



# LEGISLATIVE CONSUMER COMMITTEE

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## SENATE MEMBERS

Brad Molnar  
Christopher Pope

## HOUSE MEMBERS

Mary Ann Dunwell Vice-Chair  
Mike Hopkins Chair

## MINUTES LOG

October 3, 2022  
State Capitol, Room 152  
Zoom Videoconference

Please note: This document is a Minutes Log and provides annotation of the time elapsed between the beginning of the meeting and the time at which the item was presented or discussed, a motion was made, or a vote was taken. The narrative presented here is provided only as a guide to the audio or video recording of the meeting. The official discussion, motion, or vote is available on the audio or video archive of this meeting. The Legislature does not prepare a transcript of the meeting activities. The time designation may be used to locate the referenced discussion on the audio or video recording of this meeting.

Access to an electronic copy of these minutes and the audio or video recording is provided from the Legislative Branch home page at <http://legmt.gov>. On the left-side menu of the home page, select Committees, then Interim. Once on the page for Interim Committees, scroll down to the appropriate committee. The written Minutes Log, along with the audio and video recordings, is listed by meeting date on the interim committee's web page. Each of the "Exhibits" is linked and can be viewed by clicking on the Exhibit of interest. All Exhibits are public information and may be printed.

Please contact the Montana Consumer Counsel at 406-444-2771 for more information.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

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Representative Mary Ann Dunwell Vice Chair  
Representative Mike Hopkins, Chair  
Senator Brad Molnar  
Senator Christopher Pope

## MONTANA CONSUMER COUNSEL STAFF PRESENT

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Jason Brown, Consumer Counsel  
Jaime Pollard, Staff Attorney  
Paul Schulz, Rate Analyst  
Jaime Stamatson, Economist  
Suzanne Snow, Secretary

## AGENDA

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[\(Attachment 1\)](#)

### CALL TO ORDER

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16:13:45 Chair Hopkins called the meeting to order with roll call.

[\(Attachment 2\)](#)

### 2025 BIENNIUM BUDGET APPROVAL

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16:14:55 Jason Brown presented the agency's budget proposal and requested approval from the Committee prior to submission for inclusion in the budget book.

Committee Discussion:

16:16:57 Rep. Dunwell inquired as to whether the inflationary adjustment for fiscal years 2024 and 2025 is adequate.

16:18:02 Senator Pope inquired about the actual versus budgeted travel budget.

16:19:53 Senator Pope inquired whether the staffing levels of the Montana Consumer Counsel were sufficient to adequately address the mission of the organization.

16:22:20 Chair Hopkins noted, with respect to Senator Pope's inquiry about actual versus budgeted amounts, that generally agencies would want to submit their budget based on what a normal year would look like outside of the events of the last couple of years. Chair Hopkins also noted with respect to inflationary adjustments that returning members of the next Legislative session will have conversations on how to deal with inflation especially, in the realm of the pay plan, and employee retention.

16:23:56 Senator Molnar joined the meeting. Chair Hopkins recapped what had transpired prior to Senator Molnar joining the meeting and offered him an opportunity to comment on the agency's biennium budget proposal.

MOTION: Representative Dunwell moved that the budget be approved for submission to the Governor's Office of Budget and Program Planning.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously.

## PERSONNEL MATTERS – STAFF PAY PLAN

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16:27:50 Jason Brown presented a request for an increase in the base pay rate of .55 cents an hour for the Consumer Counsel staff, in line with HB 13 of the 2021 Regular Legislative Session.

16:29:10 Committee Discussion.

MOTION: Representative Hopkins moved to approve a base pay rate increase for the Montana Consumer Counsel staff, consistent with HB 13 of the 2021 Regular Legislative Session.

*...Effective on the first day of the first complete pay period that includes November 15, 2022, the base salary of each employee be increased by 55 cents an hour....*

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

## CONTRACTED SERVICES

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16:43:40 Jason Brown requested authorization to retain the services of the following consultant:

2022.09.083 – NorthWestern Energy – Annual Power Costs and Credits Adjustment Mechanism (“PCCAM”)

- Acadian Consulting Group, LLC – David Dismukes

MOTION: Chair Hopkins moved to approve retention of Acadian Consulting Group.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

## NEXT MEETING

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16:46:56 The date of the next meeting will be set at a later date.

## ADJOURNMENT

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16:48:38 There being no other matters before the Committee the Chair adjourned the meeting.