

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
March 11, 2020
9:03 a.m.

[9:03:55 AM](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Stedman called the Senate Finance Committee meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Natasha von Imhof, Co-Chair
Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair
Senator Click Bishop
Senator Lyman Hoffman
Senator Donny Olson
Senator Bill Wielechowski
Senator David Wilson

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT

Pete Ecklund, Staff, Senator Bert Stedman; Senator Peter Micciche, Sponsor; Michael Willis, Intern, Senator Peter Micciche; Kris Curtis, Legislative Auditor, Alaska Division of Legislative Audit; ELIZABETH REXFORD, STAFF, SENATOR DONNY OLSON; Sara Chambers, Director, Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development; Alysia Jones, Executive Administrator, Alaska State Medical Board, Juneau.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Charles McKee, Self, Anchorage; Jeff Edwards, Director, Board of Parole, Anchorage; Sarah Bigelow-Hood, Alaska State Medical Board Member, Anchorage; David Boswell, Alaska State Medical Board Member, Fairbanks; Richard Wein, Alaska State Medical Board Member, Sitka.

SUMMARY

SB 137 EXTEND BOARD OF PAROLE

SB 137 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

SB 172 EXTENDING THE STATE MEDICAL BOARD

SB 172 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

CSHB 206(FIN)

APPROP: MENTAL HEALTH BUDGET

SCS CSHB 206(FIN) was REPORTED out of committee with a "do pass" recommendation.

#hb206

CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 206(FIN)

"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."

9:05:21 AM

Co-Chair von Imhof MOVED to ADOPT the committee substitute for CSHB 206(FIN), Work Draft 31-GH2198\K (Bruce, 3/10/20).

Co-Chair Stedman OBJECTED for discussion.

9:05:46 AM

PETE ECKLUND, STAFF, SENATOR BERT STEDMAN, explained the committee substitute.

Co-Chair Stedman noted that \$13.9 million was for FY 20, and there was roughly \$250 million approved to draw from the CBR.

9:09:16 AM

Mr. Ecklund continued to discuss the changes in the committee substitute.

Senator Hoffman remarked that the \$9 million was listed as grants, and he appreciated the issue because of the eminent threat of Covid-19. He wondered whether there was a determination of how the \$9 million grants would be distributed to the people that need it.

Mr. Ecklund understood that there would be 10 people hired in the epidemiology unit, and did not know whether there was a plan for the grant distribution.

Co-Chair Stedman REMOVED their OBJECTION. There being NO OBJECTION, the proposed committee substitute was ADOPTED.

Co-Chair Stedman wondered if there was someone from the department that could speak about the issue of the coronavirus.

Co-Chair von Imhof believed that the money would be used to hire five public health nurses, three or more epidemiologists, and one emergency technicians. She noted that there could potentially be tents, testing kits, oxygen, and other things related to containing the virus. She stressed the importance of distributing the money as soon as possible.

[9:15:36 AM](#)

Co-Chair Stedman stressed that the funds needed to be available as soon as possible.

Senator Olson wondered whether the tents were for prevention.

Co-Chair von Imhof believed that the actual documentation for the supplemental item addressed the employees. She remarked that there were other discussion about the possible alternative location to send people.

Co-Chair Stedman remarked that it was difficult to get answers.

Senator Hoffman noted that Alaska received a disproportionate number of travelers, because of the cruise industry. He reiterated the importance of the approval of the funding.

Co-Chair von Imhof MOVED to report SCS CSHB 206(FIN) out of Committee with individual recommendations. There being NO OBJECTION, it was so ordered.

Co-Chair Stedman remarked that the bill would be on the floor of the Senate that day.

SCS CSHB 206(FIN) was REPORTED out of committee with a "do pass" recommendation.

Co-Chair Stedman handed the gavel to Co-Chair von Imhof.

[9:19:12 AM](#)

AT EASE

[9:21:57 AM](#)

RECONVENED

#sb137

SENATE BILL NO. 137

"An Act extending the termination date of the Board of Parole; and providing for an effective date."

