MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATEWIDE CONTRACTING

Seventy-sixth Session April 1, 2011

The Senate Committee on Finance was called to order by Chair Sheila Leslie at 11:16 a.m. on Friday, April 1, 2011, in Room 4412 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, Room 4412, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. Exhibit A is the Agenda. Exhibit B is the Attendance Roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Sheila Leslie, Chair Senator David R. Parks Senator Ben Kieckhefer

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mark Krmpotic, Senate Fiscal Analyst Patricia O'Flinn, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Gustavo Nuñez, P.E., Manager, State Public Works Board

David Bowers, City of Las Vegas

Lisa Foster, Nevada League of Cities

Constance Brooks, Clark County

Kimberlee Tarter, Deputy Administrator, Purchasing Division, Department of Administration

Renny Ashleman, City of Henderson

Stacey Crowley, Director, Office of Energy, Office of the Governor

Constance Brooks, Clark County

Randy J. Brown, CPA, Director, Regulatory and Legislative Affairs, AT&T

James R. Wells, Executive Officer, Board of the Public Employees' Benefits Program

Cadence Matijevich, Legislative Relations Program Manager, City of Reno

Rudy Malfabon, P.E. Deputy Director, Southern Nevada, Department of Transportation

CHAIR LESLIE:

We will open the second hearing on Senate Bill (S.B.) 359.

SENATE BILL 359: Revises provisions relating to contracts with a governmental entity. (BDR 23-973)

GUSTAVO NUÑEZ, P.E. (Manager, State Public Works Board):

The State Public Works Board (SPWB) has submitted an amendment to S.B. 359 that would eliminate the need for a fiscal note by the SPWB. I will to the document titled "SPWB Proposed Amendment SB 359" (Exhibit C) to explain the changes we are requesting. Section 15. subsection 1, sub-subsection (a), paragraph (6), is new language that deems a bid nonresponsive if it does not contain the information required in S.B. 359. This would provide better enforcement of the provisions in this bill. The next change we are suggesting is to add the words "and update" to section 15, subsection 1, sub-subsection (b), paragraph (2), as well as section 15, subsection 2, paragraph (b).

CHAIR LESLIE:

Why are you adding the words "and update" to that section?

MR. Nuñez:

The information will need to be updated at various stages in the construction of the public works. As the primary contractor purchases supplies or subcontracts for services, these businesses will also be required to report information about their employees.

This amendment deletes the original wording of section 15, subsection 1, paragraph (d), and replaces it with the following: "Enter the information in the State Public Works web application in a form prescribed by the State Public Works Board." The SPWB would further like to change the word "enter" to the phrase "enter, or cause to be entered." This change would allow the public body to request that someone else input that information and alleviate the workload. A primary intention of this amendment is to ensure no one entity is responsible for gathering and inputting all of this information.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

Does this amendment allow the public body to delegate inputting the information to the general contractor who could then delegate it to the subcontractor? Does the issue of responsibility become confused?

Mr. Nuñez:

We envision this will be a requirement in the contract documents, both during the bid process and for the successful bidder. No matter who inputs the information, whatever the contractor submits will be put into the system. We will have no way of verifying the information. It will be an honor system. The Web-based system raises concerns about access. The contractor would have to request a username and password from SPWB. We do not want anyone who is not authorized to enter information. I suppose they could then allow a subcontractor to have their password. We expect to receive quite a few requests for passwords on a monthly basis and we will try to automate that as much as possible.

The SPWB requests the addition of the following language as section 15, subsection 1, paragraph (e): "Information gathered and maintained pursuant to paragraph (a) must be entered into the State Public Works Web application within 30 days of bid opening." This ensures the reporting required of SPWB will be up to date.

Subsection 3, paragraph (a) will be changed to the following: "Create a web application for a public body to enter the information that they have compiled and maintained pursuant to subsection 1, the web application as created must not allow for the entry of any personal information, as that term is defined in NRS 603A.040."

