

# Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

Friday, December 6, 2024

Agenda: <https://egov.ct.gov/PMC/Agenda/Download/24167>

A recording is available at: <http://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=23958>

**Members Present:** John Filchak (Chair), Tom Gaudett, Sam Gold, Matt Hart, Martin Heft, Laura Hoydick, Karl Kilduff, Keith Norton, James O’Leary, Jan Perruccio, Francis Pickering, Troy Raccuia, Lon Seidman, Steve Stephanou (Vice Chair), Ron Thomas, Brie Wolf

**Members Not Present:** Carl Amento, Steve Cassano, Bridget Fox, Irene Haines, Eric Protulis, Brendan Sharkey

**Other Participants:** Megan Andrews, Laura Francis, Betsy Gara, John Harkins, Sheila McKay, Brian O’Connor, Louis Rosado Burch

**OPM Staff:** Christine Goupil, Bruce Wittchen

**Vacancies:** Designee of the House Minority Leader

## 1. Welcome and Call to Order

Commission Chair Filchak called the meeting to order at 10:34 AM with a quorum not yet present, and moved to item 3 of the agenda.

## 2. Consideration of Draft Minutes of [11/1/2024](#) Meeting

Members returned to item 3 after a quorum was met. A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft minutes, which carried unanimously by voice vote.

## 3. 2025 Meeting Schedule

There was a discussion of the proposed 2025 meeting schedule. A motion was made and seconded to approve the schedule. The motion was adopted unanimously by voice vote.

## 4. Membership Updates

Commission Member Heft said only one vacancy remains and noted that people have reached out to the House Minority Leader’s office regarding his vacant designation. Commission Member Hoydick said she will also contact Representative Candelora.

## 5. 2024-25 Work Program: Interim Report & Recommendations; Possible Actions

Commission Chair Filchak provided an overview of the work program and Commission Member Hart described recommendations of the municipal workforce subcommittee. He explained their interest in trainee initiatives and highlighted other topics of interest, including compensation and the work environment, including civility, and noted the potential for tapping into the justice-involved community. Commission Member Thomas added that the subcommittee is interest in best practices from CT municipalities and from other states. He also mentioned the [CT Conference of Municipalities](#)’ (CCM’s) [Civility Pledge](#) and the work of the University of Hartford’s [Governor M. Jodi Rell Center for Public Service](#).

Commission Chair Filchak asked if that committee is considering governance, pointing out municipal government-education cooperation in Mansfield and Madison. There was a discussion of such options, including back-office challenges faced by small towns, and Commission Chair Filchak said school superintendents could oversee those roles, noting that school systems have greater capacity for doing so. Commission Member Thomas said we should let towns be innovative.

Commission Chair Filchak mentioned the recently-announced [Hartford-East Hartford Task Force](#) and recommended legislation to encourage such partnerships and enable the use of state [Regional Performance Incentive Program](#) (RPIP) without involving a council of governments (COG). Commission Member Thomas noted that RPIP was only recently modified to require COG or [Regional Education Service Center](#) (RESC) involvement and Commission Member Hart underscored the value of COGs' involvement. Commission Member Heft summarized the history of the recent change to RPIP. Commission Chair Filchak described the rationale for that change but added that there is a rationale for simplifying cooperative efforts between a city and inner suburb. Commission Member Hart mentioned an additional topic: municipal workforce needs must be on the radar of the state's [workforce development boards](#).

Commission Chair Filchak asked for an update from the education subcommittee and Commission Member Perruccio highlighted the group's discussions of various opportunities for regionalism, but not only in back-office roles. She also mentioned the potential for such relationships in governance and programming, noting that no single option is perfect. This subcommittee, like the other, also is considering workforce needs and the employee pipeline.

Commission Member Seidman added that barriers to collaboration are a major focus of this group, as is the state's definition of Local Education Agency (LEA) as well as regulatory barriers to innovation. He emphasized that 18% of Connecticut education funding is for special education and noted the impact on property taxes. He listed some possible options for consideration, including teachers working for more than one school district. Commission Member Seidman also explained state funding disincentives for school construction that can be necessary for school districts considering collaborating or consolidating programs.

Commission Member Perruccio said the Education Committee has considered the potential for incentivizing districts to share staff as well as incentives for regional collaboration and early intervention to reduce the number of students needing special education later in their schooling. She pointed out that only 6,252 of the 8,936 employed educators certified for special education are currently working in special education. Commission Member Perruccio also noted the subcommittee's consideration of workforce retention and diversification. She said programs exist that need to be scaled. She also mentioned needs for vocational/technical education.

