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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
67th Montana Legislature

SENATE MEMBERS

Mark Blasdel - Vice Chair
Margaret (Margie) MacDonald
JP Pomnichowski
Scott Sales
Jon Sesso
Fred Thomas

HOUSE MEMBERS

Casey Schreiner - Chair
Kim Abbott
Seth Berglee
Wylie Galt
Greg Hertz
Shane Morigeau

COMMITTEE STAFF

Susan Fox - Executive Director
Todd Everts - Attorney
Fong Hom - Secretary

MINUTES LOG
2021 Session Working Group
Zoom Conference Meeting
Remote Room 102, Capitol Building
Helena, Montana
June 30, 2020

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ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Sen. Mark Blasdel, Chair
Rep. Kim Abbott
Rep. Wylie Galt
Rep. Greg Hertz
Sen. Margie MacDonald
Sen. JP Pomnichowski
Sen. Jon Sesso

Members Excused:

Sen. Fred Thomas

Staff Present:

Todd Everts, Attorney
Susan Fox, Executive Director
Nadine Spencer, Secretary

AGENDA (Attachment 1)

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

13:01:15 Sen. Blasdel called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. The secretary called the roll. [\(Attachment 2\)](#)

OVERVIEW OF INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

13:01:50 Susan Fox, executive director, Legislative Services Division (LSD), gave a presentation on the resources available on the LSD website related to COVID-19.

OVERVIEW OF AREAS FOR PLANNING

13:04:27 Ms. Fox provided an introduction and said she took information from states that have already had special sessions and put together a menu of options based on Phase 1, Phase 2, and Phase 3 of reopening.

13:05:51 *Sen. Sesso joined the meeting.*

Personnel

13:06:41 Ms. Fox provided an overview of what Legislative Services Division is doing to protect Legislative Services personnel, legislators, and the public during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Committee Questions

13:16:59 Rep. Hertz said he recommends having an adequate supply of face masks and hand sanitizers. He provided his comments on suspending the page program and on protective measures for personnel.

Facilities

13:19:39 Ms. Fox provided an overview of what the Legislative Services Division is doing to provide safety measures for public access to the Capitol Building and other state facilities, and what could be done to provide safety precautions for staff, legislators, and the public during session.

Committee Questions

13:28:20 Sen. MacDonald commented on the need to limit the number of people in the building and to provide temperature checks and installing better digital monitors in all the hearing rooms.

13:29:49 Sen. Pomnichowski discussed the idea of having remote locations for the public. She asked about public health policies for people who might have transmittable diseases. She commented on the page program and what the 2021 session might look like.

13:34:37 Sen. MacDonald asked Ms. Fox about the HVAC system at the Capitol. Ms. Fox said she can have General Services Division provide information at the next meeting.

13:36:22 Rep. Hertz said it is important to make sure that the public can participate even if there are capacity limitations. He said if the session is held

remotely there still needs to be a contingent of legislators working at the Capitol with staff.

13:39:13 Sen. Pomnichowski recommended drafting a plan for a virtual or partial session to be presented at the August meeting. She also recommended that legislators be provided with the technical capability to work remotely.

13:43:54 Rep. Hertz discussed the need to understand how much bandwidth is necessary in order to work remotely.

Members and Legislative Process

13:44:58 Ms. Fox discussed possible locations for remote meetings and the legislative process if session is done by Zoom.

Information Technology and Support

13:52:05 Ms. Fox discussed supporting the legislators' use of computers and phones to participate in remote meetings.

Committee Questions

14:00:57 Rep. Hertz asked how the Chair of the Day can manage Zoom meetings during the House Floor session. Trevor Graff, research analyst, explained how Zoom participants are recognized by the Zoom manager during a meeting.

14:02:22 Rep. Hertz said if there is a short session, the legislature needs to think about its priorities; i.e., balancing the budget. Other items will need to be prioritized that the Legislature will have to act on.

14:03:12 Rep. Abbott said in order to have equal participation it would be better to have everyone connected remotely rather than trying to have a hybrid session.

14:04:58 Sen. Sesso asked Ms. Fox if she could discuss the current status of the televised meetings and whether there are limits on that and how the rest of the meetings are recorded. Jessica James, audio/video engineer, responded.

14:06:20 Sen. Sesso asked Ms. James about the ability to increase the number of video streams.

14:06:57 Sen. Sesso asked Ms. Fox if the Legislative Branch could submit COVID-19 related expenses through the fiscal year ending June 30th.

14:08:16 Sen. Sesso recommended increasing investments in technology and seeking reimbursement under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act).

14:10:36 Sen. MacDonald recommended having the capacity for every committee meeting to be a Zoom meeting so the public can participate.

Public Participation

14:11:58 Ms. Fox discussed participation by the public.

Applicable Remote Session Constitutional, Statutory, and Legislative Rule Provisions

14:14:09 Todd Everts, Legal Division director, LSD, said he provided information on the applicable remote session constitutional, statutory, and legislative rule provisions. ([Exhibit 1](#))

Public Comment

14:17:38 Amy Carlson, Legislative Fiscal Analyst and Director, Legislative Fiscal Division, thanked the committee and said she is available to provide any assistance.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

14:18:21 Rep. Hertz asked Ms. Fox about plans for the legislative session or a special session based on the phased reopenings.

14:19:21 Sen. Sesso commented on the work currently being done and asked staff about the direction and expectations for the session planning committee.

14:21:31 Ms. Fox said she wants to make sure she is covering the areas that the committee is interested in and if there are other areas they want to include.

14:23:42 Sen. Sesso said staff is moving forward on the right track and recommended making investments in technology to plan for a remote session for legislators and the public.

14:25:37 Rep. Hertz asked Mr. Everts if he needed more direction on the applicable remote session constitutional, statutory, and legislative rule provisions.

Public Comment

None

DIRECTIONS TO STAFF/NEXT MEETING DATE

14:26:40 Sen. Blasdel said any suggestions or further direction from the committee can be given to staff to be included in the next meeting.

14:26:48 Sen. Blasdel asked Ms. Fox about the next meeting date. Ms. Fox said she will send out suggested dates to the committee.

14:27:41 Sen. Blasdel asked about the next meeting date for the Rules subcommittee. Mr. Everts said both subcommittees can meet on the same day with the same format.

14:28:16 Sen. Blasdel thanked staff and everyone for their participation.

ADJOURNMENT

14:28:28 Sen. Blasdel adjourned the meeting at 2:28 p.m.