

**JOINT LEGISLATIVE FISCAL COMMITTEE-SPECIAL MEETING**

Legislative Office Building, Room 209

Concord, NH

Tuesday, March 20, 2018

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Rep. Neal Kurk, Chair  
Rep. Kenneth Weyler  
Rep. Frank Byron (\*)  
Rep. Mary Jane Wallner  
Rep. Dan Eaton  
Sen. Gary Daniels  
Sen. Lou D'Allesandro  
Sen. John Reagan  
Sen. Bob Giuda

(\*) Alternate

(The meeting convened at 3:32 p.m.)

**(1) RSA 228:12 Transfers from Highway Surplus Account:**

GARY DANIELS, State Senator, Senate District #11 and Vice-Chairman: Why don't we get going? We will open the Fiscal Committee -- Special Fiscal Committee meeting on March 20<sup>th</sup>, and we have one item before us, which is a request of the Department of Transportation, and I'll recognize the Commissioner. If you would like to explain your request.

VICTORIA SHEEHAN, Commissioner, Department of Transportation: Certainly. Good afternoon. For the record, Victoria Sheehan, Commissioner of DOT. With me today is the Deputy Commissioner, Chris Waszczuk, who's sitting behind; our State Maintenance Engineer, Caleb Dobbins, and our Director of Finance, Marie Mullen.

So, unfortunately, Mother Nature has not been kind to us this season.

(Rep. Kurk enters the committee room.)

MS. SHEEHAN: So I truly appreciate the Committee assembling today for a special meeting. We were working hard to enter all of our expenses from the last storm; and we had hoped, perhaps, to be able to come to you last Friday at a regularly scheduled Fiscal meeting to make this request but took a little bit longer for us to pull the data together.

So this item is a request to transfer 3.95 million from the Highway Fund Surplus that we can continue to perform our winter maintenance operations. Typically, when we forecast what our needs are going to be, we look at the historical averages at this point in the season. In establishing this estimate, we are assuming what we hope is the worst case that we would have two storms equivalent to last week, and that's based on those expenses that we came up with this number of 3.9 million that we're requesting today.

Of course, if winter changes and we don't get the weather that we are anticipating, then this money would lapse back into the Highway Fund Surplus. I'm happy to answer any questions that you might have.

NEAL KURK, State Representative, Hillsborough County, District #02 and Chairman: Thank you very much. I apologize for being late. I was involved in a conversation that was so interesting I just ignored the time. Could you tell us --

DANIEL EATON, State Representative, Cheshire County, District #03: Could you share?

CHAIRMAN KURK: Could you tell us how much will be left in the Highway Fund after we take out the six point -- 3.9?

MS. SHEEHAN: The Surplus Statement is the last page of the item. Basically, the numbers that we have received the balances are as shown at the bottom of the page. So be 12.2 million fund balance in '19.

CHAIRMAN KURK: That's after deducting the 3.9?

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MS. SHEEHAN: Yes.

MARIE MULLEN, Director of Finance, Department of Transportation: No, that's current.

MS. SHEEHAN: Current balance before we reduce.

CHAIRMAN KURK: So this will go down to nine point --

REP. EATON: Eight.

ROBERT "Bob" GIUDA, State Senator, Senate District #02:  
8.3.

LOU D'ALLESANDRO, State Senator, Senate District #20: 8.3.  
Ouch.

REP. EATON: Hm-hum.

CHAIRMAN KURK: 8.3. Has it ever been that low before? As I recall at some time it's been in the negative; is that true?

REP. EATON: It was.

MS. SHEEHAN: At one time I believe it was negative, yes.

REP. EATON: Yep.

CHAIRMAN KURK: Discussion? Questions? Senator D'Allesandro.

SEN. D'ALLESANDRO: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What does it cost us an hour to fight a snowstorm? They're talking about, I think, four to eight inches; right? But we must have an hourly cost of what it takes to maintain those roads.