Subsection 3, paragraph (c) changes the word "information" to "raw data." The intent is to indicate SPWB will provide the data to the Legislative Counsel Bureau in an acceptable format, but there will be no requirements to analyze the data collected.

The final change in the proposed amendment to <u>S.B. 359</u> is the deletion from section 16, subsection 1 of the words "and section 15 of this act."

The intent of the proposed amendment is to eliminate the need for a fiscal note by spreading the work to all public bodies. Note there are no requirements for SPWB to enforce these requirements or verify the accuracy of the data provided.

CHAIR LESLIE:

I am confused about eliminating the language in section 16. Why do you want to delete that phrase?

Mr. Nuñez:

The original language criminalizes an employee's inadvertent failure to comply with this statute. The change recognizes that a mistake in data entry is not grounds for prosecution.

CHAIR LESLIE:

Is there any additional testimony on section 15, especially the amendment presented by SPWB?

DAVID BOWERS (City of Las Vegas):

We support this amendment. The majority of the information required by <u>S.B. 359</u> is already provided by the contractor. The amendment eliminates the requirement for the City to input the data again.

LISA FOSTER (Nevada League of Cities):

We are neutral. We appreciate the amendment proposed by SPWB.

CONSTANCE BROOKS (Clark County):

We are neutral.

CHAIR LESLIE:

We will now focus on the first part of the bill and the amendment suggested by Senator Horsford (Exhibit D). We will read through the proposed amendment, and as we take testimony on the bill, consider these suggestions.

MARK KRMPOTIC (Senate Fiscal Analyst, Fiscal Analysis Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau):

Section 4, page 3, lines 14 to 19 changes the definition of "public body" to include only State agencies, State boards, counties and cities. This narrows the

scope of the bill in response to concerns that including all public agencies would create a burden for smaller agencies.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

Would the revised definition affect all portions of the bill?

MR. KRMPOTIC:

That is correct.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

I do not think that makes sense. School districts are not included in the new definition and they execute contracts for multi-million dollar projects.

CHAIR LESLIE:

That is a good point.

MR. KRMPOTIC:

Section 7, page 3, lines 26 to 28 amends the applicability section so that service contracts purchased in conjunction with contracts for goods are exempt from the provisions of sections 2 through 14, inclusive. The intent of <u>S.B. 359</u> is to apply to stand-alone service contracts.

CHAIR LESLIE:

Does that mean an agency could purchase a copy machine with a service contract without becoming subject to the provisions of this bill?

MR. KRMPOTIC:

That is correct. It also would exclude the purchase of a technology system that included hardware, software and a subsequent service contract.

The next proposed amendment involves section 11, page 4, lines 22 to 24. It adds an additional sentence providing that a sole-source contract may only be renewed if approved by a two-thirds vote of the governing body of the public entity.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

Since section 11, subsection 2 states that a public entity may not extend the period of an existing sole-source contract without first putting it out to bid, how can it be renewed?

CHAIR LESLIE:

The intent is the agency would have to put the contract out to bid if there are other vendors who can meet the requirements.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

In terms of practicality, according to the language of the bill, a sole-source contract cannot be renewed.

MR. KRMPOTIC:

There are further amendments to section 11 that may clarify this issue. Page 4, lines 25 to 27 amends subsection 2 by defining the term "competitive bidding" to mean the same competitive bidding requirement that the public body would have been required to follow to initially enter into a contract for a non-sole-source contract for the same amount of money. The final amendment to section 11 is the deletion of subsection 3 which states: "If a public body enters into a contract with an independent contractor with a period that exceeds 2 years, the public body and the independent contractor shall renegotiate the terms of the contract on the second anniversary of the date that the contract was entered into and every 2 years thereafter." This language is being deleted in response to concerns that an automatic two-year renegotiation would increase the initial cost of service contracts. Contractors might increase their bids to cover the uncertainty created by such a short renegotiation schedule.

