

# ALASBO News Link...



March 2019

*A newsletter publication of Alaska Association of School Business Officials*

**ALASBO News Link**  
is published for the members of the Alaska  
Association of School Business Officials  
and its affiliate members.

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## **President's Message**

*Carl Horn, Nenana City School District*

What an amazing Team ALASBO is! I approached becoming President in December, naturally with some insecurity and fear that I would be able to rise to the challenge of communicating and furthering our collective vision to support education. I had nothing to fear. We are a consensus organization with all the parts be it the past presidents, our executive director(s), current board members, the active collage of honorary members, functioning committees, all who provide the eyes, ears, minds and hands to keep our association strong.

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Together we all contribute too and obtain benefit from our efforts that include the annual and summer conferences, business practice tools and a universe of skills and professional development opportunities. Never forget to spend time to improve your own skills - be sure to review all that your association offers.

The proposed cuts to public education are without parallel in the history of the State of Alaska. The Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA) 2019 Joint Position Statements (JPS) { <http://www.alaskaacsa.org/wp-content/uploads/JPS-State-Issues-2019-Final-Draft.pdf> } provides us with a framework in which to think about and react to these budget discussions occurring between our elected representatives. The first item in the JPS is “**priority funding for education.**” There is broad support from the people of Alaska for funding of public education. This survey just released this month documents this support { <http://www.alaskaacsa.org/new-survey/> }. And during the past few years education has been spared cuts which affected almost every other item in the State Budget. This should not bring complacency that nothing is going to be cut. It can!

What I see is the bigger challenge is the next item in the JPS - “**Revenue Enhanced Fiscal Plan...**” Public support needs to be rallied for “[t]he need to finalize and implement a complete and long-term multi-revenue fiscal plan...” It is easy to voice support for things we like and it can be heartfelt and unshakable but the problem Alaska faces is a math problem. How do we get the things we feel are essential i.e. constitutionally protected public education and various other things and pay for them in the long term? This is the discussion all of us in Alaska have to engage with our elective representatives.

Stay informed, your association will keep you up to date. Be sure to tell your story to your representatives, respond to request for information - fake or distorted facts will not help anyone. Consider joining us in Juneau March 24-27 for the ACSA Legislative Fly-In { <http://www.alaskaacsa.org/leg-fly-in/> }

**Always remember you are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, smarter than you think and loved more the you know.**  
*Unknown*

## **Executive Director’s Message**

*Melody Douglas, Executive Director*

What a privilege to once again serve the ALASBO membership as your executive director (ED)! As I pick up the ED reins, I am amazed at the resource ALASBO has grown to be to its members, particularly when I reflect on what ALASBO’s founder Tom Freeman, along with other founding members, envisioned back in 1974.

Things have changed **a lot** from when I was the executive director 1998-2003! The ED position was a volunteer position up through Tammy White’s tenure (2003-2007) as executive director. Many volunteers helped make all things ALASBO happen in those days; you know who you are!

ALASBO grew to the point of being able to hire a part-time executive director in 2007. Past president, Duane Guiley served two years as ALASBO’s first paid part-time executive director. Amy Lujan was hired in 2009 and as you know, she stepped down from that post in December 2018. She oversaw a number of projects for ALASBO; a recap of the highlights under her leadership is included in the School Business Official of the Year article in this newsletter.

Thank you, Amy, for not wanting to exit stage left! I appreciate that you remain passionate about our profession and that you remain available as needed, even serving as the Associate ED in this year of transition.

Many things have changed over the years; such as conference registrations have been automated, board packets are in PDF portfolios, Power Lunches are provided and recorded (when the technology works!), the treasurer duties have expanded, and our books are audited by an independent auditor.

I see my role as one to assist the ALASBO Board transition an organization, with increased professional development needs, focused on long term stabilization. The Board moved this direction last fall with the addition of the associate executive director position targeting professional development; particularly the NBMI program. ALASBO is now in the next level of association development with a full time FTE shared by two people.

ALASBO still needs the many volunteers working  
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within ALASBO in many ways, including serving on the ALASBO Board of Directors, serving on committees, volunteering to be mentors, working in the NBMI program, presenting Power Lunches and conference sectionals, and writing newsletter articles. Please continue to raise your hand to serve; it is a blessing to you in serving others and to the colleagues you serve. AND you learn a lot along the way.



I look forward to working with all of you as we move forward in interesting times. Please remember I am just a phone call (907-398-6819) or email ([alasbo@gci.net](mailto:alasbo@gci.net)) from you; let me know if I can help in

any way.

## Communicating Your Budget

Forming a communications plan about your district's budget is absolutely vital! Failure to communicate can cause unnecessary consternation, confusion, and mixed messages to important stakeholders. Here are some ideas for your consideration:

General points:

- Chief school business officials must work with their superintendents to coordinate communications.
- Be professional in all communications.
- Be factual.
- Be succinct, but comprehensive.
- Note this unprecedented situation and its uncertainty concerning the eventual resolution, but
- Promise to keep parties informed after learning new information.
- Refer to programs, concepts, schools, grade level groupings, but not to a specific person or persons, except to:
- Identify the district person who is the point person for budget communications.
- Some message points will need to be tailored for the particular audience.
- At times, suggest steps that people can take to communicate or persuade, such as provide an e-mail address so stakeholders can communicate their budget concerns to the district.

As the FY 20 budget is being developed:

- The Superintendent must keep the Board informed. This may be telephonically. It cannot be the full board at one time,

except in a publicly held meeting. At times the Superintendent may want to include the chief school business official.

- Share with stakeholders the scope of the budget shortfall. Stakeholders can include parent organizations, school advisory councils, unions, district staff, local Native organizations, and advocacy groups. Do not immediately share specific budget reductions. Choose a comparison point such as the FY 19 budget to the FY 20 budget, and use it consistently. Realize that a district will have inflationary cost increases as well as revenue reductions.
- Solicit input from stakeholders. Most people prefer to be part of the solution.
- As the District develops its budget, communicate with key district administrators and supervisors. They may have ideas that you have not considered. They are the people who will have to implement budget reductions and can convey the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed budget reduction.
- Keep your legislative delegation informed about the scope of budget reductions and broad ideas that your district has for balancing the budget.
- If a municipal district, share with the city, borough, or municipal chief executive officer and their finance staff the fiscal impacts of the FY 20 budget as it affects their budget.

As you get closer to releasing the FY 20 budget to the public:

- Make sure the human resources department or the Superintendent has a process for informing staff members who will be adversely, directly and personally impacted by budget reductions. They need to hear it before it becomes public. The message should come from the top as much as possible. Emphasize the scope of the reductions and that this is the best educational plan the district can provide students with its reduced resources.
- If appropriate, communicate in advance with labor unions.
  - Communicate it fully with all administrators and supervisors. Don't do this too far in advance, though. Their

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employees will ask them many questions

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- Develop a message for the public release, with simple graphics and a few key numbers. **Keep the message understandable.** This does not necessarily mean line item reductions. It may mean larger class sizes, less diversity in high school curriculum, fewer high school activities, less central office personnel, for example.
- If news media covers your district, give them a background briefing before its release. Better informed reporters provide better coverage.

After the budget is released to the public:

- If possible, meet with as many staff members as possible in groups such as at their staff meetings. Some of these meetings will be very difficult because solid, proven, education enhancing programs may have to be cut or significantly reduced.
- Consider a press conference with news media. It may mean radio and television interviews.
- In some districts the superintendent or designee may need to meet with parent organizations.
- Likewise, they may need to meet with school advisory councils.
- If a municipal district, arrange for the Board to meet with the Assembly.
- Share it with your legislative delegation.

Let me add, the process will not be final until after the Governor signs the appropriations bill. It may mean for some districts, that after the budget is



prepared and approved in order to meet legal deadlines, it may have to be revised.

*David Means is and ALASBO Legislative Liaison, past president of ALASBO, and an Honorary Member*

## Permanent Executive Director (ED)

ALASBO advertised for a permanent ED in 2018. The only applicant who could begin January 1 was Melody Douglas, who offered to serve a one-year term as executive director unless an applicant could start earlier in 2019. In working through transition issues, it became clear that gaining efficiency will be long-term unless a permanent ED can be hired as soon as possible. An effective transition is possible regardless of who the Board selects as the permanent ED and when they can start.

Melody Douglas and Amy Lujan are committed to making a successful transition for ALASBO and are flexible in meeting the evolving needs of ALASBO with the full knowledge that they may need to enter a different MOA agreement, by mutual consent with ALASBO, later in the year.

