

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON ELECTED OFFICIALS
MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

January 24, 1977
8:10 a.m.
Room 428A
State Capitol Building

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Lynch with all members being present, except Representative Gunderson who is excused. The subjects of the hearings for this meeting: Western States' Forestry Task Force, under the Legislative Council's budget; Traffic Safety proposals; Construction program, Department of Highways.

Senator Joe Roberts (District 11) and Senator Bob Brown (District 10) were present to give testimony in support of that portion of the Legislative Council's budget for the Western States' Forestry Task Force. It was explained that this is a task force composed of a group of state legislators from five western states (California, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington) that are affected by federal decisions on timbered lands. They have found that Congress is very receptive to the proposals of the task force, and they have been influential in implementing programs that benefit the western states. During the last biennium the travel expenses were included in the budget, but they had to request a supplemental budget. Of the \$6,000 allocated in the last biennium, \$44 is left. They now request that funding be included for membership dues, in the amount of \$4,000. This is an increase in membership dues. It was explained that the task force devised a formula for the amount of dues each state must pay, based on population and the amount of commercial timber land in the state. California pays \$37,000; Montana pays less than the other states but derives a great deal of benefit from the efforts of the task force. They elaborated on some of the accomplishments that have been especially beneficial to Montana and its people, including the change to federal payment of state lands in lieu of taxes. Senator Roberts observed that their major administrative expense is related to the hiring of an executive director, who is located in Sacramento, California. They felt that it was extremely important that Montana be able to continue participating in this task force as they have been able to implement programs that are very beneficial to the state. The request for \$4,000 for membership dues is in addition to the travel expenses of about \$3,500.

The Administrator of the Highway Traffic Safety Division, Department of Community Affairs, Mr. Albert Goke explained his proposal for an additional \$500,000 for expansion of his programs. There are five (5) areas he feels should be implemented in order to decrease the death and injury counts related to highway accidents. He is unable, he explained, to obtain the necessary funds for these programs from the federal government. His programs, briefly, are as follows:

- 1) \$130,000 for the addition of a second five-man accident prevention unit within the highway patrol enforcement unit. This has been an ongoing function for three years, does save lives and brings a \$25 return for every dollar invested, Mr. Goke reported.
- 2) \$150,000 to contract with local governments in selective enforcement aid. It has worked in Great Falls with great success. They would work with the larger cities in the state initially.
- 3) \$100,000 to be used in working with the lower courts in the state for D.W.I. schools, not only for first offenses but for additional also. They have had a good deal of success with the programs they have been conducting in Billings and Great Falls, where they have recently found that they had only three offenders return to court after going through this program. Neither Billings or Great Falls had the resources to provide courses beyond a first offender instruction course; it has cost \$20,000 a year.
- 4) \$50,000 to contract on technical aspects for engineering, assessing and designing needs for the smaller cities and counties. Mr. Goke feels the state government should play a larger role in giving assistance in this area to the local governments in the state.
- 5) \$20,000 increase for a "personal budget" for research within the division. Federal funds cannot be used for research.

Chairman Lynch inquired how this fund request would affect the highway trust fund; for the biennium the trust fund would lose about \$1,000,000.

There was a brief discussion of the bill proposed by Mr. Goke and the status of it presently. There being no further questions or comments, the hearing on this subject was closed.

John Prebil, Administrator, Centralized Services Division, distributed a memorandum explaining the requests for the Construction program (attached hereto). It includes the request that termination sick and annual leave payments be allowed; they also request salaries and related expenses be added back into the construction budget.

Senator Lockrem commented that the legislators have been asked to watch for increases in overtime fundings and asked for a justification of the request for a quarter million dollars in this area. Mr. C.R. Mackey, Construction Bureau Chief, responded that contractors work ten hours a day five days a week, some also work on Saturdays. He feels they are at the mercy of the contractors. It was also explained by Jack Beckert, Administrator of the Engineering Division, that there are certain jobs the department does not have to perform, but they must keep track of what they are doing and make sure a satisfactory service is being performed. Mr. Gosnell indicated this is the beginning of a heavy construction period, this being the heaviest year. The request for the division is \$500,000 for fiscal year 1978 and slightly less for fiscal year 1979.

Mr. Prebil discussed the items included in the personal services or "salary" portion of their budget. Under termination sick and annual leave, the overall package would be about \$200,000 per fiscal year for the department. Employer-paid benefits, such as health insurance, unemployment security, social security, totals about 15%.

A memorandum explaining further the request for the travel promotion budget was passed out to each committee member. Mr. Prebil feels that some provision should be made to fund this as it will bring in some additional income for the department.

Mr. Gosnell, upon the request of Senator Regan, asked that the committee be furnished with information on the total estimate of federal funds coming into the state; the breakdown of funds under Title 23 for 1975, 1976, 1978 and 1979 by section and amounts; an estimate of the proportion of federal funds the state can expect to obtain when monies are released for maintenance of interstate highways over five years old; and some other information. He also asked if reclassification need be done this biennium or if it could be deferred or absorbed by other areas. Responding to an inquiry from Senator Regan on matching funds, Mr. Prebil explained that matching is done at the time the contract is established, to assure that they don't have more contracts out than monies to spend. It is difficult for them to predict when the contractors will complete the work contracted because of weather and contractor problems. It was reported by Mr. Beckert that in 1975 they were caught up on highway funds by about \$47,000,000; in 1976, by about \$9,000,000; in 1977 they expect to catch up on obligations by \$14,000,000; in 1978, \$26,000,000; 1979 is contingent upon many factors, including primarily how the federal government lets them use the money. Mr. Prebil will try to bring back answers to the questions presented to him and additional information for the committee members.

The "PBS" system which will be discussed at the hearing on January 25, refers to Priority Budgeting System, and Mr. Gosnell feels it is the kind of system that will work well with the Department of Highways.

Wednesday, January 26, the hearing for the Department of Administration will begin about 9:00 a.m., after the committee takes some executive action on the Department of Highways budgets.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 a.m.


J.D. Lynch, Chairman