



# HousingMinnesota Capitol Update

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Distributed weekly during the legislative session and periodically outside of session, the Capitol Update provides information about bill introductions, committee hearings, policy analysis and political chatter. Contact us with items to include in future issues.

## Capitol Notes

### **Eight days and counting**

There are eight days before the Legislature must adjourn according to Constitutional mandate and plenty to be accomplished before that date. Read on to see where housing provisions are situated in the mix.

### **Supportive Housing –Proposals Indicate Legislators Supportive But Amount Dwindling**

Bonding bill conferees traded a variety of proposals regarding bonding provisions over two long days of hearings. The House had increased their support to \$15 million - \$12 million for permanent supportive housing and \$3 million for transitional housing and remained fairly constant through Friday's midnight adjournment. This was accomplished primarily by redirecting most of the funds allocated to the Hastings Veterans Home proposal. This project is now slated to receive about \$700,000 for planning purposes. The Senate held strongly to \$25 million for permanent supportive housing with a \$5 million earmark for Lutheran Social Services until their last offer Friday evening when they proposed \$20 million for permanent supportive housing with no earmark. Advocates had been concerned throughout that the longer the item 'stayed on the table' the more likely it was to lose funds.

### **Bonding – The Big Picture**

Bonding negotiations did not start moving until the Senate agreed to the lower House target number of about \$950 million – they had been closer to \$990 million. There was close to \$1.3 billion in different projects funded in the bills presented by the Governor, House and Senate, therefore conferees are trying to carve out more than \$350 million worth of projects to get to the House target number. The big gorilla in the room remains the Duluth Convention Center supported by the Governor at \$33 million. This project had only been allocated \$5 million so far in the process.

### **Tax Bill Still In Doubt**

The Senate late last week shipped a tax bill over to the House which must decide whether to take it up at all or to substitute its own version of a tax bill. Capitol watchers expect the House Leadership to force Democrats to vote on the tax increases contained in the Senate bill. It is difficult to determine at this point whether the House Republicans will even offer a tax bill. The House was not able to get a bill out of tax committee last week therefore anything put forward on the floor will most likely come in the form of an amendment. It appears that there is little support among majority members of House Tax Committee to put forth a bill and if presented, it is surmised that it would be a minimal bill containing only a few items. HousingMinnesota is working to include the Low Income Rental Certification (4d) modifications into the House offer if there is one, but a stripped down bill would make this very difficult as it would limit policy initiatives even those like LIRC (4d) which have no fiscal implications. We have been concerned from the beginning of session that that House might not offer a bill or a minimalist version of one.

## **Housing Related Items Still Alive – Maybe?!**

It gets nearly impossible at the end of session to track various proposals coherently as they move among bills and amendments in the final days of the process. Here's what we *think* is still in play.

- *Runaway & Homeless Youth Act* – The language for this proposal *without an appropriation* had found its way into bills in both the House and Senate, the gyrations in the various budget bills though has cast into doubt whether this item will end up being enacted.
- *MFIP Housing Penalty Suspension* – This item was also tucked into a variety of Senate proposals in the Health and Human Services budget process but again action on items in this category is questionable due to 'abortion politics.' Some DFLers are unwilling to risk bringing a Health and Human Services bill to the floor of the Senate because it will provide legislators the opportunity to attach abortion amendments.

## **Health and Human Services Budget and Supplemental Budget Clouded by Abortion Issue**

The Senate DFL has been ripped to shreds over the abortion issue. Even though there has been no public discussion on the issue, it's been a hot topic behind closed doors. In its budget bill the House passed two anti-abortion measures. The first would challenge a 1995 Supreme Court decision mandating that the state pay for abortions for low income women. The other would require judges to account for the number of times they grant permission to a minor seeking an abortion (judicial bypass) when they are unable to obtain consent from both parents. These measures have hung up the finance bills in the Senate. First the Senate stripped the entire Health and Human Services article from the Senate Finance bill, promising to take it up as a separate bill on the floor. All last week, it was on the schedule, then off the schedule. Rumor has it as we go to print that it will occur Monday. Meanwhile in the Finance Conference Committee, the language is contained in the House Finance bill. Late Friday, Senator Cohen suggested to Rep. Knobloch that the Senate would accept the House language on abortion if the House would accept all of the Senate positions on funding. The final result is still to be determined.

## **Conference Committees**

### **Capital Investment Conference Committee**

HF2959/SF3475 (Dorman/Langseth) Omnibus Bonding Bills. Committee met numerous times last week & exchanged a variety of proposals. Supportive housing offers fluctuated between \$25 million and \$15 million with and without earmarks and transitional housing set asides.

### **Eminent Domain Conference Committee**

S.F 2750 (Bakk) / H.F. 2846 (Johnson) Eminent domain. *This bill was finalized by the conference committee and will be sent to the Floor.*

## **Committee Hearings**

*This week most of the action is happening in conference committees with some possible last minute meetings of Ways & Means/Finance Committees & Tax Committees in both houses.*

*For more up to date committee schedules for the House,*

*go to <http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/comm/commemlist.asp> or call 651-296-2314 for the Senate info , go to <http://www.senate.leg.state.mn.us/committees/index.htm#header> or call 651-296-0504*

## **Floor Action**

The Senate and House passed a number of bills last week off their respective calendars thus making room and setting aside time to take up major bills as they come out of conference committee this week. It is expected that the Eminent Domain Bill and possibly the Natural Resources Constitutional Amendment will reach the floor early in the week.

## **Bits & Bytes**

### **Conference Committee Rules**

A few notes on this process – in order for a conference committee report to be forwarded to the floor it must be supported by a *majority of conferees from each body not a simple majority of members*. A conference committee report can not be amended on the floor either – it must be voted up or down. If one body insists on a change or amendment, it must be sent back to conference committee to be amended then move back to the floor.

### **Adjourn – Sine Die – “Without Day” – The End – Fine**

As time runs down on legislative clock, a little known rule comes into play that being that neither body can take action on a bill on the last day of session or when chambers adjourn Sine Die. This means that all legislative activity related to the passage of bills must be concluded by midnight next Sunday, May 21. The Legislature as a body very seldom meets on Sundays though conference committees have done so in recent years. This week’s negotiations on various issues – budget, taxes, stadiums and abortions will determine whether there will be the rare Sunday floor session. Your authors can remember times when the clocks in the chambers were covered late at night, therefore suspending time in the Capitol, but this hasn’t occurred since the late eighties.

For more information on affordable housing, the content of this document or if you have information to include in future issues, contact Joanna Dornfeld at (651) 649-1710 ext. 108, email [jdornfeld@mhponline.org](mailto:jdornfeld@mhponline.org) or see HousingMinnesota's website at [www.housingminnesota.org](http://www.housingminnesota.org).