The goal is for ALASBO to gain operational efficiency as soon as practical and to take less than two years to do so. Therefore, the ALASBO Board approved posting an ED vacancy notice in January. Interviews are planned in March. The ED Hiring Committee, chaired by Carl Horn, includes Cassee Olin, Karen Quitslund, Jimmy Love, Amy Lujan, Holly Holman and Melody Douglas. The ED Hiring Committee plans to make a recommendation to hire a permanent ED to the ALASBO Board at the March Board meeting.

Butterflies can't see their wings. They can't see how truly beautiful they are, but everyone else can. People are like that as well. *Power of Positivity.*

## ALASBO Board Approves Associate ED Position

The ALASBO Board entered into a MOA with Amy Lujan to serve as Associate Executive Director through July 2019. This MOA includes projects that, due to limited time were not completed by the end of 2018, including records retention, upgrading the newsletter, and completing the Cvent conversion re: vendor registration and Summer Leadership registration.

With the addition of the Associate Executive Director position, ALASBO is moving toward the equivalent of full-time staff services focused on  
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ALASBO membership. It is in ALASBO's best interest that there be two individuals working part-time to fulfill ALASBO's staffing needs vs a full time person. With two contracted individuals supporting ALASBO's mission, there will be cross training to ensure continuity of services should one of the individuals not be able to fulfill their commitment.....or perhaps want to take a vacation. ☺

## Developing Your Budget: Personal Advice

Preparing next year's budget could be more harrowing than ever before. Balancing next year's budget will challenge your core values. You will know, before others, and before you can talk with others, that programs and people very dear to you will be cut or significantly reduced. It will hurt your heart!

To a large extent, spending much more time on preparing the budget than in prior years will not alleviate the problem. It will not solve the problem of reducing expenditures to meet lesser resource dollars. Spinning your wheels will hurt you, and not do much to help.

So, take care of yourself and your emotional well-being. This may mean stepping away from it for a brief time. It may mean engaging in some physical activity such as basketball, cross-country skiing, softball, or square dancing. It may mean doing something fun for yourself. It may mean talking with a confidante such as a priest. Take care of yourself!

*Provided by budget veteran David Means.*

## The Executive Leadership Conference (ELF) in San Diego, CA on February-14 thru the 16th, 2019

*Karen Quitslund, Petersburg SD, ALASBO's  
President Elect.*

Thank you for the opportunity to attend and represent ALASBO at the ELF Conference! The first day of the conference was the Governance Symposium that Melody Douglas has shared in this newsletter.

The second day of the conference was three different presentations by dynamic presenters on leadership.

The first presenter was Gaurav Bhalla. He spoke about soulful leadership; leading as a humanitarian and with intention. One point that I especially appreciate was to remember that employees are not resources that an employer can "use up" but rather, they are assets that employers "use up" but rather, they are assets that employers invest in.

The second presenter was John Draper. He spoke about the negativity surrounding the public education system and the national rhetoric that the education system is failing our students. His message was a reminder of all the good things that are happening in public education everywhere, that public education is changing the way it serves students and that all educators have to share the positive news and impact that education is having on students.

The third presenter was Galen Emanuel. He led the group through different improvisational exercises and scenarios to improve communication. It was a very interesting exercise in how our tones, attitudes and choice of words can influence the dialog with others and influence communication.

The third day of the conference was a Techno Race. I was not sure about this at first but it was a lot of fun and I had the opportunity to meet and build leadership skills with a group of individuals that I maybe would never have met. The Techno Race was a scavenger hunt with about 150 different activities from trivia to group selfies doing silly activities. Many of the activities required the group to collaborate to complete the activities. My team did not win the challenge but we learned a lot about leadership styles and building relationships!

I encourage ALASBO members to consider attending this remarkable leadership training event next year; it was well worth the time, cost, and effort to attend!



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## ASBO Executive Leadership Forum (ELF)

Melody Douglas, Executive Director

### Governance Symposium



Carl Horn, Karen Quitslund, and I participated in an informative and interactive governance session that helped us understand ALASBO is doing many things right and that we have some growth opportunities. One thing we unfortunately can't do, is provide a 1 and ½ or two-day board orientation training as recommended. Good idea; but our board members have a hard time dedicating the time and covering the cost of getting to the Annual Conference and/or Summer Leadership meetings, much less adding more face-to-face meetings.

**Agenda/Minutes** - We discovered that our board agendas are being handled according to best practices. However, we are including too much information in our board minutes. The ALASBO Board approved a simplified reporting format for board minutes.



**Strategic Plan** – It appears that our Strategic Plan is more of an Operational Plan; however, ALASBO has completed most of its current plan. Discussion occurred about reviewing ALASBO's Mission, Vision, and Values statements during our Summer Leadership meeting in July. With that work out of the way and after a permanent executive director is on board, the ALASBO Board can develop a new Strategic Plan to address ALASBO's future.

**Board Leadership Training and Orientation** - It was mentioned that the President Elect must come quickly up to speed during a busy time of year with wrapping up the Annual Conference, attending ELF, budget, and other projects. It was also mentioned that a month is a long time between meetings and that it might be helpful if the

President, President-Elect, and ED met for a short conference call to catch up on works in progress and to sketch out the BOD meeting agenda. While many decisions are the responsibility of the President, keeping the President Elect in the loop is a great leadership training plan that also assures ALASBO that association business and other matters would continue should something unforeseen happen to affect the President's time and/or ability to volunteer. A recap of these mid-month conference call meetings will be sent to the ALASBO Board of Directors.

### Leadership Development and Networking

Carl Horn, Karen Quitslund, Andy Degraw, Tammy White, Holly Holman, and Linzey White participated in the excellent leadership training provided by ASBO. The trainings offered include Creating a "Yes And" culture of High-Level Performance and Engagement, Paddling Upstream in a Public-School Canoe – Public Schools That Work, Soulful Leadership: A visionary Manifesto for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and a Techno Race: Leadership Scavenger Challenge.

ALASBO members and guests enjoyed an evening of networking with Oregon ASBO members during a dinner sponsored by American Fidelity. **Thank you, American Fidelity and Scott Florsheim for a memorable evening of fun and fellowship!**

## ALASBO Recognizes two School Business Official of the Year (SBO)

Each fall nominations are accepted for ALASBO's prestigious School Business Official of the Year Award. The individual is selected by a committee of past recipients of the award based on the following three criteria:

1. How has the nominee assisted the school entity in maximizing its financial resources..
2. How has the nominee improved public relations through involvement in local community activities,. AND
3. How has the nominee's commitment to the profession helped improve School Business Management at the local, state, and national and /or international level.

In an extraordinary move, the committee decided to make two SBO awards this year.

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**2018 SBO Recipient Amy Lujan** ALASBO surprised Amy Lujan early on the first day of the ALASBO Annual Conference with a School Business Official of the Year Award in recognition for her many years of service to ALASBO.

Amy has been involved with school business in Alaska for 25 years; she was the business manager for 7 years for the Kuspuk School District in Aniak and for 7 years with Nome Public Schools. She also worked one year at the North Slope Borough School District. Amy left the role of executive director for ALASBO after 10 years serving the membership; she is the longest serving executive director in ALASBO's history. Fortunately, Amy is still serving ALASBO as the associate executive director!

Amy has attended every ALASBO conference for the last 25 years. Prior to becoming ALASBO's ED, Amy served as a board member in 1997 – 1998 and again 2002 – 2003 and as Secretary in 2004.

Since 2009 and under Amy's leadership as executive director, ALASBO

- **2009** - Transitioned development of joint position statements with ACSA
- Worked with ASBO in support of Jenny Martens serving on the ASBO Task Analysis Panel that ultimately became ASBO's SFO program
- **2010** - Adopted the ASBO Professional Standards and Code of Ethics
- Worked with ASBO in support of Jenny Martens and Dave Jones serving on the ASBO Certification Exam Committee and Dennis Niedermeyer serving on the Cut Score Committee for the SFO Program
- **2012** – Celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> annual conference
- Established the Management Review Ad Hoc Committee to create a program to assist school districts
- **2014** – Introduced the ALASBO Improvement Model (AIM)
- **2015** – launched a new ALASBO website
- **2017** – Established the Chart of Accounts Ad Hoc Committee to recommend changes to the Alaska Uniform Chart of Accounts

- **2018** – Released Standard Operating Procedures template documents that were then integrated into the AIM tool
- Formed a DCR Forfeitures Ad Hoc Committee to resolve FY18 accounting issues
- Launched the New Business Manager Institute



**2018 SBO Recipient Karen Goodwin** Information from the application submitted on Karen Goodwin's behalf includes information from her superintendent, board president and a colleague. Karen's superintendent shared that she consistently and tirelessly advocated on the district's behalf in a financially sound manner. "When Karen first arrived at our district, she was faced with many audit findings and administrative challenges. But Karen's great work ethic, adherence to rules and regulations, and pragmatic approach to business practices are evidenced by a host of marked improvements on the books." "Karen was a champion for the district's kids from the beginning and she spread goodwill in promoting their education. Karen's adherence to district budget oversight and departmental efficiencies provided the essential benefits for student instructional programs."



