

House Committee on Appropriations

Minutes of Meeting
2021 Regular Session
April 20, 2021

I. CALL TO ORDER

Representative Jerome "Zee" Zeringue, chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations, called the meeting to order at 9:11 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 Barbara W. Carpenter
Representative R. Dewith Carrier
Senator Gary M. Carter, Jr., vice chairman
Representative Raymond J. Crews
Representative Daryl Andrew Deshotel
Representative Mary DuBuisson
Representative Rick Edmonds
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 Aimee Adatto Freeman

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**Louisiana Housing Corporation**

Ms. Desireé Honoré Thomas, assistant commissioner, Division of Administration (DOA), 1201 North Third Street, Suite 7-210, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-7000, and Treasurer John Schroder, Department of Treasury, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-0010, discussed the pending investigation of allegations against the executive director of the Louisiana Housing Corporation and the administration of the Emergency Rental Assistance Program with Representative Zeringue.

Mr. Pat Forbes, executive director, Office of Community Development, 1201 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-1626, discussed certain requirements for multi-family housing to comply with the Enterprise Green Communities Program with Representative Crews.

Division of Administration - Office of Community Development

Mr. Forbes discussed the timeline for allocating federal funds for certain watershed projects within each of the state's watershed regions and the allocation of funding for certain Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) projects throughout the state with Representatives Zeringue and Edmonds.

Ms. Thomas discussed the total amount of funding drawn down for flood mitigation efforts in response to the 2016 floods and the anticipated start date of certain state and local projects with Representatives Zeringue and Edmonds.

Mr. Forbes discussed the federal grant process for the state's flood mitigation projects with Representative Crews.

Mr. Forbes discussed the administrative costs associated with the state's watershed projects with Representative Zeringue.

Mr. Forbes and Ms. Thomas discussed the Isle de Jean Charles relocation project with Representative Magee.

Mr. Forbes discussed funding for the Amite River Basin watershed model and the urgency of constructing the state's watershed projects with Representatives Bacala and Wheat.

Mr. Forbes discussed the Watershed Council's review process for selecting certain watershed projects and the cost associated with the review process with Representative Deshotel. Ms. Thomas also discussed the application process for watershed projects with Representative Deshotel.

Mr. Dan Rees, deputy executive counsel, Office of Community Development, 1201 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-1718, and Mr. Forbes discussed lawsuits associated with the Road Home Program with Representative Carter.

House Bill No. 1 by Representative Zeringue

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

Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Ms. Maggie Higgins, budget analyst, House Fiscal Division (HFD), 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-2441, presented an overview and discussed the FY 21-22 budget for the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF).

Representative Carter in the chair.

Secretary Jack Montoucet, LDWF, 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70808, (225) 454-3317, addressed the committee regarding efforts to streamline the department's budget and its impending fiscal cliff.

Representative Zeringue in the chair.

Secretary Montoucet discussed the decline in revenue for the department's Conservation Fund and the department's plan to restructure certain hunting and fishing licenses with Representative Edmonds.

Secretary Montoucet discussed the effects of building artificial reefs to prevent coastal erosion with Representative Carpenter. The secretary also discussed the department's efforts to restructure and diversify personnel with Representative Carpenter.

Mr. Cole Garrett, general counsel, LDWF, 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70808, (225) 763-5577, discussed the department's funded vacancies with Representative Carpenter.

Representative Carter in the chair.

Secretary Montoucet and Mr. J. Travis McIlwain, director, Office of Planning and Budget, 1201 North Third Street, Suite 7-150, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-7005, discussed the department's receipt of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding or American Recovery Plan funding with Representative Romero. Secretary Montoucet also discussed the potential consolidation of agencies within the department with Representative Romero.

Secretary Montoucet and Mr. Garrett discussed potential legislation to restructure hunting and fishing licenses and the effects of lifetime licenses on the department with Representatives Bacala and Romero.

Secretary Montoucet and Mr. Garrett discussed funding for aquatic plant spraying and artificial reefs with Representative Wheat.

Louisiana Racing Commission

Mr. Chris Henry, budget analyst, HFD, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-1394, presented an overview and discussed the commission's FY 21-22 budget.

Mr. Charles Gardiner, executive director, Louisiana Racing Commission, 320 North Carrollton Avenue, Suite 2-B, New Orleans, LA 70119, (504) 483-4000, addressed the committee regarding the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the commission. Mr. Gardiner also discussed the commission's functions and provided a status update on the Delta Downs Race Track with Representative Carter.

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 and received prior to noon on Monday, April 19th, 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 Zeringue offered a motion to adjourn. Without objection, the motion passed by a vote of 13 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Zeringue, Adams, Bacala, Carpenter, Carrier, Carter, Crews, Edmonds, Jones, Marcelle, Miguez, Dustin Miller, and Romero voted yea.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:58 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman Jerome "Zee" Zeringue
House Committee on Appropriations