

Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

Friday, October 4, 2024

Agenda: <https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/24165>

A recording is available at: <http://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=23640>

Members present: John Filchak (Chair), Bridget Fox, Tom Gaudett, Irene Haines, Matt Hart, Martin Heft, Laura Hoydick, Karl Kilduff, Keith Norton, Francis Pickering, Troy Raccuia, Lon Seidman, Brendan Sharkey, Steve Stephanou (Vice Chair), Ron Thomas

Members not present: Carl Amento, Steve Cassano, Sam Gold, James O’Leary, Jan Perruccio, Eric Protulis

Other participants: Brian O’Connor, Sheila McKay

OPM staff: Christine Goupil, Greg Lowery, Bruce Wittchen

Vacancies: Designee of the House Minority Leader
Nominated by COST: Municipal official: Town of 10,000 – 20,000

1. Call to order, overview of meeting procedures, agenda review/additions

Commission chair Filchak called the meeting at 10:32 with a quorum not yet present and provided an overview of the agenda and of his thoughts for including a new section for federal updates on future agendas, saying that has been neglected in the past. Given the lack of a quorum at the time, the group skipped Item 2 of this agenda and proceeded to Item 3.

3. Membership Updates

Commission member Heft said the governor has appointed First Selectman and State Representative Irene Haines to the ACIR, as a municipal official representing a town of population <10,000, and appointed ACIR member Steve Stephanou to be vice chair. He added that the two remaining vacancies are a municipal official from a town having population of 10,000 – 20,000 population, nominated by the [Council of Small Towns](#) (COST) and a designee of the House Minority Leader.

2. Approve draft minutes of [9/6/2024 meeting](#)

Additional members arrived and the group returned to Item 2 with a quorum present. A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft minutes and that motion was approved unanimously.

4. Update: [2024-25 Work Group Program](#) (also see [Work Group Ground Rules](#))

a. Municipal Workforce Development Subcommittee (Matt Hart and Ron Thomas, co-chairs)

Commission member Hart said the subcommittee met 9/19 with a focus on best practices for employee recruitment and retention. He added that the meeting included guests from Ellington and Plainville, towns utilizing a 4-day day work week, a schedule that has proven to be popular. He noted that the 4-day schedule is only for general government employees, not those in public safety or public works, where it wouldn’t work well. He mentioned that the group also discussed best practices with representatives of the [CT chapter of the Public Employer Labor Relations Assoc.](#) (ConnPELRA), which supports local government, human resources professionals.

Commission member Hart said the group is also looking into the potential for local government trainee programs or apprenticeship programs, noting the popularity of the state's trainee programs. Federal dollars might be available. He mentioned the benefits of paying new employees while training them and said they intend to provide recommendations by the end of the calendar year. Commission member Thomas described a national survey to be conducted by ConnPELRA to identify best practices.

Commission chair Filchak said he understands the attraction of a 4-day work week but pointed out that offices in smaller towns often are open less than that. A regional sharing approach might be better for them. Commission member Thomas said that concept was raised, with shared town managers and assessors being two examples. Commission member Hart clarified that they are not advancing the 4-day work week as being the be-all and end-all, but that it is an option for some. Commission chair Filchak suggested the subcommittee look at the three towns in NE CT that are the beginning stages of developing shared town administration. He highlighted this approach's potential for providing improved service by professional employees.

Commission vice chair Stephanou commended the subcommittee for its work and agreed that a multi-prong approach is needed. Christine Goupil added that union representatives are involved in this work, so the subcommittee is cognizant of their concerns.

b. Special Education, Education Governance, & Workforce Development Subcommittee (Jan Perruccio and Lon Seidman, co-chairs)

Commission member Seidman said this group began with three separate topics but they are related to each other and the group's report will encompass all of them. He described the group's recent meeting with the tri-chairs of the [Task Force to Study Special Education Services and Funding](#). He highlighted the rising proportion of students identified as eligible for special education and pointed out the need for workforce development to serve special education needs and suggested looking at governance differently, given these challenges.

