

HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE
May 12, 2021
2:50 p.m.

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CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Merrick called the House Finance Committee meeting to order at 2:50 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Neal Foster, Co-Chair
Representative Kelly Merrick, Co-Chair
Representative Dan Ortiz, Vice-Chair
Representative Ben Carpenter
Representative Bryce Edgmon
Representative DeLena Johnson
Representative Andy Josephson
Representative Bart LeBon
Representative Sara Rasmussen
Representative Steve Thompson
Representative Adam Wool

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT

Carrie Bohan, Facilities Services Program Manager, Department of Environmental Conservation; Bryan Butcher, Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, Department of Revenue.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Ruth Kostik, Administrative Services Director, Department of Environmental Conservation, Office of Management and Budget, Office of the Governor; John Skidmore, Deputy Attorney General, Criminal Division, Department of Law.

SUMMARY

HB 70 APPROP: CAP; REAPPROP; SUPP; AMEND

Co-Chair Merrick reviewed the meeting agenda.

#hb70

HOUSE BILL NO. 70

"An Act making appropriations, including capital appropriations, reappropriations, and other appropriations; making supplemental appropriations; making appropriations to capitalize funds; and providing for an effective date."

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^PRESENTATION: VILLAGE SAFE WATER

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CARRIE BOHAN, FACILITIES SERVICES PROGRAM MANAGER, DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, began a PowerPoint presentation titled "Department of Environmental Conservation House Finance Committee," dated May 10, 2021. She began on slide 2 titled "Village Safe Water:"

Village Safe Water's mission is to support rural communities in their efforts to develop sustainable sanitation facilities

- Communities with a population less than 1,000 per AS 47.07.080

We accomplish this mission by:

- Funding planning, design, and construction of water, wastewater, and solid waste projects
- Providing project management and oversight for grant funded projects

Ms. Bohan elaborated that a few communities exceeded the one thousand population limit and were the exception due to their status as second class cities, which were included under statute.

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Ms. Bohan moved to slide 3 titled "Village Safe Water: Project Assessment:"

Project grant applications are scored primarily on how they address critical public health needs and capacity to operate and maintain facilities

- Current level of service
- Beneficial health impact provided by the project
- Relationship to other project phases
- Operation, maintenance, and management capabilities

High scoring projects added to the Multi-Year Priority List

Ms. Bohan explained that projects were ranked in score order and those highest on the list received funding. Once a project was selected Village Safe Water (VSW) committed to funding it through completion, but the funding was not always allocated at one time. The large longer-term projects were placed on the multi-year priority list and after the design phase was completed, received priority funding as needed in subsequent years to completion. The multi-year priority list gave the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) the flexibility to fund more than one project at a time.

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Representative Carpenter pointed to slide 3 and asked about the criteria used to judge capacity to operate and maintain. Ms. Bohan replied that since 2015 VSW employed the "Operation and Maintenance Best Practices" tool. She delineated that the tool was based on three categories that were established in the Safe Drinking Water Act: technical, financial, and managerial categories. The tool judged water system capacities. The department worked with the Rural Utility Business Advisor within the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED) to gather information from communities and score them according to the tool's criteria. The information was published on the program's website so the other agencies working with the communities were able to look at how the community was doing and could provide additional assistance to improve their capacity.

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Representative Wool spoke to a community's capacity to operate and maintain a system. He assumed a community needed the financial means to maintain a system. He ascertained that it was a problem if communities could not afford to maintain the system. He inquired whether fiscal solvency to operate and maintain a system was a criterion. Ms. Bohan answered in the affirmative. She reported that the program determined if a community had a realistic and balanced budget and were collecting sufficient revenues to cover the cost of operating and maintaining the system. She elaborated that it was not a "yes/no" type of scoring. Each community had an opportunity to improve its capacity. Each category had multiple tiers and a community could improve their scores through easily identifiable criteria.

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Co-Chair Foster addressed the "catch 22" facing the VSW program regarding communities with the ability to support a system and communities that could not. He acknowledged the need for a scoring system, but it left the ineligible communities without basic services. He understood the complexity of the issue and wanted to place the issue on the record and asked for comments. Ms. Bohan answered that there was no easy solution to the issue. The program discussed the issue frequently, internally and with federal partners. She reported that VSW did adjust the eligibility criteria in the current year to address the issue. They lowered the eligibility score for unserved and underserved communities to access funds for improvement to core infrastructure. The program continued to work with all the partners to assist the communities build its capacity. She noted that VSW had success with regional partners helping with funding.

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Co-Chair Foster thanked the program for the recognition of the issue. He realized it was an ongoing process.

Ms. Bohan advanced to slide 4 titled "Village Safe Water: Average Project:"

- Cost to provide running water and sewer to individual homes in a village for the first time
 - \$350 - \$750 thousand per/home

Projects typically last 5-10 years to completion, depending on

- Size and complexity of the project
- Availability of funds
- Ability of community to meet ongoing construction funding conditions

Ms. Bohan discussed an "average" project.

Co-Chair Merrick asked what drove the cost up so high. Ms. Bohan answered that the high price tag included the cost to mobilize materials and the short construction season was also a factor. She relayed that a delay could easily mean missing an entire construction season. Construction for the landscape and climate raised the costs. Currently, the materials costs had skyrocketed due to the pandemic had skyrocketed. She concluded that there was a variety of reasons that drove high project cost.

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Representative Carpenter referenced slide 4 and observed that the costs reflected the way things had been done versus how things could get done. He asked if his statement was accurate. Ms. Bohan replied in the affirmative.

Representative Wool guessed that if there was a water utility in place charging for service, he assumed the utility would not recover the cost, but the customer would be billed for service. He asked about the average cost of a water/sewer bill that had a water system installed at a cost of \$500 thousand per home. Ms. Bohan answered that the numbers included on slide 4 were provided via grant dollars and the communities were not taking on the expense. However, the customer would be billed to cover the ongoing expenses. She recalled that user rates in some rural communities were as high as \$250 per month. She would follow up with more average costs.

Representative Josephson asked about goal setting. He stated the goal was lofty and honorable. He asked what the program was trying to achieve. Ms. Bohan answered that the goal was to provide public health protection through access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Studies had shown the health impacts associated with a hauled or "honey bucket" system. There were health benefits from access to

systems providing a larger volume of water daily and properly treated water meeting safe drinking water regulations.

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Representative Josephson asked if the state was subject to a court order or some other mandate. He wanted to finish the work by 2030, but he wondered what would happen if it was not completed by 2050. Ms. Bohan replied that there was a state statute and requirements that public water/wastewater systems had to comply with state and federal regulations but that was not a directive to construct a new system.

Representative Edgmon asked for the number of villages that did not have adequate water sources. He related his experience of a village in his district that could not find a suitable water source to support the system. Ms. Bohan responded that she could not provide a specific number of communities that fit his description. She elucidated that VSW worked with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) and the Indian Health Service (IHS) to list all the known sanitation needs in rural communities that were maintained on an IHS database. She offered to follow up. Representative Edgmon discussed that the "eye popping numbers" reflected on the reality of doing business in rural Alaska. He remarked on the difficulty of climate, landscape, location, and logistics that affected a project in rural Alaska.

Co-Chair Foster pointed to the number for the cost of first time service on slide 4. He wondered if the cost per home was calculated by the total cost of the whole entire project and divided it by the number of homes.

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Ms. Bohan responded in the affirmative. She furthered that in 2016, VSW commissioned a survey to develop a rough cost estimate for what it would cost to provide service to all unserved communities. She restated that the methodology was to take the cost of the entire system from scratch and factor in the number of homes in the community.

Representative Wool asked if there were situations where a water system was being developed in a community where

residents refrain from being connected to the system due to costs, which made the costs higher for everyone else. Ms. Bohan answered in the affirmative. She shared that it was more likely that the home was disconnected from service because it could not afford the user fees. There were some instances where a homeowner chose not to be part of an initial project due to costs and she confirmed that it drove up the cost for the rest of the community. Representative Wool ascertained that the scenario presented a whole new cyclical challenging situation, where more residents might drop the service due to escalating costs.

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Ms. Bohan moved to slide 5 titled "Village Safe Water: Typical Project Timeline," which showed a flow chart of the timing of a typical project. She described the process. She indicated that each spring VSW accepted applications for new planning projects. The planning project was the first step that identified the problem, potential solutions, and cost estimates. The plans were reviewed via a committee that included Ms. Bohan, staff from the federal funding agencies and IHS, and representatives from various regulatory programs that had to approve system designs. She elaborated that once the planning document was approved, the community may apply for a construction grant. The planning project typically took 9 to 12 months to complete and put the project in its second year. She furthered that in year 3 the project applied for design and construction funding, which was awarded by the fall of the third year. She noted that design could take one to two years depending upon the complexity of the system. By the spring of year 5 construction funding was awarded and could last one to three years.

Ms. Bohan turned to slide 6 "Village Safe Water: FY2021 by the Numbers:"

Planning Projects

- \$1.9 million funding made available
- 19 studies for 19 communities
- Project range: \$25,000 -\$240,000

Construction Projects

- \$62.5 million funding made available
- 19 ongoing construction projects and 13 new construction projects

- Project range: \$300,000 - \$9.3 million
- IHS & EPA Tribal Construction Projects
- \$48 million funding made available
 - 35 construction projects
 - Project range: \$65,000-\$7.1 million

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Ms. Bohan reported that VSW worked closely with its partners; the IHS and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), both provided funding through IHS's Sanitation Deficiency System (SDS) funding cycle. The entities scored each other's work and ensured that no communities were "falling through the cracks" in the process. Ms. Bohan advanced to slide 7 titled "Village Safe Water: Supporting Rural Sanitation:"

Work with partners to support communities in their efforts to build technical, financial, and managerial capacity

Provide water and wastewater system operator training and certification

Remote Maintenance Workers

- Funded through federal grants from EPA and USDA and associated state match in the operating budget
- 15 Remote Maintenance Workers at DEC and regional health corporation provide onsite training and technical assistance
- Emergency response and support

Village Safe Water does not provide funding for ongoing maintenance and operations of systems

Ms. Bohan furthered that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grants were part of its Rural Development (RD) section. She shared that some of the Remote Maintenance Workers (RMW) had been working with the same communities for over 20 years and were dedicated to the job.

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RUTH KOSTIK, ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET, OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR (via teleconference), turned to side 8 titled "Village Safe Water: FY2022 Gov Amend Request (in thousands):"

\$70,812.0 FY2022 Governor's Amended

- \$52,250.0 Fed
- \$18,062.0 AHFC Bonds (match)
- \$500.0 SDPR

First Time Service

Expansion, Upgrade, and Replacement of Existing Service

Gov Amend is an increase of \$2,332.0 of match due to increased federal support

Ms. Kostik noted that the increase was a result of the federal funding that passed in late December, which was an increase of \$7 million from FY 2021 from the EPA. She reminded the committee that the VSW match was appropriated from the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) bond proceeds. She reported that there were bills moving through the legislature [HB74/SB54-AHFC Water & Sewer Bonds/Transportation] regarding the transaction but if it did not pass the AHFC fund source would need replacement by another fund source. She reviewed slide 9, " Village Safe Water: FY 2021 Supplemental Request (in thousands):"

\$3,650.0 GF Match

First Time Service

Expansion, Upgrade, and Replacement of Existing Service

Due to increased federal support

Ms. Kostik noted that the numbers reflected a higher level of funding from the EPA. She remarked that the federal funding was approved very late in the state's budget cycle and had to be included in the supplemental request.

Representative Josephson asked if the legislature did not find \$18 million in matching funds whether the state

permanently "waived" \$52 million. Ms. Kostik replied that at some point VSW had to commit to its funding partners to accept the funds and make grants. She explained that in FY 2021 the department awarded the full amount of grant money even though the state matching money was not yet identified and assumed it would borrow from the next years appropriation. The program would need to alert its funding partners if VSW was unable to find the match money.

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Ms. Kostik Ms. Kostik presented slide 10, "Village Safe Water: Funding Sources," which showed a flow chart of its funding sources and the corresponding allocations. She delineated that the chart showed the full scope of funding sources that flowed into the VSW program. She pointed to the left that depicted the state match, USDA Rural Development funding and the EPA Infrastructure grants that flow through the traditional funding route through the multi-year priority list that required a state match. She pointed to the SDS list on the middle right and explained that the funding flowed through from IHS and EPA tribal Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act for the SDS list projects. On the far right there was one more pot of funding from IHS Housing Priority System (HPS) system that supported sanitation and water projects. She noted that the colors of the fund sources would match the chart depicting the funding history on the next slide.

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Ms. Kostik advanced to slide 11 titled "Village Safe Water: Funding History," which showed a bar graph entitled "Funding for Rural Water and Sewer Improvements SFY2017 - 2021." The bar graph showed a five-year funding history. She detailed that the state match was depicted in green, EPA funding was shown in gold, and USDA-RD was designated in purple; the federal funding required a state match. The IHS money was represented in blue, and the EPA Tribal funding was shown in brown; both funding sources did not require a state match.

Ms. Kostik spoke to slide 12, "Rural Alaska Sanitation Funding Need," which showed a pie chart titled "Rural Alaska Sanitation Funding Need = \$1,821,446,807." The pie chart depicted the total SDS funding need. The blue portion [68 percent] encompassed all first time service projects

and reflected the traditional piped systems and its high costs totaling roughly \$1.2 billion. She pointed to the yellow portion of the pie chart labeled "Upgrades to Benefit System Operation or to Address Minor Health Threats" and noted that the type of project was the most difficult to fund because they did not frequently rise to the level of scoring to get funded and encompassed minor things like putting a protective roof over a water tank to prevent deterioration.

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Ms. Kostik addressed slide 13, "Alaska Water & Sewer Challenge Project":

Conventional systems are expensive to construct, maintain and replace

Many communities cannot afford the high operation and maintenance costs.

Available funding is not adequate to serve remaining homes and make needed improvements

Innovative approaches are needed to address health problems associated with water and sewer system deficiencies

Focus on decentralized systems that provide treatment, recycling, and water minimization

Pilot testing at UAA delayed due to COVID, anticipated to begin in fall 2021

Ms. Kostik elaborated that in 2013 DEC launched the Alaska Water & Sewer Challenge Project that was a research and development project to try to build an alternative to a piped system that included an improved self-contained water system for single homes. The goals were to keep the cost to \$160 thousand per home and be easily maintained. She noted that DEC was working with the EPA to set the standards for water recycling. The project was in phase 5 with one model and testing in a community was slated to happen after the standards were developed. She commented that community involvement would be critical to the project.

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Ms. Kostik moved to slide 14 titled "Other Water/Wastewater Infrastructure Funding at DEC;"

- Infrastructure Protection Funding
 - Grants to VSW eligible communities of up to \$150.0 for critical improvements that extend the life or improve operations of a water or wastewater system
 - One-time \$4,000.0 appropriation; all funds have been allocated

- Municipal Matching Grants (AS 46.03.030)
 - Grants to municipalities for public water supply, wastewater system, solid waste system, or water quality enhancement
 - Municipalities provide 15-40% match depending on population
 - Historically UGF funded program
 - No new projects funded since FY 2016

- State Revolving Loan Funds (AS 46.03.032 & AS 46.03.036)
 - Low interest loans for clean water and drinking water projects
 - Capitalized by federal grant funds
 - Can be used to match Municipal Matching Grants
 - Newly created Micro Loan option aimed at VSW eligible communities

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Ms. Kostik commented that since the Municipal Matching Grant program was phased out, use of the loans had decreased. She explained that communities used the loan funds to supplement their grants.

Representative Edgmon stated there was potentially a large sum of money coming into Alaska via federal funding. He wondered in broad terms how that could affect all the VSW projects. Ms. Kostik thought that it was a very good question. She deduced that there was possibly even more funding coming through a federal infrastructure plan. She shared that the federal delegation had been very effective at obtaining funding for VSW, which necessitated asking for more matching dollars. She reiterated that construction

material prices had skyrocketed, and projects were going to cost more temporarily. The huge injection of cash would exacerbate the problem for things like contractor availability. She worried that the current funding had to be spent by 2024 and did not know how much could be done in the timeframe considering the limitations.

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Representative Edgmon stated that her answer made a lot of sense and listed the challenges. He recalled a presentation by Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) that reported on the number of aging systems. He cited slide 12 and deduced that there was more need in communities with existing service needing upgrades. He questioned the pie chart allocation. He noted that a small number of communities lacked services and most had existing service needing upgrades. He asked if he was reading the slide incorrectly. Ms. Bohan answered that the data on the graph on slide 12 came directly from the SDS database she had described earlier from the ANTCH and IHS database and was based on known needs. She furthered that the disparity Representative Edgmon described between the first time service costs for the 28 communities that remain unserved cost an estimated \$50 million to \$60 million to construct a new system versus the upgrades needed for existing facilities that costs much less.

Representative LeBon thanked the presenters for the informative presentation. He had a question regarding first time service. He referenced a \$45 million project and at a cost of \$500 thousand per home he deduced that about 90 structures would benefit from the project. Ms. Bohan replied that she did not know the number off the top of her head but agreed the numbers Representative LeBon used were fairly accurate. She reported that the community she spoke of was Tununak and she did not recall the number of homes that the project would serve. Representative LeBon guessed that there was a combination of residential and nonresidential structures. He asked if a community could be too small to qualify for a program and wondered how the ability to maintain a system was judged.

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Ms. Bohan responded that there was not a low population level that affected eligibility but at a certain point a

small population could not support a system. The program looked at other alternatives for providing services. She detailed that IHS had a program that provided wells and septic systems for individual homes and VSW would also consider the same type of service. Representative LeBon surmised that in theory no community could be too small to receive some level of assistance. Ms. Bohan replied affirmatively.

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AT EASE

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RECONVENED

^PRESENTATION: PROSECUTOR HOUSING

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JOHN SKIDMORE, DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL, CRIMINAL DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF LAW (via teleconference), discussed the Department of Law's (DOL) housing requests in the Capital Budget. He considered housing a retention issue. He offered that the issue had four components. The largest component was housing. Overall, the Criminal Division had a 25 percent to 37 percent turnover rate for prosecutors per year between 2018 and 2020. He elucidated that turnover was most pronounced in rural Alaska with Bethel averaging a 45 percent turnover of prosecutors over the last 7 years. He called it a "tremendous problem" and identified that housing was a "critical component" to retention. He listed the three categories of the housing issue: availability, quality, and affordability. He shared that he had heard stories from prosecutors having to sleep in their offices for long periods of time until housing became available. He shared his own personal experiences with the issue when he had lived in rural communities. He spoke to the quality of housing available. Some units lacked necessities such as locks on the front door, running water, or working appliances. He believed the challenges helped explain why people did not stay in the communities for long periods. He voiced that affordability was also problematic. Many housing options required first and last month's rent and a deposit. New prosecutors also had student loan debt and other moving expenses. He viewed the situation as an obstacle to trying to attract and retain quality people. He explained that on May 12, 1990, a law was adopted that

allowed various state agencies to own and operate employee housing. The authorization was for DOL, the Department of Fish and Game (DFG), Department of Public Safety (DPS), and Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT). He believed that DOL was the only department that had not taken advantage of the law and concluded that it was currently necessary. He elaborated that the department wanted to build or buy housing. The plan included consulting with the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) on costs, logistics, etc.

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Representative Rasmussen asked if any properties had been identified in the areas of need. She shared that she did not have experience in rural Alaska, but she had worked in the real estate world as an agent and appraiser for the past 10 years. She felt that the cost per unit of \$300 thousand was only sufficient for a modular home. She questioned the proposal. Mr. Skidmore replied that the proposal of \$300 thousand per unit came from a Request for Information (RFI) the department had done. He acknowledged that the cost of building materials had significantly increased, and it was a rough guess. He discovered through discussions with AHFC that the costs were more likely \$350,000 to \$400,000 but could increase up to \$600,000. He had not done a Request for Proposal (RFP) yet and "readily acknowledged" that the costs could be much higher. Representative Rasmussen stated that in Anchorage one could not get into the market for under \$500 thousand and the costs of building materials had skyrocketed. She did not want to put the cart before the horse if the timing was not right. Mr. Skidmore replied that the proposal was not only to build but to search for existing structures if available. The request was merely to obtain enough funding to investigate what was available. He emphasized that he was open to all options.

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Representative Rasmussen asked if the department was looking for one consultant for all communities or one in each community. Mr. Skidmore answered that the department listed the priority of communities [Bethel, Utqiagvik, Kotzebue, Nome (in that order)] and would begin in Bethel. Currently, the requested amount of money would not allow them to include the other communities and he considered

Bethel a test run. Representative Rasmussen asked how many units they needed in Bethel. Mr. Skidmore replied that the department anticipated the need at 9 to 10 units, and it would take up the entire \$3 million. Representative Rasmussen asked if the department needed the same amount of housing for the three subsequent communities in the future. He responded that the housing necessary in the remaining three communities were two to three units and together were the equivalent to what was needed in Bethel. He acknowledged that more information was needed.

