

Minutes of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee*

July 23, 1997

Senate Majority Caucus Room, Statehouse
Boise, Idaho

Co-chair Senator Bruce Sweeney called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. Committee members Senators Atwell Parry, Grant Ipsen, and Lin Whitworth, and Representatives Bruce Newcomb and Robert C. Geddes were in attendance. Staff members Nancy Van Maren, Julie Cheever, Ned Parrish, and Margaret Campbell also were present.

Co-chair Sweeney opened the meeting with a review of the minutes. **Senator Parry moved to approve the minutes of the May 15 meeting and Senator Lin Whitworth seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

EVALUATIVE REVIEW RELEASE: *THE BISHOP'S HOUSE HISTORIC SITE*

Ms. Julie Cheever, Performance Evaluator, reviewed the findings and recommendations of the evaluative review and responded to questions from the committee. Kyle Cleverly, accountant for the Friends of the Bishop's House, Inc., and Mr. Art Albanese, board member, responded to questions regarding public access to the Bishop's House, state representation on the board, and the Friends' financial practices. Mr. Cleverly said that Friends were improving financial management practices and working with the Idaho Historical Society to improve public access. They emphasized that Friends was a volunteer organization that had successfully raised the necessary funds to move the house to the Old Pen site and to maintain it.

Co-chair Sweeney called upon Mr. Mike Jones, Deputy Attorney General, to respond to committee questions regarding his legal review of the lease. Mr. Jones summarized his concerns regarding the lease, as included in the report, and offered the assistance of the Office of the Attorney General in negotiating necessary improvements.

Mr. Jay Biladeau, Assistant Director, Department of Lands, said the department was willing to help in implementing the recommendations. Mr. Steve Guerber, Director, Idaho State Historical Society, said the Society had started to develop a Historic Site Plan, one of the report's recommendations, and was happy to assist in making other improvements.

Senator Ipsen moved to accept the evaluative review. Senator Parry seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously by voice vote. Co-chair Sweeney said the committee looked forward to reviewing in six months the progress made to resolve problems with the lease.

REVIEW OF REPORT RELEASE POLICIES

The committee discussed an alternative to the current policies and practices for report release that would allow reports to be released through the committee co-chairs, at their discretion, followed by a committee presentation and discussion at the next meeting date. The change would require a change in statute. After discussion, the committee decided to make no change in the current policy.

* Subject to approval by the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee

However, committee members concurred that efforts should be made to schedule full agendas for JLOC meetings. In rare cases, report releases may be postponed to fit meeting dates.

SIX-MONTH STATUS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION: *ESTIMATING AND REDUCING THE TAX GAP IN IDAHO*

Ms. Beth Harris, Performance Evaluator, updated the committee on implementation of recommendations in the report *Estimating and Reducing the Tax Gap in Idaho*, released in December 1996. She reported that the Tax Commission had implemented four of the nine recommendations, which were estimated to result in cost savings/enhanced revenue of \$563,000 each year. Commissioners Michael Southcombe and Coleen Grant, and Dan John, State Tax Commission, responded to committee questions.

The committee requested that the next update from the Tax Commission be scheduled early in the session, so that committee members would be aware of any related legislation proposed during the session. Members also requested that the germane committee chairs (Senate Local Government and Taxation and House Revenue and Taxation) be invited to attend the next update.

UPDATE: ONGOING AND FUTURE PROJECTS

The committee discussed the timing of the report release of alternatives to incarceration. They tentatively set November 7 as the next JLOC meeting date, at which the report would be released. Members asked that OPE send topic selection materials to the committee in advance. Four topics were suggested for future discussion: (1) Weights and measures enforcement, Dept. of Agriculture; (2) Contracted computer systems in state agencies; (3) Agency moving and remodeling costs; and (4) State owned or leased real estate.

FISCAL YEAR 1999 BUDGET REQUEST

The committee reviewed the appropriation and reversion history of the Office of Performance Evaluations. Members said they were pleased with the management of the OPE budget, and the reversions the office had made to date.

Ms. Van Maren presented two proposals for OPE's FY99 budget. Members said they thought it was too early to predict the state's FY99 revenue situation. As a result, they did not want to take action on either budget proposal. Option 1 (using existing funds for an 8-month temporary position, rather than 5-month) seemed preferable because it allowed the budget to remain flexible to respond to large projects, and didn't request additional funds. However, the committee concurred that OPE should also present Option 2 (combining new and existing funds to fund a new full-time performance evaluation specialist), if Ms. Van Maren believed it was needed to do the work the Legislature requested. **By unanimous consent, the committee asked Ms. Van Maren to take both options to the October meeting of Legislative Council for consideration;** at that point, more would be known about the state's revenue position for the next year.

The meeting adjourned at 1:10.