

Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

Legislative Office Building, Hartford, Connecticut

Friday, January 10, 2020

NOTE: A video of this meeting can be streamed at <http://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=17019>

Members present: Carl Amento, John Elsesser, John Filchak, Sam Gold, Mary Glassman (Alt), Rick Hart, Martin Heft, Marcia Leclerc, Rudy Marconi, Neil O’Leary (Chair), Francis Pickering, Ron Thomas, Bob Valentine, Lyle Wray (Vice Chair)

Members absent: James Albis, Maureen Brummett, Sen. Stephen Cassano, Kathleen Demsey, Brian Greenleaf, Tommy Hyde, James O’Leary, Lon Seidman, Scott Shanley, Brendan Sharkey

Other participants: Rep. Jason Rojas

ACIR staff: Bruce Wittchen

1. Call to Order

Commission chair Neil O’Leary called the meeting to order at 10:34.

Due to the presence of new members, Commission chair Neil O’Leary asked everyone to introduce themselves. He provided some background regarding the ACIR’s recent activities, highlighting the participation of members and others in two work groups, led by Commission members Wray and Filchak, that met beginning in late summer and prepared a report for the PA 19-117 Task Force.

Commission chair Neil O’Leary noted the presence of [Rep. Rojas](#), who is also a member of the Task Force, and recommended skipping ahead to Agenda Item 5 and asked Commission member Heft for an update on the task force.

5. PA 19-117 Task Force

Commission member Heft explained that the task force was unable to meet as expected last month because of weather and said he spoke with Rep. Rojas, who will spearhead the effort to get the task force together for a meeting. He noted the ACIR’s desire for legislative input and preference that the task force not rubberstamp the report prepared by the ACIR.

Rep. Rojas thanked ACIR and work group participants for their efforts and noted that he questions the need for the one-time task force, since the ACIR is doing this work on an ongoing basis. It is important to move forward with this effort. He sees the ACIR as being the convener and legislators will need to move it forward.

Commission chair Neil O’Leary said the ACIR appreciates the involvement of Rep. Rojas and other legislators who participated in the work groups’ efforts.

2. ACIR Membership Updates

Commission member Heft provided an update regarding the expected appointment of someone to fill the remaining vacancy and said Jonathan Harris will help push that.

3. 2020 meeting schedule

Commission chair Neil O’Leary described the proposed schedule and a motion was made and seconded to approve it. The motion was approved unanimously.

4. Consideration of the draft minutes of the November 1, 2019 meeting

A motion was made and seconded to approve the [11/1/2019 minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously.

6. Other Old Business

a. Updates on future ACIR reports

Bruce Wittchen said he is working on the ACIR’s 2020 compendium of state mandates, the first full [compendium](#) since 2014. It is due to the legislature on Feb. 19. He explained that the group has been issuing compendium supplements since then that identify each year’s mandate changes, but a full compendium describing all mandates is due this year. He described changes the group authorized in 2019.

Bruce Wittchen said the ACIR’s municipal budget report will be the next report and mentioned that this leads to the next agenda item: a discussion of the work group proposed by Commission vice-chair Wray to develop recommendations for streamlining town/region reporting to the state. Bruce said that can also help modernize ACIR reporting, especially for something like the [municipal budget adoption experiences report](#), which is also mentioned on the agenda.

Commission vice-chair Wray said the towns and Councils of Governments (COGs) are obligated to spend too much time shuffling reports and he noted that there is considerable variation in digitization even within programs of a single agency. He described the evolution of the [CT Conference of Municipalities](#)’ (CCM)’s municipal salary surveys and noted that some [Dept. of Transportation](#) (DOT) programs still require COGs to submit information via paper copies with highlighting. He said the state has to improve its business functions.

Commission vice-chair Wray asked for volunteers to participate in a work group to develop recommendations. He mentioned that the state of Florida spent little to establish a [SharePoint portal](#) and Iowa did the same. He said the [Capitol Region Council of Governments](#) (CRCOG) probably devotes the equivalent of half-time staff person for such reporting. Other states enable much more to be done online. Commission member Thomas volunteered for the work group.

Commission member Pickering said the [Western CT Council of Governments](#) (WestCOG) uses an electronic system for such records but must print pages and recalculate numbers when submitting to DOT. Commission vice-chair Wray said the improvement people have in mind will threaten the jobs of the state’s carrier pigeons. There was a discussion of potential benefits and the need to phase in changes.

Commission member Gold noted that, while the discussion has been specific to reporting required of the state’s nine COGs, the same changes would also reduce reporting burdens faced by the state’s 169 municipalities. Commission vice-chair Wray highlighted the unevenness of reporting mechanisms even within a single agency, noting that at the same time reports must be submitted to one DOT program on paper, with some text highlighted by hand, another program has the best project management software in the country.

