

NORTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Minutes of the

LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, June 24, 2003
Harvest Room, State Capitol
Bismarck, North Dakota

Senator Bob Stenehjem, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

Members present: Senators Bob Stenehjem, Randel Christmann, Michael A. Every, David P. O'Connell, Herb Urlacher; Representatives Rick Berg, Merle Boucher, Eliot Glassheim, David Monson, Janet Wentz

Others present: Jill Berg, Spherion Staffing, Fargo

Rebecca A. Albers, Spherion Staffing, Bismarck
Dean Eberle, Audio Systems Company, Bismarck
Bev Nielson, North Dakota School Boards Association, Bismarck
Karen J. Mund, Legislative Council, Bismarck

SUPPLEMENTARY RULES OF OPERATION AND PROCEDURE

At the request of Chairman Stenehjem, the assistant director reviewed the *Supplementary Rules of Operation and Procedure of the North Dakota Legislative Council*.

SECRETARIAL, TELEPHONE MESSAGE, AND BILL AND JOURNAL ROOM SERVICES Historical Background

Chairman Stenehjem called on the assistant director to review the history of contracting for secretarial services. The assistant director said during the 1993 legislative session the Senate and House employed 10.5 stenographers and typists at a cost of \$56,629.20. In addition, he said, the Senate and House each employed a chief stenographer and payroll clerk at a cost of \$14,326.59. Beginning with the 1995 legislative session, he said, the Senate and House shared a part-time payroll clerk and contracted with a private contractor to provide secretarial services at the following employee numbers and costs:

Legislative Session	Employees	Cost
1995	10	\$46,053.50
1997	8	\$41,462.50
1999	4	\$32,564.47
2001	4	\$24,975.97
2003	4	\$23,634.13

The assistant director said private contractors have provided bill and journal room services beginning with the 1997 legislative session. During the 1995 legislative session, the Senate and House employed 12 bill and journal room clerks at a cost of \$57,170.61. Beginning with the 1997 legislative session, he said, private contractors have provided bill and journal room services at the following employee numbers and costs:

Legislative Session	Employees	Cost
1997	6	\$39,160.00
1999	6	\$38,840.00
2001	6	\$49,750.00
2003	5	\$29,559.59

The assistant director said the Senate and House employed eight attendants, two pages, and one chief telephone attendant to provide telephone message services during the 1999 legislative session at a cost of \$57,169.69. Beginning with the 2001 legislative session, he said, a private contractor provided telephone message services at the following employee numbers and costs:

Legislative Session	Employees	Cost
2001	9	\$44,963.29
2003	9	\$41,265.60

The assistant director said the cost of the toll-free 1-800 service to the telephone message center was \$2,372.66 during the 2003 legislative session. The cost of long-distance service for telephones in the legislative wing was \$7,079.97. These costs include the months December through April.

The assistant director said a single contractor provided secretarial and telephone message services during the 2001 legislative session and a single contractor provided secretarial, telephone, and bill and journal room services during the 2003 legislative session. He said the Legislative Management Committee prepares the requests for proposals for the services and makes recommendations prior to each legislative session. He said the chairmen of the Senate and House Employment Committees sign the contracts during the organizational session.

Spherion Staffing

Chairman Stenehjem recognized Ms. Jill Berg, President, Spherion Staffing, Fargo, for a presentation regarding the secretarial, telephone message, and bill and journal room services provided by Spherion Staffing during the 2003 legislative session. Ms. Berg distributed a report entitled *2003 Legislative Assembly Review* for the combined secretarial service, message center, and bill and journal room. A copy of the report is on file in the Legislative Council office.

Ms. Berg said secretarial services were provided through one supervisor and three employees during the 2003 legislative session. She said actual legislative days staffed were 76 days. She said additional skill testing added for the 2003 legislative session provided employees with higher-skill sets, creating a more efficient secretarial service. She said Spherion increased the pay rates by 50 cents per hour above that described in the bid to provide more qualified employees. She pointed out there was no turnover in secretarial services during the legislative session. She said the secretarial services prepared 157 speeches (and 732 copies), 86 press releases (and 182 copies), eight charts (and 34 copies), 424 letters (and 3,708 copies), 251 faxes (and 702 copies), 50 mail merges (and 4,471 copies), and 119 miscellaneous documents (and 2,631 copies) during the 2003 legislative session.

In response to a question from Representative Berg, the assistant director said according to statistics from the 2001 legislative session, Spherion prepared 237 speeches (and 1,008 copies), 304 press releases (1,012 copies), 36 charts (and 707 copies), 1,080 letters (and 1,789 copies), 601 faxes (and 1,180 copies), 148 mail merges (and 7,052 copies), and 193 miscellaneous documents (and 9,430 copies).

Ms. Berg said telephone message services were provided through one supervisor and eight telephone attendants during the 2003 legislative session. She said the actual legislative days staffed were 76. She said one of the employees was cross-trained between the message center and the secretarial service, but the secretarial service did not require additional assistance. She said the message center received 10,021 calls during the 2003 legislative session, compared to 19,478 calls during the 2001 legislative session. She said in late March five employee assignments ended due to lower workload and Spherion transitioned those employees to other job opportunities. She said Spherion increased the pay rates by 50 cents per hour above that described in the bid to provide more qualified employees. She said there was one turnover of a telephone attendant in which a replacement was provided early in the legislative session.

Ms. Berg said bill and journal room services were provided through one supervisor and four employees during the 2003 legislative session. She said this was the first legislative session the bill and journal room was staffed by a staffing company rather than by the

contract printer of bills, resolutions, and journals. She said the actual legislative days staffed were 76 and a supervisor worked 18 days before the legislative session and one day after the session. She said the fifth employee worked until March 1, leaving four employees to complete the staffing after March 1. She said Spherion provided a fax and copy machine in the bill and journal room and total production during the legislative session was 1,457 copies and 103 faxes and the total collected was \$411.25. She said there was no turnover in the bill and journal room.

Ms. Berg directed the committee's attention to the flexible scheduling described in the report and the statistics concerning the savings incurred by the Legislative Assembly as a result of the flexible scheduling provided by Spherion Staffing during the 1999, 2001, and 2003 legislative sessions. She said the bid to provide combined secretarial, telephone message, and bill and journal room services during the 2003 legislative session was \$1,532.56 per day for 76 days, and an additional 19 days of providing bill and journal room services at a bid of \$1,874.16, for a total bid price of \$118,350.72.

Ms. Berg pointed out the actual amount billed by Spherion Staffing amounted to \$1,221.73 per day for 76 days, and an additional 19 days of bill and journal room service at a cost of \$1,430.15, for a total billing of \$94,281.63. She emphasized that the Legislative Assembly saved \$24,069.09 because Spherion Staffing provided the services at a cost of \$94,281.63 rather than for the bid amount of \$118,350.72.

Ms. Berg referred to the additional savings as the result of services provided by Spherion Staffing during the 1999 legislative session, which amounted to \$8,012.00 (for a savings of 19.75 percent compared to the bid price), during the 2001 legislative session which amounted to \$10,479.54 (for a savings of 13 percent), and during the 2003 legislative session which amounted to \$24,069.09 (for a savings of 20.43 percent). She emphasized that the cost-savings are a direct result of efficiencies gained by the continuity of utilizing one staffing service--Spherion Staffing--over the last three legislative sessions.

Ms. Berg presented recommendations and suggestions as the result of experiences gained during the 2003 legislative session. With respect to the bid process, she said, consideration should be given to previous cost-savings and overall management of the staffing process for future bids versus using only the lowest bid price as the determining factor. In reality, she said, the lowest bid may not always be the best replacement for management expertise and experience. She said the real value is the cost-savings from original bid by proactive employee management and scheduling. She said the hourly pay rate paid to the staffing company's employees needs to be given equal consideration along with the total daily bid amount. She said the hourly pay rate directly impacts turnover, quality of

employees, and performance. She said Spherion Staffing designated a liaison person to manage the process between the Legislative Council, the three departments involved, and the Spherion Staffing office. She said Spherion Staffing was physically in the environment managing the staff and process on a daily basis. She said Spherion Staffing highly recommends the staffing company continue to provide a proactive account manager to oversee the daily operations and employees in the departments under the bid.

Ms. Berg presented staffing recommendations with respect to future legislative sessions. With respect to secretarial services, she recommended the same level of staffing. She said due to decreased workload, however, consideration should be given to cross-training these four employees so they can take overflow calls for the message center. With respect to the message center, she recommended six employees (one supervisor and five employees). During the 2003 legislative session, she said, the telephone attendants had available capacity. She said another option is to combine secretarial and telephone message services under one supervisor. She said four people could be cross-trained to take telephone messages, with five to six primary telephone attendants who are first in queue to take calls and overflow routed to persons providing secretarial services. She said a combined center could have a total of 9 to 10 people with one supervisor. She said due to differences in skill levels, most secretarial service employees could be cross-trained to take telephone messages but not all message center employees would be able to handle secretarial services.

