

House Committee on Appropriations

Minutes of Meeting
2022 Regular Session
March 28, 2022

I. CALL TO ORDER

Representative Jerome "Zee" Zeringue, 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.

II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative Jerome "Zee" Zeringue, chairman
Representative Tony Bacala
Representative R. Dewith Carrier
Representative Raymond J. Crews
Representative Daryl Andrew Deshotel
Representative Mary DuBuisson
Representative Rick Edmonds
Representative Aimee Adatto Freeman
Representative Brett F. Geymann
Representative Timothy P. Kerner
Representative Rodney Lyons
Representative C. Denise Marcelle
Representative Jack G. McFarland
Representative Dustin Miller
Representative Troy D. Romero
Representative Francis C. Thompson, vice chairman
Representative Christopher Turner
Representative Debbie Villio
Representative William "Bill" Wheat, Jr.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Representative Barbara W. Carpenter
Representative Jason Hughes
Representative John R. Illg, Jr.
Representative Blake Miguez

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dazia Briscoe, committee administrative assistant
Chris Henry, budget analyst
Ashari Robinson, budget analyst
Jamie Tairov, budget analyst

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES PRESENT:

Faye Talbot, sergeant at arms
Vivian Hurst, sergeant at arms

III. BUSINESS**Discussion of the FY 22-23 Budget for:****Special Schools and Commissions**

Mr. Ashari Robinson, budget analyst, House Fiscal Division (HFD), 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-2412, presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for Special Schools and Commissions.

Ms. Katherine Granier, Special Schools District (SSD), 2888 Brightside Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70820, (225) 757-3220, provided opening comments to the committee.

Representative Crews and Ms. Granier discussed reasons why the majority of instructional positions remain unfilled and the manner in which to address those gaps in the next year.

Louisiana School for Math, Science and the Arts (LSMSA)

Mr. Ashari Robinson, budget analyst, presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for the Louisiana School for Math, Science and the Arts (LSMSA).

Dr. Steve Horton, executive director, LSMSA, 715 University Parkway, Natchitoches, LA 71457, (318) 527-9267, expressed the transition year due to COVID and that the school experienced no closures during the pandemic.

Mr. John A. Allen, chief of staff and director of administration, LSMSA, 715 University Parkway, Natchitoches, LA 71457, (318) 663-6167, was available to answer members' questions.

Representative Zeringue and Dr. Horton discussed instructional position challenges due to enrollment numbers to ensure the school could sustain adequate staff.

Representative Thompson and Dr. Horton discussed school enrollment representation from each of the 64 parishes.

Representative Freeman and Dr. Horton discussed 65% of LSMSA alumni reside within the state.

Thrive Academy

Mr. Ashari Robinson, budget analyst, presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for Thrive Academy.

Mr. Paul Sampson, executive director and superintendent, Thrive Academy, 2585 Brightside Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70820, (225) 236-6791, addressed the committee with opening comments regarding the five-day boarding model which serves some of the most at-risk students in grades 7-12 throughout the state. This allows the school to immerse the students in a 24-hour learning environment, high-quality education, arts, extra curricular activities, and wrap-around services. Mr. Sampson provided committee members with a handout, Exhibit A, which is included in the committee records.

Ms. Diane Layrisson, chief financial officer, Thrive Academy, 2585 Brightside Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70820, (225) 223-6923, was available to answer members' questions.

Representative Crews and Mr. Robinson discussed page 18 of the PowerPoint presentation, New Orleans Creative Center for the Arts (NOCCA).

Representative Crews, Mr. Sampson, and Ms. Layrisson discussed the American Rescue Plan (ARP) dollars and additional staffing for mental health, residence assistants, social workers and staff who serve as role models to the students.

Representative Bacala and Mr. Sampson discussed the school having been a state agency for the past years, the waiting list, and expansion of transportation.

Representative Zeringue and Mr. Sampson discussed staff positions, transportation, and maintenance of the facility.

Louisiana Educational Television Authority (LETA)

Mr. Ashari Robinson, budget analyst, presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for the La. Educational Television Authority.

Mr. Clarence Copeland, executive director, Louisiana Educational Television Authority (LETA), 7733 Perkins Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70810, (225) 767-4446, provided opening comments to the committee regarding live broadcasts, lunch and learns, infrastructure needs, including a transmitter that is at end-of-life status, and an elevator, which once unserviceable, will be non-ADA compliant. Mr. Copeland provided committee members a handout, Exhibit B, which is included in the committee records.

