

HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
March 28, 2023  
1:36 p.m.

[1:36:45 PM](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Johnson called the House Finance Committee meeting to order at 1:36 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Bryce Edgmon, Co-Chair  
Representative Neal Foster, Co-Chair  
Representative DeLena Johnson, Co-Chair  
Representative Julie Coulombe  
Representative Mike Cronk  
Representative Alyse Galvin  
Representative Sara Hannan  
Representative Andy Josephson  
Representative Dan Ortiz  
Representative Will Stapp  
Representative Frank Tomaszewski

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT

Rob Carpenter, Deputy Director, Legislative Finance Division; Remond Henderson, Staff, Representative DeLena Johnson; Representative Louise Stutes.

SUMMARY

HB 39        APPROP: OPERATING BUDGET/LOANS/FUND; SUPP

HB 39 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

HB 41        APPROP: MENTAL HEALTH BUDGET

HB 41 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

Co-Chair Johnson reviewed the meeting agenda. The committee would continue the operating budget amendment process.

#hb39

#hb41

HOUSE BILL NO. 39

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

HOUSE BILL NO. 41

"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."

^AMENDMENTS

[1:37:51 PM](#)

Representative Cronk rescinded conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment N 64 [see minutes dated 3/28/23 9:00 a.m. for details on the underlying and conceptual amendments].

Representative Coulombe MOVED to ADOPT conceptual Amendment 2 to Amendment N 64. The conceptual amendment would reduce the \$50,000 funding request to \$10,000 [identical to the rescinded conceptual Amendment 1].

Representative Stapp OBJECTED for discussion.

Representative Stapp stated that he did not see any issue but wanted to know how much a sign from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) would cost.

Representative Coulombe replied that she did not know the signage cost, but the official DNR signage needed was

minimal. She suggested the municipality [of Anchorage] could contribute the remainder of the funding if \$10,000 was inadequate.

Representative Stapp WITHDREW the OBJECTION.

Co-Chair Foster OBJECTED for discussion. He found the \$10,000 funding request to be much better than the \$50,000 request. He expressed his intent that any remaining funds lapse to the general fund. He WITHDREW the OBJECTION.

There being NO further OBJECTION, conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment N 64 was ADOPTED.

1:40:37 PM

Co-Chair Johnson noted that a motion to adopt Amendment N 64 had been made and spoken to. [Note: Representative Josephson moved and explained the amendment in the 3/28/23 9:00 a.m. meeting. See separate minutes for detail.]

Representative Cronk agreed with the amendment but shared that he had recently voted no on some things that were important to him and many Alaskans; therefore, he could not support the amendment.

Representative Stapp echoed comments by Representative Cronk. He relayed that if it was the will of the members from Anchorage he would vote yes, but he did not really have a say in the argument. He would be happy to hear from committee members from Anchorage on the matter.

Representative Coulombe replied that the issue included state lands, which made it complex. She explained it was a public lake [Campbell Lake], which had been viewed as a private lake for a long time. She detailed that once people learned it was a public lake, they started accessing it and the situation had become dangerous in some cases. She elaborated that people were fighting with each other and homeowners were yelling at people. She supported clear signage showing where the easement was located and where the public could go. She reiterated that the amendment was before the committee because state land was involved.

Representative Galvin shared that an Alaskan who lived on the lake had provided written comment indicating the problem had been going on for a long time. The individual

explained that the public paid twice for the dam construction of Campbell Creek for the exclusive benefit of private landowners and float plane owners. She communicated the need for a legal, publicized public easement to access the public waters.

Representative Tomaszewski shared that he had been following the issue for numerous years. He viewed it as public access for the general purpose. He stated that the problems caused were a safety issue that needed to be addressed. He remarked there were four homeowners who were more involved than others. He could not imagine the easements had not been clearly represented when homeowners bought their houses. He wanted to see a resolution and felt the amendment was the beginning of a resolution to the problem.

Co-Chair Johnson commented that Big Lake also had a similar problem. She knew there were a number of other lakes where easements may not be clearly marked. She stated that Campbell Lake seemed to have gotten substantial traction because it involved a blogger and former state senator in a dispute (more than a public outcry). She thought there was much more time spent on the dispute than there needed to be. She thought there were other locations that also warranted easement signs, perhaps more than the one under discussion. She remarked she knew the man who had built the lake and some knowledge about the lake. She found it almost embarrassing that the legislature was dealing with \$10,000 on the issue because it had been repeatedly brought up in a blog when there was a deficit of close to \$1 billion. She was slightly disturbed that the committee was spending time on the topic when there were many more important issues. She did not think it should be a priority issue. She would vote against the amendment.

[1:47:05 PM](#)

Co-Chair Edgmon echoed Co-Chair Johnson comments. He believed there was merit in the proposal. He had not been aware of the issue previously and had not followed it on the Landmine blog. He considered other amendments the committee had spent substantial time on that had been defeated including funding for seniors and disability

services due to a budget crunch. He stated that \$10,000 was small in the grand scheme of billions, but it was symbolic. He could think of a couple of places where his district could use signage. He remarked that there was merit, and it was a public use issue. He asked if the legislature was to fund one and not the others, which he found to be the big issue. He would oppose the amendment.

Co-Chair Foster WITHDREW the OBJECTION.

Representative Cronk OBJECTED.

A roll call vote was taken on the motion to adopt Amendment N 64.

IN FAVOR: Tomaszewski, Galvin, Hannan, Josephson, Ortiz, Coulombe, Foster

OPPOSED: Cronk, Stapp, Edgmon, Johnson

The MOTION PASSED (7/4). There being NO further OBJECTION, Amendment N 64 was ADOPTED.

[1:49:06 PM](#)

Representative Coulombe MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 65 (copy on file):

Agency: Natural Resources  
Appropriation: Fire, Land & Water Resources  
Allocation: Fire Suppression Activity

Transaction Details  
Title: Additional Fire Suppression Funding to Reduce Potential Supplemental Budget Requests  
Section: Section 1  
Type: Inc

Funding 1004 Gen Fund 31,359.0

Explanation

To fund fire suppression activity to the approximate 10-year average of actual costs (\$45,000.0) so the Department does not have to return for such large

supplemental request after the fire season. Unspent funds will lapse into the general fund.

Co-Chair Foster OBJECTED.

Representative Coulombe stated the amendment was an attempt to capitalize the fire suppression fund. She explained the fund was intended to help with wildfire costs, but it had been fairly inactive for a long time. She referenced a presentation [to the committee] from the fire suppression division reporting that costs were increasing. The amendment was an attempt to get ahead of the issue before being hit with a large supplemental request; however, in light of the spring revenue forecast she WITHDREW the amendment.

1:50:30 PM

Representative Coulombe MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 66 (copy on file):

Agency: Natural Resources  
Appropriation: Parks & Outdoor Recreation  
Allocation: Parks Management & Access

Transaction Details

Title: Add and Reclassify Positions for Chugach State  
Park Improvements  
Section: Section 1  
Type: Inc

Line Items

Personal Services: 254.0

Services: 42.0

Commodities: 15.0

Grants: 25.0

Positions

Permanent Full-Time: 2

Permanent Part-Time: -1

Temporary: 4

Funding 336.0

#### Explanation

There has been a 47% increase in public use of Chugach State Park since 2019, which has increased the need for more frequent maintenance and upkeep of all the park's facilities, but mostly outhouses, parking areas and trailheads, including snow plowing in winter months.

The funding is also for management of the park's Eagle River campground. The state took over management of the campground in 2022 after the facility had been under private management for years, but no additional operating funds or personnel were allocated to the park even though the campground is fully occupied throughout the summer.

This funding includes a reclassification of a Natural Resource Technician 2 from PPT to PFT, a PFT Park Specialist, and 4 temporary positions for a trail crew.

Co-Chair Foster OBJECTED.

Representative Coulombe explained the amendment would add positions and services to the Chugach State Park. She relayed that there had been a 47 percent increase in public use of the park since 2019, which had increased the need for more frequent maintenance and upkeep of the park's facilities, primarily outhouses, parking areas, and trailheads (including snow plowing). She stated that the issue was important to her district. She had visited the several trailheads in her district and they were in need of help. The general fund receipts had grown 78 percent between 2018 and 2022, but the budget had remained flat. She elaborated that \$1.68 million in general fund receipts had been generated, but the operating budget was \$1.3 million. The amendment was an attempt to make up the difference. The amount reflected what the park was bringing

in. She explained that the additional maintenance would help the trailheads. She added there were also camp hosts at the Eagle River campground that the parks could not afford to pay. She remarked that there were not many access points to the park, which caused numerous road problems in residential neighborhoods because access was located in the middle of neighborhoods. She reported there was a municipal proposition to create the ability to bond for some of the road improvements, but the funding in the amendment would help the access points. She urged support for the amendment.

[1:52:32 PM](#)

Representative Galvin spoke in support of the amendment. She understood how critical Chugach State Park was to all of Alaska. She stated it meant a lot that the 47 percent use increase was helping to pay for the work. She wondered if the sponsor had been given any numbers to know how it balanced out. She stated her understanding that the funding in the amendment would not necessarily be a decrement if the receipts were enough to pay for the maintenance.

Co-Chair Johnson noted that the question would be addressed during wrap up on the amendment.

Representative Hannan was supportive of the amendment but had a couple of questions about the proposed vehicle rental tax funding source. She recalled that the legislature had attempted to pass legislation the prior year to add a category of cars that were rented but were not subject to the vehicle rental tax. She referred to the legislation as the "Turo tax bill." She stated that the vehicle rental tax fund had been used for several years for funding parks and the Alaska Travel Industry (ATI). She wondered whether the fund was growing or being depleted annually. She clarified her support for the amendment and was interested in more detail on the stability and growth of the fund source. She wished Turo taxes were going into the fund; it was her understanding Turo was a growing segment of rental cars. She asked if the Legislative Finance Division (LFD) knew the status of the fund.

[1:54:52 PM](#)

Co-Chair Johnson asked if there was any additional discussion on the amendment prior to answering questions.

Representative Ortiz commented that he generally supported state funding for state parks; however, the amendment was \$336,000. He noted he may very well vote in support of the amendment; however, he considered other funding requests the committee had not approved that would benefit elders and disabled individuals, which caused him slight hesitation on the amendment at hand.

[1:55:49 PM](#)

AT EASE

[2:02:47 PM](#)

RECONVENED

Representative Coulombe requested to hear from LFD.

ROB CARPENTER, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, LEGISLATIVE FINANCE DIVISION, responded that given projections for vehicle rental tax ending in FY 24, the balance of the fund would be about \$1.8 million.

Co-Chair Johnson asked Representative Coulombe if she would like to add anything additional.

Representative Coulombe reiterated that the park was generating receipts and bringing money into the state. The amendment was intended to help the park keep up with the 47 percent increase since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Representative Cronk added that he would support the amendment because when the pandemic hit, people had been encouraged to get outside and exercise. He believed more people were getting outside and exercising, which was good for physical and mental health.

Co-Chair Foster WITHDREW the OBJECTION.

There being NO further OBJECTION, Amendment N 66 was ADOPTED.

[2:05:51 PM](#)

Representative Josephson WITHDREW Amendment N 67 (copy on file).

Representative Josephson MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 68 (copy on file):

Agency: Public Safety  
Appropriation: Fire and Life Safety  
Allocation: AK Fire Standards Council

Transaction Details

Title: Add a Fire Training Specialist II and a Fire  
Training Administrator  
Section: Section 1  
Type: Inc

Line Items

Personal Services: 287.8

Commodities: 62.2

Positions

Permanent Full-Time: 2

Funding

1004 Gen Fund 350.0

Explanation

In 2017, the Alaska Fire Standards Council asked for an additional position (Fire Training Specialist II). Instead, the Governor cut one of their positions (Fire Training Administrator) leaving them with only one position. This amendment would restore the previous position and add the position asked for at the time.

Co-Chair Foster OBJECTED.

Representative Josephson relayed that the amendment had originated from a visit to his office by the Alaska Fire Standards Council director. He believed the council was only staffed by the one individual. The director had told him that the council tried to increase its staff to three in 2017 because the council was overworked. He reported that instead, former Governor Bill Walker had cut one position. He explained that the council was essentially a volunteer organization. He stated that the director, Mr. [Daniel] Grimes shared that he worked in fire management during the day and then went home and served the people of Alaska [via the council]. He listed duties the council was supposed to fulfill: establish minimum training and performance standards for certification of fire services personnel; establish minimum fire training curriculum

requirements for certification; govern the procedure for certification of fire services training programs, govern the procedure for certification of individuals who met the established standards; govern the procedure for revocation of a certificate of a person or program; consult and cooperate with municipalities, state agencies, and other governmental agencies and universities; and employ an administrator and other persons necessary to carry out its duties.

Representative Josephson continued to explain the amendment. He shared that Mr. Grimes noted the council's workload included maintaining a regular review process of the over 25 different professional certifications that the council was supposed to oversee. A full-time administrator position was eliminated in 2017 and duties were absorbed by the head of state fire services training. He relayed that Mr. Grimes reported that since 2017, the council's ability to meet its mission had been severely compromised. The council had lost third-party accreditation on numerous standards to the inability to keep revision work within the established timelines. The council had lost the trust of its fire service through delayed certification; it had also lost council members who felt they were no longer able to accomplish the goals. He stated it was an example of what happened when budgets were cut resulting in an agency (of one) trying to function in a significant way. The council was meant to consider who should be a firefighter, whether standards should change, who should write and adopt the standards, etcetera.

Representative Josephson shared that he had zero reason not to offer the amendment and every reason to offer it. He asked for members' support.

[2:10:01 PM](#)

Co-Chair Foster MAINTAINED the OBJECTION.

A roll call vote was taken on the motion.

IN FAVOR: Galvin, Hannan, Josephson, Ortiz

OPPOSED: Stapp, Tomaszewski, Coulombe, Cronk, Foster, Johnson

Co-Chair Edgmon was absent from the vote.

The MOTION to adopt Amendment N 68 FAILED (4/6).

[2:11:05 PM](#)

Representative Josephson MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 69  
(copy on file):

Agency: Public Safety

Appropriation: Domestic Viol/Sexual Assault

Allocation: Domestic Viol/Sexual Assault

Transaction Details:

Title: Add Funding to the Base Budget to Support  
Victims of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

Section: Section 1

Type: Inc

Line Items

Grants: 3,000.0

Funding: 1004 Gen Fund 3,000.0

Agency: Public Safety

Appropriation: Domestic Viol/Sexual Assault

Allocation: Domestic Viol/Sexual Assault

Transaction Details:

Title: Delete One-Time Funding Intended to  
Supplant VOCA Shortfall

Section: Section 1

Type: Dec

Line Items

Grants: -\$3,000.0

Funding: 1004 Gen Fund -3,000.0

Co-Chair Foster OBJECTED.

Representative Josephson remarked that Amendments N 69 and N 70 were on a similar subject. He highlighted that the state had the Alaska Network of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA) and the Commission [Council] on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA). He elaborated that the state partially funded domestic violence shelters. He recalled touring a shelter in Unalaska when he had worked as a prosecutor. He relayed that the agencies had, for a time, received funding assistance through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). He noted he knew little about VOCA but understood its funding source related to white collar crime (and possibly restitution). He remarked that apparently there had not been a lot of that. He relayed that the funding had been backfilled by \$3 million from the state and \$3.5 million of federal funding. He noted the federal funding had been described as "courtesy from Senator Murkowski."

Representative Josephson explained that the amendment would provide some stability for domestic violence shelters by moving the \$3 million into the base budget. He detailed that adding the funds into the base budget would eliminate the annual funding battle. He added there were around 120 callers [during public testimony] the previous week and he suspected at least 15 of the total supported the concept in the amendment and/or the upcoming amendment. He elaborated that the testifiers had spoken about the critical nature of CDVSA funds on a broad basis. He asked for members' support. He noted that the amendment did not propose spending more, it proposed giving Alaskans the comfort of knowing the legislature was serious about protecting women and children from domestic violence.

[2:14:32 PM](#)

Representative Galvin supported the amendment. She shared that she had met with many individuals working with abused women in Bethel, Anchorage, Kodiak, Juneau, and Dillingham. She detailed that the individuals were grateful for any federal and state support. She elaborated that the individuals had communicated that one of the main things

that could be done to help with their work was providing stability.

Representative Coulombe asked for verification that the funding was already in the budget and the amendment would change it from a one-time increment to a base increment.

Representative Josephson replied affirmatively.

Representative Coulombe relayed that she had a bill to try to get more money to CDVSA in the restorative justice fund. She suggested that if the amendment and the bill both passed, they could switch the funding source so it would not have to come from undesignated general funds (UGF).

Representative Stapp commented and clarified that the funding was already in the FY 24 budget. He thought it was unwise to consider adding liabilities in perpetuity. He would be happy to hear Representative Coulombe's bill when it came to the committee. He opposed the amendment.

Co-Chair Foster MAINTAINED the OBJECTION.

[2:17:01 PM](#)

A roll call vote was taken on the motion.

IN FAVOR: Galvin, Hannan, Josephson, Ortiz, Coulombe

OPPOSED: Tomaszewski, Cronk, Stapp, Edgmon, Foster, Johnson

The MOTION to adopt Amendment N 69 FAILED (5/6).

[2:17:54 PM](#)

Representative Josephson MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 70 (copy on file):

Agency: Public Safety

Appropriation: Domestic Viol/Sexual Assault

Allocation: Domestic Viol/Sexual Assault

Transaction Details

Title: Restore Funding for Costs Related to Utilities

Section: Section 1

Type: IncM

Line Items

Grants: 300.0

Funding

1004 Gen Fund 300.0

Explanation

In FY23, a One-Time Increment of \$300,000 was provided to support utility costs increases for grantees who provide support for victims of domestic violence or sexual assault. This amendment restores that funding.

Co-Chair Foster OBJECTED.

Representative Josephson explained that ANDVSA director Ms. [Brenda] Stanfill requested \$3 million moved to the base budget and \$300,000 for increased utility costs and related costs. He noted that ANDVSA had received an increment of \$300,000, which he believed may have been COVID funding. The amendment would provide an additional one-time increment of \$300,000 to pay for utility costs and increases for grantees.

Co-Chair Edgmon clarified that Ms. Stanfill's first name is Brenda.

Representative Josephson agreed.

Co-Chair Foster MAINTAINED the OBJECTION.

[2:19:51 PM](#)

A roll call vote was taken on the motion.

IN FAVOR: Galvin, Hannan, Josephson, Ortiz

OPPOSED: Coulombe, Cronk, Stapp, Tomaszewski, Foster, Edgmon, Johnson

The MOTION to adopt Amendment N 70 FAILED (4/7).

[2:20:48 PM](#)

Co-Chair Johnson noted that Amendments N 71 and N 72 dealing with vacant positions would be rolled to the bottom of the list.

[2:21:25 PM](#)

Representative Josephson WITHDREW Amendment N 73 (copy on file).

[2:21:32 PM](#)

AT EASE

[2:23:51 PM](#)

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Johnson MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 74 (copy on file):

Bundle Description

These amendments replace a \$620,000 increment to maintain and operate the Silvertip Maintenance Station with a one-time increment. The Silvertip Station was closed in 2019. It was reopened in FY22 using one-time COVID Funding and was included in last year's budget as a one-time increment (IncOTI). Given the State's current revenue forecast, this item should remain as an IncOTI in the current year's budget.

Agency: Transportation

Appropriation: Highways/Aviation & Facilities

Allocation: Central Highways and Aviation

Transaction Details

Title: Delete Increment to Maintain and Operate Silvertip Maintenance Station

Section: Section 1

Type: Dec

Line Items

Personal Services: -500.0

Services: -120.0

Funding 1004 Gen Fund -620.0

Agency: Transportation

Appropriation: Highways/Aviation & Facilities

Allocation: Central Highways and Aviation

Transaction Details

Title: Add Funding to Maintain and Operate  
Silvertip Maintenance Station

Section: Section 1

Type: IncOTI

Line Items

Personal Services: 500.0

Services: 120.0

Funding 1004 Gen Fund 620.0

Co-Chair Foster OBJECTED.

Co-Chair Johnson explained that the amendment did not change the funding or close the [Silvertip maintenance] station. She explained that it changed the funding to a one-time increment to enable the legislature to revisit the issue given the state's current revenue forecast. She clarified that the amendment was not an attempt to stop the maintenance. She wanted to keep an eye on things as the legislature went through the process. Additionally, she wanted to receive reports detailing what was happening with the maintenance stations.

[2:25:14 PM](#)

Representative Josephson opposed the amendment because for the first time in years, there was a new road being built near the Silvertip station. He reasoned there would be more road to plow and maintain. He recalled that a state representative from the northern peninsula had voiced real concern about the closure of the Silvertip station.

Co-Chair Johnson reminded members that the amendment would not take away funding; it continued to make the funding a one-time increment. She continued that if there were additional roads built and additional funding was needed the following year, it would be another reminder of the need to look at the item. She underscored it was not an attempt to close the station and served as a reminder to take a second look the following year to ensure they were following along on the maintenance station. She noted that the funding had been withdrawn under the former Walker administration. She reiterated that the amendment provided an opportunity to take another look to determine the station was not something it wanted to shut down.

Co-Chair Foster WITHDREW the OBJECTION.

Representative Josephson OBJECTED.

[2:27:16 PM](#)

A roll call vote was taken on the motion.

IN FAVOR: Hannan, Ortiz, Coulombe, Cronk, Stapp, Tomaszewski, Galvin, Edgmon, Foster, Johnson

OPPOSED: Josephson

The MOTION PASSED (10/1). There being NO further OBJECTION, Amendment N 74 was ADOPTED.

[2:28:30 PM](#)

Co-Chair Johnson WITHDREW Amendment N 75 (copy on file).

[2:28:49 PM](#)

Representative Josephson MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 76 (copy on file):

Agency: Transportation

Appropriation: Highways/Aviation & Facilities

Allocation: Central Highways and Aviation

Transaction Details

Title: Contractual Plowing Assistance for Snow Removal  
Section: Section 1

Type: Inc

Line Items

Services: 100.0

Funding 1004 Gen Fund 100.0

Explanation

The costs for response and repairs are often additional unbudgeted costs exceeding the department's ability to absorb within annual operating budgets. These funds would provide the department with a vital tool in responding to natural disasters, extreme weather incidents, and repairing state's assets due to catastrophic events. DOT&PF, like the rest of the State Department's, has seen significant vacancy issues in recent years. This necessitates a need for the department to outsource snow removal through contracts.

Co-Chair Foster OBJECTED.

Representative Josephson shared that he grew up in Alaska and was used to snow; however, he had been told the current year was exceptional. He detailed that there had been three significant snow events [in Anchorage] in the current year and the school district had shut down for six consecutive business days. He detailed that the old Seward Highway that ran through his district was unmanageable, and people had been unable to get safely in and out of businesses. He elaborated that two lanes had been reduced to one and people blamed the city and/or the state. He explained that the city plowed only a portion of Fireweed Lane because the state owned a portion of the road. He had asked the [Department of Transportation and Public Facilities] commissioner in committee whether extra money could have

been helpful and the commissioner had responded affirmatively. He underscored the events were real and highlighted that a former mayor of New York had lost his job when he could not plow the streets. He remarked that the amendment pertained to moving people and merchandise. The amendment would allow the department to contract out additional resources in the event of substantial snow events in the coming fall and winter.

[2:31:39 PM](#)

Representative Ortiz asked what would happen to the money if it was not needed. For example, he wondered if the funds would be put into an account to build up over time or if there was a way to ensure the funding would not be spent in other ways. He asked if the department could use the funds in other ways if they were not needed to remove snow. Additionally, he wondered whether it would become part of the budget moving forward.

Representative Josephson responded that he intended for the funds to lapse to the general fund but could not confirm whether it was the case.

Representative Tomaszewski offered that the topic was part of his subcommittee and there had been discussions on major snow events. The commissioners had discussed that although the events happened, it was not something to be budgeted for every year with the contingency of it possibly happening. He shared that the department had not asked for the funding during subcommittee; therefore, he would respectively oppose the amendment.

Representative Galvin noted that her district included Fireweed Lane where a state road backed up to a local road that did not get plowed and businesses had been at a standstill. She had heard from more businesspeople than parents who could not get their kids to school, but they were both relevant. She was interested to know the answer to Representative Ortiz's question about whether the funding would lapse back [into the general fund]. She believed there had been another amendment where funds could not be spent on other things. She thought if it was the case, the amendment made sense. She reasoned that DOT could not quickly hire additional people and did not have the equipment to handle an emergency situation in urban Alaska.

She remarked that the department had stated that it would have been able to contract some of the work out if it had access to the funding. She supported the amendment.

[2:35:23 PM](#)

AT EASE

[2:36:23 PM](#)

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Johnson noted that LFD would weigh in on the amendment.

Mr. Carpenter responded to the question by Representative Ortiz and Representative Galvin about whether the funding would lapse at the end of the year. He explained that the proposed funding was an increment to the department's base budget and would be commingled with the other "M&L money." The funding would not necessarily be set aside specifically for the intended purpose the way the amendment was structured; however, there was currently \$12 million in the governor's capital budget for DOT reappropriations for the precise purpose: emergency weather and catastrophic events. He stated it was a substantial amount of money, but DOT went through a great fast in previous years with approximate funding of \$3 million.

[2:37:46 PM](#)

Co-Chair Foster provided a scenario where capital funds did not come to fruition and the department was short on funding to cover a large snow event. He asked for verification that DOT could ask for a supplemental appropriation rather than putting the funding in the base budget.

Mr. Carpenter agreed. He explained that DOT had expenditure authority to use for emergency services, which would be backfilled later by the legislature.

Representative Josephson stated he was more intrigued by the reappropriation than the question of supplemental funding. He noted there was a supplemental budget that had not left the House. He understood the legislature could backfill and then pay other departmental functions for may and June. He characterized the concept as robbing Peter to pay Paul. He asked Mr. Carpenter for verification that

there was a substantial amount of money for emergency transportation needs in the capital budget that would be helpful in circumstances considered by the amendment.

Mr. Carpenter replied affirmatively. He elaborated that DOT had worked to dig up reappropriation funding in the past few years because emergency weather events had been an issue for the department. He stated it was a number one priority for the agency to come up with the funding and set it aside for the same purpose outlined in the amendment. He relayed that the funding was currently \$12 million in the proposed capital budget.

Representative Josephson referenced Mr. Carpenter's statement about the comingling of funds. He asked if it would be true even though the title of the amendment was "contractual plowing assistance for snow removal."

Mr. Carpenter replied affirmatively. He added that the agency could set the funding aside as a courtesy; however, generally when adding money to the base budget the funding was commingled in a giant pot with line items that could be moved around as the agency managed its budget.

Representative Josephson noted that his hometown had been paralyzed by storms, one person in his district had died from snow load, and three buildings had collapsed. He had viewed the situation as something that could be fixed with enough resources. He understood based on Mr. Carpenter's testimony that the funding was spent quickly, but there was some coverage in the coming winter if the reappropriation [in the proposed capital budget] was passed.

Mr. Carpenter agreed.

Representative Josephson WITHDREW Amendment N 76.

[2:41:23 PM](#)

Co-Chair Johnson MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 77 (copy on file):

Bundle Description

These Amendments clarify the collective bargaining agreement monetary terms included in the AMHS Operating increases proposed by the Governor.

Agency: Transportation

Appropriation: Marine Highway System

Allocation: Marine Vessel Operations

Transaction Details

Title: Reverse Governor's Alaska Marine Highway System Calendar Year 2024 Increase

Section: Section 1

Type: Dec

Line Items

Personal Services: -7,377.6

Travel: -563.5

Commodities: -2,590.0

Funding 1076 Marine Hwy -10,531.1

Agency: Transportation

Appropriation: Marine Highway System

Allocation: Marine Vessel Operations

Transaction Details

Title: Alaska Marine Highway System Calendar Year 2024 Non-Salary Operations Increase

Section: Section 1

Type: Inc

Line Items

Travel: 563.5

Commodities: 2,590.0

Funding 1076 Marine Hwy 3,153.5

Agency: Transportation

Appropriation: Marine Highway System

Allocation: Marine Vessel Operations

Transaction Details

Title: Add Authority for Collective Bargaining  
Agreement Salary Increase for Marine Engineer's  
Beneficial Association

Section: Section 1

Type: SalAdj

Line Items Personal

Services: 1,475.5

Funding 1076 Marine Hwy 1,475.5

Agency: Transportation

Appropriation: Marine Highway System

Allocation: Marine Vessel Operations

Transaction Details

Title: Add Authority for Collective Bargaining  
Agreement Salary Increases for InlandBoatmen's  
Union Bargaining Unit

Section: Section 1

Type: SalAdj

Line Items

Personal Services: 4,205.2

Funding 1076 Marine Hwy 4,205.2

Agency: Transportation

Appropriation: Marine Highway System

Allocation: Marine Vessel Operations

Transaction Details

Title: Add Collective Bargaining Agreement Salary Increase for Masters, Mates, and Pilots Bargaining Unit

Section: Section 1

Type: SalAdj

Line Items

Personal Services: 1,696.9

Funding 1076 Marine Hwy 1,696.9

Representative Ortiz OBJECTED.

Co-Chair Johnson asked her staff to explain the amendment that made some changes as requested by the department.

[2:41:57 PM](#)

REMOND HENDERSON, STAFF, REPRESENTATIVE DELENA JOHNSON, explained that the amendment corrected and properly classified where the salary adjustments should be placed. The amendment took money out of personal services and moved it into personal services in the various categories they should be in based on the bargaining unit. He explained the amendment was a net zero with no reduction.

Representative Ortiz WITHDREW the OBJECTION.

[2:42:56 PM](#)

Representative Hannan OBJECTED. She asked about the commodities line item. She understood the three bargaining units had their own allocations in the budget. She asked if the commodities of \$2.5 million were related to implementation of the bargaining unit agreements.

Alternatively, she asked if it was a commodities increase for the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) that was put in the wrong place. She noted it was under the heading "AMHS salaries."

Mr. Carpenter believed the \$10 million increment proposed by the governor in one lump sum was broken up into three bargaining unit increases in addition to the cost increase for the system. He did not know the precise number, but it included a significant amount of fuel for the commodities line.

Representative Hannan WITHDREW the OBJECTION.

There being NO further OBJECTION, Amendment N 77 was ADOPTED.

[2:44:40 PM](#)

Co-Chair Johnson rolled Amendments 78 and 79 (pertaining to vacant positions) to the bottom of the list.

Representative Josephson MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 80 (copy on file):

Agency: University of Alaska

Appropriation: University of Alaska

Allocation: Systemwide Reduction/Additions

Transaction Details

Title: Increase Funding for Fixed Costs to Maintain Status Quo

Section: Section 1

Type: Inc

Line Items

Services: 4,820.0

Funding 1004 Gen Fund 4,820.0

## Explanation

Financial stability is an essential requirement for our universities to focus on key state workforce needs and address student demand in areas including resource development, teacher education, business/accounting, engineering, and health. UA requires additional state support to help cover unavoidable costs. This amendment would help the UA system maintain status quo in these areas.

Co-Chair Foster OBJECTED.

Representative Josephson stated that the committee had seen the amendment several weeks earlier in a meeting of the University of Alaska committee of the whole. He shared that the amendment had failed, but he would take "a second bite at the apple" to see if the appetite had changed. He explained that early in the session the committee had seen a presentation showing that the University Board of Regents wanted \$90 million to \$100 million more than the governor recommended. He detailed that the amendment contained fixed costs. He summarized his understanding of the University's pitch related to the funding. He stated the University was grateful for the funding in the budget, but there were unavoidable costs that could not be stopped, and the University was asking repeatedly for assistance. The first component was cyber security for \$1.3 million. There had been a significant increase in cyberattacks targeting higher education and threatening data privacy and security requirements. The funds would go towards expansion of the multifactor authentication. He detailed the University would add staff to support new research related data security requirements, advance threat hunting and additional detection and response capabilities. Additionally, the University would platform security and access management and establish a formal IT risk management program system wide.

Representative Josephson relayed that the second component was insurance premiums. He viewed it as the type of thing a university could not anticipate would change, but the University noted that 2022 was the second worst lost year in history nationwide. He stated that the property carriers were finding that many insurers have underreported replacement values. The University cited a \$700,000

increase in insurance premiums. The amendment also included \$500,000 for student library digital access. The University had seen reductions in the past in its libraries, staffing was down 30 to 40 percent, and research databases and scholarly journals were down. The University reported inflationary fixed costs of 20 percent from 2017 to 2021, which has resulted in a reduced ability to access current research information with a negative impact on university research and grant proposals. The University needed more diverse and inclusive materials. Additionally, there was increased risk from weak collections that would impact institutional and program accreditation. There was reduced availability due to limited hours of operation and a growing backlog of unprocessed materials including archival of historical materials.

Representative Josephson highlighted the third component related to increased faculty dissatisfaction. There was a \$520,000 element for shared services for human resources and procurement. The University reported the need to improve public safety at the University of Alaska Anchorage by increasing campus security from 13 to 15. The campus police covered three medical facilities, a large juvenile justice treatment center, a private university, federal government facilities, and several K-12 facilities. He concluded the summary of the fixed items in Amendment N 80. He stated the items reflected inflation and other increases in technology and insurance. He asked for members' support.

Co-Chair Johnson recognized that Representative Louise Stutes had previously been in the room.

[2:50:07 PM](#)

Representative Stapp highlighted that all of the items had been discussed in the University budget subcommittee process. He was happy with the subcommittee budget that ensured the collective bargaining agreement through United Academics was funded. He reported that the University budget was increasing compared to the prior year. He thought the legislature may want to explore other ways to mitigate some of the costs. He referenced increased commercial risk insurance costs mentioned by Representative Josephson. He noted that somewhat recently the state self-insured its own buildings and found there was a cost savings. He thought the idea was something the legislature

should explore. He reminded the committee that the University's critical needs were on the capital side. His biggest concern was to ensure the heating system for the University of Alaska Anchorage had the needed funding. He opposed the amendment to ensure there was sufficient capital funding to fix the University system's critical needs, especially in Anchorage.

Representative Ortiz spoke in support of the amendment. He appreciated Representative Stapp's comments that the University had received a bump in funding in the current year. He reminded committee members that several years earlier a "grand bargain" had been made and the University had taken some drastic cuts. He remarked that even though the [FY 24] budget may have been increased, the University budget was still not close to what it had been in the past. He elaborated that in the past there had been increases in enrollment and opportunities for students across the state to find education paths that met their needs, making it more likely for students to remain in Alaska. He thought it was a significant ask, but it was an investment in the university system and the state's ability to retain students and train its own workforce. He stated the amendment was another step in helping the University crawl back to its former state five to eight years back.

Representative Galvin highlighted that the current dollars invested in the university system students was 20 percent less than it had been in 2019. She stated that the university system produced roughly 60 percent of the state's workforce. She agreed it was critical to have heating systems. She suggested thinking three to ten years into the future about how much the state needed the workforce out of the university system (in conjunction with other workforce development taking place elsewhere). She opined that if there was a responsible sized dividend the legislature would not be having "these discussions." She thought the University budget was a place to support the school system from cradle to career, especially given inflation costs. She strongly supported the amendment.

Co-Chair Foster MAINTAINED the OBJECTION.

[2:55:43 PM](#)

A roll call vote was taken on the motion.

IN FAVOR: Josephson, Ortiz, Galvin, Hannan

OPPOSED: Coulombe, Cronk, Stapp, Tomaszewski, Edgmon,  
Foster, Johnson

The MOTION to adopt Amendment N 80 FAILED (4/7).

[2:56:39 PM](#)

Representative Josephson MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 81  
(copy on file):

Agency: University of Alaska

Appropriation: University of Alaska

Allocation: Systemwide Reduction/Additions

Transaction Details

Title: Developing Alaska's Workforce

Section: Section 1

Type: Inc

Line Items

Services: 5,200.0

Funding 1004 Gen Fund 5,200.0

Explanation

This amendment would appropriate funding for programs to build capacity for Alaska's workforce, including a focus on specific program capacity, supporting Alaska Native success initiatives, reducing student indebtedness, and increasing student enrollment and retention.

Co-Chair Foster OBJECTED.

Representative Josephson explained the items in the amendment all fell under the FY 24 budget request by the University Board of Regents. He believed the items had been highlighted by the University president as being of particular concern. The \$5.2 million in the amendment began

with \$3 million for student support and recruitment and retention efforts. The funding would go towards increasing financial aid, additional student advising, and more dual credit opportunities. The amendment also addressed program capacity including \$600,000 for a master's in healthcare management and leadership, maritime training, and stable funding for the Preparing Indigenous Teachers and Administrators for Alaska Schools (PITAAS) program. The University of Alaska Southeast would receive \$247,000 of the total. He detailed that the PITAAS program was a highly successful statewide scholarship program for education degree seeking junior through graduate level students. The program supported culturally related coursework in arts and humanities for undergraduate students and favorable data related to the Counsel for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. The regents specified that the request for funding would ensure the long-term stability of the highly successful program and would address a teacher shortage, while adding to the number of indigenous teachers and administrators in Alaska and supporting culturally responsive programming.

Representative Josephson continued to explain the amendment. The regents and the president sought \$1.6 million in faculty capacity. He elaborated that the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) College of Rural and Community Development (CRCD) would receive \$500,000 for the Alaska Native Success Initiative (ANSI) faculty hires and student support. The funding was also designed to increase the number of tenure track Alaska Native indigenous faculty and staff to support ANSI. The funding was UAF dollars designed to meet its strategic goal of solidifying global leadership in Alaska Native and indigenous programs. He explained that the investment would result in an increased number of tenure track Alaska Native and indigenous faculty and staff that would support the ANSI goal of achieving a workforce that reflected the state demographically. He stated the amendment included a fraction of the things the Board of Regents wanted. He understood the items had been brought before the [University] subcommittee and he knew the temperature in the [capitol] building remained the same. He asked for members' support.

[3:01:11 PM](#)

Co-Chair Foster observed that the allocation in the amendment was system wide. He asked if there was anything that would prevent the University from putting the funding towards other items that it may deem more pressing later on (e.g., insurance).

Representative Josephson responded that the only way to guarantee funds would be spent as the legislature intended was with an appropriation. He detailed that funds could be moved in an allocation. He thought the University would pay an enormous penalty if the legislature learned it did not spend the money as intended.

Co-Chair Foster MAINTAINED the OBJECTION.

[3:02:39 PM](#)

A roll call vote was taken on the motion.

IN FAVOR: Ortiz, Galvin, Hannan, Josephson

OPPOSED: Coulombe, Cronk, Stapp, Tomaszewski, Foster, Edgmon, Johnson

The MOTION to adopt Amendment N 81 FAILED (4/7).

[3:03:33 PM](#)

Representative Ortiz MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 82 (copy on file):

Agency: University of Alaska

Appropriation: University of Alaska

Allocation: Systemwide Services

Transaction Details

Title: Add Funding for Library Catalog Statewide  
Library Electronic Doorway and Alaska

Section: Section 1

Type: Inc

Line Items

Services: 635.9

Funding 1004 Gen Fund 635.9

Explanation

This amendment provides full funding for the Consortium Library Support, which includes two core statewide library programs, the Statewide Library Electronic Doorway (SLED) and the Alaska Library Catalog (ALC).

Approximately 92% of Alaska's population is served by the Alaska Library Catalog (ALC). ALC includes UA libraries, public libraries, school libraries, museums, and special libraries and totals more than 90 libraries across the state. Last year, the ALC recorded 2,326,791 check outs and 142,270 online requests for materials.

SLED provides access to over 50 databases of articles and full-text periodicals, including EBSCO's (Elton B. Stephens Company of Information Services) databases and Live Homework Help. In FY2021, there were 11,480,376 sessions through SLED.

Co-Chair Foster OBJECTED.

Representative Ortiz explained that the amendment provided full funding for the Consortium Library support, which includes two core statewide library programs: Statewide Library Electronic Doorway (SLED) and the Alaska Library Catalog (ALC). He read from the amendment explanation above. He noted the amendment pertained to some of the libraries included in an amendment the previous day. He relayed that fully funding the ALC would save money into the future. The ALC would use the funding to offset current mailing cost increases and to license more e-books, which could be delivered online. Additionally, ALC would upgrade the system software to be more efficient and responsive. The improvements would result in lower mailing and shipping costs going forward. He explained that SLED was a statewide web-based service that provided access to hundreds of millions of vetted journal articles and e-books, online research guides, historical information, access for students to live homework help, Alaska digital archives, BrainPOP, and more. He highlighted the EBSCO [Elton B.

Stephens Company of Information Services] document base where students could access information to help with debate cases, historical papers, and more. He clarified that the information in the database was vetted for accuracy. The \$635,000 request would go to support the statewide library system.

Co-Chair Foster MAINTAINED the OBJECTION.

[3:07:15 PM](#)

A roll call vote was taken on the motion.

IN FAVOR: Galvin, Hannan, Josephson, Ortiz

OPPOSED: Coulombe, Cronk, Stapp, Tomaszewski, Edgmon, Foster, Johnson

The MOTION to adopt Amendment N 82 FAILED (4/7).

Co-Chair Johnson noted that the committee would hear Amendment N 83 and after a break the committee would address amendments that had been rolled to the bottom of the list.

[3:08:56 PM](#)

Representative Galvin MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 83 (copy on file):

Agency: University of Alaska

Appropriation: University of Alaska

Allocation: Systemwide Services

Transaction Details

Title: Increase Capacity Teacher Practicum Program

Section: Section 1

Type: Inc

Line Items

Grants: 1,000.0

Funding

1004 Gen Fund 1,000.0

Explanation

Teacher Practicum program was piloted in 2023 to incentivize students to choose UA for their teaching program. During the pilot year 30 students were able to use the program, this additional funding would increase the capacity to serve another 50 students.

Co-Chair Foster OBJECTED.

Representative Galvin explained the amendment addressed one of the most important goals at the University, to grow the workforce, particularly where there are needs in Alaska. She noted there had been some efforts made, certainly in healthcare and education. The amendment was intended to ensure educators who had chosen to become teachers had the needed support during their practicum by providing individuals with \$10,000 for housing and \$20,000 for tuition. She highlighted that the individuals could not work as teachers during their practicums. She stressed the importance of the program, which she hoped would grow by leaps and bounds. She viewed it as one of the most important things the university system could do within Alaska. She relayed that in 2019, 54 school districts were regularly spending between \$19 million and \$21 million to recruit from outside Alaska. She stated there was nothing more important in her mind than growing teachers in Alaska. She stated she would withdraw the amendment because she believed it was the right thing to do given "where we're at."

Representative Galvin WITHDREW the amendment.

[3:11:09 PM](#)

AT EASE

[3:48:53 PM](#)

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Johnson relayed that the committee would consider 16 amendments that had been rolled to the bottom of the list.

3:49:39 PM

Representative Tomaszewski MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 10  
(copy on file):

Agency: Corrections

Appropriation: Population Management

Allocation: Institution Director's Office

Transaction Details

Title: Delete Vacant Division Operations Manager  
Position

Section: Section 1

Type: Dec

Line Items

Personal Services: -168.0

Positions

Permanent Full-Time: -1

Funding 1004 Gen Fund -168.0

Explanation

DOC Division Operations Manager position has been  
vacant for three years. Associated general fund amount  
should be removed.

Representative Foster OBJECTED.

Representative Tomaszewski relayed the amendment was the  
second one he had brought forward that would delete a  
position. He stated he had received the information from  
the Legislative Finance Division (LFD) [note: Mr. Henderson  
makes a correction to this statement below]. The position  
had been vacant for over three years. He remarked that  
somewhere the wires had been crossed and he did not get  
proper information. He was told by the Institution

Director's Office that the position was filled with an acting incumbent. He stated that on one side the legislature was getting information from departments that they had high vacancy rates and that they needed more money to recruit to fill the vacancies. He elaborated that when the legislature identified vacancies that had existed within departments for years, the departments said the positions were filled. He believed it was an issue of accounting in some way that really needed to be addressed. He would make it a point to get to the bottom of the issue. He WITHDREW Amendment N 10.

Representative Ortiz asked what happened to the \$168,000 when a position was vacant. He wondered if it went to the general fund or other operations within the Department of Corrections (DOC).

Representative Tomaszewski responded that he thought the funding could be moved to fund temporary or other positions or travel expenses. He believed it was very difficult to determine where the money had gone. He stated in the current case, it was \$503,000 over the past three years that he could not account for. He surmised that the department could account for the funds as the position was currently filled. He did not know the answer and stated it was a problem the legislature needed to figure out.

Co-Chair Johnson highlighted the breadth of experience her staff Mr. Henderson had on the topic. She asked him to speak about the vacancies.

[3:53:52 PM](#)

Mr. Henderson clarified that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) provided the list of vacancies (not LFD). He relayed that OMB had looked at all of the vacant positions during the interim and had asked all departments to justify keeping any position that had been vacant for six months to a year. He did not know the result of the work, but he knew that the report showing positions vacant for three to five years was not accurate. He clarified that the report indicated that the deputy commissioner and division operations manager positions had been vacant for three to five years. In reality, the positions had been filled for two years in acting status. He explained that when a person was in acting status it showed up in the report as vacant

because the department had not really filled the PCN [position control number].

Mr. Henderson addressed the question about how departments used money [intended for specific positions] when vacancies existed. He explained that much of the funding in DOC was used for overtime when positions were not filled because other workers were having to cover by working overtime. He elaborated that paying overtime cost more than the department would have to pay if the position was filled. There were also situations where the department used the money to contract out for the services when it could not fill the position.

Mr. Henderson highlighted he found it problematic when departments took the funding intended for personal services and used it for other purposes. He shared that the legislature required OMB report on any money moved in or out of personal services and what the money was used for. For example, if a department moved \$100,000 from personal services to contractual services, it had to explain what the funding was used for. He noted the report was available and had been submitted to the legislature by OMB. He shared that OMB had been gathering information from the departments on the status of vacant positions and had prepared and provided a report to Co-Chair Johnson's office in the past hour. He noted that Co-Chair Johnson's office had met with some of the committee members to provide them with the report to learn the status of the positions.

[3:57:16 PM](#)

Co-Chair Johnson invited committee members to ask questions.

Representative Galvin appreciated Mr. Henderson's synopsis on the topic. She requested to receive the report that had been viewed by other committee members. Also, it sounded as though Mr. Henderson was referring to good audit work when funding was moved from one location to another. She thought it was common and recalled hearing about the topic during budget and audit work at the school district level. She thought it was a good and reasonable ask and she appreciated the work.

Mr. Henderson replied that a copy of the report would be provided immediately. He did not believe the information

gathered by OMB from departments was done prior to the legislature's request. He noted it was a good request by the legislature.

Representative Josephson referenced Mr. Henderson's statement that the agencies could use personal services [funding] to contract out work. He stated it struck him as something that may involve the collective bargaining agreement. He thought the state's chief negotiator Kate Sheehan may be a good person to ask.

Mr. Henderson provided a hypothetical situation where a department could not fill two or three maintenance worker positions. He explained that the department may use savings from personal services to contract out for the maintenance services.

Representative Josephson stated that it seemed reasonable.

Co-Chair Johnson thought the goal was to highlight something that may have been ongoing for some time. She appreciated the input and exhaustive work looking into all of the positions by a number of members and staff.

[4:00:48 PM](#)

Representative Coulombe MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 11 (copy on file):

Agency: Corrections

Appropriation: Population Management

Allocation: Anchorage Correctional Complex

Transaction Details

Title: Remove Funding for Vacant Maintenance Specialist, Plumbing, Journey 2 Position

Section: Section 1

Type: Dec

Line Items

Personal Services: -100.3

Positions

Permanent Full-Time: -1

Funding

1002 Fed Rcpts -50.1

1004 Gen Fund -50.2

Explanation

This position is a long-term vacancy (4 years). The duties of this position have either not been necessary or have been accomplished by other means. The department's budget should reflect its actual needs and how it is accomplishing those.

Co-Chair Foster OBJECTED.

Representative Coulombe explained the amendment. She felt it was important to look to the vacancy rate, especially when she had requested an increase (she wanted to look for areas that could be decreased). She believed looking at vacancies of four years or more was reasonable. She clarified that the vacancies on her list were not new. She shared that she had received responses from some of the departments. She planned to explain the amendment and the response from the department. The amendment would remove funding for a vacant maintenance specialist for the Anchorage Correctional Complex (ACC). The position had been vacant for four years and the duties had either not been necessary or had been accomplished by other means. She believed that the department's budget should reflect its actual needs and how it was accomplishing those needs. She stated that the legislature needed to know where the money was going and if it was not going to the position. She highlighted the need for better accounting practices. The department reported that the positions had been under continued recruitment and costs associated with the vacancy were used to support the security and operational unbudgeted overtime and for emergency contract costs associated with contracting out for service due to vacancies. Maintenance positions were being reallocated to a generalist position to assist in preventative maintenance for ACC; the positions were generally easier to fill and

appropriate for the maintenance needs within the facility. She added the amendment pertained to one position.

Co-Chair Johnson thought the amendment highlighted that the department was using the money but not exactly where it had been appropriated.

[4:03:20 PM](#)

Representative Galvin stated her understanding of Representative Coulombe's explanation. She asked if the generalist position was doing the same [maintenance] work that needed to be done.

Representative Coulombe responded that the general position assisted in preventative maintenance for ACC, but she did not believe the work constituted the majority of the position's work.

Representative Galvin asked if the generalist position paid more and had been filled more easily. She wondered if preventative work performed by the generalist position could make maintenance work unnecessary, which could perhaps address the problem, albeit at a higher rate of pay.

Representative Coulombe replied that she did not have those details.

Co-Chair Foster WITHDREW the OBJECTION.

Representative Josephson OBJECTED.

[4:04:50 PM](#)

A roll call vote was taken on the motion.

IN FAVOR: Stapp, Coulombe, Foster

OPPOSED: Tomaszewski, Galvin, Hannan, Josephson, Ortiz, Cronk, Edgmon, Johnson

The MOTION to adopt Amendment N 11 FAILED (3/8).

[4:06:19 PM](#)

Representative Coulombe MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 12 (copy on file):

Agency: Corrections

Appropriation: Population Management

Allocation: Lemon Creek Correctional Ctr

Transaction Details

Title: Delete Vacant Correctional Officer 1 Position

Section: Section 1

Type: Dec

Line Items

Personal Services: -114.4

Positions

Permanent Full-Time: -1

Funding 1004 Gen Fund -114.4

Explanation

This position is a long-term vacancy (6 years). The duties of this position have either not been necessary or have been accomplished by other means. The department's budget should reflect its actual needs and how it is accomplishing those.

Co-Chair Foster OBJECTED.

Representative Coulombe explained that the amendment would delete a vacant correctional officer I position and the associated \$114,000. She stated that the position had been vacant for six years and the duties of the position had either not been necessary or had been accomplished by other means. She had heard from the department that the Lemon Creek position was filled and the employee was placed in an incorrect PCN. The department had communicated it would submit the correction. She did not know what PCN the current officer was in, but she wondered if the department switched the officer to the correct PCN whether the initial

PCN would be vacant. She did not know the answer. She considered withdrawing the amendment but decided against it.

[4:07:48 PM](#)

Representative Hannan spoke in opposition to the amendment. She shared that she had served on the corrections subcommittee for all five years of her tenure with the legislature and at no point had the subcommittee ever believed corrections institutions in Alaska were overstaffed. She relayed the positions were tough and difficult to fill. She stated that if the positions were not filled the money was used to pay overtime and officers were frequently required to do overtime, creating burnout. She highlighted that the DOC budget was complex and she did not find that there was excess money to do the mandated work. She believed there needed to be more money serving people. She opined that corrections officer positions could not be cut, and the department should work to fill empty positions with permanent full-time staff in order to avoid an overworked staff continually on the verge of collapse.

Co-Chair Johnson relayed that Representative Coulombe's work digging into the budget was not based on an idea there was waste, fraud, and abuse in the administration. She interpreted the actions as an attempt to make sure the legislature knew what it was spending the state's money on. She thought it was important for the legislature to know if a position had been filled but it was not obvious it had been filled or if it had not been filled and funds were used for overtime. She thought the spirit of Representative Coulombe's effort was positive and an attempt to make government better. She thanked Representative Coulombe for bringing the items forward.

Co-Chair Edgmon thought it was a good exercise, but he believed the picture was incomplete. He had served as chair of the DOC subcommittee for quite a few years, and he did not support deleting the vacancy until it could be demonstrated it was a true vacancy.