"Karen demonstrated professionalism, outstanding work ethic, high morals, integrity, and dedication to the profession."

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The president of the school board stated “As a school board member for eleven years, I have witnessed a profound improvement in the financial state of the district. This change can be attributed to Karen’s tireless efforts in demonstrating fiscal responsibility and operating an efficient and competent business office.”

Karen was so beloved by her staff that to this day one of her former staff members maintains a shrine to her that consists of the many items she brought back to her staff from her travels.

Karen continues to serve public education and students by mentoring, training and providing assistance and support to REAAs as well as serving as a mentor for the New Business Manager Institute.

Karen served on the ALASBO Professional Development Committee, Management Review Committee and Service Committee. In addition, Karen served as ALASBO’s historian, and was ALASBO’S secretary, vice-president and president from 2007 to 2009.

Amy Lujan and Karen Goodwin are great additions to the ranks of ALASBO’s School Business Officials of the Year recipients!

Plan to nominate someone for your district for consideration for this prestigious recognition program.

## **ACSA Legislative Fly-In March 24-27, 2019**

Some years have more legislative activity than others; this is a year of significant legislative involvement on the part of many ALASBO members due in no small part to the governor’s budget plan. It is an interesting time; it seems full and retroactive permanent fund payments are being pitted against essential state services including K-12 public education. Quite a strategy to balance the budget; it is a strategy most business managers avoid due the political capital it chews up!

A lot of information will be conveyed during the Fly-In with question and answer opportunities that will likely be enlightening. The Tentative Fly-In Agenda includes the following sessions (a detailed agenda is on the ACSA website):

- Legislative Finance Perspective by David Teal, Director of Legislative Finance

- Legislative Fiscal Panel with Representatives Dan Ortiz and Tammy Wilson
- Dr. Michael Johnson, Commissioner of DEED
- Legislative Education Panel with Senator Gary Stevens and Representatives Harriet Drummond and Andi Story
- Guest Speaker Representative Bryce Edgemon, Speaker of the House
- Legislative Update by Dr. Lisa Parady Executive Director ACSA
- Legislative Preparation Exercise and Discussion with like-sized districts
- ALASBO Work Group to develop legislative talking points
- Guest Speaker Senator Natasha von Imhof,
- Joint House and Senate Education Committee Meeting
- CBA Database Demonstration – eFile Cabinet
- Meetings with Legislators
- Various networking opportunities including Alaska’s Heart through Student Art & Technology Legislative Reception with Honorary Chairs: US Senator Lisa Murkowski, Senate President Cathy Giessel, and Speaker of the House Bryce Edgemon
- Amy Lujan has invited ALASBO members in Juneau for dinner and networking Sunday, March 24, 2019

The Fly-In is an excellent professional development opportunity for ALASBO members in addition to sharing the stories we have about providing education in the diverse school districts in Alaska. You sharing your district’s information with legislators will have an impact on the outcome of education funding this session!

**Register ASAP at [www.alaskaacsa.org](http://www.alaskaacsa.org); March 24 will be here before you know it!**

## **ALASBO Mentor and Board Liaison Programs Changing**



**Mentors:** Consensus was reached to move to a ‘cadre of mentors’ model vs one-to-one mentors. The new model consists of a recap listing  
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colleagues willing to serve as a mentor resource in specific areas of school business expertise. The ALASBO Board approved a revised Mentor Job Description and Mentor Guidelines during the February Board meeting; these documents can be found at the ALASBO website.

Mentor Bios and a list of resources will be maintained in Ed Connector. ALASBO members requiring assistance or who just want to pick an experienced colleague's brain are welcome to contact any mentor listed on the mentor contact list.

ALASBO is seeking mentors. Please consider serving your colleagues in areas that you have expertise. Contact Melody Douglas if you want to serve as a resource to your colleagues.

**Board Liaisons:** In the past, ALASBO assigned a group of school district business managers to each ALASBO Board member as a direct contact to the Board. Some years this liaison system worked well and in others it didn't. For example, if a board member from a small REAA is aligned with a new COO at Fairbanks, there is a disconnect because the districts are dissimilar in many regards.

The ALASBO Board agreed to discontinue the Board Liaison program. ALASBO members are welcome to contact a Board member at any time by telephone or email.

## ***New Business Management Institute (NBMI)***

NBMI participants are actively engaged in learning and are keeping abreast of the NBMI commitments even in the extraordinary situation involving Governor Dunleavy's draconian budget plan that is taking so much of business manager's time presently. Colleen Fitzgerald, Holly Holman, and Robin Mullins are doing a fantastic job facilitating the Managing Self and Managing School/District Finance Modules and working with participants every two weeks for the NBMI Check-In Calls! Cassee Olin and Jenny Martens have also been a great help in managing the Canvas system used by the NBMI. This is a 'learn as you go' program for all involved.

**NBMI Work Group** The NBMI Work Group (Colleen Fitzgerald, David Means, Dennis Niedermeyer, Holly Holman, Robin Mullins, Amy Lujan, Jenny Martens, Cassee Olin, and Melody

Douglas) completed drafting the Grants Unit that will ultimately be inserted in the Managing School/District Finance Module after Oregon ASBO reviews the curriculum. Colleen Fitzgerald did an amazing job providing the technical content for this unit and she did the final formatting of the document. The Work Group is now wrestling with how to insert this unit into the curriculum for the current cohort; it is likely a couple of the check-in calls later this Spring with no homework due will need to change to accommodate the Grants Unit activities. This unit has been sent to Oregon ASBO for their review.



The Work Group continues to meet weekly to review the NBMI curriculum; review of the Managing Human Resources Module began mid-February and is in final review this week.

**NBMI Check-In Call Mentors** Mentors are a valuable resource to the NBMI participants during the Check-In Calls because they share information about current work projects and insights during Check-In Call discussions. Thank you to Mark Vink, Robbie MacManus, Cassee Olin, Patty Carlson, Tammy White, Karen Goodwin, Yodean Armour, Laura Hylton, Karen Quitslund, and Dennis Neidermeyer for serving as mentors to the NBMI program!

**Next NBMI Meeting** NBMI participants will meet again right before the ALASBO Summer Leadership on July 19, 2019. The second NBMI cohort will begin that day as well. Registration for this event and Summer Leadership will open up later this Spring.

**NBMI Sponsorship Thank you to Altman Rogers Company for sponsoring the NBMI program!** Other sponsors for this important program are needed. Please raise your hand to help ALASBO build school business staff capacity throughout Alaska. Contact Melody Douglas if your company would like to partner with ALASBO in this endeavor.

## **ALASBO Adds Two Legislative Liaisons**

One of the many reasons ALASBO was blessed with Amy Lujan as its long-time executive director was her living in Juneau. Amy was able to

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proactively work with the ALASBO Legislative Committee to respond to legislative issues as they arose. Having an ALASBO person on the ground in Juneau, who understands the role of school business for the last 10 years has been an asset to ALASBO!

Before that, the Legislative Committee chair was the point person for ALASBO relative to legislative changes affecting school funding and other school business matters and while that worked fine, ALASBO is more effective having a presence in Juneau. In January 2019, the ALASBO Board of Directors approved the addition of two legislative liaisons, Amy Lujan and David Means, both who live in Juneau, to assist ALASBO and the Legislative Committee as needed throughout the legislative session. These two veteran ALASBO members are able to quickly address questions when they arise.

I hope there are days  
when your coffee tastes  
like magic, your playlist  
makes you dance,  
strangers make you smile,  
and the night sky touches  
your soul. I hope there  
are days when you fall in  
love with being alive.  
*Brooke Hampton*

This decision could not have been more strategic given Governor Dunleavy’s budget plan that reduces funding for district operations by 23.9%. Amy and David hit the ground running! They met with the Senate leadership early in the session and after the House organized, they met with strategic representatives in the House leadership, and finance and education committees. They also made a point to meet all new legislators and/or their staff to introduce them to ALASBO. Amy and David have been responsive to inquiries, assisted with analysis, and have provided insight on many levels.

