

# Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

Friday, March 3, 2023

A recording is available at: [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/ACIR/Meetings/2023/2023-03-03\\_ACIR\\_Audio.m4a](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/ACIR/Meetings/2023/2023-03-03_ACIR_Audio.m4a)

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

**Members not present:** Carl Amento, Luke Bronin, Maureen Brummett, Steve Cassano, John Filchak (Vice Chair), Sam Gold, Brian Greenleaf, Laura Hoydick, Jeff Kitching, Harrison Nantz, Keith Norton, Neil O'Leary, Ron Thomas, Mike Walsh

**Other participants:** John Harkins, Brian O'Connor, Kari Olson, Rick Porth

**OPM staff:** Rebecca Dahl, Christine Goupil, Bruce Wittchen

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

## 1. Call to order and overview of telemeeting procedures

Commission chair Sharkey called the meeting to order at 10:33, noting the lack of a quorum and that vice chair Filchak was unable to attend today. He explained that Agenda Item 4, the update on the [CAPSS Blueprint](#) is expected to begin after the presenters arrive at 11:30.

## 2. Approval of the minutes of the [February 3, 2022](#) meeting

Due to the lack of a quorum the draft minutes could not be approved.

## 3. Membership update, if any

There was no membership update.

## 5. CT Local Government of the Future (LGF) initiative (see notes of [2/21/2023 meeting](#))

- [Property Tax Restructuring Report](#) and next steps

Commission chair Sharkey described his conversations with legislative leaders about the ACIR's work on property tax restructuring and said they are interested in the ACIR presenting its recommendations at an informational hearing. He noted interest in having the initial focus be on full [Education Cost Sharing](#) funding and then proceeding to special education. He said that approach works for the ACIR, which sees this as being a long term effort.

Commission chair Sharkey mentioned [SB 1](#), *An Act Concerning Transparency In Education* and said the ACIR should present its report at the informational hearing and hitch its wagon to a compatible legislative initiative. Early April would be a good time for that hearing.

Commission member Pickering said there are other bills that could increase property taxes and mentioned [HB 6633](#), *An Act Concerning A Needs Assessment And Fair Share Plans For Municipalities To Increase Affordable Housing*. There was a discussion of concerns regarding that bill, which could require municipalities to subsidize construction of housing, including its fiscal impact on municipalities and that obligations that increase property taxes are regressive, not progressive. Commission member O'Leary pointed out that if the ACIR were to take a position in opposition to such a mandate it would be consistent with its historic approach of pushing back

regarding the impacts of mandates. Commission member Heft noted that the ACIR members representing state agencies cannot participate in such an effort and Commission chair Sharkey recommended monitoring the bill, not submitting testimony.

- Possible new topic: Engagement with RESC and COG directors/chairs re LGF initiative

Commission chair Sharkey mentioned the discussion of this at last week's subcommittee meeting and noted that Commission vice chair Filchak is not available to lead the discussion of it today. Commission member O'Leary said it is a great idea, noting the potential services that [regional educational service centers](#) (RESCs) might provide for municipalities and the potential support by the [CT Conference of Municipalities](#) (CCM), the [CT Council of Small Towns](#) (COST), and [regional councils of governments](#) (COGs).

Commission chair Sharkey suggested a road show to COGs and RESCs. There was a discussion of how to approach municipal chief elected officials (CEOs) and Commission chair Sharkey recommended this be held for the next subcommittee meeting.

- [Governance Study Committee Report](#) – Town of Chester (2/9/2023)

Commission chair Sharkey provided an overview of the report and said many municipal services are not sustainable, but noted that the report does not identify potential roles of COGs and RESCs.

## 6. Other Old Business

- Legislative update
  - HB 6670, [An Act Studying The Consolidation Of Metropolitan Planning Organizations](#)
    - [Governor's Bill](#)
    - [Written Testimony](#)

Commission chair Sharkey said this bill would require the ACIR to conduct a study of the potential for metropolitan planning organization (MPO) consolidation. He noted it has drawn a lot of attention. Commission member Heft said the concept was previously discussed under former DOT Commissioner Redeker and that the study would look at whether there are better approaches for the state's MPOs. Commission chair Sharkey said a conversation is needed and highlighted that it proposes to study, not implement consolidation.

