Appropriations Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, April 30, 2019

10:30 AM in Room 2C of the LOB

The meeting was called to order at 10:31AM by Chairman, Sen. Osten C. S19.

The following committee members were present:

Senators: Bradley D. S23; Daugherty Abrams M. S13; Flexer M. S29; Formica P. S20; Hartley J. S15; Kushner J. S24; Lesser M. S09; Osten C. S19; Somers H. S18; Winfield G. S10

Representatives: Abercrombie C. 083; Baker A. 124; Betts W. 078; Bolinsky M. 106; Candelaria J. 095; Case J. 063; Currey J. 011; Dathan L. 142; Dauphinais A. 044; Dillon P. 092; DiMassa M. 116; France M. 042; Gibson B. 015; Gilchrest J. 018; Gonzalez M. 003; Haddad G. 054; Hall C. 059; Horn M. 064; Johnson S. 049; Kokoruda N. 101; Lavielle G. 143; Lemar R. 096; Mastrofrancesco G. 080; Nolan A. 039; Pavalock-D'Amato C. 077; Perone C. 137; Petit W. 022; Porter R. 094; Reyes G. 075; Rosario C. 128; Rotella K. 043; Ryan K. 139; Simanski B. 062; Simms T. 140; Tercyak P. 026; Walker T. 093; Wilson D. 066; Zawistowski T. 061; Zupkus L. 089

Absent were:

Senators: Miner C. S30

Representatives: McCarty K. 038

Note: Rep McCarty was absent due to illness

Senator Osten convened the meeting and immediately recessed the meeting for caucus.
Senator Osten reconvened the meeting at 1:54PM
Senator Osten entertained a Joint Favorable motion on H.B. 7147 AN ACT MAKING DEFICIENCY APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30 2019. (APP). A motion was made by Representative Candelaria and seconded by Senator Lesser.

Senator Formica asked if these were the latest updated numbers.

Senator Osten stated that this was the bill that had a public hearing last week. Seeing no other discussion Senator Osten asked the administrator to call the roll.

The motion passed with 47 voting yea; 0 voting nay; 0 abstaining; and 4 absent and noting voting.

Senator Osten stated that votes would be held open until 5PM.

Senator Osten entertained a Joint Favorable Substitute motion on H.B. 7148 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR. (APP). LCO 7643. A motion was made by Representative Walker and seconded by Representative DiMassa.

Senator Formica asked how the budget would be explained and when questions could be asked.

Representative Walker stated they will allow the chairs of the subcommittees to explain their portion of the bill.

Representative Lavielle stated she appreciated the pre-briefing.

The subcommittee chairs explained their recommendations and changes made to the Governor’s proposal.

Senator Formica asked about the lapses on page one of the fiscal note and if the Governor’s initiatives are achievable.

Senator Osten stated they are confident that they are achievable.

Senator Formica asked about page forty-one of the budget book in regards to the debt service.

Senator Osten stated that the final debt service number would need to be discussed with the Finance committee.

Senator Formica asked about page sixty and the PILOT program funding for Middletown and asked what it is for.

Senator Osten stated there was an error when the Governor’s budget was developed and this funding for Middletown was inadvertently left out and they added it in. It had been funded in the past.
Senator Formica asked about the worker’s compensation offices in New Britain and Middletown and which is moving.

Senator Osten explained that the New Britain office is ready to move to a long term lease and the Middletown is not ready to move yet.

Senator Formica asked about page one hundred seventy-two of the budget book about the Center for Medicare Advocacy and why they are funding a nonprofit.

Representative Abercrombie explained that the funding is to help the center run after years of cuts and supports what the center does.

Neil Ayers from the Office of Fiscal Analysis explained that the Center helps people with eligibility issues and funding the payer of first resort.

Senator Formica asked about the teacher retirement shifting to municipalities on page two hundred fifteen and if there would be any savings with the potential shift.

Senator Osten stated that it is currently not in the budget, however she feels that eventually municipalities may have to make some contribution to the teacher’s retirement fund. Further she stated the savings are not in the document before the committee.

Representative Lavielle asked why the Appropriations committee is voting first on the spending package rather than after the Finance committee.

Senator Osten stated they had planned this meeting day for a long time and that the Appropriations Co-Chairs were not going to wait any longer to act on the committee budget.

Representative Lavielle asked if there would be an increase in transportation spending.

Senator Osten stated that the additional funding would go through the Finance committee.

Representative Lavielle asked about the five million dollars for the startup cost of in the Department of Labor for paid family leave and asked if there would be any costs after that.

Senator Osten stated they are only anticipating a start-up cost.

Representative Lavielle asked for an explanation on the one million dollars allocated in the Comptrollers budget.

Senator Osten stated that it is for a study of the options for a paid healthcare option.

Representative Lavielle asked if the figures were correct for the funding to private providers due to the minimum wage increase.

Senator Osten stated the figures were correct.
Representative Lavielle asked for confirmation that they have accepted the Governor’s plan on lengthening the period of the payment obligations for teacher’s pensions.

Senator Osten stated that is correct.

Representative Lavielle asked about labor management concessions and non-union staff savings.

Senator Osten replied that the savings were not related to non-union staff only as the savings are too great to attribute to non-union staff. She added that the Governor is still in negotiations with the union regarding this issue.

Senator Osten stated the Governor is still in negotiations with the collective bargaining agents.

Representative Zawistowski asked if the study in the Comptroller’s budget on page forty-four would be internal or an outside consultant.

Senator Osten stated it would be through the Comptroller’s office.

Representative Zawistowski asked if the Comptroller had given information on how many people he would hire for the study.

Senator Osten stated that the Comptroller stated they can get it done for one million dollars.

Representative Zawistowski asked if the study will include the impact on the insurance companies in the state and what it would do to their business.

Senator Osten stated the study is to institute the public option and it would be up to the Insurance Committee to come up with an impact on any other businesses in the state.

Representative Wilson asked about the funding for signage at state park beaches, air quality monitoring in Sherman, and the Middletown fire training facility being funded through the Passport for Parks program.

Senator Osten explained that the signage, air quality, and Middletown fire training are all included in the Passport to Parks.

Senator Somers asked about the definition of public option on page forty-four.

Senator Lesser stated that there are two bills that contain two different components.

Senator Somers asked where the million dollars appropriated came from.

Senator Lesser stated that it is the fiscal note for the bill they have yet to debate.

Senator Somers stated that in testimony the Comptroller stated that the current partnership plan ran at a deficit, but he was able to make up for it in the budget. She asked where in the budget this can be found.

Senator Lesser stated that could be found in the fringe portion of the budget.
Representative Kokoruda asked why the Youth Service Boards are changing from the State Department of Education to the Department of Children and Families.

Representative Walker stated that they want everything for preventive services under DCF since they also are going to manage the Juvenile Review Boards.

Representative Kokoruda asked if they are using the Passport to Parks funds on anything not related to what Passport to Parks is originally for.

Senator Osten stated that they are not.

Representative Kokoruda asked what is going on with the dairy farmers with the Community Investment Act.

Senator Osten stated there is a delta that allows them to take money and put it into the dairy farmers over and above what they were receiving without taking money from any other program in the CIA fund.

Representative Kokoruda asked about the amounts for the grants for the North Franklin 4H camp and Ellington Farmers market.

Senator Osten stated they are not new and are coming out of other expenses. It is $15,000 for Ellington Farmer’s market and $40,000 for the Franklin 4H Club.

Representative Betts asked about the hospital supplemental payments on page one hundred seventy and if the numbers are the same as the Governor’s proposed numbers.

Senator Osten stated that the Governor has been in consultation with the hospitals. This is what he put in the budget and the Co-Chairs concur with his assessment.

Representative Betts expressed his concern regarding the supplemental payment proposal, especially as it relates to small hospitals. He stated he could not support the budget due to his concerns.

Representative Hall asked what the timeline is for the teacher retirement system and when towns will know when the decision for the twenty-five percent will be passed onto towns or not so towns know when they need to pass their budgets.

Senator Osten stated that they expect the budget to be passed by the end of session, which is June 5th.

Representative Hall asked if the ECS funding are from the budget that was incorrect.

Senator Osten stated they are correct.

Representative Pavalock-D’Amato asked if the study on page forty-four was the same as referenced in HB 7267 and SB 134.

Senator Lesser stated the line item addressed the fiscal note of those bills.
Representative Petit asked for clarification on page one hundred sixty-nine about the reduced hospital payments for readmission rates.

Representative Abercrombie and Holly Williams from the Office of Fiscal Analysis explained the reduction of rates.

Senator Somers asked if the supplemental payments for the hospitals are the same as the Governor’s proposal.

Senator Osten stated that is a Finance committee question and asked Representative Abercrombie to explain the hospital supplemental payments proposal.

Representative Abercrombie asked Holly Williams from OFA to explain the program in more detail.

Holly Williams explained the supplemental payments to the hospitals.

Representative Hall asked for clarification on the cuts for the unfunded vacancies in Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection and Department of Developmental Services.

Senator Osten stated that the positions have not been filled or funded those positions in a number of years.

Representative Kokoruda asked if the budget is going towards more privatization or not.

Senator Osten stated the budget is not pulling back from privatization and they plan on working with private providers.

Senator Formica thanked the chairs and subcommittee chairs. He stated why he is voting no on the budget today, but looks forward to developing the process.

Representative Lavielle thanked the chairs, subcommittee chairs, and members. She explained her reasons why she is voting no on the budget today.

Representative Walker thanked the members on the committee. She explained the process of the budget hearings and her reasons for supporting the budget.

Senator Osten thanked everyone for their hard work and explained the increases in the budget and her reasons for supporting the budget.

Senator Osten asked the administrator to call the roll.

The motion passed with 32 voting yea; 17 voting nay; 0 abstaining; and 2 absent and not voting.

Senator Osten stated votes would remain open until 5PM and there will be a Committee meeting Thursday, May 2.

Senator Formica stated that Representative McCarty is absent due to illness.

The meeting was recessed at 4:01PM.
The meeting was adjourned at 5PM.

Susan Keane
Administrator

Greg Castelli
Committee Clerk