

## House Committee on Appropriations

Minutes of Meeting  
2021 Regular Session  
April 19, 2021

### I. CALL TO ORDER

Representative Gary M. Carter, Jr., vice chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations, called the meeting to order at 9:36 a.m. in Room 5, in the state capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The committee administrative assistant called the roll.

### II. ROLL CALL

#### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative Jerome "Zee" Zeringue, chairman  
Representative Roy Daryl Adams  
Representative Tony Bacala  
Representative R. Dewith Carrier  
Representative Gary M. Carter, Jr., vice chairman  
Representative Raymond J. Crews  
Representative Daryl Andrew Deshotel  
Representative Mary DuBuisson  
Representative Rick Edmonds  
Representative Aimee Adatto Freeman  
Representative Lance Harris  
Representative John R. Illg, Jr.  
Representative Frederick Douglass Jones  
Representative Timothy P. Kerner  
Representative Rodney Lyons  
Representative Tanner D. Magee  
Representative C. Denise Marcelle  
Representative Jack G. McFarland  
Representative Blake Miguez  
Representative Dustin Miller  
Representative Troy D. Romero  
Representative Francis C. Thompson  
Representative Christopher Turner  
Representative William "Bill" Wheat, Jr.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Representative Barbara W. Carpenter

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Ms. Katie Andress, committee administrative assistant

Ms. Stephanie Little, attorney

Ms. Amanda Trapp, legislative analyst

**ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES PRESENT:**

Ms. Faye Talbot, sergeant at arms

**III. DISCUSSION**

Representative Carter announced the meeting schedule for Week 3 of the budget presentations.

**House Bill No. 1 by Representative Zeringue**

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

**Department of Transportation and Development**

Mr. Daniel Waguespack, deputy director, House Fiscal Division (HFD), 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-7477, presented an overview and discussed the department's FY 21-22 budget.

Dr. Shawn Wilson, secretary, Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD), 1201 Capitol Access Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 379-1200, discussed federal funding for the state's infrastructure backlog with Representatives Carter and Marcelle.

Secretary Wilson also discussed the department's funded vacancies employee turnover rates, and the utilization of federal funds to build railways and bridges throughout the state with Representative Marcelle. The secretary also discussed the potential increase in gas taxes for the maintenance of the state's roads and bridges with Representatives Crews and Marcelle.

Secretary Wilson discussed the transition to alternative fuels, the need for alternate modes of transportation, the Highway Priority Program, weigh in motion innovations, revenue collections from electric vehicles, and the department's response to winter storms in North Louisiana with Representative Crews.

Secretary Wilson and Dr. Eric Kalivoda, deputy secretary, DOTD, 1201 Capitol Access Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 379-1200, discussed the Highway Priority Program's funding formula for certain areas of the state with Representative Thompson.

*Representative Zeringue in the chair.*

Mr. Waguespack discussed the department's operating budget versus the department's capital outlay budget with Representative Bacala.

Secretary Wilson, Mr. Waguespack, and Mr. Barry Keeling, undersecretary, DOTD, 1201 Capitol Access Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 379-1200 discussed the expenses covered under the department's operating budget and the department's actual expenditures versus budgeted expenditures in FY 20-21 and FY 21-22 with Representatives Bacala and McFarland.

Secretary Wilson also discussed the department's administrative costs, merit increases for employees in FY 21-22, productivity and performance evaluations for those working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the department's fees and self-generated revenues, and the Transportation Infrastructure Model for Economic Development (TIMED) Program with Representative McFarland.

Secretary Wilson updated Representative DuBuisson regarding the completion of certain projects in District 90. The secretary also discussed the department's costs associated with litter abatement, the Take Ten Challenge, and certain federal initiatives proposed by President Biden with Representative DuBuisson.

Secretary Wilson and Mr. Waguespack discussed funding for the Highway Priority Program with Representative Miguez. Secretary Wilson also discussed certain issues within Iberia Parish and funding for emergency responses with Representative Miguez.

Secretary Wilson briefed Representative Edmonds on certain East Baton Rouge Parish improvement projects funded by Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicles (GARVEE) bonds. The secretary also discussed a funding request for certain shovel-ready projects with Representative Edmonds.

Representative Miller took a personal privilege to acknowledge Secretary Wilson and DOTD for their work.

Mr. Waguespack discussed expenditures within the department's Other Charges category with Representative Harris.

Secretary Wilson provided clarification regarding certain permitting and compliance issues with the heliport at Children's Hospital New Orleans and discussed certain issues with the maintenance of Claiborne Avenue with Representative Freeman.

**Louisiana Workforce Commission**

Mr. David Lehman, budget analyst, HFD, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-9101, presented an overview and discussed the commission's FY 21-22 budget.

Ms. Ava Cates, secretary, Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), 1001 North 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-3001, addressed the committee regarding the influx of unemployment claims since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, issues with employee turnover, and unemployment claims fraud. Secretary Cates also provided a handout, Exhibit A, which is included in the committee records.

Secretary Cates discussed the anticipated need for additional federal funding for unemployment claims with Representative Zeringue.

Secretary Cates discussed computer and software issues with processing unemployment claims as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic with Representatives Bacala and Deshotel. Secretary Cates also discussed the process to determine the amount of overpayments issued to certain unemployment claimants and the commission's efforts to prevent UI fraud with Representative Deshotel.

**Department of Natural Resources**

Ms. Maggie Higgins, budget analyst, HFD, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-2441, presented an overview and discussed the department's FY 21-22 budget.

The meeting recessed at 1:07 p.m. and reconvened at 3:39 p.m.

Secretary Thomas Harris, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), 617 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-2710, addressed the committee regarding current trends in the department's budget as a result of fluctuating oil prices. The secretary also discussed the need for additional Table of Organization (T.O.) positions for the Carbon Sequestration Program and the revenue generating potential of the program with Representative Zeringue.

Representative Kerner took a personal privilege to thank Secretary Harris and his staff for helping the City of Lafitte with obtaining certain levee permits.

**Department of Environmental Quality**

Ms. Higgins presented an overview and discussed the FY 21-22 budget for the department.

Dr. Chuck Carr Brown, secretary, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), P.O. Box 4301, Baton Rouge, LA 70821, (225) 219-3950, addressed the committee regarding the department's protocols put in place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2021 legislation to help improve

environmental quality throughout on the state, and the department's plan to utilize federal funds allocated to DEQ. The secretary also discussed utilizing funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for clean water and sewer projects throughout the state with Representative Zeringue.

Ms. Karyn Andrews, undersecretary, DEQ, P.O. Box 4303, Baton Rouge, LA 70821, (225) 219-3845, discussed the department's excess budget authority with Representative Zeringue.

Secretary Brown discussed fee collections from the state's waste tire program with Representatives Illg and Wheat. The secretary also discussed the department's efforts to regulate the waste tire program and to monitor and improve the state's air quality and the department's plan for lithium battery disposal with Representative Illg.

Secretary Brown discussed the Air Quality Index with Representative Crews. The secretary also discussed the long-term effects of low air quality with Representatives Jones and Marcelle.

Secretary Brown discussed the department's list of priority clean water projects, legislation to development a self-auditing process for certain facilities, and the utilization of federal funds for certain area monitors with Representatives Crews and Marcelle.

### **Department of Justice**

Ms. Jamie Tairov, budget analyst, HFD, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-0474, presented an overview and discussed the department's FY 21-22 budget.

Ms. Melissa Gannuch, administrative services deputy director, Department of Justice (DOJ), 1885 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 326-6734, discussed the success rate of the department's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit with Representative Wheat.

Ms. Elise Cazes, administrative services director, DOJ, 1005 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 326-6005, discussed the department's alleged use of state general funds to support the Rule of Law Defense Fund and the Republican Attorney General's Association. Ms. Cazes also discussed the breakdown of funds spent on outside counsel for certain lawsuits within the department with Representatives Freeman and Harris.

Ms. Cazes also discussed the department's efforts to create an equitable environment for women in the workplace with Representative Freeman.

Ms. Cazes discussed the department's responsibilities to the legislature and the Edwards versus the House of Representatives lawsuit with Representative Miguez.

#### **IV. BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

#### **V. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Persons who do not feel comfortable giving testimony in person at this time may submit a prepared statement in accordance with House Rule 14.33 in lieu of appearing before the committee:

A. Any interested person or any committee member may file with the committee a prepared statement concerning a specific instrument or matter under consideration by the committee or concerning any matter within the committee's scope of authority, and the committee records shall reflect receipt of such statement and the date and time thereof.

B. Any person who files a prepared statement which contains data or statistical information shall include in such prepared statement sufficient information to identify the source of the data or statistical information.

For the purposes of this Paragraph, the term "source" shall mean a publication, website, person, or other source from which the data or statistical information contained in the prepared statement was obtained by the person or persons who prepared the statement.

NOTE: Only statements mailed to [h-app@legis.la.gov](mailto:h-app@legis.la.gov) and received prior to noon on Friday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, will be included in the record for this committee meeting.

All persons desiring to participate in the meeting shall utilize appropriate protective health measures and observe the recommended and appropriate social distancing.

#### **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

Representative Turner offered a motion to adjourn. Without objection, the motion passed by a vote of 18 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Zeringue, Bacala, Carrier, Carter, Deshotel, DuBuisson, Edmonds, Freeman, Harris, Jones, Lyons, Marcelle, McFarland, Miguez, Romero, Thompson, Turner, and Wheat voted yea.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman Jerome "Zee" Zeringue  
House Committee on Appropriations