Commission member Pickering said MPOs submitted [joint testimony regarding the bill](#) and he said MPO designation is locally-driven. Commission chair Sharkey asked if MPOs submitted testimony opposing the bill or if it was explanatory testimony. Commission member Pickering answered that it is explanatory and added that a LEAN process is currently underway with DOT, and that the process would be an appropriate framework and forum to address issues such as this. He also said the bill is overly focused on boundaries of MPOs rather than planning outcomes.

There was a discussion of possible confusion regarding the roles and responsibilities of MPOs and that COGs and MPOs do not need to be the same thing. Commission member Elsesser that the organizations can have different capacities and there are many options. The ACIR could shape a smart approach. Commission member Hart noted that MPO funding supports COG operations.

Commission member Pickering said the proposal needs a problem statement. He added that regional approaches to various functions, including transportation and housing, should be aligned. Separating MPOs and COGs could undermine COGs, given the significance of MPO

funding to COGs. He said everything needs to be on the table and noted that only one other state includes transit in its Dept. of Transportation. Commission member O’Leary said all these issues fit into the ACIR LGF objective for restructuring at the state and local level.

Commission chair Sharkey said the ACIR needs staff for a task like this and Commission member O’Leary agreed. Commission chair Sharkey asked if the ACIR should submit testimony regarding the need for staff, acknowledging that the resulting fiscal note could kill the bill. Commission member Pickering said the proposed scope of the study is problematic and will lead to a wrong answer. There was a discussion of the implications of how the study has been framed, including whether other potential influences are assumed to be excluded. Commission member Pickering noted the possibility for municipal projects to be combined and suggested focusing on project delivery, not just planning.

Commission member Heft noted that the ACIR has asked to be involved in such efforts and pointed out that the bill would have the ACIR consult with DOT. He said there could be funding in DOT’s budget and suggested discussing this with the Governor’s Office. There was further discussion of the proposal, with Commission chair Sharkey pointing out that the proposed language does not include “within available resources”, which could mean that additional resources might be provided.

Commission member Pickering said MPOs were created as a check on the power of state DOTs and suggested the group look to the [US Dept. of Transportation](#) and the [Assoc. of Metropolitan Planning Organizations](#). He added that the MPOs were not consulted and could have corrected error in the testimony submitted by the Governor’s Office. He noted that COGs run the state’s MPOs. There was a discussion of the origins of the proposal and of bringing this back to the group.

#### **4. CAPSS Blueprint – 2023 status update**

Fran Rabinowitz, Executive Director of the [CT Assoc. of Public School Superintendents](#) (CAPSS) arrived and the group returned to Agenda Item 4. She provided an overview of CAPSS’s previous efforts to advocate for the [CAPSS Blueprint](#) and showed a [presentation with an update for 2023](#), identifying recommendations, goals, and successes to date.

Commission chair Sharkey outlined the ACIR’s earlier discussion of property tax restructuring and noted the connections to CAPSS’s blueprint. He said the ACIR seeks collaboration with others and he and Fran agreed to discuss this further. Commission member Brummett will forward the ACIR’s report to her. There also was a discussion of how SB 1 differs from HB 5003, [An Act Concerning Education Funding In Connecticut](#).

Rick Porth said education matters are an important aspect of the ACIR’s work and there was a discussion of the gap in state ECS funding and how CT funds a lower proportion of local education costs than many states. There was further discussion of legislative priorities in education and of the expected costs. Fran said she can provide the details of CAPSS’s cost estimates and Commission member O’Leary highlighted that the ACIR historically focused on matters raising such questions.

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

There was no new business.

#### **8. Additional public comments (if any)**

There were no additional comments.

## **9. Upcoming meetings:**

Commission chair read the upcoming meeting dates.

- Tuesday, March 28, 2023, 10:30 am      Subcommittee
- Friday, April 7, 2023, 10:30 am      Full ACIR

## **10. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 12:07.

*Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM*

DRAFT