

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
April 1, 2021

NOTE: Due to the State's declaration of a public health emergency, out of an abundance of caution and in compliance with the State's social distancing measures and consistent with Executive Order 7B, the August Finance Advisory Committee meeting was conducted via teleconference. Executive Order 7B provides for procedures for public meetings in lieu of the provisions of chapter 14 of the general statutes for the duration of the declared public health emergency.

The executive order provides for public meetings to be held by conference call, video conference or other technology as long as:

1. the public has the ability to view or listen to each meeting or proceeding in real time, by telephone, video, or other technology;
2. any such meeting or proceeding is recorded or transcribed, and such recording or transcript shall be posted on the agency's website within seven (7) days of the meeting or proceeding, and made available within a reasonable time in the agency's office;
3. the required notice and agenda for each meeting or proceeding is posted on the agency's website and shall include information about how the meeting will be conducted and how the public can access it;
4. any materials relevant to matters on the agenda, including but not limited to materials related to specific applications, if applicable, shall be submitted to the agency a minimum of twenty four (24) hours prior and posted to the agency's website for public inspection prior to, during, and after the meeting, and any exhibits to be submitted by members of the public shall, to the extent feasible, also be submitted to the agency a minimum of twenty-four (24) hours prior to the meeting and posted to the agency's website for public inspection prior to, during, and after the meeting; and
5. all speakers taking part in any such meeting or proceeding shall clearly state their name and title, if applicable, before speaking on each occasion that they speak." (Ex. Order 7B, March 14, 2020).

The Lieutenant Governor and the Deputy Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management convened via Zoom. The viewing link was provided for the members of the public and CT-N live broadcasted the meeting. The remaining Finance Advisory Committee members and state agency representatives participated remotely by telephone and Zoom.

PRESENT: Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz
Deputy Comptroller Martha Carlson
Deputy Treasurer Darrell Hill
Senator Catherine Osten
Representative Toni Walker
Representative Jeff Currey
Representative Mike France
Representative Lucy Dathan (alternate – non-voting capacity)
Deputy Secretary Konstantinos Diamantis
Office of Policy and Management, Finance Advisory Committee Clerk

Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

The minutes of the March 4, 2021, meeting were adopted.

The following new transactions were considered by the committee:

2021-11 for the Department of Administrative Services. Transfer of \$3,209,559.00 from the Personal Services and Rents and Moving accounts to the Other Expenses and IT Services accounts to support information technology license costs and costs related to human resources administration.

Senator Osten asked if the funding needed in the IT Services line is related to staff consolidation. Eleanor Michael and CIO Mark Raymond both confirmed, that the funds are not related to staffing.

The item was unanimously approved.

2021-12 for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Transfer of \$10,800,000.00 from Personal Services and Home and Community Based Services accounts to the Other Expenses, Professional Services, and Discharge and Diversion Services to provide for operational needs during the remainder of the fiscal year.

Representative Walker expressed concern about the large lapse in Personal Services. Commissioner Delphin-Rittmon responded that the agency has worked diligently to recruit for a large number of vacancies but have had difficulty for several reasons. While they have been working with DAS to secure hiring managers that can focus exclusively on recruiting strategies for DMHAS positions, there is an overall shortage of psychiatrists and nurses. We are in competition with our surrounding states.

Representative Walker asked whether state salaries are part of the reason for vacancies. The Commissioner responded that salaries are not as competitive as they could be.

Representative Walker asked about the Electronic Health Record (EHR) system. The Commissioner responded that the agency is working with DAS to identify financial and operational needs. Representative Walker said she hoped they agency would submit a budget request for an EHR soon and noted her concern about vacancies impacting DMHAS' ability to adequately fulfill their mission to provide mental health services for the public.

Representative France asked the Commissioner about the unanticipated discharges in the Discharge and Diversion account and their impact on CVH with the reduced patient load. The Commissioner responded that the discharges were not unanticipated because DMHAS is always working to discharge people from CVH as part of treatment.

Senator Osten asked whether the Discharge and Diversion dollars were being used to support discharges from the Department of Correction, given significant reductions in the prison population. She also asked whether behavioral health services for individuals being discharged have been accounted for in the biennial budget. The Commissioner said they work very closely with DOC and the criminal justice system to try to divert people toward treatment services, and that DMHAS has a very robust system to support those in need of services.

Senator Osten asked which contractors DMHAS uses to hire professional staff to cover staffing shortfalls. The Commissioner noted that several were engaged in recruiting temporary workers. Senator Osten also expressed concern about the number of vacancies and her desire that DMHAS make a bigger effort to fill open positions, especially relative to upcoming retirements.

Representative Dathan asked if any of the agency's unanticipated costs were related to COVID-19 and if there is an opportunity for federal reimbursement for such costs. The Commissioner noted that expenses exceeded the amount they received, particularly for cleaning supplies and screeners at direct care buildings. Representative Dathan asked whether, in light of the shortfalls, the budget proposed by the Governor was sufficient for next two years. The Commissioner responded that the anticipated \$1.6 million add to Other Expenses will help offset structural issues.

The item was unanimously approved.

2021-13 for the Department of Transportation. Transfer of \$2,900,000.00 from Personal Services to the Pay-as-you-Go Transportation Projects and Equipment accounts to cover efforts to combat the statewide tree mortality issue and to fund computer replacements.

Senator Osten asked whether all the PAYGO funding is devoted to tree-trimming and what the split is between how much is infestation-related versus general tree maintenance. Robert Card, Bureau Chief of Finance and Administration, responded that the \$2 million in this transfer is for removal of trees along the roadside that have died from infestation and drought. Senator Osten asked if there was a specific area of the state that was impacted. Commissioner Giulietti responded that efforts are statewide. He added that no federal FEMA assistance can be requested for infestation.

Representative Walker commented on a significant number of positions that are not filled within the department and asked why there was such a struggle to fill positions. Commissioner Giulietti responded that as soon as some positions are filled, others open up, and cited the number of retirements in April as an example. The Commission noted that DOT is working with DAS and OPM to fill positions. Representative Walker expressed a concern that vacancies be addressed, particularly as the retirement cliff issue is a well-known problem.

Representative France asked about the equipment transfer. Commissioner Giulietti outlined two critical factors: One is the number of employees going to remote work; the second is the asset management system which replaces paperwork with a technology solution. He noted that teleworking has been extremely successful and consideration has been given to the efficiency and productivity of using various types of equipment. Representative France asked if there a breakdown of the need between remote work and asset management. Commissioner Giulietti responded that he would get back to the Committee with an answer. Deputy Secretary Diamantis noted the breakdown of equipment items and associated unit costs.

The item was unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Konstantinos Diamantis, Clerk