

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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SEN. JANE A. AMERO
CHAIR

REP. ELIZABETH H. MITCHELL
VICE-CHAIR



Lynn Randall
Legislative Council Info.

SEN. JEFFREY H. BUTLAND
SEN. R. LEO KIEFFER
SEN. MARK W. LAWRENCE
SEN. BEVERLY MINER BUSTIN
REP. DAN A. GWADOSKY
REP. PAUL F. JACQUES
REP. WALTER E. WHITCOMB
REP. JOSEPH G. CARLETON, JR.

SARAH C. TUBBESING
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

117th MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

MEETING SUMMARY
November 26, 1996
Approved December 5, 1996

CALL TO ORDER

The Chair, Senator Amero, called the Council meeting to order at 1:26 p.m. in the Legislative Council Chamber.

ROLL CALL

Senators: Sen. Amero, Sen. Lawrence,
Absent: Sen. Bustin President Butland, Sen. Kieffer,

Representatives: Speaker Gwadosky, Rep. Jacques, Rep. Whitcomb,
Rep. Mitchell, Rep. Carleton

Legislative Officers: Sally Tubbesing, Executive Director, Legislative Council
Lynn Randall, State Law Librarian
Margaret Matheson, Revisor of Statutes
John Wakefield, Director, Office of Fiscal
& Program Review
David Boulter, Director, Office of Policy & Legal Analysis
May Ross, Secretary of the Senate
Joseph Mayo, Clerk of the House

Others Present: Sen. Richard J. Carey; Sen. Peter Mills;
Amy Holland, Analyst, Office of Policy & Legal Analysis

SUMMARY OF OCTOBER 28, 1996 COUNCIL MEETING

Motion: That the Meeting Summary be accepted and placed on file. (Motion by Speaker Gwadosky; second by Rep. Mitchell; unanimous).

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Sally Tubbesing presented the following items for the Council's review and consideration:

Item #1: Pre-Legislative Conference: Review of Program

Ms. Tubbesing, noting that the Council had reviewed the agenda for the Pre-Legislative Conference at its October meeting, reported that final preparations were underway for the 4-day program that surrounds the formal swearing in of the new Legislature. She pointed out that the only addition to the program has been a reception at the Blaine House on Wednesday, December 4, hosted by Governor King and First Lady Mary Herman.

Senator Carey suggested that the programs be expanded in future years to include a session on the lobby and its role in the process. In brief discussion Sen. Lawrence suggested that this might be a topic for a session in January.

Item #2: Legislative Budget: Follow-up to October Council Meeting

Ms. Tubbesing drew members' attention to her memo in the agenda packet which reported that the State Budget Officer and his staff have concluded that the Council's action at its October meeting regarding a Part I Budget for the FY 1998-1999 biennium does not satisfy the requirements for a Part I budget submission since the reductions that would be required had not been specifically identified.

After further discussion about why the request was not complete, Rep. Mitchell stated that it is essential that the Legislature establish the same parameters for the legislative budget process as the judicial department has. There was consensus that this item be referred to the 118th Council. Sen. Lawrence, who will be responsible for convening the new Council as Senate President, asked Ms. Tubbesing to send out materials related to the Part I Request to the members of the new Council in advance.

The Council took no action on this item.

REPORTS FROM COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Committee on Information & Technology in the Legislature

Sen. Amero recognized Rep. Carleton, who has chaired this Committee. Rep. Carleton stated that the Committee has completed the initial phase of its work and has summarized its work and its primary recommendations in a report which he distributed to Council members.

Rep. Carleton first described the context in which the Committee pursued its work -- noting that the Legislature's Information System has three primary customer groups (Legislators; staff; and the general public) and that we are in the midst of an "information explosion", which has brought countless choices, lower costs, entirely new technologies, and increased opportunities. He then pointed to some specific opportunities for improving access to information produced by the Legislature, noting that a subscription to the Legislative Document Service for "comprehensive service" is currently about \$1,500, and that the direct access available to legislators and the public to on-line information is very limited. He concluded by stating that the Information Systems staff is currently short-staffed and struggling to meet the many and varied demands.

Rep. Carleton then summarized the Committee's recommendations:

1. Establish a legislative presence on the Internet as soon as possible.

Rep. Carleton heralded the Internet as a "very productive way" to make information broadly available, but cautioned that this is an effort that requires careful planning, as well as a programming effort. He reported that this project is moving forward and that a subcommittee has been formed to develop an implementation approach and plan.

2. Consolidate the Legislative Information Office and the Information Systems Office into a single Legislative Information Services Office.

Rep. Carleton drew members' attention to a series of organization charts in the report, stating that the consolidation would allow the closer alignment of the functions of the 2 offices.

3. Establish a standing committee for the Council to oversee the use of technology in the Legislature.

This committee would be responsible for general oversight of the legislative computer system, for identifying the Legislature's evolving information needs and priorities, and for making recommendations to the full Council regarding priorities for system development.

4. Create a position at the Director level to head the Legislative Information Services Office.

- Rep. Carleton reported unanimity among the Committee that it is critical to have someone with strong management experience to assume primary responsibility for both planning and managing the Office. He noted that the Office had been headed by a Director up until 1987, but that the position had been downgraded.

