

HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
February 6, 2020  
1:38 p.m.

1:38:46 PM

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Foster called the House Finance Committee meeting to order at 1:38 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Neal Foster, Co-Chair  
Representative Jennifer Johnston, Co-Chair  
Representative Dan Ortiz, Vice-Chair  
Representative Ben Carpenter  
Representative Andy Josephson  
Representative Gary Knopp  
Representative Bart LeBon  
Representative Kelly Merrick (via teleconference)  
Representative Colleen Sullivan-Leonard  
Representative Cathy Tilton  
Representative Adam Wool

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT

April Wilkerson, Administrative Services Director, Department of Corrections, Office of Management and Budget, Office of the Governor; Jennifer Winkelman, Acting Deputy Commissioner, Department of Corrections; Laura Brooks, Division Operations Manager, Division of Health and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Corrections; Amanda Price, Commissioner, Department of Public Safety; Torrey Jacobson, Budget Analyst, Department of Public Safety; Colonel Bryan Barlow, Director, Alaska State Troopers, Department of Public Safety.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Nancy Dahlstrom, Commissioner, Department of Corrections; Captain Rick Roberts, Alaska State Troopers, Department of Public Safety; Representative Kelly Merrick.

SUMMARY

HB 205      APPROP: OPERATING BUDGET/LOANS/FUNDS

HB 205 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

HB 206      APPROP: MENTAL HEALTH BUDGET

HB 206 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

FY 21 BUDGET OVERVIEWS:

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Co-Chair Foster reviewed the meeting agenda.

#hb205

#hb206

HOUSE BILL NO. 205

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and loan program expenses of state government and for certain programs; capitalizing funds; making appropriations under art. IX, sec. 17(c), Constitution of the State of Alaska, from the constitutional budget reserve fund; and providing for an effective date."

HOUSE BILL NO. 206

"An Act making appropriations for the operating and capital expenses of the state's integrated comprehensive mental health program; and providing for an effective date."

^FY 21 BUDGET OVERVIEW: DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

[1:40:15 PM](#)

NANCY DAHLSTROM, COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS (via teleconference), provided a PowerPoint presentation titled "Department of Corrections House Finance Overview," dated February 6, 2020 (copy on file). She began on slide 1 titled "Mission:"

The Alaska Department of Corrections enhances the safety of our communities. We provide secure confinement, reformatory programs, and a process of supervised community reintegration.

Commissioner Dahlstrom mentioned that slide 2 contained a chart of the Department of Correction's (DOC) organizational structure. She turned to slide 3 titled "DOC at a Glance:"

Alaska is one of six states in the nation that operates a unified correctional system (Alaska, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Rhode Island, and Vermont).

A unified system is one in which there is an integrated state-level prison and jail system.

Commissioner Dahlstrom corrected slide 3 and noted that there were seven states in the nation operating a unified correctional system. She indicated that West Virginia adopted a unified system in 2018. She moved to slide 4 titled "DOC at a Glance (continued)"

DOC booked 33,813 offenders into its facilities in 2019

- 21,661 were unique offenders
- 1,601 were non-criminal Title 47 bookings

As of 1/24/2020, DOC was responsible for 10,986 Individuals

- 4,733 offenders in jail or prison

51% of the offender population is unsentenced

- 4,878 offenders on pretrial, probation or parole
- 253 offenders in Community Residential Centers (CRCs)
- 1,122 offenders on electronic monitoring (985 pretrial EM)

[1:43:14 PM](#)

APRIL WILKERSON, ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET, OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR, reviewed slide 5 titled "HB 49 Projections and Actual Counts with Revised Projections." The slide included a graph and chart of prison populations from July 2019 through June 2020. She noted that the orange line on the graph represented the projected population under HB 49 [HB 49 - Crimes; Sentencing; Drugs; Theft; Reports Chapter 4 FSSLA 19 - 07/08/2019]. The blue line represented the actual population. She pointed out that the lines intersected beginning in February 2020 and was aligned with population projections.

Commissioner Dahlstrom asked Ms. Wilkerson to review slides 6 through 8.

Ms. Wilkerson reviewed slides 6 through 8. She addressed slide 6 titled "Prison Population by Legal Status." The slide portrayed a graph of the sentenced and unsentenced prison population. She delineated that the unsentenced population was higher than the sentenced population. She pointed to slide 7 titled "Projected Prison Population by Legal Status." The slide contained a graph of the sentenced and unsentenced projected prison population from January 2020 through December 2020, which fluctuated between one being higher than the other throughout the year. She examined slide 8 titled "DOC FY 2021 Operating Budget Comparison:"

#### Significant Changes FY2019 to FY2021

- House Bill 49, Crimes; Sentencing Drugs; Theft; Reports
- Federal Grants: Second Chance, Equitable Sharing, Residential Substance Abuse Treatment
- Medical Fees, Chronic Disease, Nursing Shortages and Pharmaceuticals
- Nursing Study

Ms. Wilkerson reported that the bar graph and chart demonstrated that the overall budget in FY 19 was \$332 million compared to the FY 21 budget request of \$404 million and reflected an overall increase of 21.6 percent and a 20 percent increase in General Funds (GF). She delineated that the overall increase from FY 20 was 7 percent or a difference of \$25 million. She indicated that

the primary drivers of the budget were related to the passage of HB 49.

[1:46:18 PM](#)

Representative Wool referenced the increase due to HB 49. He asked about provisions in SB 54 [SB 54 - Crimes; Sentencing; Probation; Parole - CHAPTER 1 4SSLA 17 - 11/26/2017] that allowed conditional release of a person awaiting sentencing and returned individuals to jail if a condition was violated. He asked if the population had increased due to the bill. Ms. Wilkerson replied that it was not only SB 54 that had increased the prison population. She observed that several other bills contributed to the trending increase in the prison population. She related that when SB 91 Omnibus Crim Law & Procedure; Corrections - CHAPTER 36 SLA 16 - 07/11/2016] had passed there had been a decrease in the incarcerated population. Subsequently, the trend had leveled and was increasing. Representative Wool agreed that the number of inmates had increased due to many factors, but he deduced that SB 54 had changed the conditions of pretrial release and resulted in higher pretrial custody. He asked whether his assessment was "fair."