Representative Freeman and Mr. Copeland discussed visits to Representative Freeman's office by WYES and WLAE regarding the funding with La. Public Broadcasting.

Ms. Kimberly Ducote, business director, LETA, 7733 Perkins Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70810, (no card provided) was available to answer members' questions.

Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE)

Mr. Ashari Robinson, budget analyst, presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE).

Ms. Shan Davis, executive director, Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), (no address provided), (225) 342-5480, introduced herself to the committee.

New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts (NOCCA)

Mr. Ashari Robinson, budget analyst, presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts (NOCCA).

Mr. Silas Cooper, president, NOCCA, 2800 Chartres Street, New Orleans, LA 70117, (504) 940-2850, provided opening comments to the committee regarding the apprenticeship model, work ethic and discipline, and a professional environment. Mr. Cooper provided committee members with a handout, Exhibit C, which is included in the committee records.

Representative Crews, Mr. Cooper, and Ms. Ms. Lotti Delaney, chief financial officer, NOCCA, 2800 Chartres Street, New Orleans, LA 70117, (504) 940-2826, discussed the enrollment at NOCCA, and the two prep programs available to students.

Representative Freeman commented on the statewide approach to attracting students to NOCCA and her offer to help President Cooper in any way possible.

Representative DuBuisson and President Cooper discussed students commuting daily to NOCCA and her offer to help President Cooper in any way possible.

Executive Department Overview

Mr. Chris Henry, budget analyst, HFD, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-1394, presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for the Executive Department overview.

Executive Office

Mr. Ashari Robinson, budget analyst, presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for the Executive Office.

Office of Indian Affairs

Mr. Ashari Robinson, budget analyst, presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for the Office of Indian Affairs.

Division of Administration

Mr. Ashari Robinson, budget analyst, presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for the Division of Administration.

Ms. Desiree Honore' Thomas, Division of Administration (DOA), 1201 North Third Street, Suite 7-210, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-7000, introduced herself to the committee members and was available to answer questions.

Representative Lyons and Ms. Thomas discussed the Office of Community Development and its operation. Ms. Thomas discussed the funding was split into two areas, disaster recovery unit, which is 98% federal, and 2%, for local governments various needs.

Representative Lyons and Ms. Thomas discussed Road Home leftover funds, which were obligated and similar to other federal appropriations that occurred in 2005. Congress appropriated funds for various recovery efforts that went through the La. Recovery Authority.

Mr. Pat Forbes, executive director, Office of Community Development, P.O. Box 94095, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 219-9600, addressed Representative Lyons' additional questions regarding multi-family housing programs that took different shapes for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and combined Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) disaster recovery funds with low-income tax credits to build affordable rental housing that would be affordable for 35 years. The vast majority of the money placed into those projects was monitored by the Louisiana Housing Corporation (LHC).

Representative Lyons, Mr. Forbes, and Ms. Thomas further discussed Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidelines and compliance.

Representative Zeringue and Mr. Forbes discussed mitigating issues with HUD from Hurricanes Laura and Ida.

Mr. Forbes offered a handout to committee members, Exhibit D, which is included in the committee records. Mr. Forbes explained that Congress appropriated \$5 billion in 2020-2021 and required HUD to allocate funds for 2020 in 30 days.

Representative Zeringue and Mr. Forbes discussed the Louisiana Watershed Initiative (LWI) and what the anticipated next round of funds would be. Thus far, \$400 million was allocated to projects with a remaining balance of \$600 million for other projects.

Mr. Forbes further discussed the Louisiana Homeowner Assistance Fund Program Design (HAF) application process, obvious needs of the citizens, and how those needs would be addressed.

Representative Zeringue questioned the modeling effort begun last year and the budget authority of \$626 million but no significant utilization or reduction of funds. Ms. Thomas and Mr. Forbes explained there was \$500 million remaining that would be allocated to other disaster recovery projects in 2022.

Representative Deshotel requested an update on the Granting Unserved Municipalities Broadband Opportunities (GUMBO) Grant Program. Mr. Veneeth Iyengar, executive director, Office of Broadband Development & Connectivity, Division of Administration, (no address provided), (202) 421-1997, spoke to the committee regarding the application and protest processes, data provided by the FCC, and later, assessments will be provided.

