

Local Government of the Future Subcommittee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

Tuesday, April 26, 2022

Note: This document is ACIR staff notes written during this subcommittee meeting. It is a public document and has been provided to meeting participants for their review and revised in accordance with any comments received but is not approved minutes of the meeting.

The agenda is available at:

<https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/13600>

The audio recording is available at:

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/ACIR/Meetings/2022/2022-04-26_ACIR_LGF_Audio.mp3

ACIR Members present: Francis Pickering, Brendan Sharkey (Chair), Mike Walsh

Other participants: Steve Mednick, Brian O'Connor, Richard Porth, Margaret Wirtenberg, Lyle Wray

ACIR staff: Bruce Wittchen

1. Call to order

Commission chair Sharkey called the meeting to order at 11:36 and noted that it's a busy time of the year for many people. He said this is the first meeting to discuss the topics the subcommittee had recommended to the full ACIR. Now is the time to decide how to proceed.

Commission chair Sharkey also noted that [HB 5269](#), *An Act Concerning Remote Meetings Under The Freedom Of Information Act*, had passed the House and is pending in the Senate. He said some opponents are concerned that the allowance for remote meetings can shield local officials from public view, but also noted the impact on local meetings if it does not pass by the end of the month, when the current allowance for remote meetings expires.

Brian O'Connor said the Senate would have to suspend its rules for the bill to be ready for the Governor's signature before the end of the month if passed by the Senate by then. If that is not done, local meetings can only be in-person or hybrid after 4/30 until the bill is passed and signed. There was further discussion of the legislative process.

2. Review of [3/22/2022 LGF meeting notes](#) and [draft 4/1/2022 ACIR minutes](#), if desired

There were no comments.

3. [Topics assigned to LGF Subcommittee](#)

- Municipal data collection
- Maximizing federal funding

Commission chair Sharkey mentioned that there had been a discussion of reaching out to county governments in other states to learn how they structure their grant-seeking processes to maximize the federal funding they receive. He said it could be helpful to coordinate efforts regionally here. Regarding data, what do we collect; what is useful and what is not?

Lyle Wray said seeking federal dollars begins at the state level. When he worked in the Midwest, the question of how to maximize federal funds began at the agency level with grant writing and competitive programs. They then proceed to the municipal level. He added that relevant national associations might have information. Lyle also mentioned that he once asked a CT state agency how it would be affected by a federal proposal to reduce funding for a particular grant and was told they had not applied for the grant.

Commission chair Sharkey described his experience working with a state congressional delegation in DC while in school and highlighted the need to coordinate efforts between a Governor's office and Congress. Commission member Pickering said there are three categories of funding: how much the state sends to the federal government, how much the federal government sends to the state, and how much the federal government sends to contractors. Why do MA and NY receive \$1000 more COVID relief per capita than CT does?

Lyle Wray said CT needs more capacity: people at the state and local level looking for federal funding. Commission chair Sharkey recommended discussing this with the Governor's Office and OPM. Commission member Pickering said we will see unprecedented funding through the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#) (IIJA) but recommended looking more broadly and focusing this effort on other programs. Lyle Wray agreed and noted that significant funding is available through other programs. Commission chair Sharkey said he will work with Bruce Wittchen to reach out to Martin Heft and others at OPM about this and to the Governor's Office.

Commission chair Sharkey asked what data CCM has and Brian O'Connor said most comes from OPM but they are looking at other data. Rick Porth asked what we mean when referring to municipal data: are they accounting data, measures of well-being, or other? Commission member Pickering referenced OPM's municipal fiscal indicators and mentioned finance, parcel, and other data. He said we should ask what data are collected, how are they used, and what could be done with them?

Rick Porth said CCM's research department works with municipalities and added that, in addition to collecting information, it is important to think about how decisions are made with the information and the effect on the future. Commission member Pickering said WestCOG has digitized 40 years of the state's municipal fiscal indicators; some is very interesting. Steve Mednick mentioned that comparative data are helpful in municipal collective bargaining and charter revision. Such data should be easily available. Margaret Wirtenberg said WestCOG can do a lot due to its digitized data.

Commission chair Sharkey asked what the next step should be and said OPM has a treasure trove of data. Lyle Wray said he has to leave but volunteered to help. Commission member Pickering mentioned the challenge DOT faced in its effort to bring data together from where it was separately held in different programs and people's computers. We should not downplay the effort needed to see the data at state agencies. He said another option is to ask municipalities what they send to the state. Commission chair Sharkey said he will follow up with OPM following the session.

4. Property tax reform, [2022 DRS Tax Incidence Report](#), or other fiscal matters

Commission chair Sharkey said it would be better to have this conversation following the legislative session; the ACIR might be mandated or asked to look into aspects of this. Margaret Wirtenberg mentioned legislative language by WestCOG and Commission member Pickering said they had posted a draft and are working on the language.

There was a discussion of DRS's tax incidence study and concerns that it does not include penalties. Rick Porth said he found the new report to be disappointing and said it downplays the impact of the state's property tax dependence. Commission chair Sharkey said it might be beneficial to bring in DRS Commissioner Boughton following the session.

5. Future research initiatives or other topics, if any

Commission chair Sharkey asked if anyone has any other thoughts and there were no suggestions, but there was further discussion of the authorization for remote meetings.

6. Next Meetings

There was no discussion of the schedule of upcoming meetings.

7. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:17.

Notes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM