

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**JUNE 25, 2019
2:00 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Gary Stevens, Chair
Representative Louise Stutes, Vice Chair
Senator John Coghill
Senator Bert Stedman
Representative Bryce Edgmon
Representative Neal Foster
Representative DeLena Johnson
Representative Steve Thompson
Representative Tammie Wilson

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Mia Costello
Senator Cathy Giessel
Senator Lyman Hoffman
Senator Natasha von Imhof
Representative Chuck Kopp

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT

AGENDA

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
COMMITTEE BUSINESS
CONTRACT APPROVALS

SPEAKER REGISTER

Jessica Geary, Executive Director, Legislative Affairs Agency (LAA)
Tim Powers, Information and Teleconference Manager, LAA
Tim Banaszak, Information Technology Manager, LAA

[2:03:11 PM](#)

I. Call to Order

CHAIR STEVENS called the Legislative Council meeting to order at 2:03pm in the Anchorage Legislative Information Office (LIO) Large Conference Room. Present at the call were: Senators Coghill, Stedman, Stevens; Representatives Edgmon, Foster, Johnson, Stutes, Thompson, Wilson. Senators Costello, Giessel, Hoffman, von Imhof and Representative Kopp were absent.

9 members present.

II. Approval of Minutes

a. May 6, 2019

[2:04:38 PM](#)

VICE-CHAIR STUTES moved and asked unanimous consent that Legislative Council approve the minutes dated May 6, 2019, as presented.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if there were corrections or additions to those minutes. Seeing none, the minutes are approved.

III. Committee Business

a. LIO Hours of Operation

[2:04:56 PM](#)

VICE-CHAIR STUTES moved that Legislative Council return all year-round Legislative Information Offices (LIOs) to full-time operation during the interim.

CHAIR STEVENS objected for purpose of discussion and asked Tim Powers to give a brief explanation and history of this request.

TIM POWERS, Manager of Information and Teleconference for the Legislative Affairs Agency, said he wanted to provide the Committee some background on the LIO's operations and some cuts that have occurred over the past few fiscal years.

Mr. Powers shared that in FY16, the LIO budget was reduced by \$358,700 which resulted in the following changes: reduced the Utqiagvik and Kotzebue offices from twelve to six month operation; reduced the Fairbanks and Mat-Su office Information Assistant positions from twelve to six months; reduced eight

Juneau moderator positions from five to four months; and the casual labor pool was reduced.

In FY17, the LIOs were further reduced by \$298,000. Legislative Council moved that all year-round LIOs close at noon on Fridays during the interim. This was compared to the Court System half day Friday closure, in which the entire Court System closes, not just one section. In practice, this has proved impractical and confusing for the public, legislators, and staff wanting a teleconference on Friday afternoons. With this cut, they reduced 17 employees from 12 months to 11.3 months, resulting in a 6.1% reduction in annual salary.

This reduction resulted in several issues, including morale and employee retention. Short term effects included reduced paychecks and leave accrual, while long term it affected employee retirement. There were many long-time employees nearing retirement whose salaries were reduced equivalent to two steps or four years of work in longevity, which set back their retirement.

Since the cuts began, LIOs lost Information Officers in Utqiagvik, Cordova, Glennallen, Kenai, Kotzebue, Sitka, Unalaska, Valdez (twice); Administrative Assistants in Juneau and Anchorage; and two Information Assistants in Anchorage. Employee turnover has increased drastically from eight resignations in the nine years before the cuts, to 15 resignations in the four years since.

Mr. Powers said he has continued to exercise fiscal restraint and lower overall costs, for example: turned off cellular data (wifi back up) for the committee iPads for \$10,000 annual savings; upgraded the digital teleconference phone circuits which reduced the teleconference operating costs \$17,680 annually; turned on geographic call blocking which prevents callers from using long distance when a local number is available for \$12,000-\$24,000 annual savings. Costs have also been reduced by printing both the Pocket Directory and the Directory of State Officials in-house (22¢ and 25¢ per copy respectively) with added flexibility in print quantity and timeframe.

He said he is still looking for ways to save money and actually lapsed \$226,000 in FY16; \$35,000 in FY17; \$190,000 in FY18; and approximately \$200,000 in FY19.

He would like to restore the LIOs hours of operation to full time and has money in the current budget to allow for that. He would like to have LIOs open 37.5 hours per week, like every

other section in the Agency, to continue to assist the Legislature.

CHAIR STEVENS thanked Mr. Powers and asked what the benefits to the public are in taking this action.

MR. POWERS replied that the LIO functions as a contact for the public to help them better understand the often complex Legislative process.

To that end, in 2017, he implemented an online chat service on the Legislature's website where the public can instantly connect with an LIO information officer. Each year since, there have been approximately 2000 contacts through this service.

Having the LIOS work full time would make them available to the public every weekday, including Friday afternoons, to answer legislative questions and/or arrange meetings.

VICE-CHAIR STUTES said she noticed this motion was for full time only during the interim and asked Mr. Powers if he anticipated going back to part time when the Legislature is in session?

MR. POWERS asked if she was referring to the session only LIOs.

VICE-CHAIR STUTES responded yes.

MR. POWERS replied that session only LIOs do still operate six months per year, traditionally December through May, and could possibly be open for special sessions. This action would not impact any of those six month positions.

VICE-CHAIR STUTES requested additional clarification and read the motion, "to return all year-round LIOs to full-time operation during the interim." She asked if they were at full time operation during session.

MR. POWERS replied yes, the LIOs do operate full time during session.

VICE-CHAIR STUTES asked about the loss of 15-16 jobs and if those were resignations from people quitting or retiring.

MR. POWERS replied three of the positions were due to retirement.

CHAIR STEVENS said there has been discussion about impact to the public, will you please discuss the impact to legislators. Is it

correct that currently there can be no committee meetings on Friday afternoons?

MR. POWERS replied that this Friday, it would be possible. Since there was such a short time between the first and second special sessions, LIO staff currently work the session schedule. Upon adjournment of the second special session, LIO staff will return to the interim schedule and close LIOs on Friday afternoons... unless this motion passes.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON noted that Mr. Powers said he already had money in the budget, so was his budget increased this year?

MR. POWERS responded that his budget was flat, not increased.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON said it sounded like this would be a cost increase of around \$298,000, and wants to understand how that money is in the LIO budget if it was flat and there was no money in the interim before.

MR. POWERS said he was citing the lapsed funds—money achieved through cost saving measures and not spent. He anticipated lapsing approximately \$200,000 this year and the cost of this motion is approximately \$107,000.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked to confirm, this action will cost approximately \$107,000?

MR. POWERS replied yes, that will be the increased employee expenses.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if there were further comments or questions. He continued that his biggest concern is that when LIO staff are not present on Friday afternoons, partisan staff must take care of any issues as people walk in and ask questions, instead of focusing on their work. He asked Ms. Geary for her comments or recommendations on this motion.

JESSICA GEARY, Executive Director, Legislative Affairs Agency, responded that this is something that has needed to happen. As Mr. Powers mentioned, there have been severe morale issues; this is a matter of fairness since the rest of the Agency remains open and continues to work and be paid for a full day Friday. Mr. Powers has done a phenomenal job decreasing costs and finding efficiencies. Having LIO staff work full time, like the rest of the agency, is an excellent use of the budget.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if there were comments or questions. Seeing none, he requested a roll call vote.

A roll call vote was taken.

YEAS: Senators Coghill, Stedman, Stevens; Representatives Edgmon, Foster, Johnson, Stutes, Thompson.

NAYS: Wilson

The motion passed 8-1.

IV. Contract Approvals

a. FY20 Annual Hardware Refresh

2:20:58 PM

VICE-CHAIR STUTES moved that Legislative Council approve the FY20 hardware refresh expenditure of \$149,836 out of existing capital funds.

CHAIR STEVENS objected for purposes of discussion and asked Tim Banaszak to please provide a brief explanation of this request.

TIM BANASZAK, Manager, Information Technology, said on behalf of the Legislative Council's IT Subcommittee, he offered the following FY20 hardware end-of-life equipment replacement recommendations for consideration: 21 laptop workstations that replace models dating back to 2011/12; 35 tiny workstations; 20 color printers that replace models dating back to 2011/12; and 38 monitors. The total estimated cost is \$149,836.

This is consistent with the Three Year Technology Plan and is based on a five year or older equipment replacement cycle to manage upkeep costs, maintain reasonable performance, address obsolescence, and manage security risks to an acceptable level.

The IT Subcommittee technology recommendations are also: first, integrating with hardware used in the mobile workstation initiative that eliminates computer equipment being shipped between district and session offices twice a year; second, it applies a phased approach to standardizing one color laser printer for each office, reducing the maintenance and toner costs; and third, it is cost efficient, leveraging government contract volume discount pricing that all three branches of government use to leverage buying power.

Mr. Banaszak said he is happy to answer any questions.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if there were questions. Seeing none, he requested a roll call vote.

A roll call vote was taken.

YEAS: Senators Coghill, Stedman, Stevens; Representatives Edgmon, Foster, Johnson, Stutes, Thompson, Wilson.

NAYS: None

The motion passed 9-0.

b. Governor Egan Bust

2:24:48 PM

VICE-CHAIR STUTES moved that Legislative Council award a contract to artist Roy Peratrovich to commission a bronze sculpture of Governor Bill Egan in the amount of \$19,000.

CHAIR STEVENS objected for purposes of discussion. He noted that Council appointed the Capitol Art Subcommittee which met on May 11, 2019, reviewed the proposals, and selected Mr. Peratrovich as the artist. Senator Coghill brought this issue to the Council and has been working on it for some time. Chair Stevens asked Senator Coghill to please discuss the project.

SENATOR COGHILL said in dealing with the sixtieth anniversary of the Legislature, he considered how to commemorate it and honor one of Alaska's first Governors. Bill Egan came to mind, so Senator Coghill spoke with Governor Egan's son, former Senator Dennis Egan, and requested permission to propose placing a bust of Governor Egan in the Capitol foyer. Senator Egan agreed, so Senator Coghill made the proposal to the Council and Rules Chairs.

Senator Coghill found that both Eagle Bronzing in Wyoming and Roy Peratrovich—who produced the bust in the Capitol of his mother—could create this piece. Mr. Peratrovich's bid was lower than Eagle Bronzing, and a new, less experienced sculptor could create it for slightly less than Mr. Peratrovich. Senator Coghill advocated for Mr. Peratrovich because of his experience and historical context, and noted he is becoming physically infirm so this may be one of his last sculptures. This is a fine way to honor the Chairman of the constitutional convention and first Governor. Due to the recent passing of his father, Senator Coghill expressed that he became quite sentimental about this project.

CHAIR STEVENS asked Senator Coghill to please speak to the historical context and Mr. Peratrovich's background so everyone is aware.

SENATOR COGHILL responded that Mr. Peratrovich's mother was a historic civil rights activist, his father was in the Constitutional Convention, he has sculpted many pieces including one in the Capitol of his mother. He is a fine Alaskan and it would bring historical value to his sculpture due to the artistry, and the artist. Mr. Peratrovich has had many firsts—including being the first Alaska Native civil engineer licensed in the state—and brings a deep history.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if there were any questions and thanked Senator Coghill for making this project a reality. Seeing no questions, he requested a roll call vote.

A roll call vote was taken.

YEAS: Senators Coghill, Stedman, Stevens; Representatives Edgmon, Foster, Johnson, Stutes, Thompson, Wilson.

NAYS: None

The motion passed 9-0.

V. Adjourn

CHAIR STEVENS said if there is no further business to come before the Council, we are adjourned.

[2:29:36 PM](#)