With respect to the bill and journal room, she said, staffing levels are adequate with one supervisor and four staff, but the fifth person could assist for the first 30 to 60 days and then the staffing could be reduced to a total of four employees. She said a short day of training is recommended for the bill and journal room supervisor before the legislative session to review processes and procedures relating to the bill and journal room and then the supervisor would be responsible for training the additional staff.

With respect to all departments contracted for services, Ms. Berg said, consideration should be given to adding a one-half day orientation session that provides an overview of the legislative process. She said employees fielded many questions concerning legislative process and protocol.

Representative Berg thanked Ms. Berg for the services provided during the 2003 legislative session. He said he had very few negative comments concerning the services and that indicates good service. He also complimented Spherion Staffing for providing cost-savings through its flexible scheduling.

CHAMBER SOUND SYSTEMS

Chairman Stenehjem called on Mr. Dean Eberle, Audio Systems Company, Bismarck, who presented

information on proposed enhancements to the sound system in the House and Senate chambers. He said he provided an estimate during the 2003 legislative session in response to problems with the sound level and quality experienced by Community Access during its broadcast of floor sessions of the House and Senate. He said a temporary fix was made by installing an audio amplifier and an estimate was given for the cost of reducing the hum and other noise affecting the quality of the sound.

Mr. Eberle said the microphones in each chamber are linked through a single, daisy-chain wiring system. He said the proposal includes separating the microphones into four separate sections, separating the processors for the floor microphones and the podium microphones, and putting relays at the amplifiers rather than at the on-off buttons of the microphones. He said these enhancements should eliminate the background noise. He said the estimated contract price is \$28,696, which includes \$7,446 for equipment and \$21,250 for labor and installation.

In response to a question from Senator Christmann, Mr. Eberle said the repairs during the legislative session were of a temporary nature and the proposed enhancements would fix those problems also.

In response to a question from Senator Christmann, the assistant director said the Legislative Assembly appropriated \$30,000 to make the repairs to the sound systems in the chambers.

It was moved by Representative Monson, seconded by Representative Berg, and carried on a roll call vote that the Legislative Management Committee authorize the enhancements of the sound systems in the House and Senate chambers as proposed by Mr. Eberle with any additional repairs as necessary. Senators Stenehjem, Christmann, Every, O'Connell, and Urlacher and Representatives Berg, Boucher, Glassheim, Monson, and Wentz voted "aye." No negative votes were cast.

USE OF LEGISLATIVE CHAMBERS

Chairman Stenehjem called on the assistant director to reviewed the *Guidelines for Use of Legislative Chambers and Displays in Memorial Hall, North Dakota State Capitol*.

The assistant director reviewed a letter from Ms. Penny Miller, Clerk of the Supreme Court of North Dakota, requesting use of the House chamber from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. on Monday, October 6, 2003, for the admission to the bar ceremony. The assistant director said the committee has approved similar requests in the past.

It was moved by Representative Berg, seconded by Representative Monson, and carried on a voice vote that the committee approve the request of the Supreme Court for use of the House chamber on October 6, 2003.

In response to a question from Senator Urlacher, the director said there is no fee to use either chamber. He said the main concern is liability insurance coverage or sponsorship by a state agency in order to avoid the cost of insurance coverage. He pointed out the guidelines authorize the director to approve use of the legislative chambers, but if a requesting entity does not fall within the guidelines or if there is sufficient time before the request must be approved for planning purposes, the request is brought to the Legislative Management Committee for its review. He said this has resulted in the committee approving use of the chambers by groups that do not technically qualify under the guidelines, e.g., a group that employs or has contracted for services by a registered lobbyist or a group that is not holding a true mock legislative session.

USE OF COMMITTEE ROOMS

Chairman Stenehjem call on the assistant director to review the *Guidelines for Use of Legislative Committee Rooms, North Dakota State Capitol*.

It was moved by Representative Berg, seconded by Representative Monson, and carried that the meeting be adjourned. No further business appearing, Chairman Stenehjem adjourned the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Jay E. Buringrud
Assistant Director

John D. Olsrud
Director