Representative Coulombe stressed that she did not believe DOC had excess money or correctional officers. She reasoned that if the position had been open for six years, the accounting needed to be cleaned up. She stated that for the

legislature to make the best decisions possible, it needed to know which positions were filled and which were not and where the money was going.

Co-Chair Foster MAINTAINED the OBJECTION.

[4:12:55 PM](#)

A roll call vote was taken on the motion.

IN FAVOR: Coulombe, Johnson

OPPOSED: Stapp, Tomaszewski, Galvin, Hannan, Josephson, Ortiz, Cronk, Edgmon, Foster

The MOTION to adopt Amendment N 12 FAILED (2/9).

[4:13:58 PM](#)

Representative Tomaszewski MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 13 (copy on file):

Agency: Corrections

Appropriation: Population Management

Allocation: Spring Creek Correctional Ctr

Transaction Details

Title: Delete Vacant Correctional Officer 1 Position

Section: Section 1

Type: Dec

Line Items

Personal Services: -112.6

Positions

Permanent Full-Time: -1

Funding 1004 Gen Fund -112.6

Explanation

DOC Correctional Officer 1 position has been vacant for three years. Associated general fund amount should be removed.

Co-Chair Foster OBJECTED.

Representative Tomaszewski explained that the amendment was similar to the previous amendment at a different corrections facility. He heard from the department in the past hour that the position was filled, and the employee had been placed in an incorrect PCN. The department communicated that the correction would be submitted that day. He surmised it was a misunderstanding and a problem with accounting in terms of how the vacancies were being reported and how the legislature needed to work to get good information. He WITHDREW Amendment N 13.

[4:15:23 PM](#)

Representative Coulombe MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 28 (copy on file):

Agency: Family and Community Services

Appropriation: Alaska Pioneer Homes

Allocation: Pioneer Homes

Transaction Details

Title: Delete UGF Funding Associated with Vacant Certified Nurse Aide 1

Section: Section 1

Type: Dec

Line Items

Personal Services: -5.7

Funding 1004 Gen Fund -5.7

Explanation

This position has been vacant for 4 years. The duties have either been absorbed by the department, not necessary, or accomplished by other means. The department's budget should accurately reflect its actual needs and how it is accomplishing those. This amendment only removes the UGF funding.

Co-Chair Foster OBJECTED.

Representative Coulombe explained that the amendment would delete UGF funding associated with a certified nurse aide position that had been vacant for four years. She noted that the amendment had initially pertained to two vacancies. She relayed that the department had requested to keep one of the positions that had been filled. She explained that the department had indicated the second position could be deleted.

Representative Ortiz asked how \$5,700 would pay for a vacant certified nurse aide position. He could understand why the position was vacant if the amount covered its cost.

Representative Coulombe corrected her previous explanation. She explained that the amendment did not delete the position but took \$5,700 from the position. She elaborated that \$5,700 of the position funding came from UGF.

Representative Hannan asked how the rest of the position was paid for. She wondered if the remainder of the position was paid with designated receipts from [Pioneer Home] residents. She referenced an OMB report received by committee members. She remarked that the amendment did not address a specific PCN. She wondered if the amendment would delete \$5,000 from a specific PCN.

[4:18:22 PM](#)

AT EASE

[4:20:23 PM](#)

RECONVENED

Representative Coulombe noted there was a bit of confusion about the amendment; therefore, she WITHDREW Amendment N 28.

[4:20:54 PM](#)

Co-Chair Johnson WITHDREW Amendment N 29 (copy on file).

Representative Coulombe MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 30 (copy on file):

Agency: Family and Community Services

Appropriation: Juvenile Justice

Allocation: Probation Services

Transaction Details

Title: Delete Vacant Juvenile Probation Officer 1

Position Section: Section 1

Type: Dec

Line Items

Personal Services: -70.4

Funding 1004 Gen Fund -70.4

Positions

Permanent Full-Time: -1

Explanation

This position has been vacant for 4 years. The duties of this position have either not been necessary or have been accomplished by other means. The department's budget should reflect its actual needs and how it is accomplishing those.

Representative Stapp OBJECTED.

[4:21:33 PM](#)

AT EASE

[4:22:16 PM](#)

RECONVENED

Representative Coulombe explained that Amendment N 30 would delete a juvenile probation officer I position and the associated funding of \$70,000. The position had been vacant

for four years. She had received a response from the department that the PCN was slated for deletion.

Co-Chair Johnson asked for verification that the position had been put forward for deletion.

Representative Coulombe replied that the department had sent an email indicating the position was currently vacant and slated for deletion.

Representative Stapp spoke from his experience as the [Department of Family and Community Services] subcommittee chair. He explained that the juvenile justice officer I positions had one of the highest vacancy rates he had ever seen. He elaborated that the reason for the high vacancy rate was inadequate pay. He indicated the vacancy rate for the particular job class was over 60 percent. He relayed that juvenile justice officer IIs were paid better, but not significantly better. He shared it had been a topic discussed in subcommittee. He thought the positions should be paid more. He detailed that the department had slated the particular position for deletion and had already removed the associated funding. He offered the comments to provide some overall context within the department.

[4:24:22 PM](#)

Representative Hannan addressed a question to Representative Stapp. She stated her understanding based on his comments that the funding had already been deleted. She asked for verification that the amendment reflected a second deletion of the same money. If so, she was opposed to the amendment.

Representative Stapp responded it was his understanding that the funding had already been removed from the budget for FY 24 by the department.

Representative Cronk asked if \$70,400 included medical and medical benefits or salary only.

Representative Stapp responded that the increment included payroll and benefits.

Representative Coulombe WITHDREW Amendment N 30. She had thought the position was slated for deletion, but that it had not yet occurred.

Co-Chair Johnson was uncertain how to ensure the funding had been deleted. She relayed that her office would follow up on the issue. She noted that if needed the issue could be addressed on the [House] floor.

[4:26:40 PM](#)

Representative Coulombe MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 33 (copy on file):

Agency: Fish and Game

Appropriation: Habitat

Allocation: Habitat

Transaction Details

Title: Delete Habitat Biologist 2 Position

Section: Section 1

Type: Dec

Line Items

Personal Services: -98.3

Positions

Permanent Full-Time: -1

Funding 1004 Gen Fund -98.3

Explanation

This position has been vacant for 6 years. The duties of this position have either not been necessary or have been accomplished by other means. The department's budget should reflect its actual needs and how it is accomplishing those.

Representative Josephson OBJECTED.

Representative Coulombe explained the amendment would delete a habitat [biologist] II position and the associated

\$98,300 in funding. She detailed that the position had been vacant for six years. She read from an explanation received by the department:

The Habitat Section is currently looking to fill its empty positions, this position included given the increased amount of permit applications that are anticipated through the funding Congress has recently appropriated for infrastructure projects. An example is the dramatic rise in permits needed for broadband projects that will help connect rural Alaska with stable highspeed internet. Cutting this position while the section sees increased permitting demands placed upon it would only hamper its ability to review permit applications in a timely manner.

The level of fish habitat permit applications fluctuate depending on the amount of projects whose implementation requires work in resident and anadromous fish streams across the state; therefore, the Habitat Section keeps a very modest number within the acceptable amount of PCNs available to react to such an occurrence. If we do not employ this strategy and instead waited until legislative session to request these needed positions, we could find ourselves months without the needed personnel to review permit applications. This could only cause delay in the issuance of permits that are required for vital projects across Alaska.

Representative Coulombe understood the agency liked its flexibility but she believed six years was a long time to keep an open position.

Representative Cronk asked where the position was based out of.

[4:29:08 PM](#)

AT EASE

[4:32:16 PM](#)

RECONVENED

Representative Coulombe replied that she did not have the answer. She WITHDREW Amendment N 33.

[4:33:11 PM](#)

Representative Tomaszewski WITHDREW Amendment N 34 (copy on file).

[4:33:41 PM](#)

Representative Coulombe MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 35 (copy on file):

Agency: Governor

Appropriation: Executive Operations

Allocation: Governor's House

#### Transaction Details

Title: Delete Vacant Executive Residence Steward Position

Section: Section 1

Type: Dec

#### Line Items

Personal Services: -95.5

#### Positions

Permanent Full-Time: -1

Funding 1004 Gen Fund -95.5

#### Explanation

This position has been vacant for 4 years. The duties of this position have either not been necessary or have been accomplished by other means. The department's budget should reflect its actual needs and how it is accomplishing those.

Co-Chair Foster OBJECTED.

Representative Coulombe explained that the amendment would delete a position in the governor's house that had been vacant for four years. She WITHDREW Amendment N 35.

[4:34:23 PM](#)

Representative Coulombe MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 41 (copy on file):

Agency: Health

Appropriation: Public Health

Allocation: Nursing

#### Transaction Details

Title: Delete UGF Funding Associated with Vacant Public Health Nurse 3 Position

Section: Section 1

Type: Dec

#### Line Items

Personal Services: -168.0

Funding 1004 Gen Fund -168.0

#### Explanation

This position has been vacant for 4 years. The duties of this position have either not been necessary or have been accomplished by other means. The department's budget should reflect its actual needs and how it is accomplishing those.