Representative Bacala and Mr. Forbes discussed progress in alleviating flood protection. The seven watershed regions and approved projects for Region 7 were also discussed.

Representative Zeringue and Mr. Forbes discussed a federal register notice received in December 2019 in anticipation of receiving funds. Representative Bacala requested a list of the plans in the various regions (from 2016) for the committee members to review.

Representative Zeringue and Ms. Thomas discussed ARP dollars in regard to the offset of revenue loss.

Mental Health Advocacy Service (MHAS)

Mr. Ashari Robinson, budget analyst, presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for the Mental Health Advocacy Service.

Ms. Rebecca May-Ricks, director, Mental Health Advocacy Service (MHAS), 627 North Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 819-7122, was available to answer committee members questions.

Representative Wheat and Ms. May-Ricks discussed providing a broad perspective of advocating for mental health clients.

Representative Dustin Miller and Ms. May-Ricks discussed examples of legal representation of mental health patients in a hospital setting such as the services that a hospital recommends after a patient is discharged with a recommendation for a particular type of treatment.

Representative Miller and Ms. Kathy Lynn Cook, attorney-deputy general counsel, Mental Health Advocacy Service (MHAS), 627 North Fourth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 819-7122, discussed protocol when mental patients have been admitted to a hospital.

Representative Thompson and Ms. May-Ricks discussed whether Louisiana was on par with national standards as far as meeting the needs of the community.

Office of Inspector General (OIG)

Ms. Jamie Tairov, budget analyst, House Fiscal Division (HFD), 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-2412, presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for the Office of Inspector General.

Mr. Stephen Street, inspector general, OIG, 602 North Fifth Street, Suite #621, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-4262, provided an overview of the independent, statutory, law enforcement agency, dedicated to investigating criminal fraud and public corruption.

Representative Crews and Mr. Street discussed how cases could be brought before the OIG. Oftentimes the cases are identified on their own, through COVID-19's response and recovery to protect people, funds, infrastructure, and effectiveness of the HHS programs, compliance to nursing facilities, hospitals, pharmaceutical manufacturers and whistle blower programs.

Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA)

Mr. Robinson presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for CPRA.

Mr. Chip Kline, director of coastal activities for the state of Louisiana, and chairman, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority Board, 1051 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-4367, will be presenting a \$1.3 billion plan to the legislature this year, the largest allocation for hurricane protection and coastal restoration projects in the history of the state's coastal program.

Mr. Bren Haase, executive director, CPRA, 150 Terrace Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA, (225) 342-2179, discussed the plans of the CPRA and described how the coastal plan has matured from FY18.

Representative Crews and Mr. Haase discussed how the conditions in northern Louisiana affect the coastal restoration in terms of silt in rivers and dredging. One of the prime examples relate to the major rivers and how water is moving through the Atchafalaya Basin, flood seasons, delivering sediment to our coast and rebuilding the wetlands, and the amount of fresh water coming out of Toledo Bend Reservoir through the Sabine River.

Ms. Janice Lansing, chief financial officer, Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA), 150 Terrace Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-7308, was available to answer members' questions.

Representative Kerner expressed his gratitude for the continued work of CPRA and stated Lafitte Parish's lack of federal investments.

Representative DuBuisson expressed her gratitude to CPRA for their assistance in educating her for St. Tammany Parish.

Representative Thompson expressed his gratitude to CPRA for their dedication to the entire coastline and asked for additional information on the most critical areas in the state. Mr. Kline explained the protection differences along the coastline, areas across south Louisiana, gaps in protection, levy systems in New Orleans, Tangipahoa, and St. Tammany Parishes, along with Lafitte, Grand Isle, and Barataria Basin.

Louisiana Tax Commission (LTC)

Mr. Chris Henry, budget analyst, House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-1394, presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for Louisiana Tax Commission.

Mr. Michael Matherne, administrator, Louisiana Tax Commission (LTC), 1051 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 219-0339, provided opening comments to the committee members.

Mr. Rajesh Jain, director, Louisiana Tax Commission (LTC), 1051 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 219-0339, was available to answer questions.

Representative Deshotel, Mr. Matherne, and Mr. Jain discussed OTS upgrades and the service fees increase of \$116,000, doubling the technology budget, yet with no additional services.

Department of Military Affairs

Mr. Robinson presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for the Department of Military Affairs.

Representative Thompson in the chair.

