



GENERAL ASSEMBLY
STATE OF VERMONT
LEGISLATIVE JOINT FISCAL COMMITTEE

Tuesday, May 5, 2020

Minutes

Video Conference

Members present: Representatives Ancel, Fagan, Hooper, Lippert, and Toll and Senators Ashe, Cummings, Kitchel, Sears, and Westman.

Other attendees: Joint Fiscal Staff and various viewers on live stream.

Senator Cummings, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m., and Senator Kitchel moved to approve the minutes of May 4, 2020, meeting. Senator Westman seconded the motion, and the Committee passed the motion and approved the minutes on a unanimous voice vote.

A. Unemployment Insurance Update

Michael Harrington, Acting Commissioner, Department of Labor, provided an update on Vermont's unemployment insurance claims and referenced the Department's daily update to the General Assembly. The Department is in progress of expanding the call center with the goal of 200 agents by Monday, May 11. New staff received base training from the contractor, Maximus, and the Department, but it takes time to prepare agents to answer calls.

B. Grants – 1. **JFO #3004** – \$1,250,000,000 from the U.S. Dept. of the Treasury to the VT Agency of Administration. Funds must be used to support the state response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as directed by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Public Law 116-136 of 2020, Sec. 5001 (establishment of the Coronavirus Relief Fund). [JFO received 05/03/20]

Rebecca Wasserman, Legislative Counsel, Office of the Legislative Council, reviewed a [memorandum](#) sent earlier to the Committee on the AA-1 grant submission from the Administration. There was no reference to the [Committee's adopted conditions](#) of April 27, 2020 within the Administration grant submission, JFO #3004. Ms. Wasserman gave the Committee options to address its concerns and suggested some other changes to avoid ambiguity between the differences in the conditions for acceptance of the grant.

Rep. Toll moved to amend the conditions for grant acceptance adopted on 4/27/20 as follows:

In number 1, change \$60 million to \$75 million; and add a new subsection 1 (e):

(e) Spending allowed within this category which is subsequently reimbursed or covered by another funding source does not create more room in the total category cap.

Senator Kitchel seconded the motion. The Committee had a discussion on the conditions and on the COVID-19 grant tracking with Stephen Klein, Chief Fiscal Officer, Legislative Joint Fiscal Office (JFO). Mr. Klein explained the Office would have a tracking page available on its website for members and the public to access COVID-19 grant expenditures. The Committee requested that the JFO have a discussion with the Administration on the level of detail for tracking COVID-19 expenditures, including changed sources of funds for expenditures.

The Chair asked the Clerk, Representative Fagan, to call the role on Representative Toll's motion. The Committee approved the motion on a 9-0-1 vote.

Representative Ancel offered a second motion to accept the AA-1 form and the Coronavirus Relief Fund grant subject to the conditions as adopted by the Joint Fiscal Committee on April 27, 2020 and amended May 5, 2020. In the event the AA-1 form as submitted is inconsistent with the conditions amended and adopted by the Joint Fiscal Committee, then the Joint Fiscal Committee's conditions shall control. Representative Lippert seconded the motion and requested the minutes reflect Representative Ancel's comments that it was the understanding of the Committee from testimony received by the Administration on May 4, 2020, that the Committee's amended conditions were consistent with the Administration's language in the AA-1 form for the CRF grant submitted on May 4, 2020.

The Clerk called the role, and the Committee approved the motion and adopted the grant with the amended conditions on a 9-0-1 vote.

2. **JFO #3005** – \$150,000 from the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) to the VT Dept. of Mental Health. Funds will be used to support individuals experiencing homelessness who have mental health needs by providing small stipends to encourage attendance to outpatient mental health appointments. *This request does not stem from the state or federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic. [JFO received 04/29/20].*

The Chair brought forth the grant for discussion and vote. Representative Fagan moved to accept the grant, and Senator Kitchel seconded the motion. Senator Sears asked that the minutes reflect his concern of the Administration's process for the grant in that expenditures are taking place before approval of the grant. The Committee approved the motion and accepted the grant on a 9-0-1 vote.

The Committee agreed to a next meet on Monday, May 11, 2020, at 9:00 a.m., and adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Theresa Utton-Jerman
Legislative Joint Fiscal Office