

House Committee on Municipal, Parochial and Cultural Affairs

Minutes of Meeting
2015 Interim
December 17, 2015

I. CALL TO ORDER

Representative Austin J. Badon, Jr., chairman of the House Committee on Municipal, Parochial and Cultural Affairs, called the meeting to order at 2:08 p.m. in Room 6, in the State Capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The secretary called the roll.

Representative Badon offered a motion to convene. Without objection, the motion to convene passed by a vote of 11 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Badon, Billiot, Barras, Berthelot, Brown, Danahay, Honore, Norton, Ortego, Pugh, and Willmott voted yea.

II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative Austin J. Badon, Jr., Chairman
Representative Robert E. Billiot, Vice Chair
Representative Taylor F. Barras
Representative Regina Ashford Barrow
Representative John A. Berthelot
Representative Wesley T. Bishop
Representative Terry R. Brown
Representative Roy A. Burrell
Representative Michael E. Danahay
Representative Kenneth E. Havard
Representative Dalton W. Honoré
Representative Barbara M. Norton
Representative Stephen J. Ortego
Representative Stephen E. Pugh
Representative Thomas P. Willmott

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Representative Joseph Bouie Jr.
Representative Ebony Woodruff

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tina Righteous, Committee Attorney
Valarie Banks, Committee Secretary
David Gauthier, Staff Legislative Analyst
Katie LeLeux, Staff Attorney

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES PRESENT:

Daniel Leming, Sergeant at Arms

III. BUSINESS**To receive a report from the Louisiana Workforce Commission regarding the Community Services Block Grant state plan**

Bryan Moore, representing Louisiana Workforce Commission, 1001 North 23rd Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-2679, presented information about the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) state plan (Exhibit A). Mr. Moore stated that the 2016-2017 state plan was submitted to the Department of Health and Human Services on September 1, 2015, as required by law.

Representative Badon asked about the distribution of block grant funds. Ms. Jonie Smith, representing Louisiana Workforce Commission, 1001 North 23rd Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 342-4337, responded that federal law requires 90% of the funds to be distributed to remain in compliance with the program.

Representative Pugh requested details of how the CSBG state plan is written. Mr. Moore replied that states are given a shell document from the Office of Community Services in the Administration for Children and Families of the Department of Health and Human Services, which is responsible for administering the grants to states. Representative Pugh queried Mr. Moore about funding cuts to his legislative district. Mr. Moore stated that funds are distributed to areas of known poverty, which are determined via U.S. census results. Mr. Moore said funds are distributed through Community Action Agencies (CAAs); there are 42 nonprofit CAAs in the state, 21 of which are public and 21 of which are privately run.

Representative Berthelot asked when was the last time a CSBG state plan was brought before the House Committee on Municipal, Parochial and Cultural Affairs. Mr. Moore replied that a state plan was last presented to the committee in 2011. Representative Berthelot asked for clarification on what changes had been made since 2011. Ms. Smith said there is a requirement to submit a plan either annually or every two years, and Louisiana had elected to submit its plan every two years. Mr. Moore assured the committee that CSBG funds were being allocated to areas of need, and the goal is to

methodically eliminate areas of need in the state by teaching job skills and training citizens to become self-supporting.

Representative Norton asked if each agency received a set amount. Mr. Moore said the allocation of dollars is fair; however, no Community Action Agency receives less than \$50,000. A standard of \$17.40 multiplied by the census-specified number of people living in poverty is the formula used for distribution of funds.

Representative Barrow inquired about unused federal dollars that were returned. Mr. Moore said he was not aware of that situation; however, should such a scenario exist, unused money would be recaptured to the state level and spent in the state rather than going back to the federal government.

Representative Burrell, who was attending his last committee meeting (he has reached his term limit), thanked everyone for the part they played in his legislative journey. He complimented the work of Curt Eysink, executive director of the Louisiana Workforce Commission, and Mr. Moore by stating that they have done well dealing with poverty issues in the state. He also thanked Mr. Moore for inviting him to attend the Workforce Conference recently held in New Orleans. Representative Burrell asked if there has been improvement in reducing the levels of poverty in the state, in if so, where.

Mr. Moore stated that there has been marked improvement in the program and services with more synergy among agencies. He noted increased efforts to address education and employment opportunities, which will help break the cycle of long-term poverty. Mr. Moore described summer programs and referrals that help youth learn job skills, and which featured such helpful job-finding tools as resume writing.

Representative Norton asked questions about figures shown on a handout distributed by Representative Pugh entitled "FY2014 CSBG Allocation" (Exhibit B). Mr. Moore quoted figures from his presentation (Exhibit A) that showed there were 48,697 people living in poverty in Representative Norton's legislative district of Caddo Parish. Representative Norton said she believes the stated figure is lower than the actual number of people living in poverty in her district.

Representative Pugh stated his belief that area agencies are operating properly and doing a good job but made note of the problems he has with the formula used to make funding allocations. Mr. Moore discussed changes that had been made in the formula, including updates to census data and corrections to variables such as including long-term unemployed persons who were not previously being counted. Upon learning that no motion was in order, Representative Pugh made a recommendation to Mr. Moore that the allocation formula be revisited.

Representative Willmott requested an explanation of how people are served who live outside a parish where a CAA is located. Mr. Moore said federal poverty guidelines are used. Representative Willmott wondered if the plan is fair.

Representative Badon encouraged Mr. Moore's agency to reach out to members who expressed concerns about the funding formula used in the state CSBG plan. He thanked committee members for their work during his tenure as chairman (he has reached his term limit).

Representative Norton commended the chairman for his leadership.

Representative Wesley Bishop, who has been elected to the state senate for 2016, bid farewell to other members present at the meeting who were leaving the House at the end of 2015, including Chairman Badon, senator-elect Barrow, and Representatives Burrell, Honoré, and Ortego.

One person submitted a witness card in support of the Community Services Block Grant state plan as crafted by the Louisiana Workforce Commission staff.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

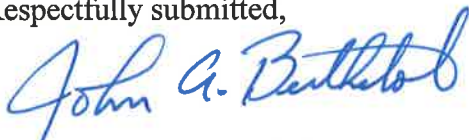
There were no announcements.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Representative Burrell offered a motion to adjourn. Without objection, the motion to adjourn passed by a vote of 14 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Badon, Billiot, Barras, Berthelot, Wesley Bishop, Brown, Burrell, Danahay, Havard, Honoré, Norton, Ortego, Pugh, and Willmott voted yea.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



John A. "Johnny" Berthelot, chairman
House Committee on Municipal, Parochial and Cultural Affairs

Date adopted: March 2, 2016

The committee has acknowledged on March 2, 2016, that these minutes were prepared in accordance with the rules of the House of Representatives.