

Local Government of the Future Subcommittee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

Tuesday, July 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/13603>

The meeting recording is available at:

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/ACIR/Meetings/2022/2022-06-28_ACIR_Audio.mp3

ACIR Members present: John Filchak, Martin Heft, Karl Kilduff, Jim O’Leary, Francis Pickering, Brendan Sharkey, Mike Walsh

Other participants: Leah Grenier, Sheila McKay, Steve Mednick, Brian O’Connor, Meghan Portfolio, Richard Porth, Margaret Wirtenberg

ACIR staff: Bruce Wittchen

1. Call to order

Commission chair Sharkey called the meeting to order at 10:32.

2. Review of [6/28/2022 LGF notes and draft 7/8/2022 ACIR minutes](#), if helpful for discussion

There were no comments

3. [Reimagining local government topics assigned to LGF Subcommittee](#)

There was a discussion of the work required by Sec. 462 and the uncertainty regarding its intent. Bruce Wittchen said OPM has been reaching out to others to get a better understanding of how to proceed and he brought it to the ACIR in part to get any suggestions but also due to the ACIR’s interest the state requirements for and use of municipal data.

There was a discussion of the dig once approach, in which major work on roads and underground utilities are coordinated to minimize costs and damage, and of the potential for using this as a case study. Commission member Filchak said he recommended including Sec. 461, which is related to the state’s [Town Aid Road](#) (TAR) funding. He said state is funding categories of work having very different returns on investment and mentioned the benefit of developing best practices. Commission member Pickering added that TAR funds are state money that is not leveraged for greater federal funding.

Commission member Heft described the OFA fiscal note’s treatment of Sec. 461 and Sec. 462, which mentions no municipal impact and says “OPM can conduct the study with existing resources.” Commission chair Sharkey said unnecessary reporting and studies are a drain on resources and there was further discussion of the scope of work and of the fiscal note.

Commission chair Sharkey asked how the ACIR would like to proceed in its consideration of Sec. 461 & 462. Commission member O’Leary said the ACIR in the past would have assigned the topic to OPM to study and,

if OPM could not, it would farm out the work. Commission chair said that perspective is lost and there was a discussion of options.

Commission member Heft said the ACIR could consider an analysis of the resources required and how the systems addressed by Sec. 461 & 462 could be improved. Commission chair Sharkey said the approach could be analogous to the ACIR's 2021 remote meeting survey. Commission member Filchak agreed and asked if the legislative sponsor of Sec. 462 should be contacted and if OPM can handle the workload. What is the value of doing that work? Commission chair Sharkey said he will discuss this with Bruce Wittchen. Commission member Heft said he has reached out to Sen. Fonfara and his staff but has not received a response. Commission chair Sharkey asked how much of the reporting required of municipalities is relevant? How can we prevent time being wasted? We could use this as a case study with a 10,000-ft view.

Commission member Pickering said WestCOG might have a presentation ready next week regarding grant-writing in other states. Commission member Filchak noted that federal infrastructure funding does not seem to clearly include COGs as being eligible. COGs that are designated metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) are eligible through the MPO, but the NE and NW COGs are not MPOs.

Commission chair Sharkey mentioned that he had promised to provide a list of reports relevant to the ACIR's consideration of property tax reform. Work interfered and he has not compiled the list yet, but Commissioner Boughton of the Dept. of Revenue Services will work with us on this. He noted that CCM has arranged a discussion with the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston (FRBB) about possible work on that. Rick Porth said they are looking at the larger context, across New England, and their perspective should help inform the ACIR's work and put it in the larger context.

John Filchak mentioned 2015 reports by the FRBB, [Measuring Municipal Fiscal Disparities in Connecticut](#) and [From Urban Core to Wealthy Towns: Nonschool Fiscal Disparities across Connecticut Municipalities](#). He added that the findings were replicated in the 2019 report (updated 2021) [Distributing Non-Education State Aid to Municipalities through a Needs-Capacity Formula](#) and said this is not time for another study; it is time for a structural reform movement.

Commission chair Sharkey said DRS Commissioner Boughton has a vision for reform to begin in 2023. The property tax needs to be restructured; we do not need another study. Comm. Boughton is ready to begin, using resources available to DRS from Wall St. Commission chair Sharkey questioned if he should invite Comm. Boughton to the conversation with the representative of the FRBB.

Rick Porth said the intent of that conversation is to put CT's initiative in a larger context to help in envisioning it. Commission member Heft asked who can attend and mentioned related work by CCM, 1000 Friends of CT, and others. Commission chair Sharkey said it is not a closed meeting and noted that he had promised to compile a listing of such work by others.

Margaret Wirtenberg said this initiative will be a winner if we have the eye and staff of Comm. Boughton. Commission chair Sharkey noted that an election is approaching but this effort can create a legacy for the governor. He added that he will be in touch with Commission member Thomas about a pre-meeting before the FRBB discussion. The ACIR is meant to do this.

4. Future topics/research initiatives, if any

- Perspective Essay for [State and Local Government Review](#) – due 11/1 for 3/2023 issue

Bruce Wittchen explained the time frame for submitting the essay about the ACIR that was discussed in past meetings. He and Lyle Wray are fleshing out an outline and others who are interested in contributing to the essay will be able to join in. Commission chair Sharkey invited Commission member O'Leary and Margaret Wirtenberg to contribute their historic perspective.

Commission chair Sharkey said he, Commission member Filchak, and Bruce Wittchen should discuss the possible survey discussed earlier. He also said Commission member Pickering will be able to report

back on the work of the WestCOG intern. He will invite Comm. Boughton to the FRBB meeting and schedule a pre-meeting.

5. Next meetings

Commission chair Sharkey read the dates of upcoming meetings:

8/5/2022	ACIR
8/23/2022	LGF Subcommittee

6. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:30.

Notes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM