

Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

Friday, October 6, 2023

Agenda: <https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/17142>

A recording is available at: <http://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=22196>

Members present: Steve Cassano, John Filchak (Vice Chair), Sam Gold, Karl Kilduff, Jeff Kitching, Matt Hart, Keith Norton, James O’Leary, Francis Pickering, Troy Raccuia, Lon Seidman, Brendan Sharkey (Chair) , Katie Stargardter

Members not present: Carl Amento, Luke Bronin, Maureen Brummett, Brian Greenleaf, Martin Heft, Laura Hoydick, Harrison Nantz, Neil O’Leary, Ron Thomas, Mike Walsh

Other participants: Owen Deutsch, Betsy Gara, Irene Haines, Sheila McKay,

OPM staff: Christine Goupil, Bruce Wittchen

Member vacancies: Nominated by COST: Municipal official: Town of <10,000 population
Nominated by COST: Municipal official: Town of 10,000 – 20,000 population

1. Call to order and overview of telemeeting procedures

Commission chair Sharkey called the meeting to order at 10:36, noting the lack of a quorum at that time.

2. Approval of the [7/7/2023](#) & [9/8/2023](#) meetings and accept notes of [8/4/2023 meeting](#)

The commission did not approve the draft minutes at the beginning of the meeting due to the lack of a quorum and did not return to this during the period of time later in the meeting when it did have a quorum.

3. Membership updates, if any

- Current vacancies
 - Two: *Nominated by COST and appointed by the Governor*
- Future vacancies (following November elections)
 - Three: *Nominated by CCM and appointed by the Governor*

Commission chair Sharkey noted the current and approaching vacancies and Betsy Gara said the Governor’s Office will be able to appoint COST’s nominees by the end of the month. She noted that one of the nominees, Irene Haines, is attending this meeting.

There was a discussion of the ACIR’s [1987 Bylaws](#). Bruce Wittchen said an OPM attorney said the ACIR is not authorized to have bylaws but Bruce noted that the ACIR had been a legislative agency in 1987, which might have enabled it to have bylaws. Commission member Pickering said the ACIR should have bylaws and Commission vice chair Filchak said the ACIR should be changed if it does not allow bylaws. He also said the statute should be changed so organizations like CCM and COST can appoint members directly. Commission member Pickering recommended gathering more information about the bylaws; learn what the group can and cannot do, and also determine whether the state’s minority representation rule, [CGS Sec. 9-167a](#), applies to the ACIR. Bruce will do that.

4. **Schedule and organize [special meeting/information forum](#) re: [SA 23-13](#), *An Act Studying The Consolidation Of Metropolitan Planning Organizations***

Commission chair Sharkey mentioned that he recently discussed this study with Patrick Hulin of the Governor's Office and outlined a possible approach for the initial meeting. He recommended it be held at the Legislative Office Building. Commission member Gold asked him what he had learned from the Governor's Office and Commission chair Sharkey said they were concerned if statewide goal are being met with decisions being dispersed among multiple MPOs.

Commission chair Sharkey mentioned encountering a similar concern regarding federal economic development funding when he was in the legislature. He said the executive branch wants to prioritize a statewide perspective and is asking if MPO mergers could be beneficial but noted that there can be alternatives short of consolidation. Commission member Gold said the DOT, not the MPOs, has been programming the local funding since 2014 and there was further discussion of the MPOs role.

Commission member Pickering said this is an obscure area, with state-to-state differences, and added that work is well-coordinated in CT and there is a good relationship with DOT. There are many people who can contribute to this study. Commission chair Sharkey said the intent is not to discuss the merits today, only to organize this study. Commission vice chair elaborated on expectations for today and Commission chair Sharkey added discussions to date have established that the state does not have the power to consolidate MPOs but more can be said in the study report.

Bruce Wittchen pointed out that a quorum was now present.

Commission member Gold mentioned that the chair of his COG/MPO had sent a letter regarding this and he will share it. There is a story to tell and he believes the story of MPOs is meaningful for other activities that can be handled regionally. There was further discussion of issues to be considered, including potential panelists for an informational meeting.

Commission chair Sharkey recommended including representatives of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT, and of an MPO. Commission member Pickering recommended including the executive director of the national MPO organization and an MPO expert at the Univ. of South Florida. Commission member Hart recommended including someone from the Governor's Office, which originally proposed the study, and Commission vice chair Filchak suggested including Transportation Committee co-chair Lemar. Commission member Gold recommended including the chair of an MPO and noted that his chair recommended including the former first selectmen who had led the consolidation of two previous MPOs that became his.

Commission chair Sharkey expressed concern about the number of potential presenters and recommended limiting it to 5-6. He listed DOT, the Governor's Office, the two national MPO experts, and Transportation Committee co-chair Lemar. Commission member Gold recommended a CT MPO representative who is a local official, not staff. Commission member Pickering said the FHWA should be able to designate its representative, noting that some staff outside CT have more experience with MPOs.

Commission vice chair Filchak said some of the listed presenters should be held for a second meeting and said the chair of WestCOG could do a presentation on why that COG did not merge its two MPOs when the two former regional planning organizations merged to form one COG. Commission chair Sharkey recommended having just one informational meeting and there was a discussion of the goals of that meeting being to provide an overview of MPOs and to explain the impetus for the study. Commission chair Sharkey said the panelists should be the FHWA, the two national experts, Rep. Lemar, someone from the Governor's Office, an MPO chair, and someone from DOT, each offering their perspective in a short time frame. He suggested that be followed by questions from ACIR members or the public, aiming for a total time of two hours.

