

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
March 2, 2005

1. ROLL CALL

Legislative Council was called to order at 12:37 p.m. by Chairman Pete Kott in the Senate Finance Committee Room and via teleconference.

The roll was taken. In attendance were Council members: Representatives Kott, Coghill, Gatto, Harris, Rokeberg, Weyhrauch, Berkowitz; Senators Cowdery, Ben Stevens, Therriault, Wagoner and Wilken. Absent members were: Senators Gary Stevens and Bettye Davis. Staff present: Varni, Ohmer, Collins, Clothier, Cook, Gullufsen (via teleconference), Hard, Ibesate, Johnston, Lord-Jenkins, Lobaugh, Price, Schofield, Young. Guests present: Red Boucher (via teleconference), Jason Ohler, Wanetta Ayers (via teleconference), Ted Popley (via teleconference) and Bill Horn (via teleconference).

2. APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 3, 2005 MINUTES

Senator Therriault moved Legislative Council approve the minutes of February 3, 2005 Council meeting.

The motion was approved unanimously.

Senator Ben Stevens, Representatives Rokeberg and Weyhrauch joined the meeting.

3. SANCTIONING OF CHARITABLE EVENTS

Senator Therriault moved Legislative Council ratify the following charitable events per AS 24.60.080(c)10: Thanksgiving in March and Legislative Skits.

The motion was approved unanimously.

4. APPROVAL OF OFFICE OF VICTIMS' RIGHTS LEASE RENEWAL

Pam Varni, Executive Director informed Legislative Council that the Office of Victims' Rights had adequate money in their lease budget for the first-one-year renewal option. The lease renewal period is from July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006.

Senator Therriault moved Legislative Council approve the one-year renewal option for existing lease space in Anchorage for the Office of Victims' Rights in the amount of \$44,115.

The motion was approved unanimously.

Representative Berkowitz joined the meeting.

5. APPROVAL OF PRINTSHOP PAPER PURCHASE

Pam Varni, Executive Director informed Legislative Council that the solicitation and expenditure for Print Shop paper not only pays for the paper used by the Print Shop to print bills and resolutions but for all Juneau copiers in the Legislature and is sometimes taken to the districts by staff for interim use. As for the bid process, the larger the paper requests the better price the Legislature receives from the vendor. The Print Shop paper is solicited year-round through a competitive bid process from different vendors throughout the state. On average, the Agency receives between 2 to 4 bids statewide.

Senator Therriault moved Legislative Council approve the solicitation, expenditure and award of Print Shop paper in the amount of \$90,500 from Legislative Affairs Agency FY 05 funds.

The motion was approved unanimously.

6. FY 04 LEGISLATIVE AUDIT

Representative Kott stated he looked over the audit completed by KPMG and noted that nothing looked unusual about the audit and it seemed to be a standard audit.

Pam Varni, Executive Director, stated there were no audit exceptions. Included in the packet are two management letters. Ms. Varni stated that different agencies have combined the audit for the entire Legislative Branch. Ms. Varni further stated it has saved money for individual agencies like the Office of the Ombudsman. The bills are pro-rated out by the funds that each of these entities have, for example, the Office of the Ombudsman pays \$300 for their share and the Legislative Affairs Agency will pay \$10,000 for the bulk of the money while Budget and Audit and Legislative Finance will pay for their shares.

7. FY 06 LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS AGENCY BUDGET

Pam Varni, Executive Director, Legislative Affairs Agency presented the FY 06 Legislative Affairs Agency Budget, and stated that the February 1, 2005 budget request included the \$78 a month health insurance increase and the increase in the working reserves (LAA has a 2.67% increase in the working reserves – terminal leave, leave cash in, workers' compensation and unemployment insurance). The Legislative Affairs Agency adjusted base is \$32,078,600 and the February 1, 2005 request is \$32,058,700, which is a decrease of \$19,900. In comparing the FY 05 Adjusted Base to the FY 06 Request for the entire Legislative Branch (which includes Budget & Audit, Committee

Expenses, Legislative Finance, Office of the Ombudsman and State Facilities Rent) budget there is a .4% increase from FY 05 to FY 06.

Senator Therriault moved Legislative Council submit the FY 06 Legislative Affairs Agency Budget request to the House and Senate Finance Committees for their review.

The motion was approved unanimously.

8. FY 06 OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN BUDGET

Linda Lord-Jenkins, Ombudsman, stated this is the third time she has proposed a budget to Legislative Council. Ms. Lord-Jenkins stated the proposed FY 06 budget seeks an increase in personal services to hire two additional investigative staff, one grade 19 investigator and one grade 17 intake officer, and to fund accompanying one-time equipment purchases, travel for recruiting and training, and for benefits. Ms. Lord-Jenkins further stated that the office has maintained bare bones, maintenance-level funding since the budget was drastically reduced in FY 98. They currently have 7 staff members, which is staffing at a 1997 level. Governor Murkowski's proposed FY 06 budget would allocate \$587,700 for the Ombudsman's office, a total increase of \$7,000 over the adjusted FY 05 budget. The Ombudsman's FY 06 budget request seeks \$770,600, an increase of \$190,000 over FY 05.

Representative Berkowitz moved Legislative Council submit the FY 06 Office of the Ombudsman Budget request to the House and Senate Finance Committees for their review.

Representative Weyhrauch objected for discussion.

Discussion followed.

Representative Weyhrauch withdrew his objection.

Representative Kott moved Legislative Council submit the FY 06 Office of the Ombudsman Budget request to the House and Senate Finance Committees for their review.

The motion was approved unanimously.

9. APPROVAL OF BIRCH, HORTON, BITTNER & CHEROT CONTRACT

Representative Kott stated that Ted Popley and Bill Horn were participating via teleconference to discuss the new contract being offered. The new contract reflects a different hourly compensation rate than under the previous contract.

Ted Popley gave a brief synopsis of Mr. Horn's qualifications in regard to the new contract.

Senator Therriault moved that Legislative Council approve the Birch, Horton, Bittner and Cherot professional services contract in the amount of \$50,000 for a one-year period.

The motion was approved unanimously.

10. IT SUBCOMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

Chairman Kott submitted a list of those on the IT Subcommittee and stated those wishing to join the IT Subcommittee still have time to get on board.

11. ALASKA INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE TASK FORCE REPORT

Jason Ohler and Wanetta Ayers provided a brief discussion on the importance of digital technology use in our every day lives, rural development and eCommerce along with the importance of extending the IT Subcommittee into the following year.

Red Boucher, Chairman, AIIP Task Force, provided a copy of a power point presentation in regards to the Alaska Information Infrastructure Task Force. Mr. Boucher stated that he would like to see the Legislative Council extend the task force through the end of the next legislative session. Mr. Boucher also discussed the importance of building the high-speed broadband IT technology connectivity in the areas of health care, education and homeland security, along with economic opportunities. Mr. Boucher also stated the importance of security in Alaska's information systems.

12. OTHER BUSINESS

Senator Therriault informed Legislative Council that he has requested his staff to research the number of bills over the last couple of years that have Letters of Intent attached to them. Senator Therriault would like this practice to be resisted. Senator Therriault also stated that he would like the Legislative Council to give direction in the Drafting Manual that this type of verbiage only be included in a bill for a compelling reason. Senator Therriault will provide additional information by the next Legislative Council meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:32 p.m.