

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 2, 2021

8:03 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Sara Hannan, Co-Chair (via teleconference)  
Representative Calvin Schrage, Co-Chair  
Representative Josiah Patkotak, Vice Chair (via teleconference)  
Representative Harriet Drummond  
Representative Mike Prax (via teleconference)  
Representative Ken McCarty  
Representative Kevin McCabe

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

OVERVIEW(S): DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

- HEARD

OVERVIEW(S): DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

NANCY DAHLSTROM, Commissioner  
Department of Corrections  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave an overview on the Department of Corrections via a PowerPoint presentation.

APRIL WILKERSON, Director  
Administrative Services  
Department of Corrections  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the overview of the Department of Corrections.

KELLY GOODE, Deputy Commissioner  
Office of the Commissioner  
Department of Corrections  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Addressed slides and answered questions during the overview on the Department of Corrections.

KELLY HOWELL, Interim Commissioner  
Department of Public Safety  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave an overview of the Department of Public Safety via a PowerPoint Presentation.

COLONEL BRYAN BARLOW, Director  
Alaska State Troopers  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the overview of the Department of Public Safety.

MAJOR STEVEN ADAMS, Director  
Alaska Wildlife Troopers  
Department of Public Safety  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the overview of the Department of Public Safety.

KATHRYN MONFREDA, Director  
Division of Statewide Services  
Department of Public Safety  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Responded to a question during the overview of the Department of Public Safety.

ELIZABETH DUNAYSKI, Director  
Division of Administrative Services  
Department of Public Safety  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Responded to questions during the overview of the Department of Public Safety.

ROBERT GRIFFITHS, Executive Director  
Alaska Police Standards Council  
Department of Public Safety  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Responded to questions during the overview of the Department of Public Safety.

DIANE CASTO, Executive Director  
Council of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault  
Department of Public Safety  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered a question during the overview of the Department of Public Safety.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:03:07 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR CALVIN SCHRAGE** called the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. Representatives Drummond, McCarty, McCabe, and Schrage were present at the call to order. Representatives Patkotak, Prax, and Hannan arrived (via teleconference) as the meeting was in progress.

**OVERVIEW(S): Department of Corrections**

[8:03:55 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SCHRAGE announced that the first order of business would be an overview of the Department of Corrections.

[8:04:48 AM](#)

NANCY DAHLSTROM, Commissioner, Department of Corrections, gave an overview of the Department of Corrections via a PowerPoint presentation [hard copy included in the committee packet]. She directed attention to slide 2, "Mission and Core Services," the portion of which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

Mission: To provide secure confinement, reformative programs, and a process of supervised community reintegration to enhance the safety of our communities

Department FY2022 Positions: 2,055

Department FY2022 Budget Request: \$398,490.4

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM related that the Department of Corrections (DOC) was established in March 1984 by Governor Bill Sheffield, via Executive Order 55. Prior to that, Corrections was within the Division of Health and Social Services. She said

DOC's mission is "grounded in the state constitution." She explained that slide 2 illustrates how DOC divides its responsibilities by [division].

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM turned to slide 3, "Core Services," which spells out that for which DOC is responsible, and which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

#### Secure Confinement

- 12 in-state correctional facilities
- 15 regional community jails
- Classification and furlough
- Inmate transportation
- Physical health care
- Correctional academy

#### Supervised Release

- Statewide pretrial, probation and parole offices
- 7 community residential centers
- Electronic monitoring
- Correctional academy
- Parole board

#### Reformative Programs

- Behavioral health care
- Substance abuse treatment
- Sex offender management
- Education and vocational programs
- Domestic violence intervention programs
- Faith-based services
- Recidivism reduction
- Reentry services

[8:07:20 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM showed an "Organizational Chart" on slide 4, which lists the following: The Commissioner's Office, the Division of Institutions, the Division of Health and Rehabilitation Services, the Division of Pretrial, Probation and Parole, the Division of Administrative Services, and the Parole Board. As noted on slide 2, she said DOC currently is requesting a total of 2,055 permanent, full-time positions.

8:08:06 AM

CO-CHAIR HANNAN asked whether the 2,055 positions were static or a change.

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM clarified that she had misspoken and that 2,055 relates to current positions. In response to a follow-up question regarding additional staff requested, she deferred to April Wilkerson.

8:09:01 AM

APRIL WILKERSON, Director, Administrative Services, Department of Corrections, related that DOC is asking for two additional auditors for the internal controls associated with inmate banking and property. The positions are being requested with funding of interagency receipt authority "to be billed back throughout the department based on efficiencies identified through these audit activities." She said there is a reduction in positions; therefore, the net effect in positions would be a positive one position in the fiscal year 2022 (FY 22) budget. She explained that the positions associated with procurement consolidation would be transferred out of the budget.

8:10:10 AM

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM moved on to slide 5, "DOC at a Glance," which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

Alaska is one of seven states that operate a unified correctional system. A state unified system is one in which there is an integrated state-level prison and jail system.

DOC booked 31,204 offenders into its facilities in 2020

19,959 were unique offenders

1,452 were non-criminal Title 47 bookings

As of 12/31/2020, DOC was responsible for 10,626 individuals

4,559 offenders in jail or prison

187 offenders on sentenced electronic monitoring (EM)

243 offenders in community residential centers (CRCs)

2,729 defendants on pretrial supervision (1,456  
on pretrial EM)  
2,908 offenders on probation or parole

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM noted that the following states have unified correctional systems: Alaska, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawai'i, Rhode Island, and West Virginia.

[8:11:38 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND, on behalf of new members on the committee, requested a definition of noncriminal Title 47 bookings.

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM explained that sometimes police need to bring individuals, usually those with mental health issues, to a holding place while it is decided where the individuals will be placed.

[8:12:34 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN, regarding the Title 47 bookings, asked whether the 1,452 reflected "unique offenders" and, if so, what the total number of bookings was out of the [31,024] bookings.

MS. WILKERSON answered that 1,400 reflects total individuals held under Title 47. She said she would follow-up with information regarding the number of unique individuals held in DOC's facilities on multiple occasions.

[8:14:01 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM remarked that some of the folks are held more than once.

CO-CHAIR HANNAN confirmed she had speculated "many of those mental health holds are not resolved in a single hold." She maintained that DOC provides the vast majority of the crisis mental health services in the state.

[8:14:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY asked for confirmation that because the Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API) currently cannot accommodate these individuals with mental health issues, DOC has become "the next choice to serve these individuals."

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM remarked that previously there had been circumstances that made API unable to accept individuals; however, the majority of those situations have been addressed, and DOC does not "see the Title 47 like we used to." She said the department could provide further details in the future.

[8:15:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE expressed interest in learning about "frequent fliers" in terms of victims of abuse and inebriates.

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM said sometimes people come to DOC under the influence of drugs or alcohol. She reminded the committee that DOC is "a downstream agency," meaning that it takes people sent from court and the Department of Public Safety. She emphasized that DOC does the best it can with these people, but it does not determine "who comes in the door." In response to a request from Representative McCarty, she agreed to provide demographics regarding the individuals held by DOC.

[8:17:32 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM returned to the PowerPoint, to slide 6, "Division of Institution," and covered the information, which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

Institution Director's Office

Inmate Time Accounting

Chaplaincy Program

Prison Rape Elimination Act Oversight

Inmate Grievance Resolution

Security Threat Group

Classification and Furlough

Inmate Classification

Inmate Furlough

Inmate Transportation and Point of Arrest

Inmate Medical Transports

Inmate Housing Transports

K-9 Unit

Point of Arrest

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM stated that the mission of the Division of Institution is to promote public safety through secure confinement and provide access to reformatory programs, as well

as offender management planning that promotes successful community reentry. She talked about the K-9 unit. She turned to slide 7, which provides a map depicting locations of jails throughout Alaska. Slide 8 she showed to provide a prison status comparison and give some statistics: In July 2019, the unsentenced percentage was 47.41 percent; in July 2020, it was 29.64 percent; in February 2021, it was 54.50 percent.

[8:19:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE referred to slide 7 and asked about the Palmer Correctional Center.

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM said she anticipates the department will open the Palmer Correctional in July 2021. She said it is a large state contract managed by the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF). There is a superintendent and assistant superintendent, and others are being hired. She expressed her hope that committee members would have the opportunity to tour the facility.

[8:21:25 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN, referring to slide 8, asked for a breakdown between felony and misdemeanor charges within the unsentenced population.

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM said she would provide that information for the committee.

[8:22:03 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM directed attention to slide 9, which shows a pie chart depicting "Prison Population by Length of Stay." In response to Co-Chair Schrage, she clarified it shows the total length of stay. She then presented slide 10, which shows a pie chart depicting "Prison Populations by Offenses."

[8:23:18 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SCHRAGE asked for a breakdown as to how the coronavirus has affected prison population.

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM said she would provide that information.

[8:24:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked for a definition of two categories in the pie chart on slide 10: "person" and "federal hold."

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM explained that federal holds are prisoners in custody of DOC's facilities but legally in custody of the US. Marshall for various crimes. She noted that Alaska is the only state in the nation with no federal prison. She said this is also the area where military members would be held if necessary. In response to a follow-up question, she confirmed that DOC is reimbursed by the federal government. She deferred to Ms. Wilkerson to offer statistics requested by Representative McCabe.

[8:26:01 AM](#)

MS. WILKERSON said DOC conducts an annual cost-of-care report to calculate a daily rate that is then reimbursed by the federal entity.

[8:26:38 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM moved on to slide [11], "Division of Health and Rehab Services," which includes the following information [original punctuation provided]:

- Health & Rehabilitation Director's Office
  - Medical Oversight
  - Medicaid Assistance

- Physical Health Care
  - Medical
  - Dental

- Behavioral Health Care
  - Mental Health Services

- Substance Abuse
  - Assessment
  - Residential Treatment
  - Institutional Out-Patient Treatment

- Sex Offender Management
  - Polygraph
  - Institutional Sex Offender Program
  - Community Sex Offender Program

- Domestic Violence Program

Batterer's Intervention Program

Reentry & Recidivism Unit  
Offender Reentry  
Community Coordination

Education/Vocational Programs  
Basic Adult Education  
Apprenticeship Training  
Vocational Training

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM remarked that DOC is committed to professionalism, quality, and safety in terms of the care it provides to inmates. She said many people arrive in an unhealthy state and leave much healthier. She said all are treated compassionately and given the help they need. In terms of reentry, she said DOC wants a successful transition of those released to their communities, and this is done through collaborative release planning and individualized case management planning. Also important is positive family, community, and peer support. She indicated that the coronavirus has brought about challenges in this area, but [successful transition] remains the department's goal.

[8:28:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked how valuable the programs offered are in the success of reintroducing someone into the population.

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM said she could get the numbers, but said there is no magic number or formula. She explained that sometimes individuals need to try several times, and they have to want to succeed; sometimes they "don't know another way." The goal with educational and vocational programs are not just for success; they also teach basic life skills like showing up on time, for example.

[8:30:05 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN asked for more information regarding apprenticeship programs and training programs and how many inmates are able to make use of them.

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM said she would have the information sent to the whole committee. She shared that COVID-19 has been challenging. For example, she made the decision a year ago to stop much of the programing, because the department could not

have the volunteers and instructors coming into the facilities during the pandemic. She said there are a lot of things that have been on hold, and the department is looking at how to return to "normal."

CO-CHAIR HANNAN said she is not only interested in the formal apprenticeships but also separate, independent apprenticeships and training that may have been available in the past and DOC is hoping to reoffer.

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM replied that she would get that information. She talked about a good program with iron workers operated from a trailer that goes to the facilities. Those running the program make the promise to hire inmates who complete the program upon their release. She mentioned a barbershop program with a high success rate.

[8:33:23 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SCHRAGE ventured these programs boost morale in the prison population. He questioned whether the pause in some of these programs in response to the pandemic has resulted in a decrease in morale or an increase in violence or vandalism.

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM described ways the department has counterbalanced the loss of some programs with things like movies, treat nights, and an increase in the number of free phone calls allowed, among other things. She lauded the job superintendents have been doing, as well as medical officers and staff.

[8:35:14 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY expressed appreciation for the work being done by DOC during the pandemic. He asked about opportunities for helping inmates as related to COVID-19.

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM spoke about the tiered offerings of the vaccine and the voluntary nature of receiving the vaccine.

[8:37:04 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM returned to the PowerPoint presentation, to slide 12, "Division of Pretrial, Probation, & Parole," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Probation and Parole Director's Office

Victim Service Unit

Pretrial Services

Assessments  
Basic Supervision  
Enhanced Supervision

Statewide Probation and Parole

13 regional locations  
Specialty  
Probation Accountability with Certain Enforcement  
Pre-Sentencing Unit  
Interstate Compact

[8:38:00 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY asked whether there is a problem wherein released inmates from rural villages may be required to stay in Anchorage because there may not be a parole officer in their home community.

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM said that is not a challenge; DOC is responsible for getting a person back to his/her "arrest location." She related there has been a challenge at times in bringing the person back to a community that has "shut down" due to COVID-19 mitigation practices. In those circumstances, DOC has ensured the person has housing and, when appropriate, is brought back to his/her home community.

[8:39:27 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM brought attention the map of Alaska on slide 13, "Supervised Release," which shows areas with supervised release, community residential centers, and electronic monitoring locations. She then asked Kelly Goode to discuss slides 14 and 15.

[8:40:13 AM](#)

KELLY GOODE, Deputy Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner, Department of Corrections, addressed slide 14, "Pre-Trial Services Supervision," which shows the numbers DOC has had. She pointed out that the numbers have increased because people are staying longer. She said this chart shows how COVID-19 has affected the pre-trial service area. She moved on to slide 15, "Statewide Probation & Parole," which shows the numbers of the caseloads being covered currently. She said there is a

statutory limit of 75 for caseloads, and the director of the division works hard to ensure that number is not exceeded.

[8:41:35 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM highlighted items listed on slide 16, "Division of Administrative Services," which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

Administrative Services

Budget and Finance

Inmate Banking

Auditing and Internal Controls

Payroll and Position Classification

Construction Procurement and Space Liaison

Alcohol Ignition Interlock Device Certification

Departmental Ethics Supervisor

Information Technology

Alaska Corrections Offender Management System

Inmate Law Library

Inmate Technology Support

Research and Records

PFD Eligibility

Research and Reporting

Criminal Justice Information Security

Data Management

Facilities Capital Unit & OSHA Compliance

Institution Renovation, Repairs, and Construction Management

OSHA Compliance and Oversight

State Facilities Rent

Douglas Island Center Building

Palmer State Office Building

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM turned to slide 17, "Board of Parole," which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

Core Service: Supervised Release

Board of Parole

Discretionary Parole

Mandatory Parole

Special Medical Parole  
Geriatric Parole  
Clemency Investigations

The Board of Parole consists of five members appointed  
by the Governor

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM drew attention to slide 18, "Office of  
the Commissioner," which read as follows [original punctuation  
provided, with some formatting changes]:

Commissioner's Office  
Constituent Relations  
Compliance Standards  
Inmate ADA Grievances  
Public Information  
Policy and Procedures

Recruitment and Retention  
Recruitment Outreach  
Applicant Assistance  
Employee Backgrounds  
Officer Medical Reimbursement  
Recruitment Incentive Leave Program  
Employee Wellness Program

Training Academy  
Basic Officer Training  
Field Officer Training  
Prisoner Transportation Officer Training  
Firearm / Taser Training and Certification  
Municipal Officer Academy

[8:44:06 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked for a breakdown on inmate ADA  
[Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990] grievances.

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM said the department would get that  
information for Representative McCabe.

[8:44:35 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN noted that Alaska has a unified community jail  
and prison system, and she asked which facilities are operated  
under municipal officers and how the Municipal Academy differs  
from other academies.

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM deferred to Ms. Wilkerson.

[8:45:08 AM](#)

MS. WILKERSON answered that the Municipal Officer Academy is a training academy provided to local entities that have their own jails, such as Sand Point, which are outside of the state prison. In response to a follow-up question as to how closely aligned the Municipal Officer Academy training is to that of fully certified correctional officer training, she said she would get back to Co-Chair Hannan with copies of the curricula, with differences identified. She added that if a municipal guard applied for a guard position within DOC, then the department would "take a look at what training has already been provided," and the candidate would be required "to go through a six-week academy with the department."

[8:46:59 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM returned to the PowerPoint, to slide 19, "Goals and Objectives," which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

- Protect the public
- Provide safe and secure care and custody
- Ensure that incarcerated offenders spend productive time while in custody
- Reentry and community supervision
- Reduce recidivism
- Work with stakeholders to achieve these goals

[8:47:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY asked for details regarding efforts to reduce recidivism.

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM responded there is a three-year lookback related to recidivism. The department constantly reevaluates its programs. In response to a follow-up question, she confirmed there is a matrix used, and she said she could provide those numbers.

[8:49:25 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN said she has had conversations with DOC for a couple years to try to close the loop related to a component of

reentry: legal identification (ID) once an inmate leaves the system. She asked for an update.

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM deferred to Deputy Commissioner Goode.

8:50:19 AM

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODE assured Co-Chair Hannan that DOC is working on the issue. She reported that currently 12-14 percent of inmates released from a facility do not have ID. She said inmates are given a voucher they can take to any Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) office to obtain an ID, which is paid for by DOC; records show that 50-90 released inmates per month will turn in a voucher.

CO-CHAIR HANNAN remarked that there has been a proposal to privatize at least six DMV offices in Alaska. She observed that in most cases where DMV has a private contractor, there are additional fees for services. She asked whether DOC would cover those additional fees.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODE said that is one aspect that is being considered, and she will share the data when available.

8:53:27 AM

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY asked what 12-14 percent translates to in terms of the number of people.

DEPUTY COMM GOODE estimated that 12 equals 350 people based on the numbers of the last few months; she said she would find out the number for the last full year.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY recalled taking part in a mock reentry program conducted in Juneau a year ago. He said, "I did everything I was supposed to do in the mock thing, and I still went back to jail." He asked whether there had been any consideration of inviting the DMV to be part of the exit/reentry process of inmates such that the released inmates would not have to go to a DMV office.

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM responded that there have been numerous considerations made, including an idea to create the IDs through DOC; but DOC does not have that authority. She said she is open to having a conversation with Representative McCarty; however, she cautioned that there are many challenges with bringing

someone from the DMV, one of which would be the necessity to have a DMV staff person in each facility 24/7.

[8:57:12 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM continued with the PowerPoint, to slide 20, "Hot Topics," which are: COVID-19, recruitment, and the new Palmer facility. She said her number one priority is to keep all inmates and staff safe. The majority of the time DOC has not only met, but often exceeded, the requirements of the Center for Disease Control (CDC). She spoke highly of the staff. She mentioned again the opening of the facility in Palmer.

[8:59:45 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE inquired how many DOC employees are unionized and what percentage of DOC's budget is allotted to personnel.

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM replied that DOC has five different unions. She deferred to Ms. Wilkerson to provide percentages.

[9:00:17 AM](#)

MS. WILKERSON advised that just over 62 percent of DOC's budget goes toward personnel costs; it includes salaries, benefits, and "employer costs." In response to a follow-up question, she said over 95 percent of DOC's staff are unionized; fewer than one dozen positions are exempt, and those would be, for example, medical positions and executive staff. The union positions exist within the five bargaining units referenced by Commissioner Dahlstrom.

[9:01:35 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM directed attention to slide 21, "COVID-19 Impacts," which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

OPERATIONAL IMPACTS

Court System Changes

Increase in pretrial release

Increase in presentence population

Attorney-client visit

Suspended visitation and certain programming

Free phone calls for inmates

## BUDGETARY IMPACTS

GF lapses associated with suspended programming  
Federal funds offset:

\$617,898 in COVID-19 leave and overtime related  
expenditures

\$479,896 in COVID-19 related expenditures

Personal Protective Equipment, Cleaning and  
Medical Supplies, Employee Fit Testing,  
Employee Housing, Inmate Charters and  
Housing, Inmate Stipends Related to  
Increased Inmate Job Workers, Increased  
Cleaning at All Institutions

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM offered additional information regarding the attorney-client visits. She said a "poly-comm" system is used and has resulted in more attorney-client time.

MS. WILKERSON talked about the budgetary impacts. She said both those figures [shown in slide 21] were funds received via Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) from the CARES Act allocation to DOC. She said there will be additional offsetting expenditures in the FY 21 budget.

COMMISSIONER DAHLSTROM added that DOC did not receive any CARES Act money directly from the federal government; the money came from DHSS. She then showed slide 22 to indicate the overview was completed.

[9:05:23 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SCHRAGE ascertained there were no further questions from the committee.

[9:05:37 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 9:05 a.m.

### **OVERVIEW(S): Department of Public Safety**

[9:06:00 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SCHRAGE announced that the final order of business would be an overview of the Department of Public Safety.

[9:06:10 AM](#)

KELLY HOWELL, Interim Commissioner, Department of Public Safety, said she would give an overview of the Department of Public Safety (DPS) via PowerPoint [hardcopy included in the committee packet], with questions deferred to area experts within the department. She directed attention to slide 2, "Department of Public Safety," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Our Mission

To ensure public safety and enforce fish and wildlife laws

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

[9:08:42 AM](#)

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL showed slide 3, "Statewide Impact," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

DPS is Alaska's primary statewide law enforcement agency

Direct support to other agencies

- Investigative assistance
- Search and rescue
- Training
- Criminal justice databases (e.g. APSIN)
- Crime lab

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL explained that assistance is given to other departments in the state, municipal, and federal governments. She said training is for law enforcement, fire service professionals, and criminal justice agencies. She defined the Alaska Public Safety Information Network (APSIN) as "the state central repository of criminal history record information." She said the state has just one accredited, full-service crime lab.

[9:09:43 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN asked whether there was any engagement between DPS and [the Alaska Wing of the] Civil Air Patrol during search and rescue missions "this year."

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL deferred to Colonel Bryan Barlow but noted that the department does work with multiple agencies in performing search and rescue missions.

[9:11:19 AM](#)

COLONEL BRYAN BARLOW, Director, Division of Alaska State Troopers, told Co-Chair Hannan he could gather statistics regarding the number of rescue operations. Notwithstanding that, he said in general the Division of Alaska State Troopers (AST) has worked with the Alaska Wing of the Civil Air Patrol on search and rescue operations over the last year, as well as with other groups across Alaska. He shared that AST shares hangar space with the Alaska Wing of the Civil Air Patrol.

[9:12:49 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked about funding of the Alaska Wing of the Civil Air Patrol.

COLONEL BARLOW stated that AST does not fund the operations of the Alaska Wing of the Civil Air Patrol; however, in past years there have been "pass-through funds" designed to assist the Alaska Wing of the Civil Air Patrol in its operations.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL, in response to a follow-up question, explained that up until the last fiscal year, DPS had a budget component for the Alaska Wing of the Civil Air Patrol; it was funded through state general funds, and it was the state's contribution of the mission of the Alaska Wing of the Civil Air Patrol.