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Co-Chair Merrick asked if the department helped pay moving expenses for employees. Mr. Skidmore answered that the department only paid for part of the moving expenses and were authorized to pay \$6 thousand, which included airfare for the employee and family. He discovered that the amount could vary substantially depending on where the employee was moving from and whether they had a family and the number of possessions. He reiterated that the department was examining all options from modular housing, attached homes, etc. and wanted to seek the advice from AHFC. He also wanted to partner with DPS that already had an agency section that managed housing. The department had housing in the same communities as DOL needed it, which provided benefits for both agencies.

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Representative Josephson had some concerns about DOL getting into the housing business, although they may have been assuaged by the partnership with DPS. He asked for clarification that DPS already operated housing. Mr. Skidmore answered in the affirmative. He recognized that DPS was a good resource, had a greater housing need, and managed its housing for 31 years. Representative Josephson asked about major maintenance and replacement. He expressed uncertainty about how DOL would manage it without assistance. He wondered whether DOL would rely on DPS's "know how." Mr. Skidmore replied that the statute that authorized the purchase of housing also authorized rent collection. The rent allowed for DOL to contract out for maintenance. He noted that guidance from DPS and AHFC would be beneficial in how to manage property maintenance.

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Mr. Skidmore continued that the housing component was a \$3 million request, but the total request was \$4 million. He addressed the recruitment and retention request for \$400 thousand. He related that the request involved developing recruitment strategies and professional materials. In addition, he wanted targeted aggressive recruitment of talent in the lower 48 or headhunting for experienced prosecutors especially around sexual assault and sexual abuse of minors as quickly as possible. He cited the approval for 10 new prosecutors for sexual assault and sexual abuse of minors. He shared that DOL had created a Prosecutor Training Specialist position in the past year to help with training and the position remained open for 9 months. There had been limited interest expressed and the interest generated was not experienced as deemed necessary. He believed that targeted recruitment was crucial. The item was in the Capital Budget because it would be a one-time spend.

Mr. Skidmore furthered that training for prosecutors was another key area for recruitment and retention [\$300 thousand]. He determined that the quality and quantity of training provided to prosecutors needed improvement. The department wanted to develop off-the-shelf materials to be used internally for training for trial advocacy and best practices for sexual assault and sexual abuse of minors. He exemplified the Forensic Experiential Trauma Interviewing that was a trademarked program found to be a best practice. He reported that another aspect of training was facility needs. He voiced that the department "struggled to provide adequate trial advocacy training to the state's prosecutors. He proposed partnering with the university to create a training facility for ongoing in-state trial advocacy training needs by remodeling a classroom to look like a courtroom. The university was also interested in the project for their own uses.

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Mr. Skidmore spoke about the final request; the installation of secure Wi-Fi in court houses [\$300K Improved Technology for Efficiency]. He explained that prior to 2014 DOL primarily relied on paper files. The system shifted to an electronic file in 2014 that was much more efficient but was not yet complete. The department needed secure Wi-Fi access in courthouses to access case

files, e-file complaints and motions, and issue discovery while in the courtroom. He noted that there was public wi-fi in the court houses, but it was not secure. In addition, the department needed to develop a secure interface with the Alaska Court System to exchange case information, file court dates, and receive court orders and decisions.

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Representative Josephson asked how long a prosecutor worked in a typical work week. Mr. Skidmore did not have an exact number. The department did not track the number of hours people worked. He shared his personal experience of working between 60 to 80 hours per week and when he was in a trial it was much more. He knew that prosecutors worked much longer than the 37.5 hours they were compensated for. Representative Josephson asked for verification that there had been no recent COLA increase for partially exempt employees. Mr. Skidmore answered in the affirmative and recalled that the COLA was not increased for 7 years.

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BRYAN BUTCHER, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION, DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE, believed that Mr. Skidmore covered most items. He added that AHFC was able to help DOL with the maintenance issues. He related that the corporation ran over 100 public housing units in Bethel and some in Nome and had staff to maintain them. He furthered that AHFC was collaborating with DPS on compiling a comprehensive list of housing needs in rural Alaska.

HB 70 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

Co-Chair Merrick reviewed the meeting for the following meeting.

#

ADJOURNMENT

[4:16:46 PM](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 4:16 p.m.