Rep. Carleton then noted that the Committee remained divided over the issue of whether the existing vacancies should be filled before a new Director has been selected. He advocated continuing to use temporary employees for the present time in order to give the new Director as much latitude as possible in filling the positions.

Finally, Rep. Carleton reported that the Committee had recently sent out a survey to all members of the 117th Legislature and to the newly-elected members of the 118th. The response rate has been high and the responses interesting.

- Of the 40 who have responded to date, all but 4 have computers at home, and 22 have access to the Internet.
- These respondents indicate that access to Maine statutes and the text of bills are the most important, followed by bill status information and the text of amendments.

After further discussion of the legislative WEB site, Rep. Carleton reiterated that launching and maintaining an effective WEB site will require resolution of several policy and procedural issues and the clear definition of priorities for what information is most important to get to the WEB. In response to a comment from Clerk of the House Joe Mayo, he agreed that maintaining information on the WEB could be decentralized in part; but, again, stressed the importance of establishing clear responsibility for overall administration and management of the WEB site.

Sen. Amero thanked Rep. Carleton and the members of the Committee both for their work and for doing it in such a timely manner.

Motion: That the Council authorize creating the position of Director, Legislative Information Services in the range assigned to other staff office Directors (Range 14). (Motion by Rep. Carleton; second by Speaker Gwadosky; unanimous).

Motion: That the new Council establish a subcommittee for the purpose of overseeing the search for a Director. (Motion by Rep. Carleton; second by Rep. Mitchell; unanimous).

Motion: That work on the Legislative WEB site proceed as quickly as possible. (Motion by Rep. Carleton; second by Sen. Lawrence; unanimous).

Speaker Gwadosky stated that he thought that getting the consolidated Office set up is more important than the WEB Page.

Motion: That the existing Information Office and Information Systems Office be combined in accordance with the organization charts included in the report. (Motion by Rep. Carleton; second by Rep. Jacques; unanimous).

Speaker Gwadosky congratulated Rep. Carleton and the Committee on their hard work.

Motion: That the Subcommittee's report be accepted. (Motion by Speaker Gwadosky; second by Rep. Whitcomb; unanimous).

Committee on Total Quality Management in the Legislature/Subcommittee on Rules.

Senator Amero recognized Senator Carey, who, with Rep. Gary Reed had co-chaired the Subcommittee on Rules, and Sen. Mills, who was a member of the Subcommittee. Senator Carey presented the Subcommittee's recommendations to make technical changes in the Joint Rules that had been recodified and adopted by the 117th Legislature last spring. Senator Mills presented two additional proposed changes to the rules. His first proposal would clarify the relationship between the public records law and the confidential information that committees may receive from state agencies in the course of the work. Sen. Mills' second proposal would require at least 2 members of a committee to sign onto a minority report before such a report could be issued.

In discussion that followed, Council members generally agreed that both of Senator Mills' proposals required further thought. Discussion turned briefly to the form in which minority and/or floor amendments are drafted, and Council members expressed an interest in exploring options.

Motion: That the Subcommittee's report be accepted. (Motion by Speaker Gwadosky; second by Rep. Whitcomb; unanimous).

Note: Copies of the Subcommittee's report are available from the Office of Policy & Legal Analysis.

Council members, led by Sen. Amero, thanked Senators Carey and Mills, Amy Holland, who had staffed the Subcommittee, and members of the Subcommittee. Sen. Carey expressed his thanks to all of the staff who had worked with the Subcommittee, including the Secretary of the Senate, the Clerk of the House, and Staff from both the Revisor's Office and the Office of Policy & Legal Analysis.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Item #1: Submission of Final Reports from Commission to Study Poverty Among Working Parents: Representative Edward J. Povich and Marc R. Mutty, Co-Chairs

Motion: That the reports be accepted and placed on file. (Motion by Rep. Jacques; second by Sen. Lawrence; unanimous).

Sen. Amero expressed her appreciation to the Chairs and members of the Commission for their thoughtful and productive work.

Item #2: Submission of Annual Report of the Loring Development Authority of Maine (pursuant to statute, 5 MRSA § 13080-L)

Motion: That the Report be accepted and placed on file. (Motion by Rep. Mitchell; second by Sen. Lawrence; unanimous).

Item #3: Review of the Maine Health System: Submission of Final Reports (Majority and Minority Reports) by the Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services.

Motion: That the reports be accepted and placed on file. (Motion by Rep. Mitchell; second by Rep. Jacques; unanimous).

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REMARKS

Sen. Lawrence thanked Sen. Amero for her gracious ability as the Council's Chair during the past two years; and Speaker Gwadosky echoed his thanks, noting that the role of Council Chair carries a great deal of responsibility and requires the Chair to devote time that might otherwise be devoted to other leadership responsibilities. He also thanked the non-partisan staff for their extraordinary efforts and for their deep caring about the institution - and similarly thanked Joe Mayo, Clerk of the House and May Ross, Secretary of the Senate.

Sen. Amero expressed her gratitude to the Council and her appreciation to staff.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p.m.