

# Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

Friday, January 5, 2024

Agenda: <https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/24156>

A recording is available at: <http://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=22463>

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

**Members not present:** Carl Amento, Maureen Brummett, Steve Cassano, Brian Greenleaf, Ron Thomas, Ethan Van Ness

**Other participants:** Betsy Gara, Brian O’Connor, Rick Porth

**OPM staff:** Christine Goupil, Greg Lowrey, Justine Phillips-Gallucci, Bruce Wittchen

**Vacancies:** Nominated by COST: Municipal official: Town of <10,000 population  
Nominated by COST: Municipal official: Town of 10,000 – 20,000 population  
To be nominated by CCM: Municipal official: Town of 20,000 – 60,000 population  
To be nominated by CCM: Two municipal officials: Towns of >60,000 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 at that time, and said any voting will be tabled until a quorum is present.

## 2. Approve draft minutes of [11/03/2023](#), [11/14/2023](#), and [12/1/2023](#) meetings

When a quorum was present later in the meeting, a motion was made and seconded to approve all three drafts of minutes and the motion was passed unanimously.

## 3. ACIR Statutory Reports

Commission vice chair Filchak commented on page numbering and suggested adding headers and footers. Bruce Wittchen said he might have disrupted a section break affecting page number during editing and will correct that once everything else is complete. He said he’ll follow up with John about adding headers and footers. Commission chair Sharkey provided some background regarding the report and ACIR mandate reporting and recommended tabling the report until a quorum is present.

When a quorum was present later in the meeting, a motion was made and seconded to approve the report. Bruce Wittchen pointed out that technical changes must be made to update changed section names once that information is available in a more usable format in mid-January. Headers and footers might also be added. The motion and second were amended and the motion was approved unanimously.

## 4. [2024 Meeting schedules](#)

When a quorum was present later in the meeting, Commission chair Sharkey explained the schedules and a motion was made and seconded to approve the schedules and was passed unanimously.

## 5. Membership updates

There was a discussion of pending nominations.

**6. [SA 23-13](#), *An Act Studying The Consolidation Of Metropolitan Planning Organizations***

Commission chair Sharkey provided an overview of the ACIR's assignment, discussions at previous meeting, and of the presentations and discussions at the November special meeting. Commission member Gold noted that he had sent some typo corrections to OPM and added that he believes the ACIR's report answers what can be answered. He said we never learned what problem the bill sponsors were trying to solve and accomplished what was needed without knowing the purpose.

Commission chair Sharkey said Patrick Hulin of the Governor's Office was one of the presenters at the special meeting and added that we were previously told they were interested in potential gains in efficiency. Commission chair Sharkey said he does not think it was more than that and noted it was a last-minute addition to the Governor's bills. All of this is contained in the report. Commission member Gold said there are many elements in transportation and the ACIR could have done more if we knew the motivation.

Commission member Pickering said the ACIR did a great job considering the limitations and contrasted this with legislative forces that have not. He thanked the other members and the staff for their efforts. There was a discussion of the challenges of getting a quorum and other administrative issues and their impact on the ACIR's ability to provide such a report. Commission member O'Leary asked Commission member Heft about the delay in appointments by the Governor's Office. Commission member Heft said we are no longer on the Membership Updates topic and Commission member O'Leary requested he find out what is holding them up.

Commission chair Sharkey asked if there is a consensus to submit the draft even if the group does not reach a quorum by the end of the meeting, to be followed by the approved report when a quorum of members are able to approve it at a later meeting.

When a quorum was present later in this meeting, a motion was made and seconded to approve the report. Commission member Gold noted the corrections he had recommended and the motion was amended and seconded. It was approved with Commission vice chair Filchak opposed and all other members present voting in favor.

**7. Topics for consideration in 2024 (see overview in draft 12/1/2023 minutes)**

Commission chair Sharkey said discussions at September's visioning session showed changes are needed. He mentioned that Commission vice chair Filchak has edited the previously circulated [legislative changes document](#) linked on the agenda and vice chair Filchak explained that the recommendations are pared back to enable direct appointment of the ACIR members that CCM, COST, CTCOG, CAPSS, CABE, and the AFL-CIO currently nominate for appointment by the Governor. He said allowing direct appointment and enabling each to have a designee would solve a lot of things. He listed other remaining recommendations to the ACIR structure and membership obligations.

At this point, the final member necessary for a quorum arrived and the group returned to agenda items 2, 3, 4, and 6 for votes as detailed in those sections of the minutes.

The group returned to Agenda Item 7 and there was a discussion of some recommendations in the linked document that have been eliminated from the as-yet uncirculated version Commission vice chair Filchak was describing. Commission member Pickering said the proposed changes should provide the ACIR the option to establish committees or have bylaws, not prescribe that the ACIR do those things.

Commission member Hart agreed with allowing discretion and asked about the recommendation Commission vice chair Filchak had mentioned about establishing an ACIR Executive Committee. Commission vice chair Filchak answered that an executive committee could act when there isn't a quorum for meetings of the full group and between ACIR meetings. There was a discussion of such committees and of procedural differences between commission member designees, proxies, and alternates. Commission vice chair Filchak said he will circulate the most recent update of the legislative changes document and there was further discussion of who ACIR representation.

Rick Porth said CCM supports the changes Commission vice chair Filchak described for appointing members and authorizing designees. Commission vice chair Filchak recommended limiting any legislative proposal to these few changes due to 2024 being a short legislative session. Other possible changes can wait.

Commission chair Sharkey described conversations with the Governor's Office and a legislative leader and said there is appreciation for what the ACIR can do. He added that there is a question about the ACIR's purpose: should the ACIR independently choose to look into particular topics? If it does, what if there is no legislative uptake? He described his legislative interests in property tax reform and regionalism that led to the [MORE Commission](#) but those are not key issues for the legislature or Governor. He noted that funding is less of a problem now than it had been then. This is not a front-burner issue.

Commission chair Sharkey pointed out that ACIR members represent key interests, noting the Governor's focus on Transportation Oriented Development (TOD) and Rep. Rojas's focus on housing. The ACIR can help with those and the group's work on the MPO study shows what it can do. He also mentioned former ACIR member Bronin's question at 2023's visioning session: why would the ACIR do something for which there is no interest and no one will use? Should ACIR members drive the ACIR's agenda or should others?

Commission member O'Leary said both should drive the agenda. The ACIR should do work assigned to it and also projects of interest to members. The focus for now, however, must be on getting quorums at meetings. Commission chair Sharkey mentioned the value of Commission member O'Leary's institutional knowledge and Commission member Hart recommended the group address its long-standing topic of service sharing. Hard times will return and there are workforce limits. Service sharing can help improve the services provided by small towns.

Commission chair Sharkey asked about balance of efforts between topics assigned to the ACIR and those the group chooses to do. He mentioned comments at previous meetings that some members might not have an interest in some topics. Commission member Hart said the ACIR has the prerogative to be proactive and Commission member Gold echoed Commission member Hart's previous comment regarding regional service sharing for small towns. The ACIR can encourage information technology that enables such sharing. He encouraged the ACIR to convene new ideas as well as to work on topics of interest to elected officials. Commission member Pickering agreed and suggested members reach out to their appointing authorities to ask what they are interested in.

Commission chair Sharkey said the ACIR's work plan should include topics of interest to all members. He mentioned education and also asked who the group would be doing something for. The earlier suggestion regarding informational technology would be for municipalities, but will they take it up? Commission member O'Leary said he agrees with the points made and added that it is important to take up topics ahead of the game. He mentioned past discussions of potential synergy between [COGs](#) and [RESCs](#) and said [Northwest Hills COG](#) recently moved into the building of the region's RESC, [EdAdvance](#). These ideas are important for the health of the state.

Commission vice chair Filchak also agreed with the points that have been raised and said the ACIR should do new things but with better member engagement. Commission chair Sharkey recommended

dedicating a meeting to developing a work plan for 2024. He said every member should be encouraged to bring one or more topics. The meeting could be later this month, possible in the Local Government of the Future time slot on 1/23. Commission member Hart said the group should consider a two-year work plan.

Commission chair Sharkey said we will try to have Commission vice chair Filchak's updated legislative proposal raised as a committee bill. The meeting adjourned at 12:07.

*Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM*