



GENERAL ASSEMBLY
STATE OF VERMONT
LEGISLATIVE JOINT FISCAL COMMITTEE

Tuesday, January 5, 2021

Minutes

Videoconference

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

Other attendees: Joint Fiscal Office and Administration staff and various viewers on live stream.

Senator Cummings, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m., and Senator Westman moved to approve the minutes of December 15, 2020, and December 21, 2020. Senator Kitchel seconded the motion, and the Committee approved the motion and the minutes.

B. Status of Coronavirus Relief Fund

Adam Greshin, Commissioner, Department of Finance and Management, reviewed the [status of the Coronavirus Relief Fund](#) (CRF), explaining that there was \$6,425,760 of CRF available after the Committee's approval of requests on December 21, 2020. Additional adjustments were noted in the report since December 21 brought the available CRF balance, as of January 4, 2021, at \$6,006,482. In responding to Representative Ancel, Commissioner Greshin confirmed there was additional unallocated CRF that the Administration was prepared to revert back for reallocation before the end of 2020 but, with the federal government's extension for usage of CRF, those funds, which total about \$14 million, remain in areas such as the Agency of Education for k-12 schools that was noted in detail on page 2 of the report. The Commissioner further responded to Senator Ashe that the available \$6 million of CRF could change as the Administration continues to reassess funds.

Representative Lippert requested that the Administration continue to inform the Committee of CRF status as well as the Legislature when it convenes its 2021 session. Senator Kitchel raised the concern of the multiple federal funds sources, including the recent \$127 million specific to the national k-12 system and how those sources could assist in reducing Vermont's education property tax, especially in light of the recent increase noted in the Agency of Education's [December 1, 2020 letter](#). Susanne Young, Secretary, Agency of Administration, confirmed that the Administration was awaiting further guidelines on the new k-12 federal funds to understand the options for usage.

C. Coronavirus Relief Fund Reallocation Request of \$1.5 million to the Secretary of State's Office

Secretary Young reviewed the [CRF request of \\$1.5 million to the Secretary of State's Office](#) to provide grants to offset non-budgeted additional costs to municipalities to produce and mail annual town meeting municipal and/or school budget Australian ballots to all active, registered voters.

Senator Kitchel moved to approve the request of \$1.5 million of CRF to the Secretary of State's Office, and Senator Westman seconded the motion. The Committee continued to discuss and James Condos, Vermont's Secretary of State, responded to questions explaining the requested amount was an estimate according to recent vote-by-mail elections. The Secretary also responded that there was no mandate for towns or municipalities to vote by mail but if they chose to vote by mail, the request authorized the Secretary of State to implement those with the costs covered by the CRF. He added that if there was another pandemic surge that caused a greater number of municipalities to vote by mail or there was possible runoff voting, the \$1.5 million CRF request may not cover all the costs and the actual cost could be upwards of \$2 million.

In responding to Senator Ashe's questions, Secretary Condos explained that legislation enacted in 2020 that allowed for mail-in ballots for elections expired at the end of 2020, and new permissive legislation was anticipated to be passed by the 2021 Legislature within the first two weeks of session to meet deadlines for towns to prepare and mail ballots.

The Committee discussed and generally agreed to support increasing the request to \$2 million. Secretary Young announced the Administration was amending the request from \$1.5 million to \$2 million. Senator Kitchel revised her motion to approve a request of \$2 million of CRF to the Secretary of State's Office to provide grants to offset non-budgeted additional costs to municipalities to produce and mail annual town meeting municipal and/or school budget Australian ballots to all active, registered voters. Senator Westman agreed to second the motion as revised. The Committee approved the motion and the request with a 9-0-1 vote with Senator Sears having left for another meeting.

D. Request to Approve the Contract for Vermont Medicaid Non-Emergency Transportation Services

Senator Kitchel gave the context for the request of the Committee to approve the [contract for Vermont Medicaid Non-Emergency Transportation Services](#), explaining the importance of selecting an appropriate service provider for not only fiscal responsibility but to ensure the provider complies with the State's policy on carbon emissions. Suellen Bottiggi, Member and Provider Services Director, Department for Vermont Health Access, explained there were two bids that included the current provider and an out-of-state provider. The contract for 2020 was \$14 million and the current proposed contract totaled \$15 million.

Senator Kitchel moved to approve the contract for Vermont Medicaid Non-Emergency Transportation Services, and Senator Westman seconded the motion. The Committee approved the contract on a 9-0-1 vote.

The Committee adjourned at 10:42 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Theresa Utton-Jerman, Senior Staff Associate
Legislative Joint Fiscal Office

Link to recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GERRhMNj0gg>