

Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

Friday, November 1, 2024

Agenda: <https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/24166>

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

Members present: John Filchak (Chair), Bridget Fox, Matt Hart, Martin Heft, Karl Kilduff, Keith Norton, James O’Leary, Jan Perruccio, Francis Pickering, Eric Protulis, Troy Raccuia, Lon Seidman, Brendan Sharkey, Steve Stephanou (Vice Chair), Ron Thomas, Brie Wolf

Members not present: Carl Amento, Steve Cassano, Tom Gaudett, Sam Gold, Irene Haines, Laura Hoydick

Other participants: David Abbey, Joe DeLong, Laura Francis, Betsy Gara, John Harkins, 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. Welcome and call to order

Commission chair Filchak called the meeting at 10:33 with a quorum not yet present and the group skipped Item 2 of the agenda and proceeded to Item 3.

2. Consideration of draft minutes of [10/4/2024](#) meeting

When the group returned to this item after a quorum had arrived during the discussion of Item 3, a motion was made and seconded to approve the draft minutes and that motion was approved unanimously, with Francis Pickering abstaining.

3. 2025 meeting schedule

There was a discussion of the suggestion to schedule 2025’s regular meetings at 9:30 on the 1st Thursday of each month at the Legislative Office Building. There was much support for the change, but it was noted that moving meetings from Fridays to avoid conflicts with Planning & Development Committee meetings might prevent the interactions possible with PD members when in the building the same day. A motion was made and seconded to approve the change and that motion was approved unanimously.

4. Membership Updates

Commission member Heft said there has been no change, but noted that people have reached out to the House Minority Leader regarding his vacant designee position. The vacancy for a municipal official from a town having population of 10,000 – 20,000 population should be filled soon. Note: later in the meeting, Commission member Heft announced that he was been notified that the Governor has appointed Tolland Town Manager Brian Foley to that position.

5. 119k Commission on At-risk and Disconnected Youth: Young People First report

Joe DeLong, CT Conference of Municipalities

Commission chair Filchak introduced Joe DeLong of the [CT Conference of Municipalities](#) (CCM) to present on the [Young People First report](#) issued by the [119k Commission](#) established by CCM. [Note: the presentation begins at 6:50 in the [meeting video](#)]

Mr. DeLong shared a [presentation](#) on the screen and provided some background regarding the commission and report. He proceeded to Slide 1 provides details of the public engagement process and Mr. DeLong said the roundtable discussions with young people were the most important part of that. Slide 2 outlines categories of actions that can lead to what the commission considers to be an achievable goal. With Slide 3, Mr. DeLong identified the six gaps or cracks in the system and highlighted the consistent story about people previously having tried to join the workforce.

Slide 4 lists the four strategic pillars and 22 aligned actions of the commission's strategy and Mr. DeLong noted that some include sub-actions, such as those listed on Slide 5 for Aligned Action 2. Mr. DeLong said CT does some things well in pieces but gaps in the system or with a lack of coordination for young people who move or who age out. He describes benefits of a holistic approach.

Slide 6 describes Aligned Action 3 and Mr. DeLong emphasized the need to get youth into the system. The state's [2-1-1 system](#) should be modernized and also be used to provide data points. Aligned Action 4 is described on Slide 7 and Mr. DeLong empathized the need to improve the Next Gen accountability standards and to determine which resources do not provide the expected results.

The next slide describes Aligned Action 5 and Mr. DeLong posed the question of how well students are prepared for success when they graduate. He also mentioned the impact of out-of-school suspensions on student's progress and noted issues regarding in-school suspensions. Slide 9 skips to Aligned Action 18, which recommends launching a Center of Excellence and Mr. DeLong noted the opportunity to see how different models work and to provide quality control.

Slide 10 estimates the costs of the overall strategy and Mr. DeLong compared the listed costs to the state's \$750 million the state loses due to the lost economy and costs of incarceration resulting from the present disconnect. Slide 11 refers back to Aligned Action 7 and its focus on the impacts of inequities in school funding.

Slide 12's chart shows state school funding since 2016-17. Mr. DeLong pointed out that such funding has not kept up with inflation and has shifted costs from state income and sales taxes to property taxes. He noted the inequities of doing so and said state pay an average of 44% of education costs nationwide, but CT pays only 36%. Slide 13 list potential changes to Education Cost Sharing and Mr. DeLong noted that the slide's Scenario 8 identifies the amount if funding were adjusted to account for inflation since 2013. He said the commission has chosen Scenario 5, changing the weighting. He ended that presentation by noting that those are some but not all highlights of the report.

Commission chair Filchak said that it is impressive but added that he did not see any mention of the multitude of state agencies with a hand in this. Mr. DeLong responded that a lot of this is moving to the nonprofit sector and noted the need for coordination. The current approach drives up costs without increasing the return on that spending and the goal is to build on what is working. He also noted that a particular town can be doing this well, but a person will lose access to that if moving to another town. They are considering a regional structure with local hubs.

Commission member Seidman noted some similarities to other reports and asked Mr. DeLong what his elevator pitch would be regarding structural changes necessary to accomplish this. Mr. DeLong said the report is deep and an elevator pitch is hard, but said a consistent message from educators is the interruption in services when students move to new districts. Other concerns relate to the rigid nature of graduation requirements and the desire to set up students for success in life. He also mentioned that the system must identify unmet needs so they can be addressed earlier, not when racing to graduation.

Commission member Seidman asked about the availability of data regarding the impact of school district size. He suggested that a smaller school environment with more local accountability might be better for kids, regardless of their demographics, but he didn't see that addressed in the report. Mr. DeLong said data are available but can be overwhelming. He added that it is not just the model of the school that matters; it also is how the model of the school meets the need of the specific demographic, noting the influence of wealth, two parents at home, mental illness, and other factors on student outcomes.

Commission member Hart asked about a potential role for Councils of Governments (COGs) and Mr. DeLong said COGs become the regional umbrella. He noted the issue of funding a new program within a COG but said the idea is for COGs to serve as the regional entity that coordinates the local hubs providing local case management. He pointed out that, by bringing information into a more coordinated regional network, a person moving within the region will not fall through a gap in services. There were no further questions or comments and Commission chair Filchak said the ACIR looks forward to seeing the progress of this initiative and thanked Mr. DeLong for the presentation.

6. Updates: 2024-25 Work Group Program

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

Commission member Hart described the group's focus on municipal workforce development and shared services. He added that the subcommittee is drafting recommendations for the next meeting and described shared service and training program options under consideration. He also described the expected role of the state's Regional Performance Incentive Program (RPIP) for funding the establishment of municipal service sharing.

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

Commission member Perruccio described the subcommittee's recent meeting with three people from the CT State Dept. of Education (CSDE) to discuss the agency's education workforce development and special education programs. She provided an overview and noted that the [CT Educator Preparation and Certification Board](#) is about to meet for the first time. The subcommittee is reviewing previous or other ongoing work in these areas and looking for commonalities. She highlighted that the ACIR's two subcommittees are coalescing around the same issues and said we are facing the same issues both on the municipal and teacher educator side. Commission member Seidman added that other groups, including the [Task Force to Study Special Education Services and Funding](#), whose leaders previously met with the subcommittee, are finalizing reports too.

Commission member Hart mentioned the impact of compensation and work environment issues on the municipal workforce and Commission member Seidman those are also issues in education, noting that work environment and work requirements have especially large impact on people's willingness to work in special education. Commission member Perruccio pointed out that work-from-home is not an option for educators and added that another important issue for educators is the desire for more autonomy in their profession: they want to be treated like professionals. She explained that educators are subject a number of influences from outside education that impact their work said a statement about autonomy will probably be included in the subcommittee's final recommendations.

Commission member Thomas said both subcommittees see a need to do something about civility in the workplace. Some potential employees are not interested in municipal work because of what they read about or experiences that they've had. He mentioned the Univ. of Hartford's [Gov. M. Jodi Rell Center for Public Service](#) and said it might be helpful for this. Commission member Perruccio mentioned the significance of state funding for increased compensation in solving a teacher shortage in the 1980s but noted that there are additional nuances to the problem. Commission member Seidman added that new teachers often have large student loans.

Commission chair Filchak said towns are poaching each other's employees and pointed out that there are only limited data for comparing salaries ranges. Current municipal salary surveys do not include details necessary for comparison in the manner compensation can be compared in private sector. He noted that someone had mentioned the [Uniform Chart of Accounts](#) expected of municipalities, which could be helpful, but he pointed out that some do not use it.

Commission member O'Leary said that, according to a number of people who have left municipal service, boards of finance have a large role in discouraging employees on the municipal side, mentioning that they often overrule salary increases. Commission chair Filchak agreed and explained that small town first selectmen and boards of finance often are not managers and look at only the bottom line without considering broader issues. Commission chair Filchak said there should be a variety of interim recommendations to consider at the ACIR's next meeting. He outlined the expected approach, noting they intent to hold a hybrid meeting at the Legislative Office Building. It will be an important meeting.

7. ACIR regular reports

- a. 2023-24 ACIR Annual report (no due date)
- b. 2025 Mandate Compendium Supplement (due 1/22/2025)

Bruce Wittchen said he previously circulated the draft annual report to members for their review and just received a response with a number of suggested improvements from one of the new members. He recommended the group not vote on it this month and he will recirculate it once he has updated it for the group's consideration in December. He added that he will also circulate a current draft of the listed mandate compendium supplement, but it is not ready for review yet. That report includes regulatory mandates and a new regulatory mandate can be approved by the legislature's Regulation Review Committee as late as mid-December. Such a mandate should also be included in the report due to the legislature in mid-January.

8. ACIR Member Roundtable

Commission member Heft said he received a message that the Governor has appointed Tolland Town Manager Brian Foley to the ACIR. He was nominated by COST to fill the position reserved for a municipal official of a town of 10,000 – 20,000 population. Sheila McKay said she has forwarded the [CSDE's response](#) to the 119k Commission report to Bruce Wittchen for circulation. Commission member Hart described the joint Hartford-East Hartford [task force to consider shared services](#). Commission member Thomas said CCM is receiving comments regarding the 119k Commission report and can provide those to the ACIR. He also mentioned that [CCM's annual convention](#) will be 12/3 and 12/4.

9. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

10. Upcoming meetings:

Commission chair Filchak read the dates of upcoming meetings.

- November 12, 2024, 1:00 pm ACIR education working group
- November 21, 2024, 9:00 am ACIR municipal working group
- December 6, 2024, 10:30 am Full ACIR

11. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:41

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM