

Permanent Fund Corp. headquarters to undergo \$4 million renovation

By [Andrew Kitchenman, KTOO and Alaska Public Media](#), August 10, 2017

Alaska Permanent Fund Corp. CEO Angela Rodell stands in the corporation headquarters on Wednesday. (Photo by Andrew Kitchenman/KTOO)

The [Alaska Permanent Fund Corp.](#) will be renovating its headquarters in Juneau. Its goal is to modernize its offices and help its workers communicate more easily. It's budgeted to cost \$4 million. Supporters say it may be a small price for the state to pay if it makes a difference in growing the \$60.7 billion fund.

The Permanent Fund Corp. office looks a lot like other offices, though the computers have more screens. That allows fund managers to keep their eye on the markets.

But when CEO Angela Rodell looks around, she sees limitations: in space, in the ability for fund workers to communicate, and in the optimal use of technology. She motions toward a long hallway lined with doors.

"It feels like a beehive to me right now, right? Lots of little warrens, low ceilings, tight narrow spaces," she said.

The renovation will open this space up. Some internal walls will be torn down. Rodell will be able to see more of the staff during her frequent walks around the office.

"You can see, it's like these long, narrow hallways, lots of offices," Rodell said. "People sit with their backs to the door. It's very hard, it's unapproachable if you want teamwork."

Another major reason for the change is to accommodate hiring more workers, which the current office configuration limits. This will allow more of the fund to be managed by corporation employees.

"All these walls, ceiling, everything comes down," she said. "The light will be allowed to flow through to the rest of the building, so that everybody will have access to a lot of natural light, which as you know in Juneau is really important to all of our work spaces."

The Alaska House of Representatives briefly debated in June whether to approve the money for the renovation, which will be drawn from fund earnings.

North Pole Republican Rep. Tammie Wilson questioned whether the corporation justified the expense. She said there should have been more details about the renovation.

"I mean, who spends \$4 million, without telling us how? That's just crazy, in my world," she said. "I don't do it for a thousand dollars, much less 4 million."

But fellow Republican Rep. Lance Pruitt of Anchorage said the expense was justified. Pruitt said it's important to seek any possible advantage to managing the fund.

"I see it as a good investment in ensuring that the people that are helping us to make sure that we have funding to provide for government as well as for our dividends, that they have the means at their disposal to invest our money correctly, appropriately and in real time," Pruitt said.

The Permanent Fund is coming off a year of major gains, increasing by \$7 billion. Rodell said that much of the gains in recent years are due to value the corporation's staff adds. She said that over the past five years, the fund grew more than \$4 billion more than if it had been invested passively.

"If we want to maintain that high level of excellence, we need to keep reinvesting in the resources," she said. "We can't keep using 1980 work styles to generate that kind of return."

The House defeated an amendment to remove the funding by a vote of 31 to 9 before the Legislature passed the [capital budget](#).

Some details of the renovation design are still being worked out. Construction is expected to begin later this year.