[9:14:26 AM](#)

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL returned to the PowerPoint, to slide 4, which depicts an organizational chart. She said there is one deputy commission position in DPS, and the following five divisions: the Division of Fire and Life Safety, the Division of Statewide Services, the Division of Alaska State Troopers (AST), and the Division of Wildlife Troopers (AWT), and the Division of Administrative Services. The Crime Lab, while not its own division, serves a unique and specialized function, she remarked. She listed the three councils housed within DPS: the

Alaska Police Standards Council (APSC), the Fire Standards Council (FSC), and the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA). She stated that in the governor's FY 22 budget, there is a proposal to transfer the Violent Crimes Compensation Board from the Department of Administration to DPS, where it was housed many years ago. This would be accomplished under Executive Order (EO) 120. Currently DPS has budgetary authority that was transferred in the last fiscal year; the statutory authority will be transferred via EO 120. She explained the transfer was not accomplished last year because of the abbreviated [in response to concerns about the pandemic] legislative session.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL related that DPS comprises 871 permanent, full-time positions, about the fifth largest in terms of permanent, full-time positions out of the 15 executive branch agencies. She noted that of the 871, approximately 419 are state trooper positions within the two trooper divisions. In response to Representative McCabe, she clarified that 419 is the number of authorized positions; approximately 365 are currently filled, and training is happening currently at the Public Safety Academy in Sitka, Alaska.

[9:17:20 AM](#)

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL moved on to slide 5, "Division of Alaska State Troopers," which shows a photo of Colonel Bryan Barlow, Director. Slide 5 offers the division breakdown, as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Detachments
  - Bureau of Highway Patrol
  - Search and Rescue
  - Statewide Drug and Alcohol Enforcement
  - Alaska Bureau of Investigation
  - Prisoner Transport
  - Judicial Services
  - Operations Support Bureau

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL noted that the mission of the Division of Alaska State Troopers is to preserve the peace, enforce the law, prevent and detect crime, and protect life and property. She said the Bureau of Highway Patrol supports highway safety campaigns, and Search and Rescue is within AST. She said the Alaska Bureau of Investigation investigates major crimes, as well as provides investigative assistance to other agencies. She stated that the court services officers, within

Judicial Services, transport prisoners throughout the state, provide security for the court system, "protect the judiciary," and provide timely service of legal process. She said the Operations Support Bureau includes the department's Aircraft Section, the academy in Sitka, an advanced training unit, the domestic violence and sexual assault training unit, and a recruitment unit.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL displayed slide 6, which shows a map delineating the four geographic detachments and the current locations of AWT and AST posts, some of which are combined.

[9:20:45 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND asked for a description of the zones on the map, in particular the zone named "B."

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL deferred the question to Colonel Barlow.

[9:21:19 AM](#)

COLONEL BARLOW described the four geographic detachments: the "A" detachment, shown in red, includes Southeast Alaska and the Kenai Peninsula; the "B" detachment, [shown in medium blue], includes Southcentral Alaska and extending east to the Canadian border; the "C" detachment, [shown in light blue], includes all Western Alaska; and the "D" detachment, [shown in yellow], includes mainly Interior Alaska. Additionally, the area in white at the top of the map depicts the North Slope Borough, which has its own police department.

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND pointed out that the Municipality of Anchorage does not get AST service, and she observed that that is not indicated on the map, where Anchorage appears to be part of the "A" detachment.

COLONEL BARLOW confirmed it is true that AST does not provide primary law enforcement services within the Municipality of Anchorage. That is covered by the Anchorage Police Department. He said some areas of the division that are involved in the Municipality of Anchorage include the Alaska Bureau of Investigation, the Statewide Drug and Alcohol Enforcement unit, and court services officers. He said sometimes the division works on its own and sometimes in cooperation with the Anchorage Police Department. He explained that the purpose of the map is to depict the division's primary geographic areas in the state.

9:24:02 AM

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked for more details regarding the area of Anchorage.

COLONEL BARLOW described a campus of buildings along Tudor Road, including DPS headquarters, the Alaska Bureau of Investigation, and the Anchorage post of AWT. He offered a brief history of a more robust presence of AST in Anchorage before expansion of the municipality. He noted that the Crime Lab is just west of the Tudor Road campus. In response to a follow-up question, he clarified the areas in which the Anchorage Police Department and AST are primary law enforcers.

9:28:13 AM

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY said he is from the Chugiak/Eagle River area. He indicated that the president of the Birchwood Airport had been told the facility is not part of APD's jurisdiction but rather within AST's jurisdiction. He asked for more details regarding "Anchorage outreach."

COLONEL BARLOW reiterated that while AST does conduct investigative efforts in the Municipality of Anchorage, generally the border is the municipality. He mentioned the area to the north at the Matanuska River and south to the bottom of Turnagain Pass and said that "the primary law enforcement within those areas is the Anchorage Police Department." In response to a follow-up question, he said it is not unique to Anchorage; AST routinely works with municipalities.

9:32:35 AM

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL directed attention to slide 7, "Division of Alaska Wildlife Troopers," which is overseen by Major Steve Adams, Deputy Director. She said the mission of the division is to protect Alaska's natural resources through wildlife enforcement. The division performs statewide patrol of commercial big game services, commercial fisheries, sport fish, and sport fish guiding, game, and trapping, as well as providing education regarding boating safety and safeguarding habitat through reduction of watershed damage and noncompliance of environmental permits. As shown on slide 8, she noted that AWT is composed of posts in a northern and a southern detachment. The detachments provide land, air, and water patrol enforcement and search and rescue throughout the state. The troopers are

also headquartered in Anchorage. She listed the major components of the division [listed on slide 7]: a Wildlife Investigations Unit and a Marine Section.

[9:33:52 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN remarked that in 2020, in the City of Haines, a wildlife trooper had to kill 36 grizzly bears in defense of life and property; the typical number annually is 12. She said people in Haines were attacked by grizzlies, and she compared the situation to a horror film. She said she had contacted the commission of the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) and was not satisfied with the department's view that "it was just a human-caused interaction." She asked whether there is a "pre-op analysis" available to wildlife troopers to interact with "managed agencies of game."

[9:35:51 AM](#)

MAJOR STEVEN ADAMS, Deputy Director, Alaska Wildlife Troopers, Department of Public Safety, acknowledged that [2020 had been] an unprecedented year for human/bear encounters in Haines, many of which were addressed by the one AWT officer stationed there, and many of which were addressed by the Haines Borough Police Department. He offered his understanding that everybody, including a local ADF&G biologist, worked well together to deal with the issue. He said he thinks ADF&G was correct in that much of the bear/human interactions were human caused, for example, leaving trash accessible. He said he could provide an analysis of how many bears there had been and what the cause of human interaction was.

CO-CHAIR HANNAN clarified her question is whether the wildlife trooper has the ability to participate in management discussions with ADF&G in order to avoid a repeat situation in 2021.

MAJOR ADAMS responded that it is common for all of AWT's troopers to work closely with ADF&G's local wildlife biologists to investigate, as well as to educate the public.

[9:39:11 AM](#)

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL returned to the PowerPoint, to slide 9, "Division of Fire and Life Safety." She said the division's mission is "to prevent the loss of life and property from fire and explosion." She said the Richard Boothby is the director of the division and also the state fire marshal. She related that

deputy fire marshals aid in the enforcement of all laws related to fire prevention and protection and conduct investigations of fires resulting from crime. The division has jurisdiction for fire code enforcement and building review authority, except in communities that have received deferrals. She said the Training and Education Bureau provides fire training and public fire education services to the Alaska service professionals, as well as to the public. Within that bureau is the Office of Rural Fire Protection, which specializes in training and response preparedness services to firefighters and emergency responders in rural Alaska. She noted that within the division, the Alaska Fire Standards Council established fire standards for fire services personnel and curriculum requirements for the certification of training programs in support of legislative findings under AS 18.70.320.

MS. HOWELL moved on to slide 10, "Division of Statewide Services." She said the division provides technical and specialized services to other divisions of the department, local and state law enforcement, and the public. She said the division director is Kathryn Monfreda. The division comprises the Criminal Records and Identification Bureau and the Information Technology Section. Ms. Howell stated that the division covers many of the department's statutory responsibilities, which include maintaining centralized information pertaining to state criminal history records through the Safety Information network; finger prints via Alaska Biometric Identification System; and administering the state Sex Offender and Child Kidnapper Registration program. Further, the division administers the state Concealed Handgun Permit program; conducts Security Guard/Process Server Licensing; and collects, tabulates, reports, and publishes the uniform crime data submitted by local law enforcement agencies, then submitting the information to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for inclusion in national crime statistic data.

[9:43:03 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN offered her understanding that Alaska no longer required concealed handgun permits. She requested clarification.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL confirmed Alaska does not require concealed handgun permit; however, it does run the program to provide reciprocity with other states that recognize that permit.

[9:44:12 AM](#)

KATHRYN MONFREDA, Director, Division of Statewide Services, Department of Public Safety, proffered that another reason to maintain the concealed handgun permit program is to allow for those who wish to carry a concealed weapon in a federal park.

[9:44:51 AM](#)

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL noted that the Information Technology Section of the division provides programming support for all the criminal justice systems administered by DPS. She then directed attention to slide 11, "Scientific Crime Detection Lab." She said David Kanaris oversees the lab, which provides: statewide forensic services for law enforcement agencies; expert court testimony on lab results; training to law enforcement officer on proper collection of evidence and preservation techniques; and administration of the statewide breath alcohol testing program.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL showed slide 12, "Division of Administrative Services." The division is responsible for providing centralized administrative support for DPS in the following areas: the Finance Section; the Budget Section; Grants Management; Procurement; and Supply Management. She said the division is unique in that it also manages the rural trooper housing program. She said DPS currently has 60 housing units located in 18 rural communities where housing is scarce. Having good housing available for troopers and their families is critical in terms of retention of staff recruited.

[9:47:46 AM](#)

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL moved on to slide 13, "Village Public Safety Officer Program," which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

- \$11,905.4 awarded
- 10 Grantees
- 54 VPSO as of 2/16/2021
- 49 Villages served (5 communities have 2 VPSOs)
- Grants administration v operational oversight

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL said providing public safety services at the local level can be accomplished by providing grant funding to nonprofit regional corporations, Alaska Native organizations, and municipalities to hire, train, and supervise

village public safety officers (VPSOs) within their regions. She talked about the program oversight being provided by individual detachments within each region rather than a centralized oversight from Anchorage; the Grants Administration Unit within the Division of Administrative Services administers the grant. Separating the financial component from the operational support has led to improvement in how the program is managed across the state, she said.

[9:49:50 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SCHRAGE asked whether there were regional corporations "or otherwise" that put in grant applications.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL offered her understanding that the department has not declined any eligible organization that has submitted an application. She deferred to Elizabeth Dunayski for further comment.

[9:50:53 AM](#)

ELIZABETH DUNAYSKI, Director, Division of Administrative Services, Department of Public Safety, said the division has dealt with the 10 grantees for a number of years and has not received additional applications for the program. She said she understood there was legislation currently before the legislature that could "expand that." In response to a follow-up question from Co-Chair Schrage, she confirmed that all the VPSOs are "employees of the grantees."

[9:51:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND noted that the total grant cost averages over \$220,000 per VPSO. She said she knows VPSOs are not paid "anywhere near that amount"; therefore, she asked, "So, where is all this money going?" She said this concerns her, especially since there are not enough VPSOs serving communities.

MS. DUNAYSKI explained that in addition to employing VPSOs, the money is spent on equipping them with vehicles, snow machines, equipment, computers, all of which are costly. The funds go also to employing a coordinator for each region. In response to a follow-up comment made by Representative Drummond, she said the division could get into more detail in a future presentation if the committee were to outline what information it would like to be given.

[9:53:53 AM](#)

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL moved on to slide 14, "Alaska Police Standards Council." She said the director is Bob Griffith. The Alaska Police Standards Council (APSC) is established under statute and comprises 13 members, 11 of which are appointed by the governor. She said the responsibilities of APSC are to: determine certification eligibility for police officers, probation and parole officers, and correction officers; issue appropriate levels of certification to those who qualify; make the decision whether to revoke certification in cases of misconduct by an officer; monitor compliance with current regulation and legislation; develop, monitor, and revise law enforcement training and training requirements; assist police academies and departments for academy training; fund specialized advanced training for departments; and provide smaller agencies across Alaska with assistance in obtaining pre-employment polygraph and psychological testing for officers.

[9:55:16 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked for information regarding the makeup of APSC. Specifically, he questioned whether public input would be forthcoming from the public positions on the council when he knows those positions are filled by retired police officers.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL deferred to Mr. Griffiths.

[9:56:19 AM](#)

ROBERT GRIFFITHS, Executive Director, Alaska Police Standards Council, Department of Public Safety, said while it is true that the majority of the four public seats are filled with people with prior law enforcement experience, those members are civilians, who were appointed after expressing interest in representing the profession and the public on the council. He noted that there is a longstanding member who is a victims' advocate; she serves as co-chair on the council.

[9:57:21 AM](#)

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL directed attention to slide 15, "Council of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault," and she said the executive director is Diane Casto. She relayed that the council comprises nine members, four of which are public members appointed by the governor, and one of which must be from a rural area. She said the purpose of the council is to provide

planning and coordination of services to victims of domestic violence or sexual assault or to their families, or to perpetrators of domestic violence or sexual assault, and to provide for crisis intervention and prevention programs. She said the council provides a tremendous service to Alaska and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. She noted that the functions of the council are listed on the slide, as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Fund and support shelters, child advocacy centers, and batterers' intervention programs
- Data collection for domestic violence & sexual assault in Alaska
- Technical assistance, best practices, and training in DVSA response and services

9:58:31 AM

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY expressed gratitude for the council. He asked about the numbers, in terms of domestic violence and sexual assault.

9:59:25 AM

DIANE CASTO, Executive Director, Council of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, Department of Public Safety, said part of the problem in some of the available data is "we compare apples to oranges and not always apples to apples." She gave an example of the sex offense felony report, which has reported cases of sexual assault, "not actual numbers." She said based on the data that is available, the numbers "have not changed too much." She talked about the interest in looking at the numbers during the pandemic; there have been increases in the numbers reported on the national level. She said there are a variety of ways and angles to look at data, and she said she would be happy to share them with [Representative McCarty].

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY said he is interested in seeing the data.

MS. CASTO mentioned annual reports and said the council is working on the fiscal year 2020 (FY 20) report. The reports include service data. She remarked that every five years the Alaska Victimization survey is conducted in partnership with University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) Justice Center; the 2020 numbers will be available late spring to early summer [2021]. She highlighted that the reports contain direct feedback from

victims. She said she would be sure to get this information to the committee.

[10:03:04 AM](#)

INTERIM COMMISSIONER HOWELL concluded the presentation.

CO-CHAIR SCHRAGE thanked everyone.

[10:03:35 AM](#)

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:04 a.m.