CHAIR LESLIE:

In Washoe County there are contracts that must be bid every three years even though only one agency can provide the service. How would this bill change the requirements for Washoe County?

MR. KRMPOTIC:

At the State level, contracts over a certain dollar threshold are required to be bid every four years. The amendment to this bill seems to require the competitive bidding of sole-source contracts every four years.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

Section 11, subsection 1 refers to sole-source contracts, while section 11, subsection 2 refers to independent contractors which are different things.

KIMBERLEE TARTER (Deputy Administrator, Purchasing Division, Department of Administration):

The bill as it is currently written is confusing. It can be interpreted to mean that, so long as the contract is for a period of only two years, the public body does not have to competitively bid the contract. In effect, a public body could obtain approval for a sole-source contract every two years and continue to work with the same contractor without ever bidding the contract. The proposed amendment does not help clarify this.

Further, the addition to section 11, page 4, lines 22 to 24 of language providing the governing body of a State agency is the State Board of Examiners appears to exclude cities and counties, unless the intent is to have the Board of Examiners approve those contracts as well.

MR. KRMPOTIC:

It does not mean the Board of Examiners will be the governing body for all public contracts. It states a sole-source contract may be renewed if approved by the governing body of the contracting entity. That governing body could be a city council or county commission.

CHAIR LESLIE:

The intent is not to let non-State entities off the hook. It clarifies that the governing body for a State agency is the Board of Examiners.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

Section 11 should be broken into two sections for clarity. One should focus on sole-source contracts and the other should focus on independent contractors.

Ms. Tarter:

I have some concern with the definition of a public body in section 4. There are 17 county governments, and 445 cities, towns and townships in Nevada. These requirements could theoretically apply to very small municipalities. Another challenge when discussing public bodies so broadly is there are various authorizing statutes. *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 333 is required of

Executive Branch agencies; NRS 332 is required of the political subdivisions, local government purchasing. The State of Nevada has approximately 2,500 contracts for Executive Branch agencies in its database. The City of Las Vegas has about 360, Clark County has about 375 and the City of Sparks has about 160.

CHAIR LESLIE:

Are you suggesting that the definition in section 4 should be narrowed further? What would leave out the smallest entities?

Ms. Tarter:

I would have to defer to legal counsel, but based on my preliminary review, excluding unincorporated cities would be necessary.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

Does this new definition include general improvement districts or other such entities?

Ms. Tarter:

The definition of a using agency under NRS 333 does not. I cannot answer about the definition of cities in statute. In my research, I found there were several different types of cities. The type of the city was driven by its population. Towns and townships are also defined by their population.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

Would school districts be included?

Ms. Tarter:

I believe the amendment would exclude school districts.

CHAIR LESLIE:

We will look further at that.

Ms. Tarter:

Section 8 requires the State Purchasing Division to create a code of conduct that will apply to all public bodies. It is a task the Purchasing Division can accomplish. However, it would take time, not only to formulate, but to give notice to, and solicit input from, public bodies.

CHAIR LESLIE:

The code of conduct is for the independent contractors.

Ms. Tarter:

Yes, that is correct. The concern is that our ability to communicate to cities, counties and State Boards is limited. We do not know each procurement contact for all those entities.

CHAIR LESLIE:

You would need to determine the key contact in each purchasing division or department for each public body.

Ms. Tarter:

That is correct. We would need to establish a communication network while the code of conduct was being drafted and during the hearing process. They would need to have an opportunity to attend and participate.

CHAIR LESLIE:

Yes, proper notice must be given. But the public bodies also have a responsibility to maintain communication and remain aware of changing regulations.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

Do you have examples of codes of conduct?

Ms. Tarter:

I do not. If this becomes law, we would use our participation with the National Association of State Procurement Officials as a resource. We would ask for samples from our colleagues and information about their implementation processes.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

I assume it will be standard language regarding acting professionally and not stealing public monies, but I am concerned it would not prohibit businesses from doing business with other legal entities.

CHAIR LESLIE:

That is what the regulatory hearings would determine. There are already three provisions stated in the bill.

Ms. Tarter:

Section 9 outlines the contractors' requirements to disclose and report fees. For Executive Branch contracts, it can be included in the State's contractor management training and request for proposal (RFP) documents can be modified. The Purchasing Division can notify all State agencies by memo of the need to collect the data. For the local level, there will not be the same consistency. They will have different procurement documents and threshold levels.

CHAIR LESLIE:

Do you think this can be done, at least for State contracts?

Ms. Tarter:

Yes.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

Is there any definition of consumers? There is such a broad array of contracts the State enters into, I wonder if the term "consumers" is too broad.

Ms. Tarter:

I would agree. There is no definition of consumer in current State procurement law.

CHAIR LESLIE:

At the original hearing of the Senate Committee on Finance, the person receiving the benefit or the service is the consumer. For example, if the recipient of unemployment insurance benefits is being charged fees by the contractor, it should be disclosed. We should define that further.

Ms. Tarter:

It would be helpful to have a definition.

Section 10, subsection 1 outlines the reporting requirements related to subcontractors. At the State level, these can be incorporated through the

contract manager training and the RFP template. Subsection 2 appears to apply only to fees charged by subcontractors, not to fees charged by the primary contractor. These may be problematic. Businesses may not disclose costs such as the amount they pay to subcontractors. They may be hesitant to disclose this information because it may create a competitive advantage for their competition. If a business finds a requirement of an RFP to be unduly onerous, they can request an exception to that language and propose an alternative. This process allows the State to consider that in the negotiations. If this disclosure language is put into the RFP documents, vendors may choose to take an exception or they may choose not to do business with the State.

A further concern is the definition of fees. Is it the fixed price? Is it the price per unit transaction? Frequently, subcontractors are smaller vendors who may not have the ability to determine the income generated in that detail. Would the larger contractors be able to report that information on their behalf?

CHAIR LESLIE:

We will have to figure this out. The contracts we reviewed at the Committee on Finance hearing were large contracts generating significant fees from consumers. I understand your point that it can be carried too far with some of the smaller contracts and vendors. But it is precisely this we want to know: what are they charging the consumers?

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

Theoretically, if an agency such as the Department of Health and Human Services chose a vendor for a public information campaign, would this requirement to disclose fees also require disclosure of proprietary information?

Ms. Tarter:

It can be asked in the RFP document, but the key word is proprietary. A vendor will provide information for evaluation purposes; however there are statutes that allow vendors to flag certain portions of their proposals as confidential.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

So there are potential problems with the large contracts as well as the smaller ones.

CHAIR LESLIE:

I agree. That is the point. We want more transparency.

Ms. Tarter:

With the smaller contracts, the vendors will be less sophisticated and may not have the ability to extract the data. The larger vendors have greater capabilities to extract the data, but they are also more sophisticated and they are aware they can keep some data private by law.

I will move to section 11 and the proposed amendment to this section. Regarding the sole-source contract requirements at the State level, there is a means of transmitting information to the appropriate agencies. The Board of Examiners must review any contract, sole source or not, worth more than \$10,000. Current State policy limits contracts to four-year terms. The agency can request a contract extension beyond this limit with compelling justification. One example is the Department of Motor Vehicle's (DMV) contract for digitized driver's licenses. That contract was written for nine years. The implementation time for the project was 18 months. During the RFP process we asked the vendors to provide pricing for four- six- and eight-year contracts. Significant savings were realized by agreeing to a longer term. This is an exception. Most contracts are written within the four-year policy.

CHAIR LESLIE:

How would section 11 of $\underline{S.B.~359}$ change the policy regarding sole-source contract renewals?

Ms. Tarter:

It is consistent with current policy except it is a two-year period rather than a four-year period. Verification that a vendor remains the single source for the service must be done every two years to renew a sole-source contract without putting it to bid.

CHAIR LESLIE:

Would it have to go to the Board of Examiners for approval?

Ms. Tarter:

Yes, that is correct.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

In the DMV example you cited, would they have to renegotiate after two years?

Ms. Tarter:

That DMV contract was a competitive solicitation; it was not a sole-source contract. I interpret the proposed amendment to apply to sole-source contracts. There is a form that must be submitted to the Purchasing Division and the request is researched.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

What are the rebidding requirements for competitively bid contracts?

Ms. Tarter:

My understanding is that an agency with a two year contract . . .

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

Is two years the limit for contracts in this bill?

Ms. Tarter:

The bill is not clear regarding the length of time for which a contract may be approved. There are two situations enumerated in this bill. The first relates to an existing contract. If that contract has a four-year term, it is my understanding that at year two, the contract must be renegotiated. If the contract has a six-year term, renegotiations must occur at years two and four. The second scenario concerns a contract that is nearing termination. The agency may not extend the contract by amendment, but must rebid the contract at expiration. The only limitation to a two-year term seems to be the sole source requirement, but it is unclear. It could be interpreted to mean agencies could not enter into any contract beyond a two-year period. My understanding is that renegotiation must occur every two years. That can be a Pandora's Box. The vendor may come to the table and request indemnification or liability limitations be renegotiated. During times when market conditions are strong, contractors may be quite happy to renegotiate for higher prices.

The Purchasing Division has further concerns relating to contract negotiations that are protracted. Some complicated contracts can take months to negotiate, particularly those for information technology and medical services.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

The Medicaid Management Information System contract negotiations took six to eight months. I am concerned this will cost the State money as the market reemerges.

CHAIR LESLIE:

Where in the bill does it say this applies to competitively bid contracts?

Ms. Tarter:

Section 11, subsection 1 says a "public body may not enter into a sole source contract." Then, subsection 2 of section 11 states "a public body may not extend the period of an existing contract with an independent contractor unless the public body first opens the contract to competitive bidding." The interpretation is that these are two separate types of contracts.

CHAIR LESLIE:

We need to clarify the intent.

Ms. Tarter:

In further sections of the bill it appears it would apply to all contracts. The number of sole-source contracts is small.

CHAIR LESLIE:

How many sole-source contracts are there?

Ms. Tarter:

For example, the city of Las Vegas has ten, but I did not bring a comprehensive list.

CHAIR LESLIE:

Please get that information for the Subcommittee. In the interests of time, let us move on to section 12.

Ms. Tarter:

The Purchasing Division already collects and posts information about sole-source contracts for the State. We can easily do that for other public bodies.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

I do not understand the point of this. Why do non-State public bodies need to report this information back to the State?

Ms. Tarter:

It is a transparency issue. If the information is on a central Website, any vendor can see it. If a vendor also provides those services, they can inquire why the contract was executed without a bid.

CHAIR LESLIE:

It is a good check and balance.

Ms. Tarter:

I agree. We currently do it with State sole-source contracts.

Moving to section 13, the Purchasing Division can report the data requested. However, if this applies to all independent contractors we will need to develop a database to allow public bodies to enter their information. For the Purchasing Division to do this without increasing staff it would have to be a self-managed process on the State's intranet.

Section 14 prohibits vendors who violate sections 8, 9 or 10 from entering into a contract with a public body. A vendor can be removed from the bidding list under NRS 333, but for different reasons than this bill contemplates. Communicating to the public bodies would be problematic. Additionally, this section is unduly restrictive. Current statute only allows removal from the list for two years.

SENATOR PARKS:

This bill confuses me. Sections 2 through 14 are in Title 23 while sections 15 and on are in Title 28. It seems to me the whole bill should fall under Title 28. Am I missing something?