The ALASBO Legislative Committee is chaired by Dave Jones (Kenai) and committee members include Melody Douglas, Amy Lujan, David Means, Carl Horn (Nenana) Cassee Olin (Sitka), Jim Anderson and Andy Ratliff (Anchorage), Andy Degraw (Fairbanks), and Mark Vink (Bering

Strait). The Legislative Committee is meeting weekly to stay abreast of legislative issues in Juneau and will send information and Call to Action communications when needed.

ALASBO members are encouraged to contact Dave Jones, Amy Lujan, David Means, and/or Melody Douglas with legislative questions, concerns, or ideas.

ALASBO also collaborates with Lisa Parady, executive director for the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA), the Alaska Association of School Boards (AASB), the Alaska Municipal League (AML), and other organizations as needed on various issues to make sure we are all on the same page legislatively.

**The Legislative Fly-In is scheduled March 24-27, 2019. Register at [www.alaskaacsa.org](http://www.alaskaacsa.org).** The Joint Position Statements will serve as the backbone for the talking points, that will be created by those traveling to the Fly-In, to be used during visits with legislators while in Juneau and throughout the rest of the legislative session. More information on the Fly-In is included elsewhere in this newsletter.

**Power Lunch Schedule**

*11 AM to noon, via teleconference;  
call 605-472-5814, code 533-330-891*

Mar 12	Preparing to Testify at Legislative Meetings
	Budget and Communication
Mar 19	Q & A
Apr 16	Risk Management – Creative Hiring in Challenging Times
	NBMI Program-Second Cohort will begin in July 2019
May 14	
Jun 11	Audit Prep

Let Cassee Olin or Melody Douglas know of other Power Lunch topics that would be helpful.

*See Power Lunch page on website for documents and audio from prior month sessions and latest scheduled topics!*



## Application Deadlines for Professional Development Opportunities

**Richard M. Swarner: Shaping the Future Leadership Grant** for two \$750 grants sponsored by the Swarner family and ALASBO. The grant is offered to ALASBO members attending the July Summer Leadership event for the first time. – application deadline June 1, 2019 - application is on the ALASBO website.

**Lowell Thomas Freeman Professional Development Grant** for \$2,000 sponsored by CORE, Inc. This grant is open to all ALASBO members interested in attending the ASBO Annual Conference. Application deadline is extended until March 31, 2019 – application is on the ALASBO website.

**ASBO Emerging Leaders Scholarship.** There will be 18 \$2,000 scholarships awarded to emerging school business leaders, with less than five years experience, to attend the ASBO Annual Conference in National Harbor, MD October 24-28, 2019. Application deadline is June 1 – application information is available at [www.asbointl.org/scholarship](http://www.asbointl.org/scholarship).

**ASBO Annual Conference Registration Grants** Enter the drawing by May 23, 2019 for 1 of 16 chances to win a free registration to the ASBO Annual Conference in National Harbor, MD. Register for this drawing at [www.asbointl.org/SecurityBenefit](http://www.asbointl.org/SecurityBenefit). Don't wait, register today!

# ALASBO



## Member Spotlight

Andrew Leavitt, Lower Yukon School District

### Tell us about your school district



The Lower Yukon School District is located in western Alaska along the Yukon River and the Bering Sea. We have 10 schools, 16 tribes, and 2,000 students in an area covering 22,000 square miles. None of our sites are connected to the road system. Our student population is nearly 100% Yup'ik and we incorporate the local values into the school system. The area is well known for the abundance of subsistence activities that come with each season- berry picking and salmon fishing in the summer and fall, moose hunting in the fall and winter, and ice fishing in the winter. As an interesting historical footnote, the Molly Hootch case (*Hootch v. Alaska State-Operated School System, 1972*) was named after Molly Hootch from Emmonak. Emmonak is one of our ten school sites, and like most rural communities at that time, it did not have a high school. The Molly Hootch case revolutionized education in rural Alaska by affording students the opportunity to attend grades 9 through 12 without having to leave their home communities.

### How long have you been in school business?

This is my fifth year in school business. All of my time has been spent in rural Alaska.

### How did you get into this business?

I didn't specifically seek out school business. I was working in technical accounting / SEC reporting at a company in Arizona and we were going through a major restructuring so I thought about what I would change in my life if I lost my job.

(continued on page 12)

(continued from page 11)



I had always wanted to go to Alaska, but it never worked out as far as timing / career opportunities. I was also getting tired of the cubicle life and wanted an adventure. I saw a job posting for a business manager in Fort Yukon and called the superintendent, and two weeks later I was on the ground. I had only one day of cross-training with the outgoing business manager, and everything else I had to learn as it came up. It's kind of like solving a puzzle, and as long as you know some of the pieces and keep working at it, you will eventually figure it out!

#### **What do you like best about your job?**

I enjoy the variety. Every day is different challenge, and I can honestly say I never have a boring day. I'll write down a list of things I want to accomplish in the following day, and many times I don't get to a single item on the list due to all the new issues that crop up.

#### **What advice do you have for those new to school business?**

This advice is more geared towards rural school business-

- If you are new to school business, especially in a rural area, you will need to be prepared for challenges that come with just getting to your office. Depending on the district, the location may actually be the most challenging part of your job.
- You will need to become a champion of logistics and will learn to become very patient. It will feel like everything moves as a slow pace and some things will never get fixed or repaired.
- Don't try to fight every battle.
- Most people you work with will not understand budgets or money.
- Be ready to translate complex financial situations into simplified terms that board or community stakeholders can understand.
- Be sure to attend the ALASBO conference and don't be afraid to ask for help.
- Every year the rules and regulations get a little harder, and every year you

have less resources available to accomplish a larger workload.

#### **How have you benefited from membership in ALASBO?**

I am always surprised at how much I learn from the ALASBO conferences. When you work at a small to mid-sized district, you are responsible for a wide range of areas and there will always be something you can learn.

The networking opportunities are also very valuable. If I have a question on any number of topics, I know who to call or email and they will get right back to me.

#### **What do you like to do for fun?**

I like simple hikes, camping, swimming, and cooking. I like to eat spicy food and enjoy reading about history. History is my favorite topic.

#### **If you could visit any place in the world, where would you go and why?**

I'm waiting to see if the special direct flight between Alaska and China will become a reality this summer. It was announced by the former governor as part of the trade negotiations, but these things can fall through or get delayed. Otherwise, I will look at a trip to Japan. Due to the lack of food options in the bush, I'm more interested in exploring the unique cuisine than anything else.

#### **Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know?**

I'm licensed to drive 18 wheelers with three trailers.

#### **What is your proudest accomplishment?**



My first year as a business manager we had four back-to-back audits- regular financial statement audit, AHFC project cost audit, Impact Aid property audit, and an impossible eRate audit for a funding year from a few years in the past. It was a great learning experience and opened my eyes to the level of scrutiny and documentation that comes with each program, and I will never forget how happy I was when we finally got the eRate audit closed out with no findings.

### **Upcoming Events**

**ACSA Legislative Fly-In** – March 24-27, 2019, Juneau, AK – register at [www.alaskacsa.org](http://www.alaskacsa.org)

**New Business Manager Institute** – July 19, 2019, Valdez, AK

**ALASBO Summer Leadership** – July 19-21, 2019, Valdez, AK

**ASBO Annual Conference** – October 24-28, 2019, National Harbor, MD

**New Business Manager Institute** – December 7, 2019, Anchorage, AK

**School Business Academy** – December 8, 2019, Anchorage, AK

**ALASBO Annual Conference** – December 8-11, 2019, Anchorage, AK

Never regret anything that has happened in your life, it cannot be changed or forgotten so take it as a lesson learned and move on.

*Positive Energy*

One day, you will look back and realize that you worried too much about things that don't really matter.

*Lessons Learned in Life, Inc.*

## **Job Well Done: Thank you! Power Lunch Presenters**

February 26, 2019

**Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Accountability Reporting** presented by Courtney Preziosi, Education Administrator with Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

March 5, 2019

**Budget Reduction Q & A Opportunity and Budget Communication Strategies** presented by Laura Hylton, Business Manager at Lake & Peninsula SD and David Means, ALASBO Legislative Liaison

March 12, 2019

**Communicating With Your Legislators & Preparing to Testify at Legislative Hearings**

presented by Dave Jones, Assistant Superintendent at Kenai Peninsula Borough School District and Legislative Committee Chair

Thank you so much for serving your colleagues in preparing for and presenting these Power Lunches.! It is no small thing to carve time out of your crazy-making schedules to provide professional development to your colleagues.