

Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

Friday, November 3, 2023

Agenda: <https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/17143>

A recording is available at: <http://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=22285>

Members present: Maureen Brummett, John Filchak (Vice Chair), Sam Gold, Karl Kilduff, Matt Hart, Martin Heft, Keith Norton, James O'Leary, Francis Pickering, Troy Raccuia, Lon Seidman, Brendan Sharkey (Chair), Katie Stargardter

Members not present: Carl Amento, Luke Bronin, Steve Cassano, Brian Greenleaf, Laura Hoydick, Jeff Kitching, Harrison Nantz, Neil O'Leary, Ron Thomas, Mike Walsh

Other participants: Bryce Chinault, Owen Deutsch, Laura Francis, Betsy Gara, John Harkins, Sheila McKay, Teri Merisotis, Mike Muszynski, Rick Porth

OPM staff: Christine Goupil, Justine Phillips-Gallucci, 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. Commission member Gold made a point of order, noting that the agenda had been circulated less than 24 hours before the meeting and Bruce Wittchen explained the circumstances and there was a discussion of the need to circulate meeting information earlier.

2. Approve [7/7/2023](#), [9/8/2023](#), & [10/6/2023](#) minutes and accept notes of [8/4/2023 meeting](#)

A motion was made and seconded to approve all four documents and the motion was approved unanimously.

4. ACIR reports to review and consider approving today:

- Due 11/15/2023: [ACIR 2023 Session Mandates Report](#)

A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft report and the report was adopted unanimously.

- Due 12/31/2023: [ACIR 2022-23 Annual Report](#)

Bruce Wittchen provided an overview of this and the previous report, pointing out that the ACIR might consider options for improving its reports in 2024. A motion was made and seconded to approve the annual report and the motion was approved unanimously.

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 she has reminded the Governor's Office of COST's nominations for the current vacancies and informed them of the significance of the 11/14 special meeting.

5. CCM survey re. local match requirement for infrastructure funding: discussion and next steps

CCM's Rick Porth provided some background regarding this effort. Commission member Gold noted that the Councils of Governments (COGs) met with DOT regarding the potential use of [Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program](#) (LOTICIP) funds for the local match required by federal programs and DOT's work with COGs and towns regarding discretionary federal funding.

Rick Porth said issues like those were the motivation for this survey and introduced Mike Muszynski, whose program conducted the survey. Mr. Muszynski said this was only an initial study and provided some details about the two-month, which had a 30-40% response rate. He highlighted that most responses were from towns having populations of <20,000 but pointed out that responses were received from towns across the state.

Mr. Muszynski said respondents were most interested in transportation projects, followed by water & sewer and then resilience. Only 36% of such projects are shovel-ready so it is not possible to quantify the potentials costs that would be sought through federal grants if possible. It would only be planning costs at this time and municipalities need funding and technical assistance to take the next step. Most of the already shovel-ready projects are for transportation or broadband. He added that many of the projects have a regional aspect.

Mr. Muszynski said >60% of projects cannot advance without state or federal support and will need financial and technical support to be made shovel-ready. He said there should be regional coordination and recommended state funds be made available for planning. There was a discussion of the motivation for this survey, of municipal capacities for providing the local match for federal grants, and of the value of looking into this further to make sure CT gets its share of federal funds.

Commission member O'Leary asked how much the COGs have been involved and Mr. Muszynski said the survey did not ask that but did ask about multi-town projects and he explained what can be done. Commission member Hart said DOT and the [CT Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Team](#) (CT BILT) will seek funds for the local match. He added that Safe Streets projects are the most popular for towns but pointed out that only five towns in his COG sought Safe Streets funding in the 2nd round of funding.

Commission vice chair Filchak said the involvement of DOT and the CT BILT and is promising but also that the 16 towns in his COG are overwhelmed by the number of grant notices received. A multi-prong approach is needed. Commission member Gold said CT's COGs are up against the counties of other states and said COGs can assist with the match for a planning grant but not a construction grant. He suggested there be an ACIR role in guiding state funding of local matching funds. He described an approach recently used to receive US Housing & Urban Development (HUD) funding and highlighted the challenge of going to a small town's town meeting to gain approval to seek to commit funding matching a grant that might not be received. Commission vice chair Filchak recommended CCM take this survey to the COGs.

Commission member Pickering said Commission member Gold has underscored an important point. Our focus has been on the local match but the orientation of federal programs favor counties and de-prioritizes New England. We should seek a congressional solution. Commission chair Sharkey outlined the points raised and agreed that there is a role for the ACIR. Mr. Muszynski said he will forward the results for distribution to everyone involved here.

6. Preparation for 11/14/2023 [special meeting/information forum re: SA 23-13](#), *An Act Studying The Consolidation Of Metropolitan Planning Organizations*

Commission chair Sharkey outlined the ACIR's assignment and Bruce Wittchen provided an overview of plans for the special meeting, including the role of each panelist. Commission chair Sharkey highlighted that it is a special meeting of the ACIR, not a public hearing, so the public is welcome to attend but will not participate in the Q&A portion of the meeting. Commission member Gold recommended sending panelists the link to SA 23-13 and said the representative of the national [Assoc. of Metropolitan Planning Organizations](#) (AMPO) can address the 7th point listed in SA 23-13.

Commission chair Sharkey listed the seven points identified in SA 23-13 and mentioned concerns that have been raised about the study and the limited role of state law. He said some responses will be self-limiting due to the limited state role. Commission member Gold said a positive aspect of this is that people can learn the concerns that led to SA 23-13 and address them. Bruce Wittchen asked that anyone interested in assisting with the agenda or questions for panelists to contact him and Commission vice chair Filchak encouraged people to attend in-person if possible. Bruce Wittchen noted that the panelists from out of state will attend remotely; they were not able to travel on the 14th.

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

- ACIR structure, legal & legislative changes
 - [possible ACIR Reform Legislation](#) (initial draft)
- Potential Partners
- 2024 Work Plan

Commission chair Sharkey said the initial thought had been to dedicate a month's meeting to each of the three topics listed in this agenda item and Commission vice chair Filchak noted the points raised at September's visioning sessions regarding missing members and how that can be approached. He described membership changes he proposed in the draft, pointing out that some might not be possible, but he wanted to raise the issue. He also explained his reasoning behind the recommendation to eliminate the current mandates report and for funding staff.

Commission chair Sharkey noted the process if there is interest in asking committee leadership to raise a bill. He also mentioned recent discussions with the governor and legislative leaders regarding priorities for the ACIR. There was a discussion of motivations for eliminating or for retaining the ACIR's mandate report and Rick Porth said CCM opposes elimination of the mandates report. There also was a discussion of the rationale for and concerns about potential membership changes. It was noted that, rather than have a small number of state agencies be represented as ACIR members, it might be better if the ACIR has access to any agency when relevant to a particular discussion.

Betsy Gara pointed out that one of COST's nominations to the ACIR has been pending approval since 12/2022. She acknowledged the burden of tracking all mandates and agreed with refining the ACIR's approach but said there should be a list of mandates. She said COST can assist.

Commission member Pickering said the legislative proposal is not what the group discussed at its visioning session and the report on that session has not been finalized yet. The ACIR should get its house in order first. He also expressed concern about the proposed use of Regional Performance Incentive Program funds, which could be repurposed in unanticipated ways. He added that the ACIR is not set up to manage a budget and identified some concerns regarding the proposed membership changes.

Commission chair Sharkey said it is not a final proposal: it is a compilation of ideas to consider. He added that getting the ACIR's act together does require some legislation. Commission member Pickering said he supports allowing members to designate alternates, a narrow change. Commission

member O’Leary said that the highest level of interest has tended to focus on local issues, with local officials raising the most issues, followed by legislators, and then state agencies.

Commission member Heft said it is important to find the right balance and noted the changes in ACIR membership that follow municipal elections. He outlined options including the standard process for identifying a designee to a commission such as the ACIR and also the manner in which local Planning & Zoning Commissions name and seat alternates. He also commented on the proposed change to the Regional Performance Incentive Program, noting the need for OPM input.

Commission member Gold said ACIR members need more time to consider topics such as this, which they only learned of the previous day, and noted that it would improve meetings if they can receive documents a week in advance. Commission chair Sharkey agreed and said the group should dedicate a meeting to the recommendations, possibly a special meeting.

Commission member Hart said there needs to be more consideration of the ACIR’s relationships, highlighting the significance of DEEP and DECD in issues of great interest to municipalities. Commission vice chair Filchak cautioned that agency designees might not attend a meeting if nothing relevant to their agency is on an agenda and recommended inviting them as needed. There was further discussion of options to consider and how to proceed.

8. Upcoming meetings:

Commission chair Sharkey read the dates of upcoming meetings, noting that he might be away 12/1. The next meetings will be:

- Tuesday, November 14, 10:00 – 12:00 MPO Study Informational Meeting (LOB 2B & Zoom)
- Tuesday, November 28, 2023, 10:30 am CANCELED: LGF Subcommittee
- Friday, December 1, 2023, 10:30 am ACIR
- To be determined: additional MPO study meetings as needed

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:17.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM