

Minutes
EVALUATION SUBCOMMITTEE
Legislative Audit Commission
February 11, 2015

Members Present:

Representative Rick Hansen, Chair
Senator Mary Kiffmeyer
Senator Warren Limmer
Senator James Metzen

Other Legislators Present:

Representative Phyllis Kahn

Representative Rick Hansen called the Legislative Audit Commission Evaluation Subcommittee meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. The purpose of the meeting was to release the evaluation, *Recycling and Waste Reduction*.

Representative Hansen introduced Jim Nobles, Legislative Auditor. Mr. Nobles said that the topic of this evaluation is important because it affects all Minnesotans collectively and individually; everyone needs to do their part to recycle and reduce waste. Mr. Nobles introduced Judy Randall, evaluation manager, to give a presentation. Ms. Randall said that the key findings in the report include: 1) the true percentage of waste that is recycled is unknown due to missing, estimated, and inaccurate data; 2) there is no oversight of state agency recycling efforts and many state agencies have low recycling rates; and 3) waste management incentives do not align with the state's waste management hierarchy, which prioritizes waste reduction, reuse, and recycling above landfill disposal. She said that recycling in Minnesota is funded primarily by county and state sources, and that state recycling money accounts for about one-quarter of counties' recycling funds. Ms. Randall explained that the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is responsible for overseeing recycling and waste reduction in the state. She said the key recommendations made by the evaluation include: 1) MPCA should continue its efforts to improve measurement of recycling outcomes; 2) the Legislature should establish goals for all tiers of the waste management hierarchy, and require counties and MPCA to track progress toward these goals; 3) the Legislature should identify MPCA as the agency responsible for coordinating and overseeing state agency recycling activities and require MPCA to annually publish state agency recycling rates; 4) the Legislature and state agencies should implement effective recycling and waste reduction practices; and 5) the Legislature should consider adopting incentives (for example, reuse program grants, variable pricing for waste disposal, product stewardship, and waste bans) that encourage the disposal of waste consistent with the waste management hierarchy.

Representative Hansen invited a representative from MPCA to address the subcommittee. Kirk Koudelka, Assistant Commissioner, thanked staff from the Office of the Legislative Auditor for their time and efforts on the evaluation. Mr. Koudelka said that MPCA is implementing a new system for recycling data that will be able to hold more information. He said MPCA agrees that state agency recycling needs to improve. However, MPCA disagrees that it should be the lead agency for improving state agency recycling; instead, MPCA thinks it needs to be a partnership between their agency, the Department of Administration, and all state agencies.

Representative Hansen invited the Minnesota Solid Waste Administrators Association (affiliate of the Association of Minnesota Counties) representative to address the subcommittee. Troy Freihammer, President, said that new goals and mandates should be accompanied by state funding so that counties are successful regardless of their individual demographics, geography, and property tax capacity. Mr. Freihammer said that counties strongly support directing all revenue generated from the solid waste

management tax toward waste management activities since SCORE funding has not kept pace with tax revenue collection and too many of these tax dollars are currently diverted to the General Fund.

Representative Hansen invited the Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board (SWMCB) representative to address the subcommittee. Trudy Richter, Administrator, explained that SWMCB is six of the counties in the Twin Cities metropolitan area that work together to be more efficient in their education of citizens, as well as policy development. Ms. Richter said that the counties felt “heard” through the report. She thanked the legislators for increasing the SCORE payments last year, but reminded them that the counties still have to provide 75 percent of their recycling funding rather than it coming from the solid waste management tax. She said that SWMCB will be asking the 2015 Legislature to take some of the funds generated from the solid waste management tax that are going into the General Fund and moving them into the Environmental Fund so they can be used for recycling.

Representative Hansen noted that Representative Kahn will be joining the commission, but it has not been reconstituted yet. He added that a meeting to organize the new Legislative Audit Commission is being planned. With no further business, Representative Hansen adjourned the meeting at 2:06 p.m.

Representative Rick Hansen, Chair

Shelly Watterud, Recording Secretary