Commission member Filchak said each town participating in [his COG’s regional animal shelter](#) is required to submit a monthly form to the state using a 3-page tricolor reporting form. The regional shelter separately prints a report for each town and it must be on pink paper to be accepted by the state. He added that the work group proposed by Commission vice-chair Wray might consider

beginning with a focus on Other Recommendations 23, 29, and 31 in the draft Task Force report, with 29 and 31 being the higher priorities:

- 23. ACIR should develop and must articulate vision and values for municipal services and the relationship with the state*
- 29. ACIR should study and make recommendations for the overhaul of Title 7 with an emphasis on making it a model for the efficient delivery of services.*
- 31. In consultation with, ACIR, the University of Connecticut School of Public Administration and the Government Finance Officers of CT (GFOA), develop a best practices guide for local budgeting as well as providing an educational outreach program using the COGs as regional education centers) for the delivery of such information, including but not limited to:*

There was a discussion of the organization of the work group and Bruce Wittchen was asked to circulate an invitation to the full ACIR and to other interested people. Non-members will be welcome to participate in the meetings. Commission member Filchak said the work group would not need to wait for the Task Force to act before looking at the three recommendations he highlighted because they are not likely to be priorities for immediate legislation.

There was further discussion of the fiscal impacts of legislation on municipalities and how impacts are described in ACIR mandates reporting. Bruce Wittchen provided an overview of how mandates are categorized as minor, moderate, or major, but pointed out that it is not based on rigorous analyses. He also mentioned that, as discussed in previous ACIR meetings, a particular mandate can have a significantly different impact on one town than on another, depending on a variety of factors.

Commission member Pickering said it could be worthwhile to make a connection to the state's fiscal indicator reporting, as discussed in the report's Other Recommendation #32:

- 32. Amend the current Fiscal Indicators Report for the effective use of data measures to inform improvement of municipal operations and service delivery*

Commission member Filchak said Other Recommendation #9 describes another approach regarding fiscal impacts:

- 9. Require ACIR to annually compile a representative sample each fiscal impact statement completed for all laws passed by the general assembly related to municipalities and enacted into law in the preceding year to determine the actual net additional cost to school districts or municipalities from any new or expanded program or service that school districts or municipalities would be required to perform or administer under a new law.*

Commission member Elsesser said that, in addition to identifying the expected magnitude of mandates, the ACIR should also consider whether a mandate is needed. He mentioned reports that must be submitted to DPH but are eventually discarded without being used. He suggested that 50% of minor mandates be eliminated.

Commission member Thomas said he agrees with recommendations for greater scrutiny of mandates and mentioned that the extension of the sales tax to municipal parking might be a greater burden than expected. Commission vice-chair Wray said it is helpful to divide mandates into three categories: those requiring action; those requiring spending; and those specifying a process. It can be difficult to put a dollar figure on a process mandate.

b. Updates on Municipal, Regional, or State Matters

Commission member Hart said Rep. Sredzinski will host a meeting at the LOB next week regarding public safety answering points (PSAPs) and potential legislation for 2020. He will send the details to Bruce for forwarding to the rest of the members. The [Dept. of Emergency Services and Public Protection](#) (DESPP) will be the lead agency.

7. New Business

There was a discussion of upcoming changes at the [CT Economic Resource Center](#) (CERC), which are expected to include a name change and re-orientation to be more of a state-wide Chamber of Commerce. Commission chair Neil O'Leary suggested inviting someone from CERC to a future meeting. He said the ACIR should also invite someone to speak with the group about special education and possibilities for the consolidation and improvement of services.

Commission vice-chair Wray said CERC, the [state workforce board](#), and the [Dept. of Economic & Community Development](#) (DECD) do similar things. Commission chair Neil O'Leary said DECD Commissioner Lehman has described an aggressive new approach for incentivizing economic development, with banks, not the state, acting as fiduciary. He also mentioned [Dept. of Administrative Services](#) (DAS) Commissioner Geballe interest in changing the state processed and noted that DAS' school construction program is moving to OPM.

Commission vice-chair Wray recommended inviting Commissioner Geballe to attend an ACIR meeting to discuss IT modernization and improved 2-way reporting. He added that, with the expected numbers of people retiring in the near-future, we will need to automate more.

Commission member Elsesser said he believes broadband equity is another issue that the ACIR should consider addressing. He explained that towns should be able to work together or separately to provide service to their residents. He described issues faced by those without access and said the [state-supported fiber network](#) played a key role in bringing the Jackson Labs to Farmington. He added that he has written a 5G policy paper that he can share with the group and noted that broadband access might be affected by significant personnel losses at the [Office of Consumer Counsel](#) (OCC) and at the [Public Utility Regulatory Authority](#) (PURA).

Commission chair Neil O'Leary suggested that the ACIR consider inviting Gov. Lamont to attend a future meeting, noting the governor's active interest in this work and Commission member Heft offered to follow up on that.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:23

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM