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REP. JANET ANCEL
SEN. BECCA BALINT
REP. TIM BRIGLIN

SEN. ANN CUMMINGS
REP. PETER J. FAGAN, CLERK
REP. EMILIE KORNHEISER
SEN. RICHARD SEARS, JR.
SEN. RICHARD WESTMAN

STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
LEGISLATIVE JOINT FISCAL COMMITTEE

Thursday, January 28, 2021

Minutes

Videoconference

Members present: Representatives Ancel, Briglin, Fagan, Hooper, and Kornheiser, and Senators Balint, Cummings, Kitchel, Sears, and Westman.

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

A. Call to Order and Committee Organization – Election of Officers: Chair, Vice Chair, and Clerk

Stephen A. Klein, Chief Fiscal Officer, Joint Fiscal Office, convened the meeting at 12:00 noon and asked for nominations for Chair and Vice Chair. Representative Ancel nominated Rep. Mary Hooper as Chair and Senator M. Jane Kitchel as Vice Chair, and Senator Sears seconded the nominations. There were no further nominations and Mr. Klein called the question. The motion carried and Rep. Hooper, Chair, then nominated Rep. Peter Fagan as the Clerk of the Committee, and Senator Cummings seconded the nomination. There were no further nominations and the Chair called the question. The motion carried.

B. Adoption of Committee/Office Policies

Mr. Klein highlighted that the proposed rules generally reflect the State personnel policies. He noted that the Legislature recently hired a Human Resources Director who may recommend to the Joint Legislative Management Committee revisions to the legislative personnel policies; if revisions are accepted, this may require adoption into the Committee's rules. Senator Kitchel moved to adopt the rules presented until further changes were proposed regarding staff personnel policies, and Senator Westman seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to adopt the rules as presented.

C. Adoption of January 5, 2021 Minutes

Representative Fagan moved to adopt the minutes of January 5, 2021, and Senator Kitchel seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously adopted.

D. Grants – 1. Brief Discussion of grants and grant process

Mr. Klein summarized the grant process included in the Committee's rules. The Chair suggested the Joint Fiscal Office offer a more in-depth briefing for the new committee members on the grant process.

2. JFO #3029—\$250,000 to the VT. Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets from the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. One (1) limited service position, Agriculture Water

Quality Program Coordinator III, and \$100,000 for a software upgrade and associated costs. [NOTE: The grant application reflects State in-kind matching dollars for a total budget of \$500,000.]

Laura Dipietro, Director of Water Quality, Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, reviewed the grant with the Committee explaining that it was preliminary to another grant. The current grant would allow the work to begin by building the program model, and the second grant would enable the continuation of the limited service position and the work as well as the funding for direct payments to farmers. Senator Kitchel moved to approve the grant, and Representative Ancel seconded the motion. The Committee passed the motion and approved the grant on a 10–0 roll call.

3. JFO #3030—\$450,000 to the VT Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living from the Kessler Foundation. Funds will be used to support the expansion or redesignation of current positions in the Department and to create three (3) limited service positions to assist Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiaries to transition to self-sustaining employment. The request includes one (1) Vocational Rehabilitation Benefits Counselor and two (2) Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II to complete the work.

James Smith, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living, reviewed the grant with the Committee. Senator Kitchel commented that she was encouraged by the pilot and the work to assist the high volume of Vermonters within the SSDI and SSI systems return to work. Representative Fagan moved to approve the grant, and Senator Sears seconded the motion. The Committee passed the motion and approved the grant on a 10–0 roll call.

4. JFO #3031-\$450,000 to the Department of Public Safety from the Office of Justice Programs for the services and support for victims in the immediate aftermath and during the investigation of a crime. The grant will fully fund one (1) limited-service position, Victim Services Specialist, to provide these services through 9/30/2023 and will also cover \$15,417 in indirect departmental costs.

Christopher Herrick, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Public Safety, reviewed the grant with the Committee. He confirmed for Senator Sears that the grant provided a second specialist to provide services statewide. The Department anticipated the grant would continue to renew every three years to provide continued funding of the position.¹ Senator Sears moved to approve the grant, and Representative Ancel seconded the motion. The Committee passed the motion and approved the grant on a 10–0 roll call.

5. JFO #3033—One (1) limited service position, Criminal Intelligence Analyst, to the VT Department of Public Safety to support information sharing and analysis to prevent and prepare for hazards and threats. Funds from the US Department of Homeland Security from previously awarded JFO Grant #2212.

¹ In a follow-up email, Herrick clarified “To be clear we are working with and expect that the sustainment will be coming from a different source, namely the International Association of the Chiefs of Police (IACP).”

Deputy Commissioner Herrick and Shawn Loan, Vermont Information and Intelligence Center, Department of Public Safety, reviewed the grant with the Committee. Senator Kitchel clarified that the grant allowed the continued authority to the Department for the limited service position and that the funding had already been authorized from a previous grant. Senator Westman moved to approve the grant, and Senator Balint seconded the motion. The Committee passed the motion and approved the grant on a 10–0 roll call.

6. JFO #3032—\$206,394 to the VT Department of Environmental Conservation from the U.S. Climate Alliance, United Nations Fund, for one (1) limited service position, Environmental Analyst VII, to serve in a leadership role in advancing Vermont’s climate mitigation priorities. Position to be funded through 9/30/22.

Senator Kitchel suggested the Legislature explore whether the grant was assumed within the FY 2021 Budget Adjustment or whether it altered the funding of the current fiscal year and the next for the climate initiative. Representative Ancel moved to approve the grant, and Senator Westman seconded the grant. The Committee passed the motion and approved the grant on a 10-0 roll call.

The Committee discussed the timing of further meetings during session as determined by the frequency of a need for grants or federal legislation. Mr. Klein stated it was likely the Committee would need to meet during the session.

The Committee adjourned at 12:36 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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

Link to recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=riyaa3amMIM>