Commission chair Filchak said the group's discussions with other organizations have been invaluable, highlighting the recent meeting with the special education task force. Lon recommended ACIR members watch that [video](#) or read the [meeting notes](#). This issue will hit towns everywhere and the costs are growing astronomically. We are not funding this the right way. Commission chair Filchak recommended inviting the task force tri-chairs to an ACIR meeting to expand on this discussion.

Commission member Seidman said the state's approach to special education funding is part of the problem. It provides funding after costs cross a spending threshold. With no funding provided below that threshold, schools districts are not incentivized to keep a student close to home. He added that schools spend too much on outplacement and it also is not good for kids.

There was a discussion of the subcommittee's upcoming meeting, which is expected to be held at the CT Assoc. of Boards of Education, and Commission chair Filchak noted the need to engage education paraprofessionals in the subcommittee's discussions. Commission member Seidman agreed and there was a discussion of inviting the task force tri-chairs to the ACIR's December meeting and holding that meeting at the Legislative Office Building, inviting legislators

5. ACIR regular reports

- a. 2024 legislative sessions mandates report (due 11/15/2024)
- b. 2023-24 ACIR Annual report (no due date)
- c. 2025 Mandate Compendium Supplement (due 1/22/2025)

Bruce Wittchen provided an overview of the session mandates report, explaining that the draft was previously circulated to ACIR members and describing the organization of the report. Commission

chair Filchak recommended the ACIR track the development of regulatory mandates due to the potential for them to be based on interpretations not envisioned at the time statutes they are based on were passed. Bruce described the ACIR's former process for monitoring the progress of legislation when the ACIR had 1-2 full-time staff and said they do not have the capacity to do that now, but monitoring the regulation approval process as suggested by Commission chair Filchak might be more manageable. He noted that the third report on the list, the mandate compendium, does include regulatory mandates, unlike the just-approved session mandates report.

Rep. Haines provided an overview of the General Assembly's [legislative document search system](#), describing its capabilities and how the progress of bills can be followed there. Bruce said this report is not due until 11/15, but the ACIR can consider whether to approve it today. A motion was made and seconded to approve the report and the motion was approved unanimously. Bruce Wittchen said he has completed drafts of the other two reports and that, since they are based in part on information on the report just approved, he had been waiting to circulate them and will do so in the coming week. He explained those reports and invited comments after members review them.

6. ACIR Member Roundtable

Commission chair Filchak explained the intent behind the new ACIR Member Roundtable section of the agenda, which is an open forum for mentioning upcoming events, meetings, or other items. The ACIR's current focus is on our work program, but that does not mean our discussions must be limited to that. Commission member Hart provided a preview of the [Shared Services Workshop & Forum](#) to be hosted by the [Capitol Region Council of Governments](#) (CRCOG) on 10/8. He added that CRCOG is looking to bring back the policy forums it used to host with the UConn School of Public Policy and CRCOG is also planning an 11/7 event on workforce development event focused in particular on the barriers faced by underserved, underrepresented, and disadvantaged populations. Information will be circulated when that is fleshed out.

Commission member Thomas mentioned the [119k Commission](#) that the [CT Conference of Municipalities](#) (CCM) established to address the state's 119,000 at-risk and disconnected youth, a number they aim to reduce by 60,000 in 10 years. He added that ACIR member Laura Hoydick is a member of the commission and the commission will issue its report on 10/9. It will be a very important proposal. Commission chair Filchak agreed that it is important work and suggested it be presented at an upcoming ACIR meeting. Commission member Hoydick highlighted the importance of collaboration and said this work can be transformational if we are open to what the report says.

Commission member Heft recommended the ACIR consider scheduling its 2025 meetings as hybrid meetings at the Legislative Office Building to raise awareness of the ACIR. Commission chair Filchak and vice chair Stephanou agreed. Commission chair Filchak said this member roundtable will be a standing part of future agendas for members to raise ideas, talk about events, and so forth.

7. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

8. Upcoming meetings:

Commission chair Filchak read the dates of upcoming meetings.

- October 8, 2024, 9:00 am CRCOG Shared Services Workshop & Forum
- October 17, 2024, 9:00 am ACIR municipal working group
- October 28, 2024, 1:00 pm ACIR education working group
- November 1, 2024, 10:30 am Full ACIR

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:21

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM