

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**FEBRUARY 12, 2025
5:15 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Sara Hannan, Chair
Senate President Gary Stevens, Vice Chair
Representative Ashley Carrick
Representative Bryce Edgmon
Representative Chuck Kopp
Representative Donna Mears (alternate)
Representative Mike Prax
Representative Louise Stutes
Senator Matt Claman
Senator Cathy Giessel
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson
Senator Jesse Kiehl
Senator Bert Stedman

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Calvin Schrage
Senator Lyman Hoffman
Senator Löki Tobin (alternate)

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT

None

AGENDA

COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION
APPROVAL OF AGENDA
COMMITTEE POLICIES
APPROVAL OF MINUTES
COMMITTEE BUSINESS

SPEAKER REGISTER

Jessica Geary, Executive Director, Legislative Affairs Agency
(LAA)
Mindy Kissner, Finance Manager, LAA
Emily Nauman, Director, Legal Services, LAA
Hilary Martin, Revisor of Statutes, Legal Services, LAA

I. CALL TO ORDER

5:18:18 PM

SPEAKER EDGMON called the Legislative Council meeting to order at 5:18pm on Wednesday, February 12, 2025, in room 519 (House Finance) of the State Capitol. Present at the call were Representatives Carrick, Edgmon, Kopp, Prax, Stutes, Mears, Hannan; Senators Claman, Giessel, Gray-Jackson, Kiehl, Stevens.

Twelve members present.

Senator Stedman joined the meeting at 5:23pm.

II. COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION
a. Election of the Chair

5:19:29 PM

SPEAKER EDGMON nominated Representative Sara Hannan as the Chair of Legislative Council and asked unanimous consent and that nominations be closed.

Without objection, Representative Sara Hannan was elected Chair of Legislative Council.

b. Election of the Vice Chair

5:20:14 PM

SENATOR GIESSEL nominated and elected Senate President Gary Stevens as the Vice-Chair of Legislative Council and asked for unanimous consent and that nominations be closed.

Without objection, Senate President Gary Stevens was elected Vice-Chair of Legislative Council.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

5:20:40 PM

VICE CHAIR STEVENS moved and asked unanimous consent that Legislative Council approve the agenda as presented.

The motion passed without objection.

IV. COMMITTEE POLICIES
a. Quorum and Voting Requirements

CHAIR HANNAN stated that it has been a long-standing policy of the Council to have a requirement of eight members for a quorum and eight members to pass a motion. With a fourteen-

member joint committee, this policy ensures that any motion requires at least one member of the other body to prevail so that no one side of our bicameral body could pass a motion without collaboration with the others. She said unless there is an objection, she would like to maintain this tradition.

The policy was maintained without objection.

CHAIR HANNAN suggested a minor modification to the Legislative Council's voting practices. She proposed that roll call votes only be conducted when at least one member is participating via teleconference or if an objection is maintained. She explained that this change would streamline meetings, allowing the Council to proceed more efficiently when there is no dispute and no remote participants requiring a roll call. Unless there is an objection, she proposed adopting the policy of approving votes by stating, "If there is no objection, it will pass."

The policy was maintained with no objection.

b. Alternate Members

CHAIR HANNAN stated in 2011, the Council adopted the practice of appointing alternate members, similar to other committees such as Legislative Budget and Audit and Ethics. For 2025-2026, the alternate member for the Senate is Senator Tobin and the alternate member for the House is Representative Mears.

CHAIR HANNAN elaborated that an alternate may only participate in the absence of an appointed Council member of their respective body. In other words, the Senate alternate may only participate if one of the Senate members is not present; and a House member may only participate if one of the House members is not present.

The policy was maintained without objection.

c. Sanctioning of Charitable Events Policy

i. Ratifications

1. Juneau Dance Theater Gala

2. Juneau Animal Rescue Fundraiser

CHAIR HANNAN stated per AS 24.60.080(a)(2)(B), the Legislative Council sanctions charitable events that have 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. The policy in place since 2003 grants the Chair the ability to sanction these charitable

events and the Committee would ratify the Chair's action at the next Council meeting.

The policy was maintained without objection.

5:24:14 PM

VICE CHAIR STEVENS moved and asked unanimous consent that Legislative Council ratify the Chair's sanctioning of the following charitable events per AS 24.60.080(a)(2)(B):

- 1) Juneau Dance Theater's 50th Anniversary Gala—February 8, 2025
- 2) Juneau Animal Rescue's annual Love is a Four-Legged Word Fundraiser—February 15, 2025

CHAIR HANNAN objected for the purpose of discussion and confirmed that the 501(c)(3) status of both organizations was verified before they were sanctioned.

There was no discussion. Chair Hannan removed her objection and the sanctioning of the two charitable events were ratified.

d. Subcommittee Policy
i. IT Subcommittee

CHAIR HANNAN stated that the Legislative Council will form one subcommittee at this time - the Information Technology Subcommittee. She appointed Chief Information Technology Officer Shay Wilson as subcommittee chair, and members will include: from the Legislative Affairs Agency (LAA) - Chief Technology and Outreach Officer Tim Powers, Technology Assistance Center (TAC) Supervisor Drew Gruening, Hardware Supervisor Frank Wilson; from legislative support offices - Crys Jones or her designee from the House Chief Clerk's Office, Liz Clark or her designee from the Senate Secretary's Office, Lori Roland or her designee from House Records, Merigwen Kawakami or her designee from Senate Records, Helen Phillips or her designee from House Finance Secretaries, Doniece Gott or her designee from Senate Finance Secretaries; from the leadership offices - Legislative Council Chair's staff Tim Clark, Senate President's staff Tim Lamkin, House Speaker's staff Laib Allensworth; from at-large legislative offices - Senator Kiehl's staff Aurora Hauke and Representative Foster's staff Brodie Anderson.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
a. December 12, 2024, minutes

[5:27:14 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR STEVENS moved that Legislative Council approve the minutes of the December 12, 2024, meeting as presented.

Chair Hannan objected for purposes of discussion; there was no discussion, and she removed her objection.

The minutes were approved without objection.

VI. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

a. FY24 Legislature Audit

CHAIR HANNAN noted that this was not an action item and asked Mindy Kissner, LAA Finance Manager, to speak to this item.

MINDY KISSNER, Finance Manager, Legislative Affairs Agency, stated that before members was the FY24 Audit conducted by external auditors Elgee Rehfeld. By statute, the legislature undergoes an annual independent audit of its internal controls and financial statements. The outcome of the FY24 Audit was a clean audit with no exceptions.

There was no discussion.

CHAIR HANNAN thanked Ms. Kissner for a clean audit and for the hard work of her staff to always make sure the legislature has clean audits.

b. 2025 Manual of Legislative Drafting

[5:29:42 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR STEVENS moved that Legislative Council approve the 2025 Legislative Drafting Manual.

CHAIR HANNAN objected for purposes of discussion and invited Emily Nauman, Legal Services Director, and Hilary Martin, Revisor of Statutes, to speak to this item.

EMILY NAUMAN, LAA Legal Services Director, stated that a primary role of their office is to act as stewards of the Alaska State Statutes, a responsibility they take very seriously. She explained that their mission is carried out by ensuring that statutes and drafted bills comply with the Legislative Drafting Manual, which instructs that bills and statutes are to be clear, readable, consistent, and well-organized. She then introduced Hilary Martin, the Revisor of Statutes, who works tirelessly to ensure that bills and the statutes comply with the Legislative Drafting Manual. She, along with the Legal Editor, are responsible for updating the

drafting manual each legislative cycle. Ms. Nauman then invited Ms. Martin to discuss recent changes and answer any questions specific to the updated drafting manual.

HILARY MARTIN, Revisor of Statutes, stated that Uniform Rule 10 and AS 24.08.060 require Legal Services to follow the Legislative Drafting Manual, which must be adopted by the Legislative Council each legislature. She explained that the manual is prepared by herself, Legal Editor Lora Brown, and the enrolling secretary. A memo detailing the updates was provided, with the only recent change being a few corrected page numbers due to formatting adjustments during printing. Martin offered to either review the changes or answer any questions.

MS. NAUMAN had one comment for clarity, stating that the color of the drafting manual changes every legislature, and the one for the 2025-2026 cycle is a peach color. She continued, if members see a drafting manual that's not peach, after the presented manual is adopted, members can recycle it. She concluded stating that this drafting manual is also available on Legislative Legal's intranet page.

CHAIR HANNAN, noting there were no questions by members, removed her objection.

Without objection, the 2025-2026 Legislative Drafting Manual was adopted.

c. Janus Litigation Contract - Amendment No. 1

[5:33:57 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR STEVENS moved that Legislative Council approve Amendment No. 1 to the Stoel Rives contract for the Janus litigation in the amount of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) for a total contract amount of one hundred and ten thousand dollars (\$110,000).

CHAIR HANNAN objected for the purposes of discussion and said that Megan Wallace, Chief Counsel, Legislative Legal Services, would be speaking to this item via teleconference.

MEGAN WALLACE, Chief Counsel, LAA Legal Services, stated that included in the packet is a memo dated February 6, 2025, outlining a request to increase an existing Legal Services contract by \$10,000. This contract, originally approved by the Legislative Council in December 2023, was established with Stoel Rives to represent the legislature in the Janus litigation. The case has progressed through litigation, with

both the legislature and the State filing cross-motions for summary judgment. Oral arguments are scheduled for the following day [February 13, 2025] in Anchorage Superior Court. She explained that the additional funds are intended to cover the remaining costs at this stage of litigation and confirmed her availability for any questions.

VICE CHAIR STEVENS asked for Ms. Wallace to provide a brief review of the Janus litigation.

MS. WALLACE explained that the Janus litigation stemmed from a special audit conducted by the legislative auditor at the legislature's request. The audit examined appropriations made to the Department of Law in FY2021 and FY2022, where the legislature had allocated specific funds for litigation related to the U.S. Supreme Court's Janus decision while restricting the use of other funds for contracts related to that litigation. The governor vetoed the appropriation for contracts that could be used to retain outside counsel, but the Department of Law proceeded with using funds to retain outside counsel to pursue those matters related to the U.S. Supreme Court Janus decision. The lawsuit seeks a court ruling on whether the Department of Law had the authority to enter into those contracts or if the legislature lawfully imposed limits on the amount of money that could be spent on those outside contracts.

CHAIR HANNAN, noting there was no further discussion, removed her objection.

Without objection, the motion to add \$10,000 to the existing contract was approved.

d. FY26 Legislative Council Budget Request

[5:38:45 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR STEVENS moved that Legislative Council per AS 24.20.130 approve transmittal of the FY26 Legislative Council Proposed Budget as amended to the House and Senate Finance Committees for their review and action.

CHAIR HANNAN objected for the purposes of discussion and invited Jessica Geary, Executive Director for the Legislative Affairs Agency, to speak to the last-minute budget request that was put forward by the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics.

JESSICA GEARY, LAA Executive Director, stated that the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics submitted a funding request

to address its current heavy workload. To provide additional support, the Ethics Committee unanimously approved a proposal via email to permanently increase the sole administrative support position from 30 to 40 hours per week, requiring an additional \$20,000. Additionally, a one-time request of \$90,000 was proposed to hire a temporary 30-hour-per-week employee to help clear the backlog, bringing the total funding request to \$110,000.

VICE CHAIR STEVENS called for a brief at ease.

5:40:33 PM

Council took a brief at ease.

5:41:24 PM

Council returned from a brief at ease.

5:41:27 PM

VICE CHAIR STEVENS moved that Legislative Council approve the request by the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics to add to their allocation the following: (1) an increment in the amount of \$20,000 to the legislative secretary position to a 40-hour workweek, and (2) a one-time increment in the amount to \$90,000 to hire a non-permanent employee for one year.