Representative Josephson OBJECTED.

Representative Coulombe explained that the amendment would delete a public health nurse III position that had been vacant for four years. She noted it was similar to the next amendment. She explained that the funds were being used for

nurses to travel because the department could not fill the vacancies. She stated that because the department was using the funding to provide nurses, she would withdraw the amendment. She WITHDREW Amendment N 41.

Co-Chair Johnson appreciated that Representative Coulombe had found the item and brought it forward.

[4:35:44 PM](#)

Representative Tomaszewski MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 42 (copy on file):

Agency: Health

Appropriation: Public Health

Allocation: Nursing

Transaction Details

Title: Delete Five Vacant Public Health Nurse Positions

Section: Section 1

Type: Dec

Line Items

Personal Services: -770.9

Positions

Permanent Full-Time: -5

Funding 1004 Gen Fund -770.9

Explanation

This deletes funding for five vacant positions that have been vacant for three years. These positions are (Public Health Nurse 3, 2 - Public Health Nurse 2, Public Health Nurse 1, and a Nurse 2) with

corresponding PCNs (06-1372, 06-1502, 06-1578, 06-1520, and 06-1574)

Representative Stapp OBJECTED.

Representative Tomaszewski explained that the amendment would delete five [public health nurse] positions that had been vacant for more than three years for a total of \$2.3 million. He would withdraw the amendment and communicated that he would be requesting an audit of \$2.3 million from the department and would provide the information to the committee. He WITHDREW Amendment N 42.

[4:36:45 PM](#)

Representative Coulombe MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 71 (copy on file):

Agency: Public Safety

Appropriation: Statewide Support

Allocation: AK Public Safety Communication Svcs

Transaction Details

Title: Delete Vacant Communications Engineer 2  
Position

Section: Section 1

Type: Dec

Line Items

Personal Services: -159.5

Positions

Permanent Full-Time: -1

Funding 1004 Gen Fund -159.5

## Explanation

This position has been vacant for 7 years. The duties of this position have either not been necessary or have been accomplished by other means. The department's budget should reflect its actual needs and how it is accomplishing those.

Representative Josephson OBJECTED.

Representative Coulombe explained the amendment would delete a vacant communications engineer II position and the associated \$159,500 in funding. She stated that the position had been vacant for seven years. She read from a response by the Department of Public Safety (DPS):

Alaska Public Safety Communications Services classification has determined the position will be reclassified to a communications engineer I/II flex with a modification to adjust classifications to have the professional license to be desired rather than required.

Representative Coulombe summarized that the department planned to reclassify the position to try to fill it. She reiterated that the position had been vacant for seven years.

[4:38:04 PM](#)

Representative Hannan opposed the amendment because the department would still need the funding to pay for the reclassified position. She did not know what the communications engineer license was, but she concluded from the lack of being able to fill the position it was a specialty and reclassifying the position would make it easier to fill. She assumed the position had to do with public safety radio communications discussed during subcommittee.

Representative Stapp asked when the department decided it would look at reclassing the position. He stated that seven years was a long time to have a vacancy. He believed it was common to look at repurposing positions for other positions. He wondered how long it took someone to notice that a position should be reclassified.

Representative Coulombe responded that she did not know the large scale answer, but the department's response to her inquiry specified it would be reclassifying the position. She suspected that her inquiry caused DPS to look into reclassifying the position.

[4:39:53 PM](#)

AT EASE

[4:40:12 PM](#)

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Johnson shared that she had just been told it took three years to reclassify a position.

Representative Stapp asked to hear from the OMB director to explain.

[4:40:58 PM](#)

AT EASE

[4:42:38 PM](#)

RECONVENED

Representative Galvin expressed her gratitude for the exercise in looking at long held positions that had not been filled. She remarked it was a strange way the state had been doing some of its accounting and auditing. She shared that she did not sit on the [DPS] subcommittee and it was difficult for her to vote in favor of the amendment because as far as she knew the position may be of the utmost importance. She would oppose the amendment because she did not have enough information to vote affirmatively.

Representative Coulombe highlighted that the department had been doing business without the filled position for seven years.

Representative Josephson MAINTAINED the OBJECTION.

[4:44:35 PM](#)

A roll call vote was taken on the motion.

IN FAVOR: Tomaszewski, Coulombe, Cronk, Foster

OPPOSED: Galvin, Hannan, Josephson, Ortiz, Stapp, Edgmon, Johnson

The motion to adopt Amendment N 71 FAILED (4/7).

[4:45:47 PM](#)

Representative Coulombe MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 72 (copy on file):

Agency: Revenue

Appropriation: Taxation and Treasury

Allocation: Tax Division

Transaction Details

Title: Delete Vacant Corporate Income Tax Auditor 4 Position

Section: Section 1

Type: Dec

Line Items

Personal Services: -146.1

Positions

Permanent Full-Time: -1

Funding 1004 Gen Fund -146.1

Explanation

This position has been vacant for 4 years. The duties of this position have either not been necessary or have been accomplished by other means. The department's budget should reflect its actual needs and how it is accomplishing those.

Representative Josephson OBJECTED.

Representative Coulombe explained the amendment would delete a vacant corporate income tax auditor IV position and the associated \$146,100 in funding. She relayed that the position had been vacant for four years. The response she had received from the department specified that the position was needed and the Department of Revenue (DOR) was actively trying to fill it. The department specified that the corporate income tax audit manager had 11 direct employees and adding training for multiple new employees was a large lift for one person.

Representative Josephson commented that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) had been accurately described as the "engineer room" of the state because it generates revenue. He recognized the amendment pertained to DOR, but he characterized it as an engine room kind of job. He reasoned that an income tax auditor IV suggested there were three classes beneath the position, meaning the position required a supremely talented and skilled person who knew about oil and gas taxes in the most complicated regime in the country. He stressed the importance of getting it right because it pertained to the issuance of tens of millions of dollars. He could see the problem with the situation. He considered the increment associated with the position and estimated it could be a \$95,000 per year job when taking out the benefits portion. He explained that BP would pay the position \$200,000. He believed the vacant position was due to a recruitment and retention issue. He thought the department needed the capacity to hire the position. For example, a former BP employee may also be a state tier II employee and they may want to come back to work for the state to take advantage of that. He opposed the amendment.

Representative Coulombe stated that the position had been vacant for four years. She remarked that the vacancy did not mean the position was not needed, but to Representative Josephson's point she believed there needed to be a change in the salary.

Representative Josephson MAINTAINED the OBJECTION.

A roll call vote was taken on the motion.

IN FAVOR: Coulombe, Cronk, Stapp, Tomaszewski, Johnson

OPPOSED: Galvin, Hannan, Josephson, Ortiz, Foster, Edgmon

The MOTION to adopt Amendment N 72 FAILED (5/6).

[4:50:13 PM](#)

Representative Coulombe MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 78 (copy on file):

Agency: Transportation

Appropriation: Marine Highway System

Allocation: Marine Engineering

#### Transaction Details

Title: Delete UGF Funding Associated with Vacant Vessel Construction Manager 1

Section: Section 1

Type: Dec

#### Line Items

Personal Services: -44.2

Funding 1004 Gen Fund -44.2

#### Explanation

This position has been vacant for 8 years. The duties of this position have either not been necessary or have been accomplished by other means. The department's budget should reflect its actual needs and how it is accomplishing those.

Representative Hannan OBJECTED.

Representative Coulombe explained the amendment would delete funding for a vacant vessel construction manager. The position had been open for eight years. She was not certain what \$44,000 was doing there. She stated she had received more information about the situation, and she WITHDREW the amendment.

[4:51:31 PM](#)

Representative Tomaszewski MOVED to ADOPT Amendment N 79  
(copy on file):

Agency: Transportation

Appropriation: Marine Highway System

Allocation: Marine Engineering

Transaction Details

Title: Delete Vacant Port Engineer Position

Section: Section 1

Type: Dec

Line Items

Personal Services: -142.3

Positions

Permanent Full-Time: -1

Funding 1004 Gen Fund -142.3

Explanation

DOT&PF Port Engineer position in the Marine Highway System has been vacant for three years. Associated general fund amount should be removed.

Representative Hannan OBJECTED.

Representative Tomaszewski explained that the amendment was for a port engineer position that had been vacant for more than three years. However, he had received information from the department that it was actively recruiting for the position. The department had communicated the position was

critical for executing grants for the coming construction within the Alaska Marine Highway System. He WITHDREW the amendment.

[4:52:23 PM](#)

Co-Chair Johnson relayed that the amendment process was concluded. She thanked committee members for their work and attention to detail.

[4:52:52 PM](#)

AT EASE

[4:54:38 PM](#)

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Johnson reviewed the agenda for the following afternoon's meeting.

HB 39 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

HB 40 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

#

ADJOURNMENT

[4:55:26 PM](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m.