

Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

Friday, October 7, 2022

A video recording is available at: <http://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=21073>

Members present: Kyle Abercrombie, John Elsesser, John Filchak (Vice Chair), Matt Hart, Martin Heft, Karl Kilduff, Jeffrey Kitching, James O'Leary, Francis Pickering, Troy Raccuia, Lon Seidman, Brendan Sharkey (Chair), Ron Thomas

Members not present: Carl Amento, Luke Bronin, Maureen Brummett, Sen. Stephen Cassano, Sam Gold, Brian Greenleaf, Laura Hoydick, Harrison Nantz, Keith Norton, Neil O'Leary, Mike Walsh

Other participants: Rebecca Augur, John Harkins, Brian O'Connor, Rick Porth

Member vacancies: Nominated by COST: Municipal official: Town of <10,000 population

OPM staff: Bruce Wittchen

1. Call to order and overview of telemeeting procedures

Commission chair Sharkey called the meeting to order at 10:34, noting the lack of a quorum of members, and provided an overview of remote meeting procedures.

2. Approval of the minutes of the [August 5, 2022](#) and [September 9, 2022](#) meetings

A quorum was not present and the minutes could not be approved.

3. Membership update, if any

Bruce Wittchen said Jeffrey Kitching, executive director of [EdAdvance](#), is attending his first meeting after being appointed to the ACIR just hours before the previous meeting. Commission chair Sharkey said [regional educational service centers](#) (RESCs) like his will have a big role in what the ACIR is working on.

4. ACIR regular reports

- ACIR Session Mandates Report (due November 15)
- 2023 Mandate Compendium Supplement (due January 15)

There was a discussion of the two draft mandates reports and Commission vice chair Filchak mentioned the [Local Impact Statement Reports](#) prepared by the [Ohio Legislative Service Commission](#) and said they obtain feedback from local governments and municipal associations and provide feedback to the state legislature. It is a better process. Commission member O'Leary described difficulties encountered when the ACIR reached out to municipalities in the past and added that associations like the [CT Conference of Municipalities](#) (CCM) and [CT Council of Small Towns](#) (COST) were not involved. Commission chair Sharkey recommended exploring this prior to submission of the compendium supplement in January.

5. CT Local Government of the Future initiative ([notes of 9/27 subcommittee meeting](#))

- Maximizing federal funds through COGs and RESCs

Commission member Pickering showed a PowerPoint presentation, [Options to Grow Federal Grants](#). He made some additional points, pointing out during the 3rd slide that

municipalities do not tend to set aside money as matches for unexpected grant opportunities that might arise during the year. He also described several potential state-level changes noted in the PowerPoint that could increase access to federal funding.

There was a discussion of options for the state grant matching fund outlined in Slide 6, including whether it would be an annual appropriation and/or a revolving line of credit and that if it were the latter, that it could serve as bridge funding. It also was noted that the state could benefit even if a revolving fund is not fully paid back but that reimbursement would make such a fund more sustainable.

There also was a discussion of assistance that could be provided at the state or regional level to assist municipalities in gaining federal funding, including ensuring that different municipalities apply for different funding sources rather than having all compete for one source while none apply for other available grants. It was noted that grant opportunities are often announced with too little time for municipalities to submit competitive proposals. It also was noted that UConn is doing a good job with its reorganized grants office and that universities commonly have a cabinet-level grants person.

There was further discussion of the potential for multi-level coordination among towns, [regional councils of governments](#) COGs, RESCs, and the state, which is especially important for small towns lacking capacity to independently apply for all possible funding opportunities. Commission chair Sharkey commended Commission member Pickering for his COGs work on this and said the ACIR should promote this as part of a legislative package with other proposals. Commission chair Sharkey noted the interest of Governor Lamont and [Dept. of Revenue Services](#) (DRS) Commissioner Boughton.

- Assessing effectiveness of certain local reporting requirements to the state

Commission chair Sharkey said this is still in the development stage and it will be discussed next month.

- Property Tax Restructuring

Commission chair Sharkey described his recent discussion with DRS Comm. Boughton and said the ACIR should provide recommendations to the administration for a multi-year process. He added that Comm. Boughton suggested the ACIR consider updating CCM's [This Report is Different](#) but people at the most recent ACIR subcommittee meeting were not in support of doing another study. Instead, some members and others are rolling up their sleeves and doing a weekly book club-style review of past reports to identify key recommendations. He noted that a different topic of interest to the ACIR is covered each week and this will culminate in a set of concrete recommendations for consideration by the ACIR. Meetings are ongoing and anyone is welcome to participate. There was further discussion of how productive the process has been and recommendations should be raised following the election.

6. Other Old Business

- UConn & UGA studies and [Institute for Municipal & Regional Policy](#)
- Update: ACIR representation on [Task Force To Study Title 7 Of The General Statutes](#)

Commission chair Sharkey said Lyle Wray has been at the forefront regarding the studies and institute and that is on hold. Commission vice chair Filchak said there is no update on the status of the task force.

7. New business or any other municipal, regional, or state matters for ACIR consideration

- a. **ACIR Organizational Structure and Operation** (Please review the current enabling statute: https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_019a.htm specifically subsections (b), (c) and (d))
- The need for bylaws to address alternates, quorum requirements, subcommittees and more - ACIR did develop and adopt bylaws in 1987 - [ACIR Bylaws](#) [Note: the validity of these bylaws is uncertain due to the fact that the enabling statute does not authorize ACIR to have bylaws]
 - Adding an annual report to the Planning and Development Committee
 - Require advisory consultation with ACIR for any legislation regarding intergovernmental relations

Commission chair Sharkey described the potential for recreating the ACIR as a commission with staffing to take on more without requiring members and others to volunteers so much time to the effort. He also noted the recurring challenge of having a quorum for meetings and mentioned the 1987 bylaws and noted the ambiguities regarding that document, what constitutes a quorum, and the potential removal of members.

Commission member Heft recommended a legal review of questions such as the authority for ACIR bylaws and added that the ACIR might address staffing by developing its own budget as a state agency. If doing that, it must move quickly. Commission chair Sharkey asked if members are comfortable with him and Commission vice chair Filchak putting together a budget for OPM's consideration and there was no disagreement. He also said the group can ask Commission member Cassano to submit a request for the Office of Legislative Review to look at the legal questions.

There was a discussion of the limitations of an OLR review, which cannot provide legal advice, but Commission member Thomas pointed out that municipal people are busy and the ACIR could consider legislation allowing municipal appointees to designate an alternate. CCM allows that for its meetings. There was further discussion of the two action items: development of a budget and questions to be submitted for OLR review, and a brief discussion of the little-known history of the NRZ's bylaws, which were only recently rediscovered. It also was noted that the ACIR's current annual reports satisfy the suggestion to submit an annual report.

8. Additional public comments if any

There were no additional comments.

9. Next meeting

Upcoming meetings will be.

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| • Wednesdays, to be determined, 8:30 am | Book Club |
| • Tuesday, October 25, 2022, 10:30 am | Subcommittee |
| • Friday, November 4, 2022, 10:30 am | Full ACIR |

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:00

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM