

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
May 6, 2021

**NOTE:** Due to the State's declaration of a public health emergency, out of an abundance of caution and in compliance with the State's social distancing measures and consistent with Executive Order 7B, the August Finance Advisory Committee meeting was conducted via teleconference. Executive Order 7B provides for procedures for public meetings in lieu of the provisions of chapter 14 of the general statutes for the duration of the declared public health emergency.

The executive order provides for public meetings to be held by conference call, video conference or other technology as long as:

1. the public has the ability to view or listen to each meeting or proceeding in real time, by telephone, video, or other technology;
2. any such meeting or proceeding is recorded or transcribed, and such recording or transcript shall be posted on the agency's website within seven (7) days of the meeting or proceeding, and made available within a reasonable time in the agency's office;
3. the required notice and agenda for each meeting or proceeding is posted on the agency's website and shall include information about how the meeting will be conducted and how the public can access it;
4. any materials relevant to matters on the agenda, including but not limited to materials related to specific applications, if applicable, shall be submitted to the agency a minimum of twenty four (24) hours prior and posted to the agency's website for public inspection prior to, during, and after the meeting, and any exhibits to be submitted by members of the public shall, to the extent feasible, also be submitted to the agency a minimum of twenty-four (24) hours prior to the meeting and posted to the agency's website for public inspection prior to, during, and after the meeting; and
5. all speakers taking part in any such meeting or proceeding shall clearly state their name and title, if applicable, before speaking on each occasion that they speak." (Ex. Order 7B, March 14, 2020).

The Lieutenant Governor and the Deputy Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management convened via Zoom. The viewing link was provided for the members of the public and CT-N live broadcasted the meeting. The remaining Finance Advisory Committee members and state agency representatives participated remotely by telephone and Zoom.

PRESENT: Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz  
Deputy Comptroller Martha Carlson  
Deputy Treasurer Darrell Hill  
Senator Catherine Osten  
Senator Craig Miner  
Representative Toni Walker  
Representative Catherine Abercrombie (alternate for Rep. Walker)  
Representative Jeff Currey  
Representative Mike France  
Representative Lucy Dathan (alternate – non-voting capacity)  
Deputy Secretary Konstantinos Diamantis  
Office of Policy and Management, Finance Advisory Committee Clerk

Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

The minutes of the April 1, 2021, meeting were adopted.

The following new transactions were considered by the committee:

2021-14 for the Division of Criminal Justice. Transfer of \$400,000.00 from the Personal Services Expert Witness, and Medicaid Fraud Control Unit accounts to the Witness Protection, Cold Case Unit, and Shooting Task Force accounts to cover anticipated requirements for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Senator Osten asked how many positions were vacant in the agency. Deputy Chief State's Attorney John Russotto responded that a certain level of vacancies is normal and that the hiring and recruitment process, including review by the Criminal Justice Commission, takes time, with hiring also impacted over the past year due to the pandemic.

Representative France asked about filling positions in the Cold Case Unit and the Shooting Task Force with more senior rather than entry-level staff. Deputy Chief State's Attorney Russotto responded that the units require the most experienced personnel.

The item was unanimously approved.

2021-15 for the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection. Transfer of \$450,000.00 from the Workers' Compensation Claims account to the Other Expenses account to support materials and supplies for a class of Trooper Trainees.

Senator Osten asked whether the lapse in Workers' Compensation was due to fewer cases or lower costs. Deputy Secretary Diamantis responded that due to the pandemic, fewer people were on the road resulting in fewer accidents and injury to troopers. Claims have averaged about \$4 million per year, and in FY 2021, expected expenditures is approximately \$3.2 million.

The item was unanimously approved.

2021-16 for the Department of Development Services. Transfer of \$650,000.00 from Personal Services to Other Expenses to meet end of the year requirements.

Representative Dathan asked whether overtime was lower than expected due to the impact of temporary staff hires or if it was a permanent change that would impact the budget. Commissioner Jordan Scheff explained that the agency has experienced an Other Expenses shortfall for several years, but it is smaller this year than in prior years. The ability to hire temporary staff, especially during the pandemic, allowed the agency to use temporary staff differently than other times and to achieve much of the savings in Personal Services. He noted that the agency strives to manage within their appropriation, but conditions coming out of the pandemic and how DDS needs to spend OE could be largely determined based on ARPA and Coronavirus Relief Funding.

Senator Osten asked how many positions were unfilled and filled. Scott McWilliams, the agency's Chief Fiscal Officer, answered that 595 positions were unfilled and 1,730 filled.