JENNIFER WINKELMAN, ACTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS, replied in the affirmative.

Representative Josephson interjected that the legislature repealed the 3, 5, and 10-day rule and reverted to a 30, 60, and 90-day timeframe for violating a pretrial condition, which meant spending more time in custody. He asked whether he was correct. Ms. Winkelman replied that they had repealed the 3, 5, and 10-day law regarding technical violations. However, the administrative sanctions remained and even though violators were still serving time, the trends were not as high as the 30, 60, and 90 day laws. She would follow up with details.

[1:49:11 PM](#)

Co-Chair Johnston cited slide 6 and noted that the unsentenced population increased relative to the sentenced population. She wondered whether there was a difference in costs between the two populations. Ms. Wilkerson responded that the slide represented only the incarcerated population

and the costs between sentenced and unsentenced were not separated because the populations co-mingled.

Commissioner Dahlstrom interjected that one of the important factors between the two populations was the importance of keeping unsentenced individuals on the road system, closer to courts and attorney access. Additionally, corrections officers observed that the populations acted differently with the sentenced population eventually acquiescing to incarceration.

[1:51:07 PM](#)

Representative Wool asked if there was a graph with a historical perspective of the sentenced and unsentenced populations. He was curious how the population had changed over time. Ms. Wilkerson would follow up with the information.

Representative Tilton cited the "significant changes" box listed on slide 8 and asked if there was a place in the presentation that associated the changes with costs. Ms. Wilkerson answered that the information was included later in the presentation.

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked if there was information comparing the percentages of the state's unsentenced and sentenced population to other states. Commissioner Dahlstrom replied that she did not have a comparison.

Ms. Winkelman did not have the data. She would investigate and follow up.

[1:53:26 PM](#)

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked what made up the unsentenced population figure. Ms. Winkelman responded that the unsentenced population was comprised of people who had not been convicted and were also considered "pretrial."

Representative Sullivan-Leonard referenced the chart on slide 8. She pointed to the Designated General Fund (DGF) figure for the FY 20 management plan showing \$35.2 million that was decreased to \$13.9 million in the FY 21 governor's request. She inquired about the reason for the difference. Ms. Wilkerson replied that the difference was related to fund source changes. She explained that the Power Cost

Equalization Fund (PCE) had been part of DGF that had been moved into the UGF column. In addition, there was a change from the "Other" fund source, which was a reduction from the Restorative Justice Fund and the reduced amount was replaced with GF from the Health and Rehabilitation component.

[1:55:07 PM](#)

Ms. Wilkerson moved to slide 9 titled "DOC FY2021 Fund Source Breakdown by Fund Category:"

The DOC budget reflects the Governor's commitment to Public Safety by adding \$24,976.3 (or 7%) to the total operating budget.

Ms. Wilkerson noted that \$25.6 million in the "Other" fund category on the slide's chart reflected items that were duplicated in the budget. She reviewed slide 10 titled "Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget Request by Fund Source" that continued the breakdown of DOC's budget by depicting a pie chart. She remarked that the department's budget was the fifth largest of all agencies and had the third largest UGF budget. She discussed Slide 11 titled "Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget Request by Line Item:"

The DOC budget is broken out as:

- 56% Personal Services
- .6% Travel
- 36% Services
- 7% Commodities
- .25% Capital Outlay

Ms. Wilkerson pointed out that DOC had a small maintenance and renovation budget of about \$1 million. She presented slide 12 titled "Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget Request by Core Services:"

The DOC budget is broken out as:

- 80% Secure Confinement
- 14% Supervised Release
- 6% Reformative Programs

Ms. Wilkerson indicated that secure confinement included the medical budget. She added that supervised release

included individuals supervised within a community and the reformative programs were offered in the institutions.

Ms. Wilkerson turned to slide 13 titled "Priority Program Comparison FY 2020 Management Plan to FY 2021 Governor's Request." She reported that the chart included the approximately \$25 million or 7 percent budget increase.

[1:57:00 PM](#)

Commissioner Dahlstrom reviewed slide 14 titled "Core Service Secure Confinement:"

Includes resources for:

Institution Director's Office, 12 In-State Correctional Centers, Classification and Furlough, Inmate Transportation, Point of Arrest, Out-of-State Contractual, Regional Community Jails, Physical Health Care, Administration and Support, Correctional Academy, and Facilities Capital Improvement Unit.

Commissioner Dahlstrom moved to slide 15 titled "Secure Confinement." The map depicted the locations of the state's correctional facilities; 12 were state institutions and 15 were community and regional jails. She highlighted slide 16 titled "Core Service Reformative Programs:"

Includes resources for:

Health & Rehabilitation Director's Office, Behavioral Health Care, Substance Abuse Treatment, Sex Offender Management Programs, Education Programs, Vocational Education Programs, Domestic Violence Programs, Faith-Based Services, Recidivism Reduction, Reentry Services and Administration and Support

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked whether access to the different programs varied by location within the state system. Commissioner Dahlstrom answered that in the past they had varied by location. Currently, the department attempted to provide the "core programs" available in every facility. She added that some of the programs like faith-based services were provided by volunteers and were "stronger" than other programs.

Commissioner Dahlstrom moved to slide 17 titled "Core Service Supervised Release:"

Includes resources for:

Pretrial, Probation and Parole Director's Office,  
Statewide Pretrial, Probation and Parole Regional  
Offices, Community Residential Centers,  
Electronic Monitoring, Administration and  
Support, Correctional Academy, Parole Board

Commissioner Dahlstrom indicated that the Parole Board was listed under the purview of DOC but was really under the governor's office. She pointed to Slide 18 titled "Supervised Release" that contained a map of the supervised release locations. She detailed that 13 were Pretrial and Probation Offices, 8 had Community Residential Centers (CRC), and 6 locations provided electronic monitoring.

