



GOVERNMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

Thursday, June 27, 2024
Room 327B, State Capitol
Bismarck, North Dakota

Representative Ben Koppelman, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Members present: Representatives Ben Koppelman, Rose Christensen, Liz Conmy, Karla Rose Hanson, Karen Karls, Jeremy Olson, Shannon Roers Jones, Steve Vetter; Senators Randy A. Burckhard, Diane Larson, Tim Mathern, Jim P. Roers

Members absent: Representative Lisa Meier; Senator Michael Dwyer

Others present: Senator Kathy Hogan, Fargo, member of the Legislative Management Leslie Bjore*, University of North Dakota; John Boyle*, Office of Management and Budget; Chandler Esslinger, Fargo Cass Public Health; Jena Gullo, Missouri Slope Areawide United Way; Jill Hough*, Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute; Sarah Kennedy, Presentation Partners in Housing; Cody J. Schuler, American Civil Liberties Union of North Dakota; Jessica Thomasson, Department of Health and Human Services; and David Zibolski*, Fargo Police Department

See [Appendix A](#) for additional persons present.

**Attended remotely*

It was moved by Representative Olson, seconded by Representative Roers Jones, and carried on a voice vote that the minutes of the December 19, 2023, meeting be approved as distributed.

STUDY OF HOMELESSNESS AND BARRIERS TO HOUSING

Mr. David Zibolski, Chief, Fargo Police Department, presented information ([Appendix B](#)) regarding homelessness, including the impact of homelessness on operations and services. He noted:

- Homelessness is a nationwide issue and is often related to untreated mental health issues.
- The department responded to 2,734 mental health-related calls for service in 2023, of which 403 involved the same 15 individuals.

In response to questions from committee members, Mr. Zibolski noted he is unable to accurately identify the number of mental health-related calls that involve individuals experiencing homelessness.

Mr. David A. Flohr, Executive Director, Housing Finance Agency, presented information ([Appendix C](#)) regarding homelessness and barriers to housing. He noted the agency will spend approximately \$4.6 million for programs addressing homelessness during the current fiscal year, including \$2.9 million for the continuum of care program, \$486,494 for emergency solutions grants, and \$1.25 million for homeless grants.

In response to questions from committee members, Mr. Flohr noted the housing incentive fund previously received funding from private sector contributions, for which contributors would receive an income tax credit.

Chairman Koppelman suggested the state consider requiring renaissance zone redevelopment to include low-income housing.

Ms. Jen Withers, Assistant Director, Office of Educational Improvement and Support, Department of Public Instruction, presented information ([Appendix D](#)) regarding homelessness and its impact on youth. She noted other states are utilizing emancipation laws to support the autonomy and well-being of homeless youth and provide access to essential services.

Ms. Sarah Kennedy, Interim Executive Director, Presentation Partners in Housing, presented information ([Appendix E](#)) regarding homelessness and barriers to housing. She noted Presentation Partners in Housing works to address homelessness by:

- Targeting households at most imminent risk of becoming homeless and providing them with necessary resources to stabilize;
- Identifying safe alternative housing options that do not include emergency shelter stays;
- Using a housing first approach that assists program participants to attain and maintain stable housing; and
- Developing critical partnerships with landlords.

Ms. Chandler Esslinger, Community Liaison, Fargo Cass Public Health, presented information ([Appendix F](#)) regarding homelessness and barriers to housing, including efforts by the City of Milwaukee, Wisconsin to address homelessness. She noted:

- Homelessness in Milwaukee has been reduced by 45 percent since 2015.
- Milwaukee adopted a housing first approach to offer access to permanent housing as quickly as possible for individuals experiencing homelessness, and provide support services and connections to community-based resources to maintain housing stability and prevent a return to homelessness.

Mr. Cody J. Schuler, Advocacy Manager, American Civil Liberties Union of North Dakota, presented information ([Appendix G](#)) regarding homelessness and barriers to housing. He noted:

- Certain states have established pilot projects, programs, and laws to provide a right to counsel for individuals facing eviction.
- Tenants with legal representation were less likely to receive an eviction judgment.

Ms. Katie Jo Armbrust, Director of Program Development and Advocacy, Grand Forks Housing Authority, presented information ([Appendix H](#)) regarding homelessness and barriers to housing. She suggested the committee consider:

- Funding the homeless grant program with \$10 million for the 2025-27 biennium;
- Funding homeless liaison positions in school districts;
- Funding a pilot program for right to counsel for individuals facing eviction; and
- Funding the housing incentive fund with \$200 million to build capacity over a 4-year period.

Mr. James Fleming, Director, Child Support Section, Department of Health and Human Services, presented information ([Appendix I](#)) regarding the consideration of housing costs when determining child support obligations, including the payment of support in arrears.

Ms. Jessica Thomasson, Executive Director, Human Services Division, Department of Health and Human Services, presented information ([Appendix J](#)) regarding North Dakota Rent Help and the potential to establish a uniform point of entry for individuals experiencing homelessness to efficiently manage and connect to programs and services. She noted North Dakota Rent Help was implemented using federal emergency rental assistance program funds received during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Jena Gullo, Executive Director, Missouri Slope Areawide United Way, commented regarding homelessness and barriers to housing.

Ms. Carel Two-Eagle, Bismarck, commented regarding homelessness and barriers to housing.

Committee members discussed the potential of establishing an emancipation law and providing increased funding for the housing incentive fund, including through the use of an income tax credit.

Chairman Koppelman suggested committee members bring any proposed bill drafts to the next committee meeting.

STUDY OF A STATUTORY CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE

Mr. Alex J. Cronquist, Senior Fiscal Analyst, Legislative Council, presented a memorandum entitled [Study of the Feasibility and Desirability of Creating a Statutory Building Committee](#). He noted the committee approved a motion to request authority from the Legislative Management Chairman to expand its study of construction and infrastructure procurement to include a review of potential changes to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and legislative oversight of construction projects.

Mr. John Boyle, Facility Management Director, Office of Management and Budget, presented information ([Appendix K](#)) regarding the Capitol Grounds Planning Commission and the 2015-17 biennium Governor's Residence Project Selection Committee.

Mr. Colby Braun, Director, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, presented information ([Appendix L](#)) regarding the Heart River Correctional Center project and the Heart River Correctional Center Facility Steering Committee, including its membership, duties, and authority. He noted the steering committee meets biweekly with design and budget workshops.

Mr. Dirk Wilke, Executive Director, Public Health Division, Department of Health and Human Services, presented information ([Appendix M](#)) regarding the public health laboratory capital project and the Laboratory Building Steering Committee, including its membership, duties, and authority. He noted the steering committee held its first meeting in August 2023, the Capitol Grounds Planning Commission approved the location and exterior design in November 2023, and the project is anticipated to be completed in December 2026.

Committee members expressed support for new staff at OMB to supervise building projects and for establishing a legislative committee to oversee the projects.

STUDY OF CONSTRUCTION AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROCUREMENT

Mr. Boyle presented information ([Appendix N](#)) regarding the role of OMB in construction and infrastructure procurement, including potential changes. He noted:

- OMB does not have authority to oversee capital projects not located on the Capitol grounds, but the office assists other state agencies when requested.
- 2 vacant full-time equivalent positions have been converted to new facilities positions, including a leasing manager and a construction manager, during this biennium.

Ms. Michelle Klose, Director of Utility Operations, City of Bismarck, presented information ([Appendix O](#)) regarding the city's use of construction management at-risk (CMAR) for city buildings and water treatment plants. She expressed support for the current CMAR procurement process.

Mr. Aaron Birst, Executive Director, North Dakota Association of Counties, commented regarding the construction and infrastructure procurement process. He noted the counties are not requesting any changes to the CMAR procurement process.

Mr. Mike Krumwiede, North Dakota Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, introduced Mr. Alan Dostert, President, EAPC Architects Engineers, to present on behalf of the American Institute of Architects. Mr. Dostert presented information ([Appendix P](#)) regarding CMAR.

Mr. Leslie Bjore, Director of Planning and Design, Facilities Management, University of North Dakota, presented information ([Appendix Q](#)) regarding the use of CMAR and public-private partnerships at the university.

In response to questions from committee members, Mr. Bjore indicated he would provide additional information to the committee regarding the costs and benefits of using public-private partnership for construction projects on campus.

Committee members expressed concern regarding the level of weighting given to previous experience with similar projects in the CMAR scoring and selection process.

Mr. Michael Ellingson, Director of Facilities Management, North Dakota State University, presented information ([Appendix R](#)) regarding the use of CMAR at the university.

Committee members noted the potential to improve the clarity, uniformity, and efficiency of the CMAR procurement process.

STUDY OF THE STATE CRIME LABORATORY

Ms. Jennifer Penner, Director, State Crime Laboratory, Attorney General's office, provided an update regarding a proposed project to construct a new State Crime Laboratory facility. She noted the site of the current public health laboratory and the northwest corner of the Capitol grounds are being considered for a new State Crime Laboratory.

STUDY OF ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Jill Hough, Program Director, Small Urban and Rural Center on Mobility, Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, provided information ([Appendix S](#)) regarding programs implemented and actions taken by other states to improve transportation accessibility, including microtransit services. She noted microtransit is an accessible, on-demand mode of transportation that uses a smartphone app or phone number to request and schedule a ride within designated service areas.

Chairman Koppelman indicated the committee has completed its study of accessible transportation.

No further business appearing, Chairman Koppelman adjourned the meeting at 3:50 p.m.

Alex J. Cronquist
Senior Fiscal Analyst

ATTACH:19