[9:22:37 AM](#)

SENATOR PETER MICCICHE, SPONSOR, explained the legislation. He remarked that it was an uncomplicated bill, and the Board would extend to five years.

[9:23:30 AM](#)

MICHAEL WILLIS, INTERN, SENATOR PETER MICCICHE, explained the legislation.

[9:24:49 AM](#)

KRIS CURTIS, LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR, ALASKA DIVISION OF LEGISLATIVE AUDIT, explained the audit of the Board of Parole.

[9:32:13 AM](#)

Senator Hoffman looked at number 2, and wondered whether it required funding.

Ms. Curtis replied that the commissioner described that there was already corrective action to update Highland Mountain Correctional Center. She remarked that additional corrective action would occur in the constraints of the budget.

Senator Hoffman queried a timeframe to address the issue.

Ms. Curtis replied that they did not provide a timeline.

Senator Bishop wondered whether there would be contact to the department.

Ms. Curtis replied that she did not have a mechanism to follow up on the finding unless there was another audit.

Co-Chair von Imhof OPENED public testimony.

[9:34:17 AM](#)

CHARLES MCKEE, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), asked for proof of jurisdiction stated in a hearing he had on September 30. He had asked the court for consideration, but only one charge was dismissed.

[9:36:57 AM](#)

JEFF EDWARDS, DIRECTOR, BOARD OF PAROLE, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), stated that he was available for questions.

Senator Wielechowski looked at the no-show percentage and wondered whether there was effort to lower that percentage number.

Mr. Edwards replied in the affirmative.

Senator Wielechowski asked for an example of technical and a nontechnical violation.

Mr. Edwards responded that a nontechnical violation would be something like a new criminal charge, as opposed to a technical violation, which would be something like a drug or alcohol use violation.

Co-Chair von Imhof CLOSED public testimony.

Senator Bishop reviewed the fiscal note.

SB 137 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

#sb172

SENATE BILL NO. 172

"An Act extending the termination date of the State Medical Board; and providing for an effective date."

9:40:48 AM

SENATOR DONNY OLSON, SPONSOR, introduced the legislation

9:41:19 AM

ELIZABETH REXFORD, STAFF, SENATOR DONNY OLSON, discussed the bill.

9:43:00 AM

KRIS CURTIS, LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR, ALASKA DIVISION OF LEGISLATIVE AUDIT, discussed the audit of the State Medical Board.

9:49:03 AM

Senator Olson looked at the issue related to some of the shortfalls, and noted the lack of reporting. He asked about the other state's requirements.

Ms. Curtis replied in the affirmative.

Senator Olson queried the seriousness of the disciplinary actions.

Ms. Curtis replied that they were civil fine actions, so it depended on the reason for the fine.

Senator Olson looked at page 11, and noted FY 16, FY 17, FY 18 and remarked on the 100 increase between FY 16 and FY 18. He queried the reason for the significant change.

Ms. Curtis deferred to the Board chair. She believed that there was normally an explanation for an increase.

[9:51:12 AM](#)

SARAH BIGELOW-HOOD, ALASKA STATE MEDICAL BOARD MEMBER, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), stated that there was no current Chair of the board.

Co-Chair von Imhof wondered whether there was an intent to appoint a new Chair soon.

Ms. Bigelow-Hood replied in the affirmative. She stated that the entire board was new, and would meet to decide on a new Chair.

[9:51:52 AM](#)

Senator Wielechowski noted that the audit recommended a five-year extension, but the bill only had a three-year extension. He queried any thoughts on the difference.

Ms. Curtis replied that the recommendation of five years was based on a cost benefit related to conducting an audit.

Co-Chair von Imhof wondered what happened in the House when presented with the five-year extension.

Ms. Curtis replied that there was a concern about the lack of compliance.

Senator Olson wondered how often a board did not have a Chair realizing that the members had recently had appointments.

Ms. Curtis replied that it was highly unusual in her experience, and noted that there was something similar occurring in the Board of Nursing.

Co-Chair von Imhof wondered how long the Chair position had been vacant.

Ms. Bigelow-Hood replied that she did not know, and that she had only been appointed for approximately one week.

Co-Chair von Imhof wondered how long the Chair position had been vacant, and when it was anticipated that the Chair position would be filled.

[9:54:45 AM](#)

DAVID BOSWELL, ALASKA STATE MEDICAL BOARD MEMBER, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), responded that five of seven board positions had only recently been appointed in March. The first order of business would be to organize and appoint a Chair.

Co-Chair von Imhof wondered why there was almost near complete turnover on the board.

Mr. Boswell guessed that it was the need for compliance.

Senator Wielechowski wondered why five out of the seven people left the board.

Mr. Boswell replied that he did not know.

Co-Chair von Imhof wanted to see the list of the current board members and their terms.

Mr. Boswell replied that his position was term limited out at eight years.

Senator Wilson felt that Ms. Chambers could address some of the questions.

[9:57:32 AM](#)

SARA CHAMBERS, DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF CORPORATIONS, BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL LICENSING, DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, deferred to Ms. Jones.

[9:57:54 AM](#)

ALYSIA JONES, EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATOR, ALASKA STATE MEDICAL BOARD, JUNEAU, remarked that there was a full turnover of the board as of March 3, 2020. She remarked that there were two that had early terminations.

Senator Wielechowski surmised that two member terms were terminated before their terms were complete.

Ms. Jones agreed.

Senator Wielechowski wondered why their terms were terminated early.

Ms. Jones replied that she did not receive that information, but were only notified of the changes.

Co-Chair von Imhof wondered how the board member and by whom they were notified that their term was to end early.

Ms. Jones replied that the Boards and Commission would call and notify the member of the change.

10:00:01 AM

Senator Wielechowski requested the reason for the termination of the membership.

Senator Bishop stressed the importance of the State Medical Board. He felt that there should be continuity on public safety.

Senator Wielechowski stressed that the mission of the board was to protect the health of the state. He wanted to know the reason for the turnover.

Ms. Chambers would request a response from the Governor's Office.

Senator Olson wondered who would ensure that there were disciplinary actions against the "bad actors."

Ms. Chambers replied that the board continued to go through the investigative process with the department investigators.

Senator Olson queried the last time the board took disciplinary action.

Ms. Jones replied that the board typically took action at their quarterly meetings, and the last meeting was on February 6 and 7 of 2020. The new board would be meeting in the upcoming May.

Co-Chair von Imhof asked whether the meeting minutes were available to the public.

Ms. Jones replied that the meetings of the most recent meeting would be available at the end of the week.

10:05:11 AM

Senator Olson assumed that there was no action because of the turnover. He wanted to know the last time action was taken against someone.

Co-Chair von Imhof stressed the importance of disciplinary action.

Ms. Jones replied that the investigations were ongoing, so the action would be brought to the board at the appropriate time.

Ms. Chambers noted that if there was a need for an emergency action, it was initiated by her department after the information was given, so a meeting could be called for the action. She stressed that all of the boards, required of turnover, could meet as needed.

Senator Olson appreciated the ability for emergency action.

10:07:41 AM

RICHARD WEIN, ALASKA STATE MEDICAL BOARD MEMBER, SITKA (via teleconference), stated that he was a new member of the board. He called in to support the passage of the bill. He remarked that was important for physicians to do no harm. He felt that he was convinced that a meeting should occur as soon as possible to fully vet the current issues. He was critically aware of the issues facing the board, including coming into compliance with the current audit.

Senator Wilson stated that he did not have a question for Dr. Wein.

Co-Chair von Imhof OPENED public testimony.

Co-Chair von Imhof CLOSED public testimony.

10:11:33 AM

Senator Wilson remarked that the board would not be able to pick a new Chair until after confirmations.

Ms. Jones replied in the affirmative.

Senator Bishop reviewed the fiscal note.

Co-Chair von Imhof discussed the following day's agenda.

SB 172 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

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ADJOURNMENT

10:14:06 AM

The meeting was adjourned at 10:14 a.m.