Representative Wool asked whether DOC had a graph of the supervised release population over time. He wondered whether the supervised release population had increased. Commissioner Dahlstrom answered that it had increased. She deferred to Ms. Winkelman to further answer the question.

Ms. Winkelman replied that she would follow up with a historical graph. Representative Wool commented that supervised release was trending higher nationally.

[2:01:32 PM](#)

Commissioner Dahlstrom asked Ms. Wilkerson to review slide 19 titled "FY 2021 Significant Operating Budget Changes:"

Changing Inmate Population - \$18,072.1 (UGF)

Second Year Fiscal Note Assault; Sex Offenses;  
Sent. Aggravator Ch11 SLA2019 (HB 14)

Second Year Fiscal Note Crimes; Sentencing;  
Drugs; Theft; Reports Ch4 FSSLA2019 (HB 49)

(\$18,512.6) Reversal of First Year Fiscal Note  
Funding

Structure change moving Community Residential Center and Electronic Monitoring from individual RDUs to the Population Management RDU

Ms. Wilkerson relayed that moving CRC and Electronic Monitoring (EM) back to the Population Management Results Delivery Unit (RDU) granted the department more flexibility as the population flowed from intake and transitioned to supervised release.

Representative Josephson looked at slide 19 and asked about the Population Management RDU. He wondered what the total appropriated was for the item in FY 20. Ms. Wilkerson would follow up with the information.

[2:03:19 PM](#)

Commissioner Dahlstrom addressed slide 20 titled "FY 2020 Significant Operating Budget Changes:"

- Recruitment Efforts - \$136.8 (UGF)
  - Expand recruitment outreach, including developing recruitment strategies, identify target populations, developing and maintaining a recruitment outreach website, identifying markets for advertising, and attendance at recruitment fairs statewide and out of state.
- Secure and Safe Institutions - \$668.9 (UGF)
  - Adding a new drug dog to assist in combating contraband at the facilities. The dogs are used for module and cell searches; they attend and screen visitor events and are used for staff searches as needed. The department currently has one drug dog, Koda, who has been instrumental in reducing the quantity of contraband in our facilities. Finding contraband in the prisons or that someone is attempting to bring into a prison greatly increases the safety of inmates and staff.
  - Increasing non-certified staff to combat contraband received through the mail by

photocopying incoming inmate mail and only distributing the copied documents to the inmates.

Representative Sullivan-Leonard discussed the problem of the hidden drugs coming into prisons. She asked whether the drug dog was deployed to address the issue and if the dog could help identify exactly how the drugs were transferred into the facility. She wondered what the success rate was. Commissioner Dahlstrom answered that drug dogs could find drugs that people were not able to find. She noted that she would be foolish to believe that DOC was catching all drugs with the dog and lacked statistics. She informed the committee that DOC had requested body scanners to find drugs hidden internally. She reported that inmates were very creative about where and how they hid drugs.

2:07:08 PM

Co-Chair Johnston recalled a process for checking inmate mail as part of drug enforcement. She wondered whether it was still in place. Commissioner Dahlstrom pointed to the bottom of slide 20 that cited the process. She expounded that DOC requested \$400 thousand for additional staff, that were not officers, to copy mail and inmates would receive photocopies of their mail. Inmates received their mail within 24 hours of the institution receiving it and that remained the goal. Often, drugs and contraband were not visible to the naked eye. Co-Chair Johnston asked if the method had been tried in other facilities. Commissioner Dahlstrom replied that there had been a test done at the Goose Creek Correctional Center (GCCC) and was proven effective. She reported that according to commissioners in other states, the method was "very effective."

2:09:02 PM

Representative LeBon asked about computer access and email for inmates. He wondered if it was limited or not available. Commissioner Dahlstrom answered that the administration was introducing a bill allowing computer tablets for inmates to access education classes, and treatment. The institutions did not have internet access available to inmates due to safety concerns.

Representative Carpenter relayed that he had discussed the idea of consolidating mail services with DOC during a

subcommittee hearing. He noted that dogs were only effective for a few hours and needed frequent breaks. Commissioner Dahlstrom agreed with Rep. Carpenter's statement regarding the dog. Depending on its training, dogs worked 20 minutes at a time and took a break. She spoke to the mail consolidation suggestion. She informed the committee that since the subcommittee meeting, the department had been looking into the different methods and where it could be done.

[2:11:49 PM](#)

Representative Wool referenced the success of the mail photocopying trial at GCCC. He asked how the program's success was measured. Commissioner Dahlstrom answered that success was measured in outcomes of random urinary analysis. Representative Wool thought that email was a good way to limit contraband. He asked whether other states had employed a prison email system that prevented internet access. Commissioner Dahlstrom answered that some email programs did exist in other states, but she did not have cost estimates. She agreed it would not be wise to allow live internet access and was aware of the department's responsibility to protect victims - DOC could not allow any contact with victims from the institution. She reported that the department was considering computer tablet use.

[2:14:28 PM](#)

Commissioner Dahlstrom highlighted slide 21 titled "FY2021 Significant Operating Budget Changes:"

Recidivism Reduction - \$1,821.1  
(\$1,075.0 Federal / \$746.1 UGF)

Establish and bolster reentry efforts by creating a new Reentry Unit component. Without some form of human intervention or services there is unlikely to be much effect on recidivism from punishment alone.

The Reentry Unit will work to ensure offenders in custody have available programs designed to address their criminogenic needs and that they are connected to supportive programming and resources upon release.

Maintain and expand federal grant opportunities for offender reentry support.

Ms. Wilkerson addressed slide 22 titled "Division of Institutions Secure Confinement:"

Institution Director's Office

- Classification & Furlough
- Inmate Transportation & Point of Arrest
- 12 Correctional Centers
- Community Residential Centers
- 6 locations
- Regional and Community Jails
- 15 locations
- Electronic Monitoring
- 6 locations
- Out-of-State

Ms. Wilkerson delineated that the divisions budget was \$271.4 million with 1,378 budgeted positions. The division was the largest and most costly division within DOC. The division's budget contained various funding sources that included DGF received through mandate billings for housing offenders on a local or municipal hold. In addition, \$13 million was received via interagency receipts and federal funding of just over \$11.9 million. The federal money was comprised of the funds received via mandate billings.

Representative Josephson asked about population management and the appropriation in the range of \$16 million to open the Palmer Correctional Center. He surmised that the department needed the \$16 million and would not have enough funding to cover other facilities if Palmer opened without the additional funding. Ms. Wilkerson answered that there was a \$14.8 million increment requested in the Institution Director's Office. In addition, the supplemental bill included an extension request for the current \$16.6 million for the Palmer Correctional Center reopening. The \$14.8 million afforded DOC the ability to house individuals until the Palmer facility was open.

[2:18:21 PM](#)

Ms. Wilkerson turned to slide 23 titled "Division of Health and Rehabilitation Reformative Programs:"

- Health & Rehabilitation Director's Office

- Physical Health Care
- Behavioral Health Care
- Substance Abuse
- Sex Offender Management
- Domestic Violence Program
- Reentry & Recidivism Unit
- Education/Vocational Programs

Ms. Wilkerson remarked that the division was the department's second largest. She noted that the division contained the Reentry & Recidivism Unit and included the \$700 thousand request for reentry.

Ms. Wilkerson reviewed slide 24 titled "Division of Pretrial Probation and Parole Supervised Release:"

Pretrial, Probation & Parole Director

- Victim Notification

Statewide Probation and Parole

- 13 regional locations
- Probation Accountability w/ Certain Enforcement
- Pre-sentencing Unit
- Inter-state Compact

Pretrial Services

- Assessments
- Basic Supervision
- Enhanced Supervision

Ms. Wilkerson emphasized that the department successfully incorporated the Division of Pretrial into the Division of Probation and Parole under Jennifer Winkelman, Director, Division of Pretrial, Probation and Parole. The consolidation expanded the effectiveness of the division. Ms. Wilkerson continued that the division had 234 staff assigned statewide and the budget was comprised primarily of GF. The division's budget also contained a small portion of federal funds utilized via the Equitable Sharing Program.

Representative Wool asked how many of the 234 positions were filled. Ms. Winkelman replied that approximately 40 positions were vacant and were exclusively probation officers.

Commissioner Dahlstrom interjected that Pretrial was newly created and candidates had not applied for the jobs because they thought it would be eliminated. She predicted that the jobs would be filled.

Representative Wool asked if Pretrial existed because of provisions in SB 54 that created a supervised pretrial population. Ms. Winkelman corrected that SB 91 had established the Pretrial Enforcement Division and affirmed that the provision created the supervised pretrial population.

Co-Chair Johnston requested the number of vacancies broken down by divisions. Commissioner Dahlstrom agreed to provide the information.

Representative Josephson asked whether the supervised pretrial unit survived the reform repeals in HB 49. Ms. Winkelman replied in the affirmative.

[2:22:13 PM](#)

Ms. Wilkerson spoke to slide 25 titled "Board of Parole Supervised Release:"

Parole Board

- Administrative
  - Discretionary
  - Mandatory
  - Special Medical
  - Geriatric
  - Clemency Investigations
- The Parole Board consists of 5 Governor appointed board members.

Ms. Wilkerson indicated that the board was a quasi-judicial branch that operated autonomously and oversaw parole releases. She moved to slide 26 titled "Office of the Commissioner:"

Commissioner's Office

- Constituent Relations
- Ombudsman Liaison
- American Civil Liberties Union Liaison
- Compliance Standards
- Inmate ADA Grievances

#### Training Academy

- Basic Correctional Officer Training
- Basic Probation Officer Training
- Field Officer Training
- Prisoner Transportation Officer Training
- Firearm Training & Certification
- Taser Instruction & Certification
- Municipal Officer Academy

Ms. Wilkerson reported that the office's budget totaled \$2.6 million and had 18 budget positions with 8 of the positions dedicated to the Training Academy. She turned to slide 27 titled "Division of Administrative Services:"

#### Administrative Services

- Budget and Finance
- Inmate Banking/Auditing
  
- Human Resources
  - Alaska Police Standard Council Certification
  - Employee Background Investigations
  
- Procurement
  - Ignition Interlock Certification

#### Information Technology & Data Management

- Alaska Corrections Offender Management System

#### Research and Records

- PFD Eligibility
- Research & Reporting

#### Facilities Capital Unit & OSHA Compliance

Ms. Wilkerson offered that the division's budget totaled \$10.4 million GF and roughly \$150 thousand in federal authority with 52 budgeted positions.

[2:23:53 PM](#)

Commissioner Dahlstrom reviewed slide 28 titled "Goals:"

- Protect the Public
- Provide Safe and Secure Care and
- Custody
- Reduce the Prison Population

- Reduce Recidivism
- Ensure that Incarcerated Offenders Spend Productive Time While in Custody
- Reentry and Community Supervision
- Work Collaboratively with Outside
- Stakeholders to Achieve These Goals

Commissioner Dahlstrom elaborated that the department strove to incentivize inmate participation in programs ensuring offenders used their incarcerated time productively.

[2:25:20 PM](#)

Representative LeBon noted that the previous session the committee had spent time discussing electronic monitoring. He asked if there was an update on the concept. Commissioner Dahlstrom answered that the numbers for EM clients had increased. She deferred to Ms. Winkelman.

Ms. Winkelman replied that DOC offered EM for pretrial individuals. Regarding EM for sentenced individuals, she reminded the committee that DOC was moving CRCs and EM under population management to allow greater flexibility in managing the sentenced population and more easily move individuals to EM or CRCs. The unsentenced population on EM were run through the Pretrial Enforcement Division.

Commissioner Dahlstrom added that some inmates who were eligible for EM or CRCs chose to remain in jail to avoid participating in classes or productive activities. Some individuals preferred to sit in jail and wait their time out.

[2:27:49 PM](#)

Representative Carpenter asked if the prison population would continue to increase or whether the population would peak. Commissioner Dahlstrom believed that there would be an increase in Alaska over the next several years and hoped there would be a peak. She confirmed that Palmer would be brought online - there was currently a feasibility study underway that should be completed the following week. She relayed that DOC was working with the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT) and was issuing an RSA of \$400 thousand for design and inspections. She

offered that different dates were given for opening Palmer in approximately 12 to 18 months. She committed to getting the facility open as soon and as safely as possible.

2:30:09 PM

Representative Wool hoped the opening would happen faster. He referenced the Coronavirus epidemic in China where a 1,000 bed hospital had been built in 10 days. He understood it was not a fair comparison. He felt that the process could be expedited and that the prison could open section by section. He voiced that accommodations were made in the past to handle overcrowding. He asked at what point were institutions at standard capacity and not maximum capacity. Commissioner Dahlstrom responded that the number was different for different facilities and she was unable to answer. She assured that measures were taken to accommodate capacity. She elaborated that the system had done what it could safely do to house inmates. She pledged to do all she could to open the Palmer facility in an accelerated manner. She commented that DOC was required to work with DOT through the procurement process and believed DOT would work effectively. She emphasized that she was "open" to operating part of the Palmer facility if it was a feasible option and was committed to the process.

2:33:12 PM

Representative Josephson looked at slide 4 and noted the bullet point regarding 1,601 non-criminal Title 47 bookings. He asked whether they were following court orders and asked for more information. Ms. Winkelman deferred the answer to Laura Brooks.

LAURA BROOKS, DIVISION OPERATIONS MANAGER, DIVISION OF HEALTH AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS, responded that DOC operated under the "letter of the law." She expounded that statute allowed the department to provide protection for an individual waiting for a bed at the Alaska Psychiatric Institution (API) to be held in a correctional facility. The 1,601 number also included Title 47 alcohol holds of up to 12 hours. She indicated that since API's reduction of patient beds, 150 individuals were temporarily held in correctional facilities.

Commissioner Dahlstrom interjected that the institutional officers did an "exceptional" job keeping the psychiatric clients safe and the department was committed to maintaining a safe environment for them.

[2:36:13 PM](#)

Representative Josephson asked for clarification regarding the 150 number. Ms. Brooks restated that since API had reduced its beds on October 6, 2018, the number of individuals affected by the reduction and housed in DOC facilities was roughly 150.

Representative Wool cited slide 4 and asked about the 1,122 offenders on EM [985 pretrial EM]. He deduced that out of the entire sentenced population only 137 were on EM. Ms. Winkelman responded in the affirmative. Representative Wool repeated that out of thousands of sentenced offenders only 137 were on EM. He expected a higher number in the sentenced population and deemed that the number seemed low. Ms. Winkelman replied that he was not misinterpreting the numbers. She communicated that placing EM under the authority of population management would provide greater opportunity to move some of the sentenced population eligible for electronic monitoring onto EM or to the least restrictive housing. The change eliminated the need for an inmate to apply for EM.

[2:39:19 PM](#)

Representative Josephson recalled that EM eligibility had been reduced under HB 49 by restraining the categories of felons that were eligible. He asked for confirmation. Ms. Winkelman was unable to respond due to uncertainty.

^FY 21 BUDGET OVERVIEW: DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

[2:40:05 PM](#)

AMANDA PRICE, COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, listed staff available to answer questions. She provided a PowerPoint presentation titled "Department of Public Safety FY 2021 Operating Budget Overview," dated February 6, 2020 (copy on file). She began on slide 2 titled "Department of Public Safety:"

Our Mission

To administer functions relative to the protection of life and property.

#### Our Core Services

- Law enforcement patrol and investigations
- Rural law enforcement services
- Domestic violence and sexual assault programs
- Statewide public safety programs
- Resource protection
- Highway safety

Commissioner Price reviewed the department's mission and core services. She turned to slide 3 titled "Statewide Impact:"

- DPS is Alaska's primary statewide law enforcement Agency
  
- Direct support to other agencies
  - Investigative assistance
  - Search and rescue
  - Training
  - Alaska Public Safety Information Network
  - Crime lab

[2:42:04 PM](#)

TORREY JACOBSON, BUDGET ANALYST, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, turned to slide 4 titled "DPS FY 2021 Operating Budget Comparison:"

#### Significant Changes

Federal grants:

- High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA)
- Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)

[The slide also contained a table and bar graph.]

Mr. Jacobson explained that between FY 19 and FY 21 the department's budget increased by approximately \$34 million. The increase was primarily comprised of increased federal fund authority for \$5 million in HIDTA and \$4 million for the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA). He reported that most of the GF increase was

related to personnel for state troopers who received a classification increase in FY 19 and a salary increase in FY 20. He clarified that the change in "Other" funding was mostly related to the Violent Crimes Compensation Board (VCCB) that was moving to the Department of Public Safety (DPS) from the Department of Administration (DOA). He noted that the change in Designated General Funds (DGF) was due to an approximately \$300 thousand appropriation from the Power Cost Equalization fund (PCE) included in a HB 49 fiscal note that was currently switched to Undesignated General Funds (UGF). In addition, the department received an estimated \$2 million in Recidivism Reduction funds from the marijuana tax. The department also received GF program receipts from building plan reviews.

Mr. Jacobson moved to slide 5 titled "DPS FY 2021 Fund Source Breakdown by Fund Category." He commented that funding from the "Other" category included items such as background checks and handgun permits handled in the Criminal Justice Information Systems Unit and the Alaska Police Standards and Council surcharges on citations and criminal convictions.

[2:44:28 PM](#)

Commissioner Price listed the department's FY 21 budget broken down by percentages: 59 percent for personal services, 3 for percent travel, 19 percent for services, 3 percent for commodities, 1 percent capital outlay, and 15 percent for grants and benefits. She elaborated that between FY 18 and FY 19 the amount for overtime increased by 26 percent and DOC was currently on track for an increase of 9 percent due to staff shortages. Commissioner Price addressed slide 6 titled "FY 2021 Significant Operating Budget Changes:"

Improve Building Plan Review Turnaround Time

- Fire and Life Safety: \$219.0 UGF / \$217.1 DGF and 4 PFT positions

Meet Operational Needs

- Alaska State Troopers: \$2,733.9 UGF

Increase Operational Capacity

- Alaska State Troopers: \$7,599.1 UGF and 36 PFT positions

## Establish Emergency Communications Center

- Statewide Support: \$872.8 UGF and 7 PFT positions

Commissioner Price shared that the administration wanted the building plan review time reduced to two weeks from the prior years' time of 16 to 18 weeks, which currently took 6 to 8 weeks. She believed that with the additional staff the two week timeline would be met. She offered that the \$2.7 million for the Alaska State Troopers was also included in the supplemental budget. The department would run out of funding for FY 20 in mid-April if the \$2.7 million UGF appropriation was not approved. The same amount was added as an increase in the FY 21 request because it would be the third consecutive year the spend occurred and required a supplemental; FY 19 was the first year the supplemental occurred. She noted the department's desire to increase trooper capacity and elucidated that the request for 36 full time civilian positions would alleviate trooper's partaking in administrative work and allow them to return to the "streets." She mentioned that the Emergency Communications Center would be established in Anchorage.

[2:47:43 PM](#)

Vice-Chair Ortiz cited the \$872,800 for the Emergency Communications Center. He inquired whether the spend would be a recurring increment. Commissioner Price answered in the affirmative and voiced that a savings would be realized after FY 21. Vice-Chair Ortiz asked whether the 7 positions were in addition to the existing positions in Ketchikan and other parts of the state that were being moved to Anchorage. Commissioner Price replied in the affirmative. She informed the committee that the total number of dispatch positions was 18 and DPS was only moving positions from Ketchikan. She believed that the positions were moving to provide "more impactful" service to rural communities. Vice-Chair Ortiz asked for more information regarding the Emergency Communications Center. He asked whether prior year's costs were \$3.5 million. Commissioner Price answered in the affirmative and explained that the former Walker administration made a \$3.5 million capital appropriation in FY 19 that was comprehensively paying for the "upfit" of the existing infrastructure in Anchorage; no additional funding was necessary for infrastructure. The funding request was for staffing only. Vice-Chair Ortiz asked how much of the \$3.5 million of funding had been spent. Commissioner Price replied that she would follow up. Vice-

Chair Ortiz asked for an estimate. Commissioner Price answered that the project was at 65 percent completion and estimated that 50 percent of the cost was expended. Vice-Chair Ortiz asked whether the initial plan included centralizing operations in Anchorage and moving the 7 positions.

[2:51:15 PM](#)

Commissioner Price believed that DPS had not provided a clear accounting that the plan involved closing the dispatch facility. She qualified that it was a common practice for departments to move resources in alignment with its statewide mission. She emphasized that the closing was specific to the state dispatch facility dispatching state resources. She maintained that the City of Ketchikan had its own municipal dispatch facility.

Representative LeBon asked about the DPS supplemental budget request. He asked for a rough estimate of how much was specifically for trooper overtime. Commissioner Price answered that most of the request was for overtime. Representative LeBon asked if the overtime number per trooper would decline as the trooper positions were filled or whether overtime was expected. Commissioner Price answered that the amount of overtime the troopers were expected to perform had a "significant impact" on retention. She stressed that the situation was not normal; overtime was expected but not 800 to 900 hours. She relayed some statistical data from a Matanuska-Susitna Borough (Mat-Su) detachment staffing assessment study done in 2017 that reported the troopers were "woefully understaffed" and did not meet minimum staffing levels. The study concluded that if the trooper detachment met minimum staffing levels overtime costs would decrease approximately 30 percent.

[2:54:03 PM](#)

Representative Knopp cited the building plan review improvements on slide 6 and inquired whether the state fire marshal recently retired. Commissioner Price answered in the affirmative and noted that Richard Boothby, Director, Division of Fire and Life Safety was the current state fire marshal replacing David Tyler who retired in December 2018. Representative Knopp favored the improved turnaround time for building plan reviews and mentioned that he had received many calls regarding plan review delays impacting

the construction season. He asked whether the state dispatchers in Mat-Su and Soldotna the were not being moved to Anchorage. Commissioner Price replied that the state dispatch in Mat-Su and Soldotna were contracted out and the dispatchers were not state employees.

Representative Knopp recounted that moving the Ketchikan dispatch was a "point of contention" the previous year. He recalled conversations about rural communities not being able to reach 911 and problems associated with rural response and moving the Ketchikan office to Anchorage. He wondered what the conclusion was. Commissioner Price answered that the large multi-year project had a "significant scope of impact to our state." She related that early in her tenure she did not believe the department had adequately vetted the issue for potential options aside from funding a new building while maintaining existing infrastructure. She detailed that she paused the project for a year and engaged in "exhaustive conversations" with her contract services partners, Soldotna, and Mat-com Dispatch. They could not find another mechanism to allow the department to accomplish the goals of increasing and providing emergency 911 phase two compliant services in the state. She elaborated that in 20 percent of the state the location of the 911 caller was unknown unless specified by the caller. The current plan accomplished DOC's identified goals. An emergency communications center met many of the technical aspects and needs for emergency communications. All the technical hurdles were vetted, and solid solutions were in place. She was confident in the plan.

Representative Knopp continued with a question about the Alaska Fire Standards Council. He announced that the council lost funding and one position. He relayed that the council was overwhelmed with work. He wondered what the plan for the council was. He asked whether the position would be reinstated if there was funding. Commissioner Price responded that the council "established professional standards for the fire service personnel and curriculum requirements for the certification of training programs." She acknowledged that the council was very short staffed. She noted the lack of a statutory mandate to provide the service. She judged that providing necessary training for fire service personnel throughout the state "was the right thing to do." However, budgetary constraints funneled tight funding to meet the departments statutorily mandated services. She hoped to recoup the funding, but it was not

included in the governor's request. She detailed that the improvements in the building plan review turnaround time prompted significant changes to the divisions internal structure including an online application and credit card payment portal to speed up the process. She assumed that the internal changes would enable the department to ask for supplemental funding in FY 21 to "stand up the fire safety council." She believed that there were "statutory gaps" defining the state's obligation to the council.

3:00:13 PM

Representative Knopp asked if the council would be better served under another department. Commissioner Price did not believe the state should move the council to another department. She believed there were some statutory gaps that needed to be addressed to rectify the problem.

Vice-Chair Ortiz looked at the increment at the bottom of slide 6 related to the Emergency Communications Center consolidation. He wondered what study had been done to determine that the consolidation of service and building overhaul in Anchorage at the cost of \$3.5 million was the best course of action. He asked if DPS had considered looking at other ideas such as revamping the Ketchikan facility. Commissioner Price answered in the affirmative. She indicated that a number of studies were completed including a site assessment of the Ketchikan facility by two nationally renowned experts in building emergency communication centers in the Pacific Northwest. She relayed that the facility did not have the built-in infrastructure to adequately respond to the anticipated call volume.

3:02:43 PM

Vice-Chair Ortiz thought that the Anchorage facility also did not have the capability before the \$3.5 million renovation. Commissioner Price answered that it was difficult to answer questions about how the project was communicated and prepared for prior to her tenure with the department. She voiced that she was sharing information she had uncovered. Vice-Chair Ortiz recounted that she had referred to a study undertaken in 2006. He assumed the department had been looking into the issue for 14 years. Commissioner Price replied that DPS consistently assesses what was available to provide improved service as technology advances. Vice-Chair Ortiz thought it "seemed

strange" that the first time he had heard about the idea of consolidating services was in January 2020 after 14 years of considering the issue. Commissioner Price did not believe it was strange. She countered that the department decided to meet the mission it was statutorily obligated to provide to Alaskans with existing resources.

[3:04:19 PM](#)

Representative LeBon discussed that he had hoped there would be a couple hundred thousand dollars for the Civil Air Patrol in the budget. He noted that the DPS budget increase from FY 19 to FY 21 was \$20 million. He commented that there had not been funding for the Civil Air Patrol in the last two years. He asked for comment.

Commissioner Price responded that it was a challenging topic. She offered that there were many items people hoped could be funded that provided excellent services. She delineated that two years ago the legislature added intent language to the budget that eliminated the Civil Air Patrol's continued funding and appropriated a one-time increment with direction to find alternative funding sources. The governor's FY 20 budget followed through and eliminated the Civil Air Patrol appropriation. The Civil Air Patrol was a pass through for DPS and it was not mission critical for the department. She believed that although it was a valuable and critical service the department did not find a discernable impact with the elimination of funding. Representative LeBon disagreed with the later statement. He asserted that its mission was critical to the department.

Co-Chair Johnston asked whether many of the Civil Air Patrol planes "left" after the funding was eliminated. Commissioner Price could not speak to the issue.

Representative Sullivan-Leonard asked how the Emergency Communications Center would work with the Mat-Com system. She relayed that the City of Wasilla was concerned regarding the change. She wondered how the department was working with emergency services as a centralized unit to include Mat-Com. Commissioner Price replied that DPS had initially engaged in significant discussions with Mat-Com regarding amending its contract and providing for an ownership opportunity. She offered that the City of Wasilla declined to enter the arrangement. The current plan allowed

the department to improve the service to rural communities. She communicated that other than the contractual impact to Mat-Com they would continue to operate in the same manner. Representative Sullivan-Leonard asked whether a 911 call in Wasilla would go through Mat-Com or the center in Anchorage. Commissioner Price deferred the question.

[3:08:59 PM](#)

CAPTAIN RICK ROBERTS, ALASKA STATE TROOPERS, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY (via teleconference), responded that all calls from a specific region were routed into the primary 911 dispatch center known as a public-safety answering point (PSAP). He elaborated that the PSAP for Wasilla was the City of Wasilla Communications Center and on the Kenai Peninsula it was the Kenai Borough Dispatch Center. All regional 911 calls funnel into the centers and were dispersed to the appropriate municipal dispatch or the emergency center in Anchorage for troopers. Representative Sullivan-Leonard provided a scenario where a person in the rural Mat-Su area called 911. She wondered if the call, routed through the emergency center in Anchorage would be competing with a call from another rural community.

Commissioner Price answered in the negative. There were two dispatch centers: one in Fairbanks covering the northern part of the state and the center in Anchorage covering the southern half. The reason for the redundancy was in case of a natural disaster to ensure coverage.

Representative Carpenter asked where the priority lay when there was simultaneously a fire and police issue.

COLONEL BRYAN BARLOW, DIRECTOR, ALASKA STATE TROOPERS, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, was unable to answer the question. He reasoned that it was a question for dispatch.

Commissioner Price responded that the answer was situation dependent and dispatch would determine the priority and act accordingly.

[3:12:46 PM](#)

Representative Carpenter assumed that the incident had already occurred by the time the regional center received the call. He deduced that if the call went straight to a local dispatcher, they would have the authority to direct

the call to the appropriate responder. Commissioner Price deferred the question to Captain Roberts.

Captain Roberts answered that dispatch centers had priority level policies that determined where the calls should be routed. He indicated that there were both fire and police dispatch centers. The type of calls Representative Carpenter described were common. The dispatchers were trained to work together to reduce the amount of time it took to properly route the calls. He assured that comprehensive policies were in place to ensure the system worked optimally.

Representative Carpenter deduced that if the incident was already occurring in Anchorage that was great, but his district was in Kenai and the calls had to be initially routed to Anchorage. Commissioner Price answered that she would follow up with specifics. She added that the Soldotna dispatch center would operate in the same manner and dispatch calls to local areas. The only change to its contract with the state was regarding calls that dispatched troopers.

[3:15:43 PM](#)

Representative Knopp informed the committee that the Civil Air Patrol still had many airplanes and had only gotten rid of Beaver airplanes. He shared that he had been a member for over 20 years and had acted as a flight instructor. He relayed information about the planes. He explained that the Civil Air Patrol had two primary purposes: to assist in disaster relief and search and rescue. His squadron needed \$10 thousand per year to operate and found it difficult to maintain with the budget slashed to zero. He emphasized that the troopers typically did not have the resources to engage in search efforts. He found it "bothersome" that the item was not a priority for the department. The patrol was important to many Alaskans. He "could not imagine" that DPS would like statutory requirements for everything it did in order to set priorities. He hoped the commissioner would reconsider the issue. Commissioner Price submitted that it was a sticky situation because the department was partners with the Civil Air Patrol. She offered that one way the department supported the patrol was to increase airport hangar payments from 25 to 50 percent in the Fairbanks area and provided snow removal. The department was trying to figure out ways to support the patrol. The items included

in the budget had been deemed critically important to preserve life and property. The department was not certain it would receive its total budget request. She wished she could be a "strong advocate" for the patrol and ask for more funding, but with budget uncertainties and her other duties to uphold, she could not.

[3:19:05 PM](#)

Vice-Chair Ortiz returned to the topic of dispatch services and recounted that the commissioner's initial plan, Plan A, was to continue contract services with Mat-Com. He asked for confirmation. Commissioner Price replied that the plan was "more comprehensive" and affirmed that continued contract services with Mat-Com was part of Plan A. Vice-Chair Ortiz asked whether the failure to secure Plan A with Mat-Com played a role in the decision to move Ketchikan dispatch. Commissioner Price would need to follow up. She recalled that to expand services with Mat-Com and move forward with the Anchorage facility, moving the positions from Ketchikan was necessary. Vice-Chair Ortiz returned to Representative Carpenter's question about the effectiveness of dispatch. He pondered whether there would be an opportunity cost without the current more localized system. He believed that local dispatchers were familiar with the specifics of streets and locations versus dispatch in Anchorage and lacking knowledge of the area. Commissioner Price believed that centralized emergency centers were fully capable of covering all the dispatch needs because the Fairbanks dispatch had been reliably serving Ketchikan during the night. Vice-Chair Ortiz asked whether dispatch services for Ketchikan would be in Fairbanks. Commissioner Price answered in the negative and added that the service would be provided from Anchorage. She reiterated that history suggested that the Anchorage service would perform effectively based on the night service Fairbanks had provided for "quite some time."

[3:21:59 PM](#)

Representative LeBon referenced increasing the trooper operational capacity noted on slide 6. He asked the commissioner to update the committee on rural versus urban trooper assignments. Commissioner Price answered that DPS's priority was to expand the trooper ranks within rural communities. She furthered that the 15 extra trooper positions she requested would be placed in: Ambler, Anchor

Point, Bethel, Dillingham, Emmonak, Glenallen, Kotzebue, Nome, St Mary's, St Michael's, and Unalakleet. Additional civilian support staff positions would be in Juneau, Kotzebue, Dillingham, and Kodiak, and a pilot position in Nome. She indicated that the placement decisions were difficult because the urban posts covered vast geographic territory and were "dramatically understaffed." Representative LeBon asked if the Kenai and Fairbanks boroughs were adequately staffed. Commissioner Price stated that it was difficult to say that any location in Alaska was adequately staffed.

Co-Chair Foster asked whether the position in Unalakleet added a trooper to the one existing position. Commissioner Price answered in the affirmative.

Co-Chair Johnston shared a situation in Anchorage where the city wanted to expand police service to Girdwood and a "hybrid" solution was found where the city paid for trooper coverage. She elucidated that troopers were considered a "rural unit" and sometimes it was just as appropriate for the troopers to work in urban areas especially where there was a tax base. She asked about the Alaska Land Mobile Radio System (ALMR), which was moving from DOA to the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA). She understood that DPS was one of the biggest users and learned that ALMR need a much larger upgrade than was budgeted for. She asked for details.

[3:25:54 PM](#)

Commissioner Price answered that there was an increment for \$24 million to replace repeaters throughout the state and must be completed by July or the United States Department of Defense would withdraw and build its own infrastructure. She furthered that under the later scenario "the cost would have been immeasurable" with significant impacts. She remarked that additional funding was not requested because the department was vetting two alternatives forms of funding outside of the capital and operating budget.

Commissioner Price reviewed slide 7 titled "FY 2021 Significant Operating Budget Changes:"

Increase Federal Receipt Authority

- Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault:  
\$1,000.0 Fed

Increase Crime Lab Capacity

- Statewide Support/Laboratory Services: \$744.2 and 4 PFT positions

Commissioner Price highlighted that the council's work was often overlooked and she noted the council's director, Diane Casto, Executive Director, Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA) worked very hard to secure the most federal dollars from state match dollars than ever received in the history of the state. Consequently, the council recently awarded funding for many programs in numerous rural communities. The funding provided for new programs like Child Advocacy Centers offering comprehensive services for treating childhood trauma and enhanced mental health services for survivors. She indicated that the laboratory services included processing sexual assault kits and would answer any member's questions regarding the kits.

[3:28:48 PM](#)

Co-Chair Foster thanked the department for its presentation. He reviewed the schedule for the following day.

HB 205 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

HB 206 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

#

ADJOURNMENT

[3:29:34 PM](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 3:29 p.m.