Commission member Gold said the ACIR will need to provide some guidance to the presenters and suggested asking DOT and Rep. Lemar what they see as the transportation challenges. Commission chair Sharkey said that goes beyond the ACIR's charge, which is only to determine if it makes sense to consolidate. There was a discussion of expectations for the study. Commission vice chair Filchak said he does not agree with allowing non-members to ask questions of the panelists and there was further discussion of that with Commission chair Sharkey said it can be kept under control without being draconian.

Commission member O'Leary asked that the legislative transcripts for the bill be circulated and Commission chair Sharkey agreed but noted that we will hear from the Governor's Office and Rep. Lemar. Commission member Pickering said the requirements of the special act are specific and there was a discussion of scheduling the special meeting. Commission chair Sharkey recommended the meeting be in early to mid-November and be a hybrid meeting in an LOB hearing room. A motion was made to have that meeting be scheduled, but the quorum had been lost. Bruce Wittchen said the group does not need to vote to schedule a special meeting.

5. Follow-up to 9/8 ACIR Visioning Session

- Review ACIR structure, legal & legislative changes, with possible assignment to subcommittee
- Potential topics for future meetings
 - November: Potential Partners
 - December: 2024 Work Plan

Commission chair Sharkey referenced the draft report on the visioning session circulated prior to this meeting and said the initial step is to consider potential internal and legislative changes. He said a subcommittee could be assigned to report back to the full ACIR in December and the full group can vote on any recommendations for the Planning & Development can consider raising in a bill.

Commission member Gold said the ACIR should continue its discussion of its constituency and appointing authorities: what is our relationship to them? Commission chair Sharkey said that would fit the suggested discussion in November; it should consider partners and constituencies. Commission member Gold recommended using the draft report to engage with other members and recommended staff reach out to them. Commission member Hart noted that strategic visioning at his COG includes stakeholders and there was a discussion of how to proceed.

There was a discussion of member engagement, including a desire to speed up the appointment process. Commission member O'Leary said the group had better participation in the past because many members had a passion for mandates, a focus of the group. Do current members have passion for a study of MPOs? What do people want to do and what do we do? There had been a clear mission: the danger of mandates.

Christine Goupil said these points are valid and referred to the road map at the end of the draft report. She noted that she had reached out to all members prior to the visioning session and said she can contact the absent members. Commission chair Sharkey referred everyone to the suggestion for a subcommittee to consider structural changes to the ACIR, as listed in the roadmap in Sec. 4 of the draft report. There was a discussion of whether the report should be considered complete and Commission member Sharkey said it is not being acted on today and said people can submit possible changes.

Commission member Gold recommended the ACIR make internal changes before pursuing statutory changes in search of a quorum. Commission member Seidman said the group struggles with capacity issues and needs staff to be able to review things between meetings. Commission chair Sharkey said funding cannot be justified if it is not clear what we do. He suggested the group consider partnerships such as with UConn. Commission member Pickering said the ACIR's work plan should be tailored to fit

its capacity. The ACIR can be a forum. A lot of intergovernmental issues arise because agencies do not talk. We could look at agency plans.

Commission member Filchak said he believes it would be a mistake for the ACIR to proceed with the upcoming work through subcommittees. He believes it should be the full ACIR. He said affiliations with UConn would be good for the long term and added that COG and RESC staff could assist us. He also said it would be a mistake to seek changes in the membership but it would be good to change how some are appointed.

Commission chair Sharkey said diversity should be improved and mentioned that a lot of COGs are represented but only one RESC is. He added that appointments should be relevant to the appointment authorities. Commission member Filchak pointed out that most of the ACIR members representing COGs are public members. There was further discussion of membership, including the potential benefit of members having proxies or alternates. Commission vice chair Filchak said enabling organizations such as CCM, COST, and the CT Assoc. of Boards of Education (CABE) to directly appoint members could enable that.

Christine Goupil said any subcommittee should be given a specific charge and also noted that a visioning session like the ACIR's would ordinarily have been a two-day, not one-day session, so the group must do more here. Commission member O'Leary thanked Christine, Martin, and Bruce for their work and said capacity will be the key. The MPO study will require a lot of work: more than we expect. Write-ups like Christine's writeup of the visioning session need time.

There was further discussion of the various points and commission chair Sharkey said the ACIR does not have a definable mission. Commission member O'Leary said the MPO Study assignment shows the ACIR needs funding for staff. Commission chair Sharkey agreed with an earlier recommendation and said the ACIR should not assign the structural changes topic to a subcommittee, it should be by the full group. He said that what is needed can be defined better for the next meeting. The group as a whole should discuss this, who is our audience, and what is our mission. Commission vice chair Filchak pointed out that, at the visioning session, Commission member Bronin had said he would attend meetings if they were relevant.

6. Update: ACIR regular reports

- Annual Report + Work Plan: no statutory deadline
- Session Mandates Report: due 11/15/2023
- Mandates Compendium (full compendium): due 2/21/2024

Bruce Wittchen said this item is just an update. He has completed his review of public and special acts and is compiling the report due 11/15. Members should see a draft in the coming weeks.

7. Upcoming meetings:

Commission chair Sharkey asked if the LGF Subcommittee should meet as scheduled and there was a discussion of potential topics for discussion, including Regional Performance Incentive Program (RPIP) pilot projects and emergency medical services, which was described as being a coming local budget bomb, but a complex issue. It also was noted that the task force to study Title 7 of the General Statutes created by [SA 22-4](#) has not yet met. Commission vice chair Filchak said health districts are another possible topic, noting past work on efficiencies and service delivery. Commission member Pickering mentioned [SA 21-12](#), the study of fire district consolidation, and it was noted that Commission member Heft is a member of that.

The next meetings will be:

- Tuesday, October 24, 2023, 10:30 am LGF Subcommittee
- Friday, November 3, 2023, 10:30 am ACIR

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:14.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM

DRAFT