MS. SHEEHAN: That's always a loaded question. It depends on the type of storm. If it's a nice, dry snow, we try to use less

salt as possible. So I'll defer to Caleb. He can give you some of the costs that we typically use in forecasting.

CALEB DOBBINS, Administrator, Bureau of Highway Maintenance, Department of Transportation: For one statewide salting run, which is 250 pounds, so that's just once to simply salt the roads, an upgrade storm, but just when they go out to do one salting run is about \$64,000. Um -- per hour, per hired equipment is about \$26,000 an hour. And for our crews if it's outside hours, overtime, it's about \$16,000 an hour. If it's regular time, it's about \$11,000 an hour and that's just highway. I mean, it's not including the turnpike --

REP. EATON: So 35 to 40 per hour.

MR. DOBBINS: The turnpike section.

SEN. D'ALLESANDRO: 'Cause the turnpike is totally different.

MR. DOBBINS: Correct.

SEN. D'ALLESANDRO: That's separate out of the Turnpike Fund.

CHAIRMAN KURK: It was 64,000 for one salt run?

MR. DOBBINS: Correct, for 250 pounds to lay a mile.

MS. SHEEHAN: Obviously, depends on the type of event, how often we're putting down salt versus how many times we're passing and just plowing snow.

MR. DOBBINS: Just for the Committee's information, for the last storm that we had that we're kind of basing this off of, which was March 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> --

CHAIRMAN KURK: How many inches?

MR. DOBBINS: In Concord -- good question. Again, our weather data is based out of Concord, and snowfall in Concord was 17.3.

CHAIRMAN KURK: So for 17 inches what did it cost us? Seventeen Concord inches.

MR. DOBBINS: Okay. So 17 Concord inches, for the three classes that we're looking at it cost us \$815,000 for salt statewide. It cost us 783,000 for hired equipment, and it was 277,000 in overtime. But keep in mind that fell on a Tuesday and a Wednesday. So 16 hours was straight time, which was not included in that cost that I gave you for overtime.

CHAIRMAN KURK: So we're talking about almost \$1.9 million?

MR. DOBBINS: Correct.

MS. SHEEHAN: And that was for a storm that fell on weekdays. If that had been a Saturday and Sunday storm, we would pay more overtime. The cost would have been higher.

CHAIRMAN KURK: So, basically, you're budgeting for two storms?

MS. SHEEHAN: Essentially, yes.

**\*\*** KENNETH WEYLER, State Representative, Rockingham County, District #13: Move approval.

REP. EATON: Second.

CHAIRMAN KURK: Apparently --

REP. EATON: Doesn't mean discussion's over.

CHAIRMAN KURK: -- that prompted action. Representative Weyler has moved that we approve Item 18-059, seconded by Representative Eaton. Discussion? Representative Eaton.

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REP. EATON: Because nobody asked it, but it has to be asked, is that we know in March we have storms, frequently go into April. And although the last week was a boom -- boomer, we had a Fiscal Committee meeting last week. And how did the accounting get so out of whack that on Thursday someone couldn't have said, yeah, we're going to be short and we're probably going to need more money?

MS. SHEEHAN: We knew we were potentially short but to what degree, we didn't have all of the data into the system. So we're in a position where with our staffing levels, even our patrol foreman and their assistants are out in trucks during the storm. So only when the event wraps up that they can do all their data entry and we know exactly what the costs were.

CHAIRMAN KURK: I think the point is much more general. You folks must know what it costs you per snow inch in Concord or however you're going to measure it. If you need another two major storms, based on past averages --

REP. EATON: Right.

CHAIRMAN KURK: -- you know what it is. You don't have to have exact numbers. We don't need to know that it was \$277,000 in overtime for particular storm. You know that your storms cost you 1.9 million per if it's a foot and a half. No?

MS. SHEEHAN: We -- like I said, it depends on the type of storm. Last week we were fortunate it was a nicer, fluffier storm. The snow -- we didn't put down as much salt as we perhaps did in the previous Nor'easter. We had the issues at the coast that we were dealing with. So it's been a very unpredictable season.

CHAIRMAN KURK: I appreciate that, but the next two storms are also unpredictable.

MS. SHEEHAN: Hm-hum.

CHAIRMAN KURK: And, therefore, this information really is not relevant to that unless you're using averages. So Representative Eaton's point is you could have used averages and come to us on Friday.

MS. MULLEN: Right. And, I mean, we understand that, that that would be a question. And we were trying to be conservative. We really want to ask for as little as we need. So we really wanted to understand the numbers and make sure we weren't asking for more than we needed or less than we needed. We didn't want to have to come back again in April or May because we miscalculated on how much we were going to need. So --

CHAIRMAN KURK: But you will be back in April or May if God decides to give us three storms, major storms.

MS. SHEEHAN: I think the probability of having two storms like we had last week is fairly low at this point looking at the long range forecast. But that being said, you know, the uncertainty around tomorrow's event, they had varying forecasts for the last five or six days. We're doing the best that we can to predict what we need per storm to date.

CHAIRMAN KURK: We understand that and that's not the issue. Representative Eaton was making the point that a number of us had wondered why didn't they come to us on Friday with a rough estimate, especially since the money not spent goes back into surplus. Representative Eaton.

REP. EATON: And that leads to the follow-up which you guys are watching all the projections as much as everybody. Last I saw was one to two inches in Lewisburg and the rest of us escape. Another projection said we're escaping completely. It's going to get people that deserve it in Massachusetts. So where's the latest projection?

MS. SHEEHAN: They are saying heavier snowfall in the southeast portion of the state. We could have as much as four to eight inches.

MS. MULLEN: Concord south was four to eight inches and they were still saying that it could shift either way. So it could be less, could be more; but right now they're forecasting four to eight in Concord southeast towards the seacoast.

CHAIRMAN KURK: Forecasting based on past experience suggests Hudson will get about 18 inches.

JOHN REAGAN, State Senator, Senate District #17: Who's your -- what weather service do you buy?

MR. DOBBINS: We use a multitude. We have MDSS weather system which is a full fund system. It comes from Federal Highway. We also use, obviously, the regular local ones, the weather.com and things along those lines. And then there's our TMC has a contract with Vaisala and some other folks for other more roadway basically orientated type of -- because what's happening at 10,000 feet is not what's happening at the ground so a little bit more specific.

SEN. REAGAN: Right.

CHAIRMAN KURK: Further discussion or questions?

REP. EATON: Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN KURK: Representative Eaton.

REP. EATON: Being presumptive at the outcome of the vote, I think it's more than appropriate with this Commissioner to congratulate her and wish her a Happy St. Patrick's Day.

CHAIRMAN KURK: There being no further discussion, are you ready for the question? All those in favor of the motion, which is to approve, please indicate by saying aye? Opposed? The ayes have it.

**\*\*\* {MOTION ADOPTED}**

CHAIRMAN KURK: Thank you very much.

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MS. MULLEN: Thank you very much.

MS. SHEEHAN: Again, we do appreciate the special meeting.

CHAIRMAN KURK: We always love to accommodate. Mr. Shea, is there anything else that we need to do?

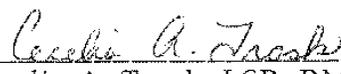
CHRISTOPHER SHEA, Assistant Legislative Budget, Assistant Office of Legislative Budget Assistant: No.

CHAIRMAN KURK: Thank you folks. We stand adjourned.

(The meeting adjourned at 3:44 p.m.)

## CERTIFICATION

I, Cecelia A. Trask, a Licensed Court Reporter-Shorthand, do hereby certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate transcript from my shorthand notes taken on said date to the best of my ability, skill, knowledge and judgment.

  
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Cecelia A. Trask, LSR, RMR, CRR  
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