

HBA Public Affairs Report By Heath Clarkston

LEADERSHIP CHANGES OCCURRING AT JEFFERSON CITY HALL

On June 5, 2023, current Jefferson City Fire Chief Matt Schofield became the interim city administrator as former Administrator Steve Crowell resigned from the post on Monday, April 17th. There is currently a search committee that has been formed to find a permanent city administrator.

Clint Smith has been hired as the Director of Planning and Protective Services for Jefferson City and started in his position a few months ago. Smith has a long history of working in the planning field and worked for the City of Columbia for 9 years before his new position in Jefferson City. Director Smith is scheduled to speak to the HBA membership at our September 13th meeting at the Eagles.

STATE HIGHWAY COMMISSION APPROVES HISTORIC ANNUAL BUDGET

The Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission (MHTC) met June 7 at Ozarks Technical Community College in Springfield for its monthly meeting. Commissioners unanimously approved a Fiscal Year 2024 budget of just less than \$7.2 billion, the largest budget ever for MoDOT. Last year's budget was about \$4 billion.

Dustin Boatwright, vice chair of the commission, said the budget represents investments of more than \$3 billion in general revenue by the General Assembly for transportation and infrastructure projects across the state: \$100 million for minor and low volume roads. \$50 million for railroad safety improvements. \$50 million for ports. \$24 million for environmental studies on I-44 and on Highways 36 and 63. More than \$10 million for aviation. \$1.4 billion in general revenue and \$1.4 billion in bonds for expanding I-70 from Blue Springs to Wentzville. Other MoDOT priority legislation that was approved includes a hands-free safety initiative to prohibit drivers' use of cell phones in vehicles and a Waterways and Ports Trust Fund to assist gathering funds for local port authorities. Among bills that didn't pass were efforts to delete increased motor vehicle fuel taxes.

With increased funding, MoDOT is experiencing the increased impact of inflation which has resulted in about \$300 million during this past fiscal year, McKenna said. A record-breaking nearly \$1.9 billion in construction contracts have been awarded in the past year, a tremendous challenge for the construction industry which has responded very well, he noted. Currently, there are 540 active construction contracts being overseen by MoDOT at this time, meaning a tremendous number of work zones (more than 1,000 road and bridge work zones every day).

The commission unanimously voted to approve the MoDOT Fiscal Year 2024 budget as presented by Brenda Morris, chief financial officer. She noted the FY 2023 budget was about \$4 billion. The FY 2024 budget is just under \$7.2 billion. The largest portion of the budget (80 percent) is "program delivery" of \$5.749 billion which includes \$2.8 billion for I-70 project funding.

GOVERNOR'S ACTION OF PASSED LEGISLATION

The 2023 Missouri legislative session has concluded. During the session, 2,309 bills were filed, and 43 non-appropriations bills were passed and sent to the Governor's desk. In addition, 19 appropriation bills were passed to which require action by the Governor.

The Governor has 45 days to act on policy legislation and all decisions must be made by July 14, 2023. The Governor may elect to sign a bill, veto a bill or take no action to which a bill becomes law. For

appropriation bills, the Governor has line-item veto authority to which he can disapprove of specific sections of the bill on funding line basis. The Governor must take action on the appropriations bills by the end of June as the new state budget year begins on July 1st.

RENEWABLE ENERGY TASK FORCE KICKS OFF INTERIM STUDY

The Task Force on Distributed Energy Resources and Net Metering met on Tuesday, May 30 in Jefferson City. The task force was established in 2022 by the General Assembly in statute, Sec. 386.885, RSMo. A report is to be presented to the General Assembly by Dec. 31.

During Tuesday's meeting, Chairman Rep. Bishop Davison (R-Springfield) was elected as chair of the task force and Sen. Mike Cierpiot (R-Lee's Summit) was elected as vice chair. Rep. Davidson said his expectations of the task force are to develop a "broad sense" of the energy issues facing Missouri and a "broad sense" of energy companies and energy production in the state.

Distributed Energy Resources (DER) often refers to smaller generation units that are located on a consumer's side of the meter. Examples of distributed energy resources that can be installed include roof top solar photovoltaic units, natural gas turbines, microturbines, biomass generators, fuel cells, wind generating units, and battery storage.

Net Metering is a billing mechanism that credits solar energy system owners for the electricity they add to the grid. For example, if residential customers have a solar photovoltaic system on their roof, it may generate more electricity than the home uses during daylight hours.

The task force is to conduct public hearings and research for its December report to the General Assembly.

The report is to include:

A DER study, including a "value of solar" study along with the practical and economic benefits, challenges, and drawbacks of increased distributed energy generation in the state.

Potential legislation regarding community solar as operated by non-utility entities and the fair and equitable setting of rates between distributed generation and non-distributed generation consumers; and

Potential legislation, including but not limited to changes to Missouri's Net Metering and Easy Connection Act, if any, to promote the overall public interest.

The next meeting is scheduled for June 15 in Jefferson City.