

Who spoke at luncheon: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, Gov. Roy Cooper, US Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel

The prime minister's motorcade arrived at 1:34 p.m. amid blustery winds. Gov. Roy Cooper, First Lady Kristin Cooper, Kishida and his wife Yuko Kishida posed for a picture before they walked inside, followed by about 40 others who arrived with them.

A brief period of mingling took place for about seven minutes before remarks began.

The prime minister and his wife, as well as Cooper and his wife, arrived at the ballroom at 1:48 p.m., met by a standing ovation.

There were seven tables decorated with a bouquet of flowers on each. The prime minister's table, which sat himself, Cooper and their wives, Emanuel and a few others was located at the front of the room.

About 60 people attended the indoor luncheon at the governor's mansion, 30 Japanese attendees and 30 American attendees. Additional members of the Japanese delegation and the governor's staff — about 20 people — sat in an outdoor tented area on the side of the mansion. The bluegrass band was playing outside.

Among those who attended the luncheon include N.C. House Speaker Tim Moore, N.C. Attorney General Josh Stein, N.C. Senate Majority Leader Paul Newton, N.C. House Minority Leader Robert Reives and N.C. Senate Minority Leader Dan Blue.

Emanuel began addressing the crowd, saying Cooper was the first person to call to say he wanted Kishida to come to his state.

Cooper then went up to the podium, and his speech was translated into Japanese by a translator next to him. He said he was grateful for the ambassador's friendship.

He welcomed everyone who came to "the people's house." Cooper said they've never hosted a foreign head-of-state in the governor's mansion, which was met by "wows" from some in the crowd.

Cooper shared a story of how his staff showed him a Japanese story previewing the visit that said North Carolina was home to Krispy Kreme and PepsiCo but the state is "home to so much more."

At 2 p.m, Kishida was welcomed to the podium. He spoke in Japanese and his speech was translated into English by a translator.

"I am honored to be here in North Carolina to showcase the the multilayered and strong ties between Japan and the United States," he said, via translation.

He said freedom and democracy is under threat around the world, so the U.S. and Japan must maintain its relationship.

Kishida said he is encouraged by Cooper's commitment to working with Japan.

He called North Carolina "a state at the forefront of the times." Kishida concluded his speech at about 2:06 p.m. and the luncheon began.

The menu, prepared by award-winning Raleigh-based chef Ashley Christensen, included:

- First course: chilled sunburst tomato and cucumber soup with benne seed and young ginger
- Second course: Seared wagyu beef tenderloin and poached North Carolinian shrimp. Served with masutake shoyu-marinated field peas, heirloom cornmeal crumb and little gem lettuces
- Third course: Carolina Gold Rice Pudding Brûlée with tunnel strawberries and rhubarb