Commission Member Seidman pointed out that some of this subcommittee's work overlaps with the work of outside groups, such as the [Task Force to Study Special Education Services and Funding](#), and said the subcommittee has avoided stepping on their toes. There was a discussion of whether the subcommittees have developed recommended legislative language and they have not.

Louis Rosado Burch agreed with not undermining other efforts and pointed out starting salaries as being an important factor for recruiting new teachers. The [Connecticut Education Association](#) (CEA) is also working on educator diversity. He said the state's [Aspiring Educators Diversity Scholarship Program](#) has been limited to students who graduated from a priority school district but should be open to students from any district.

Commission Chair Filchak asked if the state employee salary ranges listed on the state job site would be a helpful guide for establishing municipal employees' salaries. He mentioned municipalities hiring each other's employees but said we need information regarding proper compensation. Commission Member Seidman mentioned a recent [Connecticut Association of Boards of Education](#) (CABE) discussion of costs experienced by new teachers and said the various issues must be considered holistically. Commission

Member Perruccio pointed out that student teachers are not paid. Both subcommittees have considered how to attract employees, but there are differences. This shortage is different than previous shortages and she noted that teachers cannot work from home. Commission Member Hoydick said there is no compensation for people training to be school counselors and she also mentioned the relevance of CCM's recent [119k Commission report](#) (presented at the ACIR's 11/1/2024 meeting). There was a discussion of that presentation.

## **6. 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 had circulated the draft annual report to members prior to the 11/1/2024 meeting and subsequently updated it based on recommendations provided by one of the members. He said it is now ready for the group's consideration and a motion was made and seconded to approve the report. The motion passed unanimously.

Bruce said he also has circulated the draft Mandates Compendium Supplement, but it is not ready for approval because the legislature's Regulation Review Committee will meet later this month. Any additional new or expanded regulatory mandates adopted during that meeting should be included in the report. He noted the ACIR's interest in a new approach to mandate review: to add a more detailed analysis of a few mandates to the current, broader review process. Commission Member Thomas said CCM will be able to provide information regarding that later in the month.

Commission Chair Filchak said the additional work will be valuable and mentioned the example of unexpected costs resulting from new state requirements for dog pounds. Commission Member Thomas emphasized the intent of not taking a position on the merits of a mandated requirement, just regarding the cost, and Bruce Wittchen described the reporting approach.

## **7. ACIR Member Roundtable**

Commission Member Heft posted a new list of legislative committee leaders and mentioned there will be a new committee on government oversight. Commission Chair Filchak added that there will also be a Select Committee on Special Education.

Commission Member O'Leary said the public and legislators are comfortable with the status quo and said we should highlight the value of innovation. There was a discussion of CCM efforts and Commission Member Thomas recommended discussing this further. Commission Vice Chair Stephanou described an innovation fund established in Manchester. There were successes and non-successes but, overall, it was a valuable effort. He also noted his concern about the unhoused population. There are four times as many in Manchester than there had been pre-pandemic and the State's [211 system](#) is inadequate. We do not have a great shelter system and the ACIR could work on collaboration among municipalities, the state, and non-profits to address this issue.

Commission Chair Filchak pointed out associated transportation problems – the lack of buses to shelters – and there was further discussion of current efforts. Commission Vice Chair Stephanou said municipalities cannot handle it alone and Commission Member Seidman noted schools' increasing role as social services agencies. Commission Member Hoydick mentioned [United Way of Connecticut's](#) concerns regarding the situation and also pointed out issues with heating oil assistance. We need to collaborate to get through this season. She also highlighted Stratford's success with adding social workers to the police department and other innovative ideas from town department working groups.

Commission Chair Filchak recommended bringing key state agency people to the January or February meeting to discuss this and Commission Vice Chair Stephanou agreed. Commission Member Hart said a

future ACIR project could focus on the human services ecosystem, building off the 119k Commission's work. There was a discussion of the number of state agencies and nonprofits involved.

## **8. Public Comment**

Sheila McKay said it is very telling that there will be select committee at the legislature on special education. We are awaiting that task force's report. Commission Chair Filchak said such a committee is overdue.

## **9. Upcoming Meetings:**

Commission Chair Filchak read the dates of upcoming meetings (*Note: each meeting was subsequently rescheduled or canceled*).

- December 10, 2024, 9:00 AM      ACIR Education Working Group
- December 19, 2024, 9:00 AM      ACIR Municipal Working Group
- January 9, 2024, 9:30 AM      Full ACIR

## **10. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 11:34 AM.

*Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, Office of Policy and Management*