

Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

Friday, April 5, 2024

Agenda: <https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/24157>

A recording is available at: <http://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=22952>

Members present: Maureen Brummett, John Filchak (Vice Chair), Bridget Fox, Matt Hart, Martin Heft, Keith Norton, James O’Leary, Francis Pickering, Lon Seidman, Brendan Sharkey (Chair), Steve Stephanou, Ron Thomas, Ethan Van Ness

Members not present: Carl Amento, Steve Cassano, Sam Gold, Brian Greenleaf, Laura Hoydick, Karl Kilduff, Jeff Kitching, Troy Raccuia, Katie Stargardter

Other participants: Laura Francis, Betsy Gara, Sheila McKay, Brian O’Connor, Kaleigh Pitcher

OPM staff: Christine Goupil, Greg Lowrey, Bruce Wittchen

Pending Appointment: Nominated by COST: Municipal official: Town of <10,000
Nominated by COST: Municipal official: Town of 10,000 – 20,000
Nominated by CCM: Municipal official: Town of >60,000

1. Call to order and overview of telemeeting procedures

Commission vice chair Filchak called the meeting to order at 10:35, noting the lack of a quorum at that time.

2. Approve draft minutes of [2/2/2024](#) and [3/1/2024](#) meeting

The draft minutes could not be approved until a quorum was present later in the meeting. At that time, a motions was made and seconded to approve the February and March minutes and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Membership Updates

Commission member Thomas said that someone who CCM had nominated previously has taken a different job, so CCM has nominated someone else for the Governor’s consideration.

4. ACIR 2024-25 Work Plan

- [2024-03-29 Draft Work Plan](#)

Bruce Wittchen showed the previously circulated work plan on his screen and Commission vice chair Filchak described the Municipal Workforce Development focus are outlined on the 2nd Slide. Commission member Hart pointed out that the Capitol Region COG (CRCOG) and CT Conference of Municipalities (CCM) have convened an *ad hoc* group working in that area. He said the CT Dept. of Administrative Services (DAS) is also involved in that, with the initial focus being on municipal building officials.

Commission vice chair Filchak asked if an ACIR group would be complementary or redundant and Commission member Hart said it would be complementary. Commission member Thomas mentioned Governor’s bill HB 5056, *An Act Facilitating The Expansion Of Shared Municipal Services*, and Commission member Filchak said that is a starting point. Commission member Heft noted the challenges to municipal workforce development and uncertainties regarding a bill going

through the legislative process. There was a discussion of how the ACIR's focus on municipal workforce developments fits in with other current or earlier work by others. Commission member O'Leary pointed out the ACIR's limited capacity to take on such work and suggested that CCM assist.

Commission vice-chair Filchak noted that this work group would be aligned with what CCM and CRCOG are doing and recommended that Commission members Hart and Thomas co-chair this work group. They agreed to do that. Commission member Hart described the expected coordination with subject matter experts and others listed for this focus area. There was a discussion of obstacles that must be overcome, of recruiting others to assist in this effort, and of the expected meeting format.

The group proceeded to the second focus area, *Special Education And Education Governance*, and Commission vice chair Filchak said ACIR discussions often come back to special education. He added that they consider education governance less frequently, but pointed out how long it has been since a completely new regional district has been formed and added that the work of [Regional Educational Service Centers](#) (RESCs) has been overlooked.

Commission member Seidman mentioned discussions of governance at his board of education and noted the workforce and diversity issues encountered in education, especially for special education. Commission vice chair Filchak asked if the CRCOG-CCM group has looked at education and Commission member Hart said they have focused on the municipal government side. There was a discussion of the significance of education workforce development, diversity, and service sharing and of adding that as a 3rd bullet in the 2nd focus area of the ACIR work plan.

Commission member O'Leary pointed out that RESCs are looking at these issues. He also noted that the long process of merging Regional School District 6 with the Litchfield school district to form the new Region 20 should have generated a lot of information that can assist the ACIR's work. It was noted that RESCs are not included in the list of subject matter experts and others that can assist the ACIR effort; Commission vice chair Filchak will add that.

