

# Update on pilot strike against Wien Air

The City of Barrow has joined other Alaskan communities in voicing its support of striking Wien pilots and called upon Wien Air Alaska to return to the bargaining table in good faith.

Meeting Jan. 17, the Barrow City Council passed a two-page resolution which reads in part:

"...the city of Barrow requests the Civil Aeronautics Board, the Federal Aviation Administration, the Alaska Transportation Commission, and the National Transportation Safety Board to closely monitor current Wien Air Alaska jet operations to and from the Arctic, including placement of federal aviation official observers on Wien flights to and from Barrow on a regular and frequent basis, to closely observe operating procedures of replacement pilots and lessen the chance of serious mishap during the strike."

The Airline Pilots Association, representing Wien pilots in a strike since May of last year, has recently come under fire for establishing pickets at a show promoting Alaskan tourism touring Lower 48 cities. Wien pilots have been trying to persuade participants in the show not to fly Wien if they should visit Alaska.

Members of the tourism industry fear adverse publicity from the picketing, noting that although Wien is only one carrier, it flies passengers to several key summer tourist spots, including Kotzebue. Kotzebue-based NANA Regional Corp., one of 12 regional Native corporations created by the land claims act, recently noted its concern in a letter to Gov. Jay Hammond and its legislative delegation:

"The striking Wien pilots have recently begun a Nationwide

campaign to stop tourist travel to communities served by Wien Air Alaska. This effort if successful will have a devastating effect on tourism income not only in the communities served by Wien but in the entire State as many of these tourists who plan destinations in the bush will cancel the other portions of their tours in our major cities. NANA alone has approximately eight million dollars invested in tourism related businesses that would be drastically affected."

Two village councils in the NANA region and the Mauneluk Association, non-profit Native group for the region, are on record supporting the Wien pilots' position.

The primary issues in the strike are based on the pilots' assertion that Wien's Boeing 737 jets should carry a three-man crew, including the flight engineer position eliminated by Wien. Pilots are also miffed at Wien's alleged practice of hiring, firing and rehiring pilots. Other issues in the dispute include pay, retirement and working decisions.

The strike has intensified since the pilots mounted a protest against state financing of a \$19.1 million bond package to improve and expand Wien facilities around the state.

The Air Line Pilots Association asserts that the bond would be used to help Wien make up financial losses brought on by the strike and allow the company to withstand the strike pressure longer.

State Sen. Frank Ferguson, D-Kotzebue, has offered a resolution that would prevent the state's Alaska Industrial Development Authority from authorizing the bonds.