

**MINUTES OF THE
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS INTERIM COMMITTEE**
Wednesday, August 20, 2008 – 3:00 p.m. – Room C450 State Capitol

Members Present:

Sen. Peter C. Knudson, Senate Chair
Rep. Douglas C. Aagard, House Chair
Sen. Gregory S. Bell
Rep. Ron Bigelow
Rep. DeMar Bud Bowman
Rep. Glenn A. Donnelson
Rep. Lorie D. Fowlke
Rep. Keith Grover
Rep. Neil A. Hansen
Rep. Neal B. Hendrickson
Rep. Eric K. Hutchings
Rep. John G. Mathis
Rep. Curtis Oda
Rep. Larry B. Wiley

Members Absent:

Pres. John L. Valentine
Sen. Brent H. Goodfellow

Staff Present:

Mr. Benjamin N. Christensen, Policy Analyst
Mr. Christopher R. Parker, Associate General Counsel
Ms. Chelsea Barrett, Legislative Secretary

Note: A list of others present, a copy of related materials, and an audio recording of the meeting can be found at www.le.utah.gov.

1. Committee Business

Chair Knudson called the meeting to order at 3:16 p.m.

MOTION: Chair Aagard moved to approve the minutes of the June 18, 2008 meeting. The motion passed unanimously with Rep. Fowlke, Rep. Hutchings, and Rep. Oda absent for the vote.

Mr. John Fellows, General Counsel, Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel, introduced Mr. Parker and informed the Committee that he will replace Mr. Eric Weeks as the legal counsel serving the Committee.

2. Citizen Requests and Ombudsman Processes

Mr. Palmer DePaulis, Department of Community and Culture (DCC), explained that last year the Committee discussed whether ombudsmen and 211 information services should be expanded and what other options are available to provide information to assist citizens and agencies in answering inquiries or resolving disputes involving government services. During those discussions, DCC offered to study other agencies and existing 211 information services and report back potential ways to improve citizen requests for assistance from state government.

Mr. DePaulis reported the findings from the study. The study pooled five states and gathered data on each state's method for citizen inquiries and resolving disputes involving government services. He explained that of the five states surveyed, observations showed that the most successful ombudsmen-type services involved independence from the executive and legislative branches. He further noted that ombudsmen-type services offer solutions for constituent services, but not necessarily the power to make the change or produce results. He explained that independent ombudsmen-type services are often costly to implement.

Mr. DePaulis outlined three recommendations for Committee consideration. First, to collaborate with the existing 211 information service and enhance its capabilities with other state resources, like the utah.gov chatline. Second, develop and implement a best-practices guide to be adapted to any state agency. Mr. DePaulis noted that the best-practices guide would be similar to the "Best Practices for State Agencies Handling (External) Constituent Complaints," a document previously mailed to the Committee. And lastly, provide training and resources for those who are on the front lines of state agencies to learn the skills necessary to resolve high conflict situations involving the public.

Mr. DePaulis noted that the Governor and Governor's staff have met together with DCC to discuss and begin implementing a pilot program testing the ombudsmen-type recommendation with three state agencies. He noted that these results will be compiled and reported to the Committee.

Mr. Reed Jacobs, citizen, encouraged the Committee to further study the idea of improving ombudsmen-type functions.

3. Election Law Changes from the County Clerks

Mr. Bryan Thompson, Association of County Clerks (Utah County), explained that each year a number of election issues come up that require consideration by the Legislature. Most of the issues are technical and administrative in nature, others may require a more substantive policy determination. Mr. Thompson noted that with the assistance of Mr. Scott L. Hogensen, Association of County Clerks (Utah County), they will present this year's list of prioritized and proposed election law changes for the Committee's preliminary consideration.

Mr. Thompson distributed "Utah Clerks Association." He outlined the four recommendations on the handout, which included updates to the voter challenge laws, condensing text on ballot questions, the addition of voter date of birth as a private record under GRAMA, and changes to early voting location requirements in Salt Lake County.

Mr. Hogensen noted that the clerks are aware of identity fraud issues involved with date of birth information. He informed the Committee that this information is kept confidential and used for voting database purposes only. Mr. Hogensen also informed the Committee that the county clerks have put together a special district elections committee to gather research and report their findings at a future committee meeting on the single ballot issue.

Chair Knudson relinquished the chair to Chair Aagard.

4. Salt Lake Area Master Plan for State Office Space Needs -- Follow-up

Mr. Kent Dee Beers, Division of Facilities Construction and Management (DFCM), distributed "DFCM FY 2008 Capital Improvement Projects," "World Trade Center: Economic Development for the State of Utah," and "DFCM: Report to Government Operations Interim Committee."

Mr. Beers explained that DFCM completed a Salt Lake area master plan for future state government office space needs and reported this information to the Committee at the April meeting. Several questions were raised by committee members regarding the state's long range plan for state office space needs in the Salt Lake area. Mr. Beers explained that he will address the questions raised and report new information gathered from the last four months during today's presentation.

The presentation included the Ten-Year Master Plan for the Utah State Fair Park, which includes a proposal for a multi-agency office building, including a parking structure and possible construction of a new Department of Agriculture building. Mr. Beers also outlined a proposed World Trade Center in the downtown area, which could potentially help accommodate the need for office space. Mr. Beers explained the budget for the 2008 fiscal year capital improvement projects.

5. Four-day Work Week for State Employees Program -- Briefing

Mr. Jeff Herring, Executive Director, Department of Human Resources (DHR), gave an overview of the "Working 4 Utah Initiative" announced by the Governor on June 26, 2008. The "Working 4 Utah Initiative" requires most state agency employees to shift to a four-day, ten-hour work schedule. State government service hours would be extended from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday beginning August 4, 2008 with offices closed on Fridays. Essential public services that already run on extended hours and during the weekends would remain open. Mr. Herring explained that conserving energy and enhancing customer service are two purposes given for the change. He referred the Committee to Governor Huntsman's Executive Order and press release announcing the "Working 4 Utah Initiative," which were previously mailed to the Committee.

Mr. Herring distributed "Working 4 Utah, Initiative Performance Report Baseline Draft." He explained information contained in the report regarding the preliminary economic analysis and implementation planning, and energy, extended service, and employee impacts. Mr. Herring also noted the valuable recruitment tool this schedule could be in attracting a younger workforce for state agencies.

Rep. Fowlke inquired why the Legislature was not involved in the decision making process for this initiative.

Rep. Bigelow asked about the productivity of the state agencies under the new initiative. Mr. Herring informed the Committee that he will follow-up on the several questions raised regarding the reallocated expenditures noted in the report and get back to the Committee.

Mr. Todd Sutton, citizen, Utah Employer Association, noted that 75 percent of people surveyed from state agencies favored the initiative. He explained that employee comments on the surveys noted specific issues they saw with the initiative design.

6. Other Items / Adjourn

MOTION: Rep. Bowman moved to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously with Chair Knudson, Sen. Bell, Rep. Bigelow, and Rep. Mathis absent for the vote.

Chair Aagard adjourned the meeting at 4:45 p.m.