Without objection, the motion passed.

CHAIR HANNAN asked Ms. Geary to continue with the budget narrative and explanation.

MS. GEARY presented the FY26 proposed budget and sectional narrative, outlining appropriations and allocations for Legislative Council. She explained that the budget request includes two main appropriations: the Legislative Council appropriation, which funds administrative functions, special committees, and offices such as Ethics, Ombudsman, and the Office of Victims' Rights; and the Legislative Operating Budget appropriation, which includes those functions directly related to operations of the legislature, such as session expenses, House and Senate operations, and legislators' salaries and allowances. The Legislative Budget and Audit Committee appropriation is not included in the budget before Legislative Council and is submitted separately to the Finance Committees; together, these three appropriations make up the entire legislature's budget.

She stated in preparing the budget, she met with Presiding Officers, Rules Chairs, House and Senate Finance Committee staff, and the Legislative Council Chair. Council is

responsible for authorizing the transmittal of the budget request to the finance committees for action. She noted that by voting yes, members agree to pass this budget to Finance for any additional work or changes they may make. Rather than reviewing the narrative in detail, she highlighted key items and welcomed questions throughout.

Ms. Geary noted that statewide salary adjustments for FY26 include increases related to health insurance, the PERS contribution rate, and a three percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for legislative and certain exempt and partially exempt employees under Senate Bill (SB) 259. These adjustments total \$2,327,900, with \$614,300 for health insurance, \$527,600 for the PERS rate increase, and \$1,186,000 for COLA. These increases, included in the governor's budget, affect all allocations except State Facilities Rent.

Ms. Geary outlined three allocation areas with increment requests. In addition to the previously discussed Ethics Committee request, Administrative Services allocation has a \$292,000 increment for two new positions and maintenance costs associated with relocating the Capitol mailroom's package screening to an offsite location, a move approved by Legislative Council in December 2024. Additionally, the State Facilities Rent budget includes a \$42,100 increment to support the offsite package screening location and a \$10,000 increase for existing leased office spaces. These increments bring the total increase in the Legislative Council budget to \$441,100 for FY26, with the overall budget increase, including salary adjustments, totaling \$2,772,000 from FY25 to FY26.

Ms. Geary also highlighted position adjustments made for transparency and accuracy in budgeting. These adjustments, which do not increase the overall budget, include converting several permanent part-time positions to full-time in Administrative Services, Legal and Research Services, and Technology and Information, as well as deleting two temporary positions, and the addition of one permanent full-time position in the Legislative Council Chair allocation. She again confirmed that these adjustments do not have associated increments and do not increase the budget overall; they are housekeeping transactions to update the position counts and to reflect how the positions are being used.

Finally, there were permanent transfers from other allocations to Security Services per Legislative Council's direction in September 2024 to fund salary increases for

security officers and align budget authority for the security contract at the Anchorage Legislative Office Building.

She concluded by offering to answer any questions regarding the budget request.

SENATOR KIEHL asked Ms. Geary to clarify how nine 11-month positions in Legal and Research Services, along with another nine in Administrative Services, were being converted to 12-month positions without affecting the budget.

MS. GEARY explained that while these positions were officially listed as 11-month roles, they have routinely been filled as 12-month positions due to workload demands. The adjustment formalizes existing practice without adding to the budget; instead, it increases the unfunded portion accounted for under the vacancy adjustment.

CHAIR HANNAN removed her objection to the original motion made by Vice Chair Stevens.

With no further objections, the FY26 Legislative Council Proposed Budget was approved for transmittal to the House and Senate Finance Committees for their review and action.

e. Committee Records Archiving Policy

[5:48:54 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR STEVENS moved that Legislative Council adopt the Committee Records Archiving Policy as presented.

CHAIR HANNAN objected for the purposes of discussion. She called on Senator Cathy Giessel and Emily Nauman, LAA Legal Services Director, to explain the policy and answer questions.