Major General Keith Waddell, adjutant general for the Louisiana National Guard, 6400 St. Claude Avenue, Jackson Barracks, New Orleans, LA 70117, (318) 416-7534, provided opening comments to the committee.

Representative Crews and Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Paul, director, Louisiana educational programs, Louisiana National Guard, 505 F Street, Pineville, LA 71360, (318) 641-5800, discussed the five StarBase locations within the state, funding for the at-risk youth challenge program, and increased federal funding along with the 25% received from the state. The Louisiana National Guard will be at 100% full occupancy when the next class begins in June 2022.

Representative Crews and Major General Waddell discussed responding to a federal command and the deployment of troops.

Representative Deshotel and Major General Waddell discussed cybersecurity work the Louisiana National Guard.

Louisiana Public Defender Board

Ms. Jamie Tairov, budget analyst, House Fiscal Division, 900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-0472, presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for Louisiana Public Defender Board.

Mr. Remy Starns, state public defender, 301 Main Street, 7th floor, Baton Rouge, LA 70816, (225) 408-9805, addressed the committee with a broad overview of the agency and the possibility of additional appropriations.

Representative Crews and Mr. Starns discussed the process of becoming the state public defender and the number of public defender cases throughout the state of Louisiana.

Representative Dustin Miller and Mr. Starns discussed additional funding, one public defender attending to approximately over 350 caseload numbers, and addressing the shortage of public defender offices within particular parishes.

Representative Romero and Mr. Starns discussed the \$3 million allocated last year for renovations and how much of that money remains. Mr. Starns shared that he continues to search for public defender offices and invited the committee members to join in the search.

Representative Bacala and Mr. Starns discussed the backlog of cases was partially due to the pandemic, as well as the deficiencies with prosecutors and judges moving cases through the court system.

Louisiana Stadium and Exposition District (LSED)

Mr. Chris Henry, budget analyst, HFD, presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for the LSED.

Mr. Evan Holmes, director of Business Operations ASM Global, LSED, 1500 Sugar Bowl Drive, New Orleans, LA 70112, (no phone number provided), addressed the committee with opening remarks.

Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement (LCLE)

Ms. Jamie Tairov, budget analyst, HFD, presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement.

Mr. Bob Wertz, training manager, LCLE, 602 North Fifth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-1500, was available to answer committee members' questions.

Office of Elderly Affairs

Mr. Chris Henry, budget analyst, HFD, presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for the Office of Elderly Affairs.

Ms. Shirley Merrick, executive director, Office of Elderly Affairs, 602 North Fifth Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 342-7100, briefly stated the agency was required by state statute to request full funding money for the senior centers, but the money was later removed from the budget.

Representative Bacala and Ms. Merrick discussed how the removal of funding from the bill amounted to \$979,000, which could be used for transportation and delivery of meals for senior centers.

Louisiana State Racing Commission

Mr. Chris Henry, budget analyst, HFD, presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for the Louisiana State Racing Commission.

Mr. Charles Gardiner, executive director, Louisiana State Racing Commission, 320 North Carrollton Avenue, Suite 2-B, New Orleans, LA 70719, (504) 483-4000, addressed the committee on historical

horse racing (HHR), and tasks the racing commission faces with regulating this new form of wagering.

Representative Wheat and Mr. Gardiner discussed the amount of income we would be gaining as a state and whether we would be offsetting the costs.

Representative Dustin Miller and Mr. Gardiner discussed pari-mutuel racing that corresponds under the purview of the State Racing Commission.

Office of Financial Institutions

Mr. Chris Henry, budget analyst, HFD, presented an overview and discussed the FY22-23 budget for the Office of Financial Institutions.

Mr. Stan Dameron, commissioner, Office of Financial Institutions, 8660 United Plaza Boulevard, Second Floor, Baton Rouge, LA 70809, (225) 925-4660, was available to answer members' questions and provided a handout, Exhibit E, which is included in the committee records.

Representative Thompson and Mr. Dameron discussed the status of banks post-COVID-19.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Representative Romero offered a motion to adjourn. Without objection, the motion passed by a vote of 19 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Zeringue, Bacala, Carrier, Crews, Deshotel, DuBuisson, Edmonds, Freeman, Geymann, Kerner, Lyons, Marcelle, McFarland, Dustin Miller, Romero, Thompson, Turner, Villio, and Wheat voted yea.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman Jerome "Zee" Zeringue
House Committee on Appropriations