent budget reduction will defer a number of projects slated by facilities; however, the proposal of a zero deferred maintenance budget will have a greater impact. Through the year there are issues that arise unexpectedly requiring a response. Some are emergencies and some are not; nevertheless, to maintain the integrity of our state assets, they need to be fixed. The major maintenance concern in Southeast homes are water intrusions. The facade on the Sitka home is scaling off similar to the capital building exterior issues. There is also some failed window cladding in the great room of the Ketchikan home. The individual home maintenance crews have and will continue to do what they can to insure the most efficient maintenance with the resources provided.

The board reviewed the latest Occupancy Report. We noted there are 4,990 total applicants unduplicated on the waitlist, and 289 on the active waiting list for a room. Of 499 available spaces, there are 47 available. The problem is that the available spaces are not designed for, nor have staff to accommodate the Level II and III services required. The sad truth is that presently there are seniors who will die before receiving a bed in our facilities.

The board also had an opportunity to meet with Commissioner Davidson to discuss her concerns and how we can assist moving forward. The board advocated for consideration when making additional cuts within the Health and Social Services Division regarding senior care provided by the Pioneer Home System and the population we serve. An across-the-board cut will impact seniors directly. In some communities there are no facilities outside the Pioneer Homes to absorb seniors and meet the required level of care needed. Alaska Pioneer Homes provide care to the largest single population of Alzheimer and Related Dementias seniors in the state. The homes are much more than just room and board.

In summary for maintenance:

- The roof at the Palmer home should be considered the number one maintenance priority.
- The sewer piping in the Fairbanks home should be accessed and replaced.
- The facade at the Sitka home should be scheduled for repair and replacement.
- The leaking windows in Ketchikan should be repaired or replaced.

The board discussed and supports the proposal for a rate increase. But the board expresses its concerns that an additional five percent reduction would cut staffing at all homes. Reduction of staff reduces the ability to care for the current population. Old age is not a choice – the true measure of any society is how it treats its most vulnerable members.

Thank you for your review and consideration of the APHAB comments and recommendations provided herein.

Respectfully,

ALASKA PIONEER HOMES ADVISORY BOARD

By _____
Robert Sivertsen, Board Chair

cc: Bert Hall, Vice Chair
Joseph Fields, III, Vet. Adv. Council
Mary Shields, ACoA
Hollis Hall (Appointed at large)
Rosemary Hagevig (Appointed)
Lee Cromwell (Veteran Appointment)
Banarsi Lal (Appointed at large)