

MEMO

TO: Senate Appropriations Committee  
FROM: Senate Government Operations Committee  
DATE: April 23, 2015  
RE: Recommendations for Budget

The Committee took testimony from a number of groups, here are our recommendations:

Humanities Council: \$217,050 (Governor's recommend). This is 17% of their budget and with this small amount they are able to leverage much more. They are working toward building an endowment to require less state assistance.

Vermont Historic Society: \$947,620 (Governor recommend) A portion is paid back to the state for rent of the Pavilion site. By statute their employees are state employees so they contribute to the retirement system and health care cost increases. The collections belong to the state so if they had to abandon any portion of them they would end up in the archives. They are working toward an endowment to require less state assistance.

Vermont State Symphony: \$141,214 (Governors recommend) Most of this is used to provide free concerts, complimentary tickets (800 last year) and the Vermont Composers series. They are moving all employees to W2. They have a relatively rich endowment and are continuing to build but are not yet at the point of moving completely away from state funding.

Vermont Arts Council: \$645,307 (Governors recommend) NEA requires states to do a 1-1 match of federal money. Any dollar they lose from the state would result in a dollar lost in federal funding. They are prohibited from doing private fund raising because it would be a conflict with the groups/people they support.

Vermont Public Television: \$550,000 (Governor recommend). The cut suggested by House is 1/2 of their payroll. Over the years their appropriations has decreased while their local programming has increased. The elimination of the funding would be about 9% of their budget, half of their staff budget. They get some from federal, very small amount, and the rest from fund raising, underwriting and grants. The other organizations listed above benefit by VPTV by collaborating on programming and delivery. So a cut would not only affect the television station it would affect the other programs. And what would be cut from television would have to be the local programming, thus making it less distinguishable from any other PBS station.

DCF: We know that DCF, under this Commissioner, is trying to consolidate the way it awards grants – the application and reporting functions. This should create efficiencies both for DCF and for the community partners. We

recommend the attached language be inserted in the Approp bill to give it teeth should there be a change of heart, a change of Commissioners or a change of Governors.

PSAPs: Because it affects state employees, we took testimony on the proposal to eliminate two PSAPs, in Rutland and Derby. After many hours of testimony, a public hearing and many pieces of paper, we ended up with a mixed recommendation. Three members felt we should support the VSEAs proposal (attached); two members felt we should not micromanage the Department and recommend that we implement their proposal.

There was unanimous agreement that there is confusion around the call answerers and the dispatchers and that the continued conversation around PSAPs needs to take this into consideration.

There was also agreement that the state should not be providing dispatch services to some towns at no cost and not to other towns. We all felt that there should be some equity and that all towns should pay for the service, or no towns should. That is a conversation to be held outside of this particular plan and we plan to address it next year along with other questions regarding DPS and VSP and other law enforcement functions. It needs to be addressed in a manner that allows towns to include any assessment in their budgets at Town Meeting.

Use of Fleet: The Committee supports Senator Pollina's recommendation that there be a one year moratorium on the purchase of new cars for the BGS fleet. The cost of the purchase is \$2.7M, about \$700,000 would be realized by the sale of the vehicles which leaves a one year savings of \$2M. Even with the additional maintenance in the 116 cars there would easily be a savings of \$1.5M. Admitting this is a one time savings, if it proves effective it could change the purchasing schedule for ongoing savings.

Postage: We are recommending that agencies/departments give up their use of Pitney Bowes postage machines and use the BGS mailing service. They could use postage for those timely and special mailings. BGS estimates a savings of over \$50,000 for DCF alone – if done by all there would be more savings.

We also recommend that all departments that do mass mailings use the USPS purge service to purge bad addresses. This could result in big savings. It is estimated that the tax department alone had 38,000 returned pieces and it could have saved \$17,000. Mass mailing done in AHS could realize even bigger savings (BGS says every time a mass mailing is done, flats of returned pieces come back to Middlesex). Departments would come back in January with any needed legislative language they may need to allow them to do the purge. (Statutes say to the last known address – even if it continues to come back as unknown)

### **Appropriation**

\$437,000 is transferred from the universal service fund to the Department of Public Safety in FY16 (this reduces the cut to roughly \$1.3 million) for operation and staffing four PSAPs and dispatching centers.

### **Study**

In consultation with the chairs, or designees, of the E911 Board, the Vermont Chiefs of Police Association, the Vermont Sheriffs' Association, the Vermont Police Association, the Vermont Firefighters Association, the Professional Firefighters of Vermont, the Vermont Ambulance Association, and the Vermont State Employees Association, the secretary of administration shall study and by September 1 recommend to the Joint Fiscal Committee whether:

(a) the appropriation made to the Department of Public Safety, the personnel employed by the Department of Public Safety at the four PSAPs, and the office equipment used at the state's four PSAPs should be transferred to the E991 Board, and if so, on what terms and conditions; provided however, that the employees shall be considered individuals employed on a permanent status basis by the State of Vermont and subject to the rights and benefits of state employment, including maintaining pay grade, steps, seniority and all other benefits of employment now accruing to the impacted employees; and

(b) dispatching fees should be charged by users of the state's four PSAPs, and if so, to recommend one or more fee schedules comparable to the fees charged by the non-state PSAPs around Vermont on comparable terms and conditions. (Note: all non-state PSAPs charge dispatching fees.)

### **Conditions Of Appropriation**

- (a) The state's four PSAPs in Williston, Rutland, Rockingham and Derby shall remain open and each PSAP shall be staffed for three eight hour shifts with employees working in the currently existing state positions, included in their existing bargaining units, subject to existing collective bargaining agreements, and without break in service, or loss of pay, benefits or service.
- (b) No PSAP call taker or dispatcher employed by the Department of Public Safety as of March 1, 2015 shall have his or her duty station changed involuntarily, unless:
- 1) Recommended by the secretary of administration with the approval of the Joint Fiscal Committee; and
  - 2) such action is taken in a manner that is consistent with any applicable collective bargaining agreement.

(c) The number of PSAP administrators shall be reduced from four to two positions. Two PSAP administrator positions shall remain vacant as each current employee leaves the position, but not as a result of a reduction in force (RIF) personnel action. When the position becomes vacant, it shall be eliminated. When each position becomes vacant, the administrator's duties shall be assumed by the remaining PSAP administrators.

(d) The number of employees assigned to each PSAP shall through attrition be reduced by one position from each of the 4 PSAPS. Positions shall remain vacant as each current employee leaves the position, but not as a result of a reduction in force (RIF) personnel action. When the position becomes vacant, it shall be eliminated. A currently vacant position shall be prioritized for elimination over any position which is presently occupied

(e) The commissioner, in consultation with the PSAP call takers/dispatchers, by and through their recognized collective bargaining agent, shall:

(1) Promptly implement a revised schedule to more efficiently cover shifts. (NOTE: PSAP call takers/dispatchers think that with better scheduling, the equivalent of two positions can be eliminated and those employees used to reduce overtime, and better cover sick leave, family leave, training and other emergencies.)

(2) Promptly implement a new schedule at the Rutland PSAP to eliminate what may be unnecessary overtime caused by a unique scheduling demand that was implemented.

### **Studies And Implementation.**

(a) Notwithstanding any provision of law, the secretary of administration, with the approval of the joint fiscal committee and subject to any applicable collective bargaining agreement or obligation to bargain, is authorized to:

(b) implement the recommendations of the study;

(c) take other actions necessary to implement the intent of this section;

(d) implement PSAP and dispatching fees effective on or about October 1, 2015, but the actual collection of those fees may be delayed until the entity using the PSAP/dispatch service begins a new budget year; and

(f) after consulting with the E911 Board, increase the universal service fund proportional surcharge to help pay for the cost of operating the four PSAPs and dispatch centers, which may be adjusted as revenue is received from the imposition of dispatch fees effective October 1, 2015.

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**Sec. E.316.2 DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES; GRANT REVIEW**

- a. The Commissioner for Children and Families or designee shall undertake a comprehensive review of the grants provided by the Department for Children and Families in order to compile an inventory of all current and anticipated grants to public and private entities. On or before January 15, 2016, the Commissioner or designee shall provide the inventory, including a detailed description of each grant, to the House Committees on Appropriations and on Human Services and the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare.
- b. The Commissioner for Children and Families shall also report on grants that could be easily be combined and/or converted to multi-year funding; an assessment of the willingness of the affected programs to participate and their readiness to adopt the RBA framework; a 3 year spending baseline for each item and recommendation for an adjusted spending trajectory. This report shall also include:
  - a. an assessment of how combining grants and using multi-year budgeting could affect families receiving services provided through the grants
    - i. Specify how the Department and the Grantee will work in partnership to maximize client results
    - ii. Develop a process for fund flexibility within 3 year grant cycle to allow for addressing specific, unanticipated needs
    - iii. Specify how the combining of grants will reduce redundancy in paperwork requirements and reporting for grantees
  - b. an assessment of the budget information system and its ability to handle three year commitments
  - c. an explanation of how the Commissioner will collect RBA data from grant recipients and what accountability mechanisms will be in place to ensure results throughout the 3-year funding cycle
    - i. Specify the 3-5 performance measures (How well did we do? / Is anyone better off?)
    - ii. Develop a continuous improvement process for Grantees
    - iii. Develop a reporting system that reduces burden on Grantees and increases accountability, through combining grants and focusing on performance measures