



Legislative Advisory Committee on the State House Draft Report

Report to the Vermont General Assembly
Pursuant to 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 50, Section 32

Prepared by the Office of Legislative Counsel

August 12, 2021

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[Attachment A]:

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A. Statutory Charge of the Legislative Advisory Committee on the State House

2021 Acts and Resolves No. 50, Sec. 32

Sec. 32. LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE STATE HOUSE; STATE
HOUSE LEGISLATIVE SPACE AND DESIGN; REPORT

(a)(1) The Legislative Advisory Committee on the State House shall review and make recommendations on any space and design proposals for the State House. The review shall take into account the Freeman, French, and Freeman, Legislative Space Study, 2021–2022, dated April 26, 2021. Prior to making any recommendations, the Committee shall consult with legislators, legislative staff, and relevant stakeholders on space needs.

(2) The Committee shall have the assistance of a planning architect from the Department of Buildings and General Services.

(b) On or before August 15, 2021, the Committee shall submit a report with its recommendations to the Joint Legislative Management Committee, the Joint Rules Committee, the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions, and the Senate Committee on Institutions.

B. Functions of the Legislative Advisory Committee on the State House

2 V.S.A. § 653. FUNCTIONS

(a)(1) The Legislative Advisory Committee on the State House shall be consulted on all activities relating to the acquisition and care of paintings and historic artifacts and furnishings, and the refurbishing, renovation, preservation, and expansion of the building and its interior.

(2) The Legislative Advisory Committee on the State House shall develop a plan for the acquisition or commission of artwork for the State House collection that represents Vermont's diverse people and history, including diversity of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and disability status.

(b) The Sergeant at Arms and the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services, in discharging responsibilities under subdivision 62(a)(6) of this title and 29 V.S.A. §§ 154(a) and 154a, respectively, shall consider the recommendations of the Committee. The Committee's recommendations shall be advisory only.

C. Members of the Legislative Advisory Committee on the State House

The Legislative Advisory Committee shall be composed of the following 13 members:

Four members of the House of Representatives:.....Rep. Alice Emmons (Chair)

Rep. Janet Ancel

Rep. John Bartholomew

Rep. Butch Shaw

Four members of the Senate:.....Sen. Joe Benning

Sen. Alison Clarkson

Sen. Ruth Hardy

Sen. Anthony Pollina

The Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Friends of the Vermont State House.....John Dumville

The Director of the Vermont Historical Society.....Stephen Perkins

The Director of the Vermont Council on the Arts.....Karen Mittelman

The Commissioner of Buildings and General Services.....Jennifer Fitch

The Sergeant at Arms.....Janet Miller

D. Summary of Advisory Committee Proceedings

1. Testimony and Committee Deliberation

The Legislative Advisory Committee on the State House met [7?] times between June 22, 2021 and August [?], 2021 to review proposals for the use of space at the State House and other buildings or facilities within the Capitol Complex. The Committee heard testimony from multiple members of the legislative staff, including the Sergeant at Arms, the Chief of the Capitol Police Department, the Director of Legislative Information Technology, the Director of Legislative Operations, the Director of Human Resources, Joint Fiscal Office Staff, Committee Services Staff, and Legal and Drafting Operations Staff from the Office of Legislative Counsel. The Committee also received testimony from staff from the Department of Buildings and General space, including Josepha Aja, the Director for Design and Construction, and Stephen Frey, a Senior Facility Architect and Planner.

The Committee discussed multiple standards or proposals for use of the space available to the Vermont General Assembly for the 2022 legislative session. The Committee discussed whether and how to require COVID-19 vaccination for entry to the Vermont State House, and whether proof of vaccination or personal protective equipment should be required for use of the State House. The Committee also discussed the use of certain air quality performance standards as a metric for determining capacity or recommended use of committee rooms and other spaces in the State House. Multiple witnesses testified to recommend that the committee hearings during the 2022 legislative session should continue to be live streamed and that [legislators], staff, and witnesses continue to have access to committee proceedings through video conferencing tools.

The Committee had multiple discussions regarding the use of space within the State House and how that space could be used safely to meet legislative needs . Discussions included

whether certain smaller committee rooms in the State House should be used for committee proceedings during the 2022 session. The Committee also discussed whether other spaces in the State House should be converted to committee rooms to allow for improved air flow and appropriate public spacing to mitigate potential health risks. In addition, the Committee addressed whether the General Assembly should establish and enforce capacity limits for legislative spaces. Similarly, the Committee considered how spaces outside of the State House could accommodate “overflow” from full capacity committee meetings and how such space could also serve additional legislative needs such as caucuses or joint hearings likely to lack appropriate space within the State House during the 2022 legislative session.

The Committee also discussed whether to move certain staff offices or certain staff work places within the State House or to other buildings or facilities within the Capital Complex. The Committee discussed moving the Office of Legislative Counsel to either 2 Aiken or 4 Aiken in order to provide additional space within the State House and 1 Baldwin. The Committee also discussed moving the Legislative Operations staff to alternative spaces within the State House in order to allow for use of the current Operations offices for legislative needs if current space is repurposed. The Joint Fiscal Office and the Director of Human Resources also testified to space needs for each of their offices. In addition, the Committee also discussed potential alternative spaces for the Office of the Sergeant at Arms, the State House Police, and the Copy Room.

2. Overview of Committee Recommendations

After significant deliberation and debate on testimony and multiple proposals, the Committee recommends [?] measures be implemented by the Joint Legislative Management Committee or the relevant Committee on Rules so that the General Assembly return to physical use of the State House for most legislative activities in a manner that mitigates potential health threats to legislators and other legislative participants. Specifically, the recommendations of the

Committee will allow for floor proceedings of the Senate and House to be conducted within the State House. Similarly, standing committees of the General Assembly would return to physical meetings within the State House. In addition, the media and the public would be granted physical access to legislative proceedings, subject to potential measures to mitigate health risks.

E. Advisory Committee Recommendations

The Committee recommends implementation of the following:

1. Persons entering the State House, including legislators, staff, advocates, media, and the public, should be strongly encouraged to be vaccinated for the COVID-19 virus but should not be required to be vaccinated to physically access the Vermont State House during the 2022 legislative session.¹
2. [Vaccination for the COVID-19 virus and proof of such vaccination should not be required for entry into the State House and masks or other personal protective equipment shall not be required for entry to the State House.]
3. The standing committees of the Vermont General Assembly should meet physically within the State House during the 2022 legislative session.² Other legislative meetings, such as caucuses or public hearings should use space within 109 State, 133 State Street, or elsewhere for meetings. Use of the well of the House of Representatives or the Senate Chambers was also proposed as a potential meeting space for certain non-standing committee meetings, subject to approval by the Senate or House Committees on Rules.

¹ See Legislative Advisory Committee on the State House, Meeting, June 29, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1woN26snd8>

² See Legislative Advisory Committee on the State House, Meeting July 6, 2021, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f395eVyw4yo>

4. Use of the Card Room for presentations by advocates or special interests should be paused for the 2022 legislative session to prevent congestion and allow for greater air flow in the hallways of the third floor of the State House.³
5. Videoconferencing and livestreaming tools used by standing committees during the 2021 legislation session should continue to be available for use by standing committees. However, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Joint Legislative Management Committee or the House and Senate Rules Committees develop protocols or rules for the appropriate use of the tools, including protocols on when to use the tools, when to allow persons to participate through video conferencing, and how to police inappropriate use of the tools.⁴
6. The following [five], existing rooms for legislative standing committees should not be used during the 2022 legislative session for committee meetings: Room 26 (Senate Committee on Agriculture); [Room 31 (House Committee on Education)]; Room 32 (House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry); Room 33 (House Committee on Corrections and Institutions); Room 41 (House Committee on Energy and Technology); Room 42 (House Committee on General, Housing, and Military Affairs); and Room 47 (House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish, and Wildlife).⁵
7. To allow all standing committees to meet within the State House, the following rooms should be converted from their traditional legislative use for use by legislative standing

³ Id.

⁴ See Legislative Advisory Committee on the State House, Meeting July 13, 2021, available at

⁵ See Legislative Advisory Committee on the State House, Meeting July 20, 2021, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylwv1S6uZ5w> and at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXwiYng_XGs <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8thyw2Zi9s>, and at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16wFosl-9vY>

committees: Room 9 (the Coat Room); Room 10; Room 11, Room 24 (the Legislative Lounge) and the Ethan Allen Room.⁶

8. The Rules Committees in the Senate and the House should assign standing committees to the State House rooms converted into legislative committee rooms based on the perceived need of legislative standing committees for physical space during the 2022 legislative session due to the high profile, controversial, or historically popular issues that a committee is likely to address in 2022.⁷

7. [Any additional recommendations....]

F. Conclusion

The Legislative Advisory Committee on the State House . . . [to be completed based on final recommendations of the Advisory Committee.]

⁶ Id.

⁷ Id.