

**House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Infrastructure and Resources**

Minutes of Meeting
2017 Regular Session
March 30, 2017

I. CALL TO ORDER

Representative Charles R. Chaney, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Infrastructure and Resources, called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. in Room 5, in the state capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The secretary called the roll.

II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative Charles R. Chaney, Chairman
Representative Robert E. Billiot
Representative Valarie Hodges
Representative Jack G. McFarland

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Representative Jerome "Zee" Zeringue

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ms. Katie Andress, Secretary
Ms. Daniel Waguespack, Budget Analyst

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES PRESENT:

Representative Tony Bacala
Representative Rick Edmonds
Representative Walt Leger, III
Representative John M. Schroder, Sr.
Ms. Vivian Hurst, Sergeant at Arms
Ms. Faye Talbot, Sergeant at Arms

III. DISCUSSION

House Bill No. 1 by Representative Henry

The following agencies contained in House Bill No. 1 were presented and discussed:

Department of Transportation and Development

Mr. Daniel Waguespack, Budget Analyst for the House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-7477, presented an overview and discussed the department's FY17-18 budget.

Dr. Shawn Wilson, Secretary of the Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD), 1201 Capitol Access Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 379-1200, presented an overview of the department's FY17-18 budget. (See Exhibit A)

Dr. Wilson discussed the department's request for federal funding for certain projects with Representative Billiot.

Mr. Thomas M. Clark, Commissioner of Multimodal Commerce, 1201 Capitol Access Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 242-4544, discussed the new port and vessel system that will be available in Plaquemines Parish with Representative Billiot. He also discussed the efficiencies of the state's ferry system with Representative Chaney.

Dr. Wilson discussed the Louisiana's backlog of construction and maintenance projects compared to other states, the Port Priority Program, the department's request for federal match funding, and the investment in sustainable mass transit with Representative Leger.

Dr. Wilson discussed giving more federal match funds to local municipalities for local projects, and the advantages and disadvantages of toll projects with Representative Schroder. He and Mr. Waguespack also discussed the impact of the Timed Debt Service pay schedule to the state gas tax with Representative Schroder.

Dr. Wilson also discussed the number of funded vacant T.O. positions within the department and the use of public-private partnerships to build certain projects with Representative Schroder. He also discussed the effects of toll projects going bankrupt with Representative Chaney.

Dr. Wilson discussed conducting a water basin study of the Amite River and allocating federal funds to finish the Comite Diversion Canal project with Representative Hodges.

The meeting recessed at 11:54 p.m. and reconvened at 12:46 p.m.

Dr. Wilson discussed the federal match associated with the Off System Bridge Program, the amount allocated for the Port Priority Program, the Road Transfer Program, and the amount of revenue generated from the state gas tax with Representative McFarland.

Mr. Waguespack and Dr. Wilson discussed the number of T.O. positions within the department and the number of engineers assigned to district offices, salaries and benefits paid out of the Transportation Trust Fund, and merit increases within the department with Representative McFarland.

Dr. Wilson discussed the number of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions within the department, the amount of revenue required to draw down federal matching funds and the list of projects in the department's backlog with Representative Bacala.

Dr. Wilson discussed the rapid reduction of toll credits and possibly increasing the state's gas tax with Representative Edmonds.

Department of Natural Resources

Mr. Chris Henry, Budget Analyst for the House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-1394, presented an overview and discussed the department's FY17-18 budget.

Mr. Thomas Harris, Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), P.O. Box 94396, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-2710, discussed the department's efforts to be fiscally conservative, in preparation for budget reductions.

Mr. Harris discussed the department's mandated costs, the state's involvement in coastal lawsuits, and the department's efforts to grow the oil and gas industry with Representatives McFarland and Schroder.

Mr. Henry and Ms. Beverly Hodges, Undersecretary of DNR, P.O. Box 94396, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-8844, discussed the department's means of financing swap and statutory dedications with Representative McFarland.

Mr. Harris discussed the department's enforcement of oil and gas industry rules and regulations with Representative Chaney.

Mr. Harris discussed the number of offshore oil rigs that are operating in Louisiana waters and the state's investment in the natural gas industry with Representative Billiot.

Mr. Harris and Ms. Hodges discussed the increase in supply purchases FY17-18 and the increase in professional services from FY15-16 to FY16-17 with Representative Schroder.

Mr. Harris discussed the Bayou Corn sinkhole and the department's efforts to lower the number of orphaned wells in Louisiana with Representative Chaney.

Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Mr. Chris Keaton, Budget Deputy Director of the House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-1964, presented an overview and discussed the FY17-18 budget for the department.

Mr. Keaton discussed the comparison of the department's FY15-16 actual expenditures to the amount budgeted in FY16-17 with Representative Edmonds.

Mr. Bryan McClinton, Undersecretary, and Mr. Jack Montoucet, Secretary for the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70808, (225) 763-5577, discussed the department's statutory dedications, funded vacancies, and the department's efforts to be fiscally responsible with Representative Edmonds.

Mr. Keaton discussed the increase in "Other Compensation" and explained the definition of excess budget authority to Representative Edmonds.

Mr. Montoucet discussed his efforts to reform the department with Representatives Edmonds and Schroder.

Mr. McClinton and Mr. Montoucet discussed the impact of oil production and revenue to the department's Conservation Fund, the Aquatic Plant Control Fund, and the possibility of leasing state-owned lands for agricultural and hunting purposes with Representative McFarland.

Mr. Montoucet discussed his view of the department's involvement in law enforcement issues and the development of a disability policy for permanently disabled employees with Representative Schroder.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Representative McFarland offered a motion to adjourn. Without objection, the motion passed by a vote of 4 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Chaney, Billiot, Hodges, and McFarland voted yea.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman Charles R. Chaney
Subcommittee on Infrastructure and Resources