ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

AUGUST 14, 2024
2:00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson, Chair
Representative Kevin McCabe, Vice Chair
Senator Lyman Hoffman
Senator Jesse Kiehl
Senator Donny Olson
Representative Bryce Edgmon
Representative Sara Hannan
Representative Craig Johnson
Representative George Rauscher
Representative Dan Saddler
Representative Cathy Tilton

MEMBERS ABSENT
Senator Click Bishop
Senator Matt Claman
Senator Bert Stedman (alternate)
Senator Gary Stevens

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT

AGENDA
APPROVAL OF AGENDA
APPROVAL OF MINUTES
CONTRACT APPROVALS
COMMITTEE BUSINESS

SPEAKER REGISTER
Jessica Geary, Executive Director, Legislative Affairs Agency (LAA)
JC Kestel, Procurement Officer, LAA

I. CALL TO ORDER

2:01:29 PM
CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON called the Legislative Council meeting to order in the Anchorage Legislative Information Office Denali Room. Present at the call were Senators Gray-Jackson, Hoffman, Kiehl, Olson; Representatives Edgmon, Hannan, McCabe, Rauscher, Saddler, Tilton.

Ten members present.

Representative Johnson joined the meeting at 2:02pm.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

2:02:39 PM
VICE CHAIR MCCABE moved and asked unanimous consent that Legislative Council approve the agenda as presented.

The motion passed without objection.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2:03:06 PM
VICE CHAIR MCCABE moved that Legislative Council approve the minutes for the June 14, 2024, Legislative Council meeting as presented.

The motion passed without objection.

IV. CONTRACT APPROVALS

a. Anchorage Legislative Office Building Janitorial Contract Renewal

2:03:30 PM
VICE CHAIR MCCABE moved that Legislative Council approve Renewal No. 3 of the contract for janitorial services with Q-1 Services, LLC, in an amount not to exceed $56,000.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON objected for the purpose of discussion and asked JC Kestel, Procurement Officer, to speak to this item and remain at the table for the next agenda item.

JC KESTEL, Procurement Officer, LAA, stated that before members is a memo regarding a contract renewal for the Anchorage janitorial services contract, which will expire August 31, 2024. The Agency is satisfied with the services provided and requests Council's approval to proceed with Renewal No. 3 of the contract for the period September 1, 2024, through August 31, 2025. If approved, two one-year renewal options remain under the current contract.

There was no further discussion. Chair Gray-Jackson removed her objection and asked for a roll call vote.

2:05:13 PM
YEAS: Senators Hoffman, Gray-Jackson, Kiehl, Olson; Representatives Edgmon, Hannan, Johnson, McCabe, Rauscher, Saddler, Tilton

NAYS: None

The motion passed 11-0.

b. Anchorage Legislative Office Building Snow Removal Contract Renewal

2:05:44 PM
VICE CHAIR MCCABE moved that Legislative Council approve Renewal No. 3 of the contract for snow removal services with Kelly Inc., dba A-1 Lawn and Landscaping, in an amount not to exceed $65,000.

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON objected for the purpose of discussion and asked Mr. Kestel to speak to the item.

JC KESTEL stated that this contract renewal is for snow removal at the Anchorage Legislative Office Building; the current term expires October 4, 2024. The Agency is satisfied with the services provided and requests Council's approval to proceed with Renewal No. 3 of the contract for the period October 5, 2024, through October 4, 2025. If approved, two one-year renewal options remain under the current contract.

DISCUSSION FOLLOWED between Mr. Kestel and Representative Saddler regarding contract details, primarily determining that the contract amount is not a flat rate for the season and the vendor is paid for their time as needed.

There was no further discussion. Chair Gray-Jackson removed her objection and asked for a roll call vote.

2:08:54 PM
YEAS: Senators Hoffman, Gray-Jackson, Kiehl, Olson; Representatives Edgmon, Hannan, Johnson, McCabe, Rauscher, Saddler, Tilton

NAYS: None

The motion passed 11-0.

V. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

a. Continuity of Government / Continuity of Operations Review

2:09:58 PM

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON reminded members that this item was informational only and there would be no action taken today.

JESSICA GEARY, Executive Director, LAA, said that in members' packets is a PowerPoint shared several years ago at a National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) annual summit to discuss the importance of Continuity of Government (COG) operations plan; rather than going through page-by-page, which may not be the best use of time, she recommends considering this relevant information outside this meeting. She said that during COVID, the Agency began work on a COG plan, met with other states that had developed similar comprehensive plans and made some progress; however, no one at LAA is a COG plan expert. As such, we think the best course of action to ensure the legislature has a proper plan going forward would be to contract for those services. We will begin investigating the procurement of such an expert and will hopefully have something to bring back before this committee for either approval or to keep everyone apprised of the status.

SENATOR KIEHL asked Ms. Geary to confirm his memory that during COVID there was a resolution put in place by the Legislature that covered many of these same issues, however it may not have passed both bodies. He asked if she could please remind him about the relationship between that resolution and what would be covered by this expert report.

MS. GEARY clarified it was her understanding that it was a specific resolution that allowed for some of the rules of voting to be relaxed so there could be remote voting, and it did contemplate some of these issues as well. She noted Legislative Legal is online and may be able to offer more detail on the resolution. She said she believed Senator Kiehl was correct in that the resolution did not pass both bodies. The adoption of this kind of plan by Council would stand the test of time and would include all the necessary aspects (voting, emergency succession plans, etc.). She said that Homeland Security has a plan for the State of Alaska and perhaps our first step would be to contact them to understand where the Legislature fits into that plan. She said, to Senator Kiehl's point, some of these issues were contemplated in the resolution.

SENATOR KIEHL asked what the cost estimate would be to have an expert make recommendations on necessary policy and statute changes.

MS. GEARY clarified that this was just the very first step and a cost has not yet been determined. The intent of sharing this information with the committee is to advise that we are beginning to take the necessary steps to ensure the legislature has a plan in place before it is needed. Senator Kiehl is correct that instituting this plan will likely involve statute changes and more.

b. Assembly Building Apartments Policy and Lease Update

2:15:22 PM
MS. GEARY stated she wanted to provide the committee an update that we have completed the first full session of renting the Assembly Building Apartments and it was largely a success. We learned some lessons and, as a result, have some suggested changes to the Assembly Building Apartments policy. Overall, it was a good endeavor and tenants reported positive experiences. She said the property managers, Juneau Real Estate, did a great job partnering with us on this new venture. Session rentals generated $196,000, which covered all the maintenance and operating expenses. Upon adjournment, Dawson Construction resumed work on heat pump updates, painting the building exterior, there was also elevator work, and replacement of damaged furniture, all of which is expected to conclude by the end of this month. This work was paid for with existing contract funds, so no additional funds were expended.

Some of the recommended policy changes are clarifying language for tenancy requirements to make it clear that tenants must be a legislative employee, clarifying some of the parking issues, adjusting the application period to allow more time to notify potential tenants if they have secured an apartment so they can timely find alternate housing if needed, and discussing making some apartments pet only to address allergy concerns. She will bring these recommendations before this committee for adoption but wanted to first apprise the committee.

Lastly, she said there has been substantial interest from legislators to stay in the building next year which means fewer opportunities for staff. Adjusting the application period will help with this matter.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked about the furniture damage and generally how it had held up.

MS. GEARY responded that the majority of the damage occurred before the furniture arrived due to a leaking shipping container. The furniture has held up well. She has received feedback that it is not the most comfortable, however durability was the primary goal and post-session, it still looks brand new.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON noted that a considerable number of homes were damaged in the recent Juneau flood and asked if legislative housing may be impacted as a result.

MS. GEARY stated that she didn’t expect it to impact session housing and asked if the Juneau Delegation had any info as they’ve been touring the flood zone.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN said that most legislative employees aren’t looking for three-bedroom homes in the valley, which is primarily what was impacted. She said that being just a week out from the flooding it is still very early in the recovery process.

SENATOR KIEHL shared some impact statistics from the Red Cross and that lingering impacts to the housing market should be minimal since contractors and others in the community are making these repairs their priority for homeowners.

VICE CHAIR MCCABE asked how many apartments are in the assembly building.

MS. GEARY responded that there are thirty-three apartments.

VICE CHAIR MCCABE asked if they had considered a ratio of legislators to staff, or if it was all seniority based.

MS. GEARY responded that the policy is currently written as seniority based with legislators receiving priority.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if there were any grandfathering rights in place.

MS. GEARY responded that the way the policy is currently written is if a member decided to rent during the interim there is an interim storage rate and that would enable them to have that same apartment for the next session, only for one entire legislature. There has been a request by some tenant legislators to retain their unit as long as they are in office, which is a policy decision that needs to be made.

VICE CHAIR MCCABE asked how many legislators took advantage of the interim storage rate.

MS. GEARY responded that it was either eight or nine.

VICE CHAIR MCCABE asked if that meant that 24 or 25 units will be available for next session.

MS. GEARY said in theory yes. At least one of the members will not be seeking re-election, which will affect available units as well.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN mentioned that the Assembly Building Apartments exterior paint job looks fabulous and has brightened up the block.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

CHAIR GRAY-JACKSON, after confirming there were no additional comments by members, advised that the next Legislative Council meeting will be September 26, 2024, which she expects to be a long meeting, and the final meeting will be December 12, 2024. The Chair thanked members, LAA staff, LIO staff, and her staff for their contributions.

2:29:22 PM

With no further business before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:29 pm.