Commission vice chair Filchak asked Commission member Seidman to co-lead the Focus Area 2 work group and Commission member Seidman agreed to do that. Commission vice chair Filchak recommended asking Commission member Brummett to be co-chair and also recommended the ACIR vote to approve the work plan as amended when a quorum is present.

Commission member Hart questioned whether the ACIR has the bandwidth needed for these two new work groups in addition to the existing LGF subcommittee and asked Commission member Heft if OPM will assist. Commission member Heft said OPM has the statutory obligation to staff the ACIR but noted the limited staffing available. He recommended halting the LGF subcommittee meetings and said OPM's Christine Goupil and Bruce Wittchen can each assist one of the two new work groups.

Commission vice chair Filchak agreed with the suggestion to end the LGF subcommittee meetings. Commission member O'Leary said others can assist with this, pointing out that the RESC Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) used to host ACIR meetings. He also said [Northwest Hills COG](#) director Rob Phillips's interest in the ACIR's work. Commission member Stephanou volunteered to assist.

Commission vice chair Filchak recommended LGF subcommittee meetings be canceled and the ACIR begin organizing the new work groups, which he said can proceed even without a vote being taken, in the absence of a quorum. The group would later return to this agenda item when a quorum was present after an additional member was able to join the meeting during the next section of the agenda. At that time, a motion was made and seconded to approve the work plan as

amended and the motion passed unanimously. Later, a separate motion was made to appoint the co-chairs as listed and that motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

5. Pending legislation (See attached list provided with agenda)

Commission member Thomas mentioned municipal interest in [HB 5144](#), *An Act Concerning The Assignment Of Certain Liens*, which he said would reduce the interest rate allowed for municipal tax liens, which he said would reduce local revenue and reduce the incentive to pay unpaid taxes. Brian O'Connor provided an overview of [CT Municipal Employees Retirement System](#) (CMERS) bill [HB 5515](#), *An Act Establishing The Municipal Employees Retirement Commission And Concerning The Municipal Employees' Retirement System*, which he said has come out of the [Finance Committee](#). He also mentioned [PA 23-182](#) and said the state is making changes but there is more to do.

Commission member Stephanou thanked CCM and the Comptroller for their work on the municipal retirement system. He said he is hopeful for more flexibility and the ability to collectively bargain for additional options to make the system sustainable. There was further discussion of the existing retirement system and of the significance of housing authority participation.

Commission member O'Leary asked about [HB 5264](#), *An Act Concerning Volunteer Fire Departments And Ambulance Companies And The Definition Of Employer Under The State Occupational Safety And Health Act*, and Betsy Gara provided some background, highlighting that the [Council of Small Towns](#) (COST) [is opposed](#).

At this time, Bruce Wittchen pointed out that an additional member had joined the meeting and a quorum of members was present. The group returned to Agenda Item 2 and a motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the February and March meetings. The motion passed unanimously. The group proceeded to Agenda Item 4 and a motion was made and seconded to approve the work plan as amended and the motion passed unanimously. Commission member Brummett, who had been late to this meeting because of the recurring conflict with a [CT Association of Public School Superintendents](#) (CAPSS) meeting, said CAPSS will replace her as its representative to the ACIR. There was a discussion of the process for doing so.

The group returned to Agenda Item 4 and there was a brief discussion of a desire for labor-oriented changes for [HB 5056](#), *An Act Facilitating The Expansion Of Shared Municipal Services*. Betsy Gara mentioned [SB 191](#), *An Act Concerning Food Scrap Diversion From The Solid Waste Stream And The Redemption Of Out-Of-State Beverage Containers*, which she said is not achievable, but she added that the bond bill might help pilot that. She also mentioned [SB 11](#), *An Act Coordinating Connecticut Resiliency Planning And Broadening Municipal Options For Climate Resilience*, saying the addition of climate resiliency in municipal plans of conservation & development (POCDs) would be manageable, but zoning for extreme heat and resiliency is not well understood.

