

House Committee on Appropriations

Minutes of Meeting
2018 Regular Session
March 27, 2018

I. CALL TO ORDER

Representative Cameron Henry, chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations, called the meeting to order at 9:38 a.m. in Room 5, in the State Capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The secretary called the roll.

II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative Cameron Henry, chairman
Representative Mark Abraham
Representative Beryl A. Amedée
Representative Tony Bacala
Representative Lawrence A. "Larry" Bagley
Representative John A. Berthelot
Representative Robert E. Billiot
Representative Gary M. Carter, Jr.
Representative Charles R. Chaney
Representative Rick Edmonds
Representative Reid Falconer
Representative Franklin J. Foil, vice chairman
Representative Lance Harris
Representative Bob Hensgens
Representative Valarie Hodges
Representative Walt Leger, III
Representative Jack G. McFarland
Representative Blake Miguez
Representative Dustin Miller
Representative Jerome Richard
Representative Patricia Haynes Smith
Representative Jerome "Zee" Zeringue

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Representative James K. Armes, III
Representative Steve E. Pylant

Representative Scott M. Simon

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ms. Katie Address, Secretary
Mr. Peter G. E. Conroy, Legislative Analyst
Ms. Talisha Lee, Legislative Analyst

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES PRESENT:

Ms. Faye Talbot, Sergeant at Arms
Ms. Michaela Wells, 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, House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, 11th Floor, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-7477, presented an overview of the agency's FY18-19 Executive Budget Review and Parish Transportation Fund.

Dr. Eric Kalivoda, Deputy Secretary, Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD), 1201 Capitol Access Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 379-1200, discussed the Road Transfer Program (RTP) and road improvement funding streams, funding types, how they are used, and time frames with Representative Amedée.

Dr. Shawn Wilson, Secretary, DOTD, 1201 Capitol Access Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 379-1200, discussed Road Transfer Program (RTP) funding options and the Dulac Pontoon Bridge, Terrebonne Parish opening with Representative Amedée. Dr. Wilson also recited the total department payroll amount to Representative Bacala.

Mr. Waguespack and Dr. Wilson discussed personnel, bridge deteriorations, maintenance backlogs, project completion dates, and a broad overview of how the agency functions with Representative Edmonds.

Dr. Wilson, Mr. Waguespack, and Representative Dustin Miller discussed the Parish Transportation Fund, which is based on population and allocated through the Treasurer's office.

Representative Chaney expressed concerns of new interstate signage on I-20 and the interstate cable tension safety dividers. Dr. Wilson explained the mechanics of the Rural Road Bonding Program, where truck and trailer fees previously totaled \$50 million per year. There was an opportunity to fund roads without federal funds; the department utilized half, bonded it out, and accomplished over \$4 million of road improvements over a three-year period. All routes were not federal-aid eligible, obligating the use of 100% state funds.

Dr. Wilson and Representative Bagley discussed road and infrastructure financing and using crumb rubber to repair roads in District 7.

Representative Hodges discussed Act No. 437 of the 2018 R. S., the Floodplain Evaluation and Management Commission, to be chaired by the secretary of the Dept. of Transportation and Development. Dr. Wilson shared components of this expertise, the structure and framework that would be necessary, the varying levels of authority, costs, maintenance, and a long-term funding stream for the watershed.

Representative Gary Carter and Dr. Wilson discussed the Algiers Ferry Fund and the expiration date of June 30, 2018. The ferry was doing well with a decrease in the operation hours and fares, an increase in construction of two new boats, and \$10 - \$12 million for a new terminal.

Representative Pat Smith inquired about the Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicles (GARVEE) bonds deadline while Dr. Wilson stated the need to continue procurement.

Representative Falconer asked a follow-up question to the GARVEE bonds. Dr. Wilson shared that the Loyola Interchange and Barksdale were the two design bills in procurement; the public/private partnership was eligible for up to \$12 million.

Department of Natural Resources

Mr. Chris Henry, Budget Analyst, House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, 11th Floor, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-1394, presented an overview of the department's FY18-19 Executive Budget Review and Parish Transportation Fund.

Mr. Thomas Harris, Secretary, Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR), 617 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-2710, explained to Representative Smith the reduction in oil prices and the impact on revenues, staffing shortages, and production within the department.

Representative Smith offered a motion to recess. Without objection, the motion passed by a vote of 22 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Henry, Abraham, Amedée, Bacala, Bagley, Berthelot, Billiot, Gary Carter, Chaney, Edmonds, Falconer, Foil, Lance Harris, Hensgens, Hodges, Leger, McFarland, Miguez, Dustin Miller, Richard, Smith, and Zeringue voted yea.

The meeting recessed at 11:47 a.m. and reconvened at 1:05 p.m.

Vice Chairman Franklin Foil in the chair.

Office of Juvenile Justice

Mr. Mark Antoon, Budget Analyst, House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, 11th Floor, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-2412, presented the FY18-19 Executive Budget Review, including an overview of the agency's organization, budget, revenues, and expenditures.

Dr. James Bueche, Deputy Secretary, Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJ), 7919 Independence Boulevard, Baton Rouge, LA, 70806, (225) 287-7900, shared historical information about juvenile justice in Louisiana before addressing Representative Foil's question concerning the reduction in community-based employees and its impact on the department.

Mr. Gearry Williams, Undersecretary, OJJ, 7919 Independence Boulevard, Baton Rouge, LA, 70806, (225) 287-7900, explained to Representative Amedée the reduction in federal funding and the increase in the budget request as employee census dropped significantly.

Representative Abraham inquired as to the impact and procedures occurring with a number of employees related to the closing of the Lake Charles office. Dr. Bueche addressed Representative Abraham's questions and explained the pending layoff process, employees' resignations, and relocation of other employees to the Lake Charles area to share office space within the courts and sheriffs offices.

Representative Bacala asked about detention centers located in Bridge City, Swanson, and Acadiana. Mr. Bacala offered justifications to close Swanson (100+ years old) and Bridge City (70-80 years old) based on the maintenance cost repairs of sewage, HVAC, and plumbing. Dr. Bueche discussed the issue of capacity and the legislation related to raising the age on July 1, 2018. Studies done by LSU show there will be an increase for secure care, and, by closing the older detention centers (Bridge City), there will be capacity loss. Additionally, there was a layoff plan, term pay, hiring process to train staff for Acadiana, and costs incurred for both facilities, simultaneously. Mr. Williams answered Representative Bacala's questions on staff vacancies and turnover ratios through the first three-quarters of 2017.

Dr. Bueche explained to Representative Pat Smith the problems with demands of capacity and staffing.

Representative Chaney inquired what best practices are being done in other states, citing the Missouri Model. Dr. Bueche shared that Missouri calculates differently than Louisiana. The cuts to the probation staff would put Louisiana at 1:100. In past years, Louisiana was at 1:20. A budget cut the previous year placed Louisiana at 1:28. Last year's cut placed the state at 1:40.

Representative Dustin Miller stated that his office received numerous calls from judges about repeat offenders and the lack of detention centers. Dr. Bueche confirmed that the waiting time was approximately 20 - 30 days before the Office of Juvenile Justice was able to house the offenders, due to funding at the local level.

Representative McFarland revisited the question of whether the ages of the facilities, the costs of maintenance and repairs, and the possibility of privatization had been considered. Dr. Beuche affirmed that they had been, but the State Bond Commission had had difficulty with approval. Louisiana has the land, the resources, and the footprint in Acadiana as a model, which would be managed by the state.

Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Mr. Chris Keaton, deputy director, House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, 11th floor, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-8569, presented the Executive Budget for FY18-19, an overview, and recommendations for the department.

Representative Dustin Miller inquired about FY16-17 excess budget authority, and Mr. Jack Montoucet, Secretary, Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries (DWLF), 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70898, (225) 765-2800, explained that the department is not a general fund agency; it is responsible to fund hurricanes and floods, with the expectation that reimbursement occurs from the federal government. The idea of a general fund agency gives the implication that the department has excess funds, but it is actually a budget authority.

Major Donald Salpietra, DWLF, 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70898, (225) 281-4833, addressed Representative Miller's questions about driving distance for relocated employees from Opelousas to the new building facility in Lafayette.

Rep. Miguez asked about a capital outlay fund to follow up acquisition of conservation of funds, fees, license, royalties, and the purpose of the fund. Mr. Bryan McClinton, Undersecretary, Office of Management and Finance, DWLF, 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70898, (225) 765-3021, answered questions about the 32 statutory dedications and conservation funds. Mr. McClinton explained that DNR appeared before the Interim Emergency Board to request the purchase of the building in Lafayette and consolidation of several offices. Representative Miguez described the lack of transparency and oversight of the department.

Representative Zeringue inquired about the state management of recreational fish. Mr. Patrick Banks, Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries, (DWLF), P.O. Box 98000, Baton Rouge, LA 70898, (225) 765-2370, reported that the department was asking the federal government to allow Louisiana to manage its own fish.

Representative Bagley recounted the possible elimination of the ongoing feral hog problem throughout the state. Mr. Montoucet stated research is ongoing, but it will require a biological remedy to reduce the number of feral hogs.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next Appropriations meeting will be on Monday, April 2, 2018, at 3:00 p.m.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Representative Smith offered a motion to adjourn. Without objection, the motion passed by a vote of 22 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Henry, Abraham, Amedée, Bacala, Bagley, Berthelot, Billiot, Gary Carter, Chaney, Edmonds, Falconer, Foil, Lance Harris, Hensgens, Hodges, Leger, McFarland, Miguez, Dustin Miller, Richard, Smith, and Zeringue voted yea.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman Cameron Henry
House Committee on Appropriations