Ms. Tarter:

I agree.

RENNY ASHLEMAN (City of Henderson):

Regarding page 6, lines 28 to 32 which states for a person who submits a bid who is not a natural person: "the public body must gather and maintain the required information for each natural person who owns or controls all or a portion of the person who submits the bid." This will not work well with organizations that are public stock corporations with literally thousands of people who own a portion of the person who submits the contract. With the changes suggested by SPWB, we cannot look to them for regulation. Another concern regarding the reporting of information about subcontractors and suppliers as stated on line 6 of page 6 is that people are rarely hired only for a single particular purpose.

STACEY CROWLEY (Director, Office of Energy, Office of the Governor):

We support the proposed amendment as the sponsor of <u>S.B. 359</u> has written it. Especially the deletion of section 11, subsection 3. We would also like to have the difference of sole-source and independent contractors clarified.

CONSTANCE BROOKS (Clark County):

We are neutral regarding <u>S.B. 359</u>, but we are supportive of the amendments. We would like to be involved with the development of a code of conduct.

CHAIR LESLIE:

Will the public hearings and regulations be sufficient?

Ms. Brooks:

Yes, that will work.

RANDY J. BROWN, CPA (Director, Regulatory and Legislative Affairs, AT&T): We are neutral. We are honored to be a trusted business partner for the State of Nevada. We have a contract to provide telecommunications services that exceeds the two-year provision of this measure. The longer contract term allows us to provide better pricing. In addition, local governments and school districts are able to opt into the State's deals.

CHAIR LESLIE:

It can be one-sided, however. The local entities can decide when they renegotiate.

JAMES R. WELLS (Executive Officer, Board of the Public Employees' Benefits Program):

The Board of the Public Employees' Benefits Program (PEBP) enters into several voluntary contracts that allow participants in our programs to purchase home and auto insurance or long-term care. There is no mandate for our participants to choose that particular vendor. The requirement in section 9 to report fees charged to consumers might impact our ability to offer these voluntary products. Regarding section 11, PEBP has two large contracts that are time-consuming to implement. Our contractors typically amortize the costs of implementation over the term of the contract. The two-year window would increase our implementation costs.

CHAIR LESLIE:

Regarding the voluntary fees, are you saying the reporting requirements would be so onerous you would not be able to afford it?

MR. WELLS:

It would be one thing if the fee was flat for every person involved. But, home and auto insurance varies widely.

CADENCE MATIJEVICH (Legislative Relations Program Manager, City of Reno): We are neutral. The amendments presented today addressed many of our concerns. We too would like to be involved with the development of the code of conduct and would like to see the clarifications to section 11. I did want to express a concern that this bill not apply retroactively.

CHAIR LESLIE:

The bill is effective October 1, 2011.

We will discuss this and decide how to proceed. There will probably be another meeting and another amendment. There are things in this bill we can process that will ensure more transparency, which is the goal.

RUDY MALFABON, P.E. (Deputy Director, Southern Nevada, Department of Transportation):

Will you take testimony on section 17?

CHAIR LESLIE:

Not unless there is something different.

MR. MALFABON:

We have the same position as last week.

CHAIR LESLIE:

Is anyone here from DMV?

MR. KRMPOTIC:

The statement DMV submitted (Exhibit E) looks at the impact of proposed language of S.B. 359. We may want them to respond to the amendment language.

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CHAIR LESLIE: This meeting is adjourned at 12:37 p.m.	
	RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:
	Patricia O'Flinn, Committee Secretary
APPROVED BY:	
Senator Sheila Leslie, Chair	
DATF:	

<u>EXHIBITS</u>			
Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
	Α		Agenda
	В		Attendance Roster
S.B.	С	Gustavo Nunez	SPWB Proposed
359			Amendment
S.B.	D	Senator Horsford	Proposed Amendment
359			
S.B.	E	DMV	Impact Statement
359			