SENATOR GIESSEL explained that she proposed the archiving policy to ensure committee records, most importantly public comments, are properly archived to ensure transparency, accountability, and historical record preservation. She emphasized the importance of future access to public testimony, allowing people to reference original statements to understand legislative intent. Concerns had been raised about the accuracy of archiving public testimony, and she stressed that maintaining public trust requires both listening to and accurately recording their input. The policy would formalize this process, ensuring proper documentation both immediately and in the Legislative Reference Library archives. She noted that she consulted Legal Services while

drafting the policy and appreciated their assistance in refining the language.

CHAIR HANNAN said that while many had presumed this was already the policy, in practice, the process has been inconsistent from committee to committee. She emphasized that formally adopting it as a policy would ensure that a good practice becomes a consistent requirement for all to follow.

REPRESENTATIVE CARRICK expressed strong support for the policy, emphasizing its importance in ensuring transparency and consistency in handling committee documents. She noted that, as both a former committee aide and now a legislator with committee aides in her office, the handling of committee documents had often been a political decision rather than a procedural standard. She cited instances where committee chairs selectively uploaded supporting documents while omitting opposing ones, highlighting the need for a uniform process. The policy, she continued, seems to remove that discretion from committee chairs and places the responsibility with committee aides, reinforcing trust in their work and in the legislative process, which builds and maintains public trust in the legislature.

SENATOR CLAMAN voiced his full support for adopting the policy and noted a potential area for future refinement. After reviewing an earlier draft, he observed that Uniform Rule 23 does not explicitly reference public testimony. He asked Ms. Nauman whether, after the policy has been in place for some time, it might be practical to consider a future amendment to Uniform Rule 23 to formally incorporate a specific reference to public testimony.

MS. NAUMAN stated that the decision to amend the Uniform Rules would be up to the legislature. While such an amendment would likely carry more procedural authority than the current policy, she emphasized that it remains a legislative policy decision. In response to a follow-up by Senator Claman, Ms. Nauman confirmed that Uniform Rule 23 refers to written testimony only and does not include public testimony.

CHAIR HANNAN thanked Senator Claman for highlighting the issue and expressed hope that institutional awareness would help ensure it is addressed. She also noted that the Uniform Rules have not been amended in several years.

SENATOR CLAMAN stated that he acknowledges this, and it is one of the reasons he is not suggesting such a motion today.

SENATOR GIESSEL explained that she opted to address the issue through a policy rather than a Uniform Rule change because it provided a more expeditious solution. She noted that implementing a Rule change would be a more complex and time-consuming process, whereas a policy allowed for a quicker resolution.

CHAIR HANNAN confirmed that policies take effect immediately, meaning that committee aides should begin ensuring all public testimony is included right away. She anticipated the policy would be adopted and opened the floor for further questions.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked for clarification on whether the policy also required archiving recordings of oral testimony in addition to written testimony.

CHAIR HANNAN deferred to legal counsel for interpretation, seeking clarification from Ms. Nauman on whether the policy explicitly covered verbal testimony for archiving.

MS. NAUMAN clarified that the policy applies to all public comments and testimony submitted to the committee, including those received through an electronic portal or email. She explained that these records are to be included in both the physical and electronic legislative record. She further noted that committee recordings are archived separately from those uploaded to BASIS, with the responsibility for archiving resting with the Agency.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX followed up confirming that the oral testimony is archived somewhere.

MS. NAUMAN stated that was correct.

SENATOR KIEHL noted that Uniform Rule 23 already requires committee meeting recordings and corresponding logs to be sent to the Legislative Reference Library, ensuring that both recordings and witness testimony are archived. He acknowledged that testimony is not always submitted in written form and agreed with Senator Claman that incorporating public testimony into the Uniform Rules should be considered in the future. He expressed his support for the policy.

CHAIR HANNAN removed her objection.

With no further objections, the policy was adopted.

-DRAFT-

VII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the Legislative Council meeting was adjourned at 5:57 p.m.

5:57:15 PM