

**MINUTES OF THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND WORKFORCE SERVICES
INTERIM COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, May 16, 2012 – 9:00 a.m. – Room 20 House Building

Members Present:

Sen. Stuart C. Reid, Senate Chair
Rep. Jim Bird, House Chair
Sen. Patricia W. Jones
Sen. Karen W. Morgan
Sen. Jerry W. Stevenson
Rep. Johnny Anderson
Rep. Rebecca Chavez-Houck
Rep. Brian Doughty
Rep. Keith Grover
Rep. Ronda Rudd Menlove
Rep. Jeremy A. Peterson
Rep. Dixon M. Pitcher

Rep. Dean T. Sanpei
Rep. Brad R. Wilson

Members Absent:

Sen. Aaron Osmond
Rep. Marie H. Poulson

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 9:12 a.m. Rep. Poulson was excused from the meeting.

MOTION: Sen. Reid moved to approve the minutes of the November 16, 2011 meeting. The motion passed unanimously, with Sen. Morgan, Rep. Anderson, Rep. Grover, and Rep. Menlove absent for the vote.

2. Open and Public Meetings Act Training

Mr. Christensen distributed and explained the handout, "Quick Summary of the Open and Public Meetings Act." He said the annual training is required for members of a public body (see Utah Code Section 52-4-104) and that this training is provided in the spring of each year during morning interim committee meetings.

3. Economic Development Task Force -- Update

Rep. Brad Wilson, Co-Chair, Economic Development Task Force, briefed the committee on duties and plans for the two-year task force created by H.B. 28, "Economic Development Task Force," which was recommended by the Workforce Services, Community, and Economic Development Interim Committee last year and passed in the 2012 General Session. Rep. Wilson discussed the task force's two-year goal to find innovative methods to increase economic development.

4. Capitol Facilities Grants Process for Community and Culture Projects

Mr. Michael A. Hansen, Deputy Director, Department of Community and Culture, gave a visual presentation and distributed the handout, "Capital Facilities Grants Process Overview." He explained H.B.

236, "Department of Community and Culture Grants," which passed in the 2009 General Session and provides a process for the governor and Legislature to receive prioritized requests for appropriations from local entities involved in the arts, history, museums, and libraries. Mr. Hansen stated that the department suggests, after three years of experience with the new process, a review of policy options for the process, because entities that follow the prioritization process rarely received funding.

5. Impact of Workforce Services' Modernization

Sen. Karen Mayne distributed a handout containing questions about the recent Department of Workforce Services' (DWS) modernization changes and their impact on job seekers, employers, department employees, and other participants in department programs. She discussed her concerns that the department may not be going in the right direction with some of the changes.

Ms. Gina Cornia, Executive Director, Utahns Against Hunger, stated that DWS has undergone massive modernization changes to streamline the process for the low-income population to receive assistance. She said Utahns Against Hunger would support looking at the impact of this modernization.

Ms. Kristen Cox, Executive Director, DWS, referred to legislative audits that address departmental concerns. She assured the committee that DWS procedures are open and transparent, and their employees are able to comment without fear of retribution.

6. Housing Authority Waiting Lists

Rep. Gage Froerer updated the committee on H.B. 489, "Housing Authority Application Process," which passed during the 2011 General Session and requires that, when two or more housing authorities are established in certain counties, a uniform online application process is required for their housing choice voucher program.

Mr. Timothy J. Funk, Project Director, Crossroads Urban Center, who said he has spent 12 years on the Salt Lake City Board of Trustees, stated that he felt the housing authorities, with limited resources, do a good job but that, with a uniform application process and one county housing authority, not three, it could do better.

Mr. Kerry Bate, Director, Housing Authority of the County of Salt Lake, reviewed legislation and also stated that the housing process would run smoother with the end objective of a uniform application.

Ms. Janice Kimball, Housing and Resident Services Director, Housing Authority of the County of Salt Lake, expressed that streamlining has been implemented, the process has been standardized, and the department is willing to look at more techniques to comply with the legislation.

7. General Assistance Program

Rep. Brian King reported to the committee on the state-funded General Assistance Program that provides cash assistance to an adult who, because of physical or mental impairment, is unable to work at any occupation and is not eligible for other cash assistance. Rep. King further informed the committee that, beginning May 1, 2012, the maximum amount of cash assistance increased from \$261 to \$287 per month

for an individual and from \$362 to \$398 for a household of two. He stated that the cash assistance is limited to 12 months of benefits in any 60-month period.

Mr. Bill Tibbitts, Associate Director, Crossroads Urban Center, expressed gratitude that critical benefits for general assistance cash payments have finally increased for disabled and other vulnerable persons after having remained static since 1998. He expressed concerns that other policies be maintained and complicated application processes be streamlined so that the homeless can get the help needed to assist with job searches, food pantry assistance, and other benefits.

Rep. King and Mr. Tibbitts responded to questions from the committee.

8. Other Items /Adjourn

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

Chair Bird adjourned the meeting at 10:58 a.m.