



# Alaska Common Ground

[www.akcommonground.org](http://www.akcommonground.org)

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Peg Tileston**  
*Chairperson*

**Helen Nienhueser**  
*Secretary*

**Barbara Karl**  
*Treasurer*

**Janet Bidwell**

**Bill Falsey**

**Mary Grisco**

**Cliff John Groh**

**Max Gruenberg**

**Bill Hall**

**Mary Lu Harle**

**Ian Laing**

**Janet McCabe**

**Jill Smythe**

**Kevin Waring**

**Esther Wunnicke**  
*Emeritus*

**Victor Fisher**  
*Emeritus*

**Kari Gardey**  
*Staff*

## 10 am: Annual Meeting

**Welcome** Peg Tileston, Chair, Alaska Common Ground

- Approval of the agenda
- Approval of the 2009 Annual Meeting Minutes
- Treasurer's report
- Reports on Alaska Common Ground Activities and Projects
  - Fiscal Policy
  - Cost-Effective Justice
  - Dialogue Alaska
- Election of Directors to the Board
- Chair's comments and adjourn

## 10:30 am: Why Do We (Love to) Hate Property Taxes

❖ **10:30 to 11:15 Tutorial:** Experts will help us understand the foundation for paying for local services and how it leads to our quality of life.

- **Roger Shaw** – Accountant/consultant; former Chair of the Municipal Budget Advisory Commission
- **Marty McGee** – Assessor for the Municipality of Anchorage

❖ **11:20 to 12:30 Small Group Discussion:** World Café format: three 20-minute, small group discussion sessions with a recorder/facilitator. Participants are encouraged to move from table to table for each session.

- ❖ **12:30 to 1:00 Sharing:** Recorders/facilitators share all.

**Alaska Common Ground (ACG)** is a membership supported non-profit, non-partisan, tax-deductible organization that focuses on Alaska's public policy issues. Our mission is to collect and disseminate information about Alaskan issues and problems, facilitate discussion, and to develop public policy, knowledge, and understanding among Alaskans. We do this through forums, reports, group dialogue, and media. More information at [www.akcommonground.org](http://www.akcommonground.org). You can also find us on Facebook.

**Alaska Common Ground  
Anchorage Senior Center  
Minutes for the Annual Meeting  
May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009**

Alaska Common Ground's 18<sup>th</sup> annual meeting was called to order by Chair Peg Tileston at 10:02 am.

**Agenda:** Approved.

**Minutes:** Minutes from the annual meeting held on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008 were approved as presented.

**Treasurer's Report:** Alaska Common Ground's treasurer, Barbara Karl, presented the 2009 budget approved by the board on January 21<sup>st</sup> 2009 to the general membership. Alaska Common Ground is in good financial shape. Spring renewals are coming in. Peg emphasized that Alaska Common Ground is supported by member dues and it is very important that all members renew.

**Committee Reports:**

**Fiscal Policy:** Mary Grisco reported that Alaska Common Ground continues to explore starting a fiscal policy center and we continue to seek partners in this project. Today at this meeting we will have one of our many fiscal forums.

**We are Alaskans:** Janet McCabe announced the completion of the project started in 2000 under Esther Wunnicke. The project was to celebrate our state's diversity and was developed with enthusiastic support from Carol Comeau, the East High School choir amongst others. Al Bramstedt from Channel 2 provided the funding and we were the non-profit sponsor. There are 3 PSAs available on YouTube or on our website.

Janet presented a gift to Esther Wunnicke in appreciation for her effort.

**Dialog Alaska:** Bill Hall reported on this program. The impetus is to provide a different discussion format than the usual forum and explore how our communities make decisions. There is a small group actively engaged in this project which is hoping to grow.

**Member suggestions:** Peg asked for suggestions from the members.

Q: Is there any advocacy role for Alaska Common Ground?

A: Our role is to provide information not to conduct advocacy.

**Election results:** Peg reported that all 4 renewing board members were approved. These are Barbara Karl, Kevin Waring (both incumbents) and Janet Bidwell and Mary Lu Harle (new members).

Meeting was adjourned at 10:25 am.

It was followed by a program on "Hard Times and the Alaska Permanent Fund" moderated by Michael Carey. ACG board members Cliff Groh and Kevin Waring provided an introduction followed by a panel discussion with Janie Leask, Larry Persily and Eric Wohlforth.

<b>ALASKA COMMON GROUND 2009 BUDGET</b>			
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>NUMBER OF MEMBERS TO DATE &amp; NOTES</b>	<b>ACTUAL INCOME/ EXPENSE 1/1/09-12/31/09</b>	<b>APPROVED 2009 BUDGET</b>
<b>INCOME</b>			
Membership-renewal (100 goal)	80	\$ 4,995.00	\$ 6,500.00
Membership-new (20 goal)	5	250.00	700.00
Grants		4,500.00	14,000.00
Interest		227.40	400.00
Miscellaneous contributions	donations for refreshments	30.52	200.00
Non-monetary contributions & Misc.			
<b>TOTAL</b>	including any non-monetary	\$ 10,002.92	\$ 21,800.00
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Contract labor	117 hrs. thru 12/31/09	\$ 2,340.00	\$ 4,800.00
Post Office box rental		140.00	135.00
Telephone message line	thru December	152.00	153.00
Internet costs		119.64	125.00
Postage		248.95	445.00
Copying		268.16	300.00
Envelopes and labels		33.41	150.00
Printing, brochure, etc.	poster, etc.	96.16	300.00
CBPP conference expense		680.90	1,900.00
Room rental	annual meeting & 12/10	337.50	900.00
Video taping			700.00
Refreshments		276.00	600.00
Publicity	print ad	136.00	1,500.00
Transportation and expenses (for presenters)	Dave Donaldson air & hotel	390.70	1,600.00
Other	Pay Pal expense	3.87	3,192.00
<b>Nat'l. Issues Forum Expenses</b>		233.72	5,000.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		5,457.01	21,800.00
Income	including non-monetary	\$ 10,002.92	
Expenses		\$ 5,457.01	
Cash Impact		\$ 4,545.91	
<b>BANK BALANCES - 12/31/09</b>			
Savings			
Checking			
12 month CD to 8/15/10			
<b>TOTAL</b>			

# Project Reports

## Fiscal Policy Committee

By Mary Grisco

Alaska Common Ground has a long range goal of founding an independent state fiscal policy center, built with assistance from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) State Fiscal Analysis Initiative (SFAI) that has assisted such centers in nearly every state. More information at: [www.statefiscal.org](http://www.statefiscal.org).

Each year, ACG members attend the annual CBPP state fiscal policy conference in Washington, DC. This conference brings together high level federal administration leaders, policy analysts from other organizations with state fiscal policy and advocacy leaders. Workshops and plenary sessions offer solid, credible and timely information as well as forward-thinking discussions. This past conference focused on the changing state revenue environments, how ARRA funding is helping states, health care (insurance) reform, coming re-authorizations of entitlement programs and understanding property taxes.

## Cost-Effective Justice Project

Alaska Common Ground will be holding a public workshop on this issue on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2010 at the Assembly Chambers at Loussac Library in Anchorage.

The forum will address such questions as: How does our current system compare with those in other states; what can be done to reduce the rate of recidivism? Since a high percentage of current inmates are addicted to drugs or alcohol or are mentally disabled, is prison the most cost-effective way to address the problem? The full-day program will feature background presentations in the morning, a keynote luncheon speaker, and assessment and ways to move forward in the afternoon. Partners in Progress has joined Alaska Common Ground as a planning partner. We invite other organizations to participate. If you are interested in helping with the forum, please let us know at [info@akcommonground.org](mailto:info@akcommonground.org) or go to [www.akcommonground.org](http://www.akcommonground.org) for more information.

## Dialogue Alaska

### 2010 Activity Report To Alaska Common Ground

By A. W. "Bill" Hall

Alaska Common Ground has a long history of providing public forums in Alaska. In 2006 we entered into an agreement with the Kettering Foundation, supporter of the National Issues Forum (NIF), to begin forming what they call a Public Policy Institute (PPI) in Alaska ("Centers for Public Life"). We are now part of over 50 similar organizations that constitute the NIF network, most of which have adopted names more appropriate to their role in promoting civic dialogue and deliberative democracy. We are calling ours Dialogue Alaska. Kettering provides financial assistance to PPIs in the form of what they call research contracts in which organizations propose a research plan in the form of questions relating to their work in creating and operating PPIs. The program offers up to three annual contracts at \$5,000 per year. We did not use all of the funds from our first year contract and have a carry over for use in our second year. Kettering also pays the costs of travel to attend two meetings a year at their campus in Dayton, Ohio and for volunteers to attend training workshops provided by other PPIs.

In our first year of operation, we hosted two organizational conversations around the NIF issue book: *Democracy's Challenge*, and conducted a facilitator training for 20 Alaskans in Anchorage. With Kettering support three of our volunteers received training in facilitation and framing at NIF locations outside. Meetings and discussion were held in an effort to create an active advisory committee that would form the organizational basis for our public policy institute – with limited success. Creating a PPI as an organization requires the active involvement of individuals committed to its purpose of supporting and promoting public dialog. This remains an unmet and continuing obligation in our relationship with the Kettering Foundation.

Although Dialogue Alaska is one of a few PPIs in the NIF network that is not formally affiliated with a university, it has benefited from the support of the University of Alaska Cooperative Extension Service through the work of their Engagement and Outreach Coordinator, Bill Hall, who is also the lead organizer behind Dialogue Alaska.

We are now working on our second year contract with Kettering which is focused on creating a collaborative relationship with the Alaska Library Association (AKLA). This opportunity was presented to us by June Pinnell-Stevens, a retired librarian in Fairbanks who is active in both AKLA and the American Library Association (AMA). With June's help we formulated the following research questions which were accepted by Kettering and incorporated into our second year research agreement with them.

1. What are we learning about how partnerships and collaborations (e.g., Cooperative Extension, Library Association) increase our capacity to convene, frame, and deliver forums? How do these partners view their role in relation to the role of citizens?
2. What are we learning about how a program of public dialogue on Alaska's Fiscal Future can facilitate the public learning necessary for informed deliberation on potential changes in public policy?
3. What are we learning about how an educational dialogue can lead to changes in public policy?
4. What are we learning about how moderators understand their role in the politics of their community, or in Alaska?
5. How have we and our partners reflected together on our work? What changes have these reflections yielded in our practice or in the institute?

Our goal is to work with the Alaska Library Association to create a statewide program in support of community dialogue. We have learned that promoting citizen dialogue and deliberation involves three interrelated but distinct components: 1) convening, 2) framing & designing and, 3) facilitating.

We initiated this effort with a collaborative proposal submitted to the AKLA board last May. They responded by inviting us to make presentation at their annual membership meeting in March of 2010 in Anchorage which is attended by most librarians from across the state. We prepared for this event by presenting a demonstration forum at the Seward Public Library with the help of their Director, Patricia Linville, in February 2010. Building on this, and with the help of Mrs. Linville, we presented one workshop at the AKLA Conference in March to describe and discuss the possibilities of a library based program of community dialogue. This was followed by a demonstration forum using a discussion guide titled "Who do I Trust to Protect My Privacy?" produced by the AMA. Participants at both events were enthusiastic about the possibilities. So, we are in the process of a creating a steering committee of interested librarians to consider the following development possibilities:

- Develop a local library dialogue plan in support of community dialogues with at least 3 options: convening, designing/framing and facilitating to be used as an introductory proposal
- All options should be organized around a local community conversations committee of at least 3 individuals who might represent different aspects of the community such as the school system, local government, chamber of commerce – OR NOT? Check out the Island Institute in Sitka for a model: <http://home.gci.net/~island/>
- Select four communities to begin working with ASAP; possibly Haines, Seward, Anchorage, & Fairbanks.
- Create a development committee of AKLA, Alaska Common Ground, and CES representatives – not too large.
- Investigate possible grant funding from Rasmussen Foundation
- Develop an introductory workshop for librarians
- Survey Libraries to determine potential level of interest
- Organize and deliver facilitator/moderator training workshops
- Convene and frame the dialogues, which would make the programs feasible throughout the state.

Our ability to accomplish the foregoing will require the further development of a Dialogue Alaska Organization or an Alaskan Center for Public life into an active working organization. We will need leaders and members who can contribute their time, energy, passion, and talent to the mission and purposes of the organization. This is our greatest challenge at this time.