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Senate Committee Threatens to Withhold Taxicab Commission Funding After Repeated No-Shows

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Members of the Senate Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance were disappointed yet again by the failure of key officials of the Taxicab Commission to appear before them for scheduled testimony on the agency's 2024 budget appropriation request.

Technical difficulties and the absence of senior board members scuppered the [first scheduled meeting in July](#), and then at the beginning of August a [second appearance was canceled](#) after Executive Director Vernice Gumbs, who is unable to speak above a whisper due to chronic medical issues, showed up to the hearing on her own. "We are going to adjourn this meeting until such time as the Taxicab Commission can get their act together," said committee chair Senator Donna Frett-Gregory at the time.

That time was supposed to be on Monday, August 28, according to the legislative calendar for this week. However, Ms. Gumbs wrote to Ms. Frett-Gregory ahead of the meeting to say that she was unable to attend. “None of the board members appear to be willing to come and present the taxi budget,” she added.

The latest cancelation prompted the committee chair to threaten to withhold funding from the troubled agency entirely. “We are not including taxi in the budget unless they come in front of the Senate,” the committee chair declared. “Folks don’t just get to do what they want.”

The senator went on to argue that legislative scrutiny of the commission’s fiscal operations is crucial at this juncture, due to serious questions about the agency’s financial health. “When we look at the revenues around the taxi commission, the revenues are not supporting the operations,” she said.

Ms. Frett-Gregory noted that instances like this are responsible for the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) cashflow issues. “When we budget X dollars, and then you have to take away to plug somebody else’s cash, that’s where we’re having a cash shortage. Okay? So accountability matters.”

Ms. Frett-Gregory’s comments regarding the Taxicab Commission’s ongoing delinquency came following her praise of OMB Director Jennifer O’Neal for good succession planning. Ms. O’Neal brought Associate Director of Budget Operations Kimika Woods to the hearing, who was responsible for reading the provided testimony for OMB during their allotted time slot.

Senator Ray Fonseca supported the sentiment, juxtaposing OMB’s preparedness against the Taxicab Commission’s ineptitude. “We’ve been having issues with them folks... [they] basically wasted the legislative time.”