Representative Walker asked how many positions were unfilled at this time last year and whether the number was about the same as now. Mr. McWilliams stated that the exact numbers were not immediately available, but that this number has been consistently high. Representative Walker asked whether high

rates of overtime experienced last year were addressed through the hiring of temporary positions instead of hiring regular staff. Mr. McWilliams explained that DDS hired temporary staff around this time last year in anticipation of increased overtime due to the pandemic. He also noted that utilization of temporary positions helps mitigate the impact of turnover of direct care staff, and that those temporary staff often transition to filling full time positions.

The item was unanimously approved.

2021-17 for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Transfer of \$5,000,000.00 from Personal Services to the Workers' Compensation Claims and Professional Services accounts to meet end of year requirements.

Senator Osten asked how many unfilled and filled positions were in the agency. Commissioner Delphin-Rittmon responded that there were 516 vacancies and 2,924 filled positions. Sen. Osten asked whether DMHAS was having difficulty filling positions. Commissioner Delphin-Rittmon responded that the agency has been struggling to hire skilled healthcare professionals like doctors and nurses. She noted that the agency attempting to ramp up its recruitment process to better attract and hire new staff.

Representative Walker asked why the agency's vacancies had increased from 368 to 516 since the agency testified before the Appropriations Committee. Commissioner Delphin-Rittmon said that she thought 516 might be slightly high because the agency has commitments from and is in the process of hiring several new employees. Rep. Walker asked what specific positions DMHAS has not been able to fill. The Commissioner responded that they have been struggling to recruit and retain nurses, doctors, forensic treatment specialists, and mental health associates. Rep. Walker noted that all those positions are critical to the care of clients, particularly in the light of COVID-19. Rep. Walker asked whether DMHAS is adjusting salaries and job specifications to address the issue. Commissioner Delphin-Rittmon responded that DMHAS is bringing on additional Human Resources staff who will be working directly out of facilities to attract new talent.

Representative France asked Commissioner Delphin-Rittmon whether the Workers' Compensation deficiency was due to claims from FY 2020 being adjudicated in FY 2021. The Commissioner responded that DMHAS saw increased claims as well as a carryforward of costs from FY 2020. Rep. France asked whether the increase was due to the number of claims or level of severity. Commissioner Delphin-Rittmon responded that it is difficult to predict costs because healthcare costs often shift and change over time and clarified that this year DMHAS has seen an increase in the number of claims.

The item was unanimously approved.

2021-18 for the Department of Education. Transfer of \$1,529,737.00 from the Charter Schools account to the Education Equalization Grant account to enable full payment of ECS grants to towns.

Senator Osten asked if the lapsing funds were available in the Charter School Account due to the closure of two charter schools in Stamford. Deputy Secretary Diamantis affirmed that this was the case.

The Item was unanimously approved.

2021-19 for the Teachers' Retirement Board. Transfer of \$1,806,000.00 from the Retiree Health Service Cost account to the Retirement Contributions account in order to meet the State's required employer contribution to the retirement fund.

The item was unanimously approved without discussion.

2021-20 for the Department of Children and Families. Transfer of \$700,000.00 from Personal Services to the No Nexus Special Education account to support education costs of certain children in the agency's care.

Senator Osten inquired about the agency's filled and unfilled position counts. Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes identified 262 vacant and 2,837 filled positions. Senator Osten asked if the number of students served through the No Nexus Special Education account has grown, and if their education costs are increasing. The Commissioner, assisted by Chief Financial Officer Cindy Butterfield, stated the number of students has remained consistent as compared to last year, but that the number is 30-40 higher than a few years ago. Both concurred that the cost per student has grown.

Representative Walker asked for an explanation of what is meant by "no nexus." Commissioner Dorantes explained that this means a student's parent has no legal connection to a local education authority, for reasons such as parental incarceration or having moved out of state. Representative Walker inquired whether the no nexus caseload has been influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commissioner indicated there was no certain connection.

Representative Walker asked about the type of facility in which the students reside and their reason for placement. Ms. Butterfield identified private residential treatment centers and small out-of-state facilities, indicating that these settings address the children's intensive needs. The Commissioner cited agency protocols that require that the least restrictive placement be used to meet a child's specialized needs.

Representative France asked whether the prior year student growth was an anomaly. Ms. Butterfield discussed a significant drop in out-of-state placements in recent years as a contributing factor. Deputy Secretary Diamantis commented on a similar trend whereby local school districts are bringing students back from out-of-state, with more services being provided in-state.

The item was unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Konstantinos Diamantis".

Konstantinos Diamantis, Clerk