

**MINUTES OF THE
WORKFORCE SERVICES AND COMMUNITY
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INTERIM COMMITTEE**
Wednesday, September 21, 2011 – 2:00 p.m. – Room 20 House Building

Members Present:

Sen. Stuart C. Reid, Senate Chair
Rep. Jim Bird, House Chair
Sen. Patricia W. Jones
Sen. Aaron Osmond
Sen. Jerry W. Stevenson
Rep. Johnny Anderson
Rep. Keith Grover
Rep. David Litvack
Rep. Jeremy A. Peterson
Rep. Dixon M. Pitcher
Rep. Marie H. Poulson
Rep. Brad R. Wilson

Members Absent:

Sen. Karen W. Morgan
Rep. Gregory H. Hughes

Staff Present:

Mr. Benjamin N. Christensen, Policy Analyst
Mr. Peter Asplund, Associate General Counsel
Mr. Robert H. Rees, Associate General Counsel
Ms. Debra Hale, 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 Bird called the meeting to order at 2:38 p.m.

MOTION: Rep. Anderson moved to approve the minutes of the July 20, 2011 meeting. The motion passed unanimously, with Sen. Stevenson and Rep. Wilson absent for the vote.

2. State Contracts for Purchases from a Community Rehabilitation Program

Mr. Steven Mascaro, Executive Director, Utah Works, distributed and discussed "Sections to be reviewed" (Utah Code 63G-6-425. Purchase from community rehabilitation programs), "State of Utah & Utah Works, Utah's 'State Use Program,'" and a "Utah Works" pamphlet.

Mr. Mascaro recommended changes to three areas of Utah Code Section 63G-6-425:

- (a) Revise Subsection (2)(a) to expand the size of the Purchasing Board from three to approximately seven people;
- (b) Make clarifications to Subsection (2)(b)(iii) regarding the procurement contract list; and
- (c) Expand the definition of "reasonably competitive" in Subsection 2(a).

Mr. Mascaro suggested that these changes would provide additional employment for disabled persons and continue to reduce public service costs. He requested committee support in making these changes.

Mr. Dean Hoffman, CEO, Columbus Community Center, and Chairman, Utah Works Board of Directors, recited success stories of two disabled individuals involved with the Utah Works program. He encouraged

the Committee to support the legislative changes suggested by Mr. Mascaro to increase the number of disabled persons benefitting from this program.

Mr. Kent D. Beers, Director, Division of State Purchasing and General Services, Disabilities Advisory Board, distributed and referred to a handout regarding Utah Code Section 63G-6-425 with potential changes in red ink. Mr. Beers stated that it would help the state purchasing process if language could be adopted to indicate that the central, not-for-profit association could be "selected" by the board "through a competitive procurement process."

Mr. Beers further suggested that the Committee provide guidance in statute to better explain what constitutes "reasonably competitive" prices for a community rehabilitation program's goods and services.

Referring to Mr. Mascaro's request, Mr. Beers urged that, if the purchasing board membership was to be increased, caution be exercised to ensure that the makeup of the Board maintains a proper balance.

Mr. Russell Thelin, Director, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Utah State Office of Rehabilitation, noted that the "state use" contract is how the state achieves integrated competitive employment. This contract has placed about 3,500 individuals each year, some with significant disabilities, into competitive and integrated employment. Mr. Thelin distributed and discussed the handout, "USOR Impact, By the Numbers (Vocational Rehabilitation) 2010 Performance Year."

MOTION: Rep. Poulson moved to approve the opening of a committee bill file for potential legislation in the areas discussed. The motion passed unanimously, with Sen. Stevenson absent for the vote.

3. Breaking the Cycle of Generational Welfare

4. Department of Workforce Services - Organizational Efficiency (Both agenda items were discussed simultaneously.)

Mr. Matt Minkevitch, Executive Director, The Road Home, shared stories of two families plagued with generational drug, alcohol, and sexual abuse; personal depression; and unemployment. He mentioned that one of these families is hanging by a thread and requiring a great deal of public assistance.

Mr. Minkevitch discussed the chronic, recurrent homeless situation, which is being addressed by creating a housing model for individuals and families. He informed the Committee that Early HeadStart, beginning now with infancy, has proven to be a real cycle-breaker. He stated the goal is that, as these children grow, they are taught employment skills to gain more economic power--that partnerships are strengthening, and lives are changing.

Dr. Mary Beth Vogel-Ferguson, Social Research Institute, College of Social Work, University of Utah, distributed and discussed "Fact Sheet: Intergenerational Poverty," illustrating the increase in poverty rates on a national basis. She stated that Family Rewards Program and other like programs greatly decreased the level of poverty. She also stated the bottom line is that people need jobs in order to move forward; however, without role models, they do not know how to achieve their goals. Ms. Vogel-Ferguson said that is why HeadStart works so well--they work with the family system to attain the tools required to assist families in arriving where they want to be.

Ms. Kristen Cox, Executive Director, Department of Workforce Services, distributed and discussed "Department of Workforce Services, Public Assistance - Eligibility Services, Caseload, Cost, FTE's FY 2007 - FY 2012 (est.)," illustrating the increase in public assistance cases on a state basis. Ms. Cox also distributed and discussed "Eligibility Services Division Throughput Operating Strategy," "WDD TOS," and "Department of Workforce Services, Throughput Operating Strategy, 'People who can work do work.'" She remarked that approximately 34 percent of adults on public assistance were on public assistance as children, and that, living in poverty, they were also more likely to experience drug, alcohol, and domestic abuse, homelessness, etc.

Ms. Cox described the intensive, high expectations in the human and financial asset development programs necessary to break these generational chains of poverty, i.e., improved home habits, personal habits, and education. She stated that many participants in state programs have job coaches working all day with them. Ms. Cox also noted the program's intervention with youth whose families are on assistance. She reported that believing people can achieve these assets results in greater numbers of success stories.

Ms. Cox concluded that Utah has 65,000 individuals, ages 18 to 64, on Medicaid who do not have health issues that would prevent them from handling employment.

Ms. Elizabeth Garbe, Public Policy Director, United Way of Salt Lake, explained that a number of public, non-profit agencies and neighborhood groups work together to resolve their area problems. Ms. Garbe distributed a card advertising the program "Earn it. Keep It. Save It," which, as well as other programs, provides low-income assistance statewide with, for example, tax preparation, financial information, wisely spending tax returns, reducing debt, buying a car, starting a business, and other ways to contribute to financial stability. The "Believe in Your Future.org" website, relating to financial education, is also available and addresses the fundamental issue of moving off entitlement into work.

The presenters then responded to comments and questions from the Committee.

5. Other Committee Business / Adjourn

MOTION: Rep. Anderson moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously, with Sen. Stevenson, Rep. Grover, and Rep. Pitcher absent for the vote.

Chair Bird adjourned the meeting at 4:14 p.m.