

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
SUBCOMMITTEE AGENCY 1

MONTANA LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
LIBRARY

February 14, 1977
8:00 A.M.
Room 343
State Capitol Bldg.

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Bradley. Roll was taken with Representative Marks and Senator Stephens absent.

WRAP UP ON PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION -

Mr. Bob Robinson talked about his final recommendations on their supplemental requests. He said he took a look at all of their current employees, their jobs and came up with the following additional people. He feels a C.P.A. or Tax Accountant position is justified.

An Auditor would be justified along with a Hearing Reporter. He is not sure what it takes to cut down on lag time, but perhaps the Hearing Reporter could cut it down by approximately 10 days. He mentioned the rates are set on the basis of cost so seems they need someone with accounting or auditing background. He gave an example of how Montana Power used the tax deferment in their base request and the commission did not really understand it. The C.P.A. or tax Accounting could also team with the auditor.

Mr. Robinson also recommends an Economist. The Economist could also handle the rate structure analysis and development. The Economist could be their computer man.

The Executive Administrator - He feels this position is necessary primarily because the Commission is a political organization. He feels one of the problems is that none of the commissioners want to give too much authority to one another, therefore they need one administrator over all.

Representative Gunderson asked about the attorney.

Mr. Robinson said they want to replace the Personnel Officer with an attorney. They have a problem of ex-parte right now. If someone presents the material on one side, he can't help write the order, etc. They have been doing this for 2 or 3 years and nothing has ever been said about it.

Senator Roberts said they explained this position was an oversight. He said they already have that person on board.

Mr. Robinson mentioned you are not supposed to just add a person whenever you want to. You have to be authorized, which had not been the case.

Senator Story asked if they had heard from the Consumer Advocate? The LFA said another subcommittee was working on that.

There was some discussion on the Consumer Advocate.

Representative Gunderson said he was inclined to go along with the additional 5 positions based on the fact the rate increases are coming along so often. The only question I have with these 5 positions, will that enable them to get a better handle on it.

The LFA said the hearing reporter should speed up the process. As far as the other positions, he wasn't sure.

Representative Gunderson mentioned he thought the Executive Administrator might be the key to speeding things up.

Mr. Robinson said they had 4 administrators now and he was not sure the Centralized Services Administrator could not be upgraded to the Executive Administrator. He mentioned Jim Dwyer was going to return to college.

Representative Gunderson asked if they could put more money into that so they could upgrade the position at the time Mr. Dwyer is finished?

Representative Bradley thought that might be all right, but mentioned they really wanted an Executive Administrator. I think we should go ahead and give it to them.

Senator Thomas said this is probably the most essential. We have to come up with something to help them upgrade their efficiency because I think the legislature will be taking a long hard look at them the next time if they have not improved.

Representative Bradley mentioned that in transportation, they were not in too bad a shape. I think they do help out back and forth between division.

Representative Gunderson then asked about the Customer Service Representative for utilities.

The LFA said Mr. Bollinger said they would like to have two completely separate people if possible.

There was more discussion on this.

Senator Thomas made a motion to accept the LFA recommendation for these 5 new people.

AYES - Unanimous -

MOTION PASSED

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Senator Story mentioned there are several bills in now to work this commission over. If any of these pass, we might have to change some things we are doing. This was agreed to by the committee.

Senator Roberts asked about the auditor they are recommending. What is this.

Mr. Robinson said a Utility Auditor. He will go out into the field, bring back the material and build a data bank to go into the computer.

Senator Roberts then mentioned the Commission had rated the Transportation Auditor above the Auditor for Utilities.

Bob Robinson said he had looked at both positions very carefully and feel they have more problems in utilities than in transportation. He felt the C.P.A. could work with both transportation and utilities.

Senator Roberts mentioned that most of the comments he hears is from small truckers on transportation. He felt perhaps they need help here.

Bob Robinson said the Administrative position or Assistant position has been empty for the past 8 months. They are now doing some interviews and hope to hire someone soon.

Senator Roberts said he would like to see them with a couple more people. They need an attorney and I feel they need another auditor. I can't believe they don't have people doing that now.

Representative Bradley asked if he wanted them for both years?

Senator Roberts said maybe we could do that with the auditor, but he would fund them for the biennium.

Senator Story said on the basis of what we are going to do with legislation, the consumer advocate, and because they are not getting further behind, I would vote no.

There was more discussion about the attorney.

Senator Story said I think if we pass the senate bill the philosophical problem is corrected.

Representative Bradley said she would go along with the auditor.

Senator Thomas said he would want them to come up with some justification of their re-organization of the department. I don't think the consumer advocate belongs in that department either.

Senator Story said one other thing in relation to these positions, if we short them they will be back. If we over due it, they won't be back and we won't have any hearing to cut them back.

There was more discussion about the bills coming up and what it could mean.

Senator Thomas asked that they postpone any decision on this until more thought could be given to this.

Everyone agreed.

Senator Roberts then withdrew his motion.

The meeting was adjourned until tomorrow at 8:00 a.m.

Dorothy Bradley
Dorothy Bradley, Chairman

Nina Kosmas, Sec.