Commission vice chair Filchak mentioned [SB 179](#), *An Act Concerning Rates For Ambulance And Paramedic Services*, and there was a discussion of the proposed increase in reimbursement and of the subsidy provided per transport. Commission member Hart referred to the previously discussed SB 5056 and said there are concerns regarding some of the substitute language. Revisions are expected and it is uncertain if it will provide the collective bargaining relief that had been sought.

Commission vice chair Filchak asked for updates regarding education bills and Commission member Brummett mentioned [SB 381](#), *An Act Concerning The Teaching Profession And Revisions To The Mandated Reporter Requirements*, which would allow some use of judgment by school employees in choosing whether to report possible child abuse to the Dept. of Children and Families (DCF). She believes there will be training regarding protocols. Commission member Brummett said that there had been less special education outplacement during the pandemic, noting that those tend to be the most expensive, but also mentioned other costly programs that have been mandated despite inconsistent

results and little state funding. She also mentioned [HB 5348](#), *An Act Concerning Paraeducators*. It would establish minimum salary for paraeducators, which they don't argue with, but it would be an additional local mandate.

Sheila McKay described the [CT Assoc. of Boards of Education](#)'s (CABE's) interest in [HB 5437](#), *An Act Concerning Mandate Relief*, which would create a group to review education mandates. She also described CABE's interest in developing a statewide portal for consistently tracking teachers' professional development work and certifications. Betsy Gara mentioned [HB 5315](#), *An Act Concerning Member Participation During Remote And Hybrid Municipal Public Agency Meetings Under The Freedom Of Information Act*, which she said would require members of local commissions to display their face when voting or speaking remotely at a public meeting.

6. Potential future topics

- Tentatively June: [CT DRS 2023 Tax Incidence Report](#) (issued 2/14/2024)

Commission vice chair Filchak said a presentation on this year's report is tentatively scheduled for the ACIR's June meeting and mentioned a recent [CT Mirror article](#) about that and other studies. He added that there might be avenues for the ACIR to contribute to the work being done.

Commission chair Sharkey thanked Commission vice chair Filchak for leading the meeting. Commission member O'Leary recommended the group also vote to appoint the working group co-chairs discussed earlier and a motion was made and seconded to appoint Commission members Hart and Thomas to co-chair the Municipal Workforce Development work group and Commission members Brummett and Seidman to co-chair the Special Education and Education Governance, Workforce Development, and Service Sharing work group. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Upcoming meetings:

The Local Government of the Future subcommittee will not meet due to the creation of two new work groups in accordance with the 2024-25 work plan.

- Friday, May 3, 2024, 10:30 Full ACIR
- To be determined Municipal Workforce Development work group
- To be determined Special Education and Education Governance, Workforce Development, & Service Sharing work group

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:45.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM

Attachment: Pending legislation of interest

- a. [HB 5056](#) *An Act Facilitating The Expansion Of Shared Municipal Services*
- b. [HB 5173](#) *An Act Authorizing The Online Publication Of Legal Notices By Municipalities*
- c. [HB 5273](#) *An Act Concerning The Recommendations Of The Intergovernmental Policy And Planning Division Within The Office Of Policy And Management*
- d. [HB 5390](#) *An Act Concerning Transit-Oriented Communities*
- e. [HB 5473](#) *An Act Requiring The Majority Leaders' Roundtable Group On Affordable Housing To Study The Elimination Of Municipal Design Review Processes*
- f. [SB 11](#) *An Act Coordinating Connecticut Resiliency Planning And Broadening Municipal Options For Climate Resilience*
- g. [SB 198](#) *An Act Establishing Local Representation On The Connecticut Siting Council For Local Projects*
- h. [SB 207](#) *An Act Concerning Housing Authority Jurisdiction*
- i. Other