



ADVISORY COMMISSION ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS
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AGENDA

Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations
Monday, March 10, 2014 – 10 A.M.
Room 1B, [Legislative Office Building](#)
300 Capitol Ave., Hartford, CT

1. Call to Order
2. Consideration of the [Draft Minutes of the September 18, 2014 Meeting](#)
3. Consideration of ACIR reports
 - a. 2014 Mandates Compendium
 - Mandates Reporting – format, definitions and classification
 - b. 2014-2015 Municipal Budgeting Experiences
 - c. 2014 Annual Report
4. Old Business
 - a. ACIR Work Group (see attached 10/22/2013 meeting notes)
5. New Business
 - a. Other
6. The next meeting will be: to be determined

Work Group Meeting Notes

Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

Hearing Room 2A, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, Connecticut

Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2013 - 1:30 P.M.

Members Present: Dave LeVasseur, Carl Amento, Frederick Baruzzi, Sen. Stephen Cassano, Jim Finley, Rep. Frank Nicastro, James O'Leary, Leo Paul, Lisa Roy, Scott Shanley

Staff: Bruce Wittchen

Others: Garrett Eucalitto

Commission member Paul asked if the ACIR can do more than just approve reports and said there is more that can be done for intergovernmental relations. Commission member LeVasseur said the group used to function more like a think tank, with funding and staff, and sponsored conferences and other initiatives that had an influence on legislation. There was a discussion of changes in OPM staffing and work assignments. Given the limited resources available for ACIR activities, the focus is on reports required by statute.

Commission member Shanley said that he considers last year's budget to have been a fundamental change of the relationship between state and local government, yet there was no discussion of that aspect. Commission member Paul said that is a reason for the ACIR to do more than just issue its reports.

Commission member Nicastro said a possible role for the ACIR is to get involved when federal or state actions might harm municipalities. He mentioned the closing of Bristol's Social Security office and possible elimination of the regional planning organization currently based in Bristol. The ACIR could speak up and be a place for municipalities to take a stand.

Commission member Roy said that 1991's [June Special Session PA 91-10](#) seems to have been the source of some of the ACIR's change in direction. There was a discussion of the history of ACIR's move from the General Assembly to OPM and of the funding and staff assigned to it at that time. Commission member Finley noted that the ACIR is now an autonomous entity within OPM and that the federal ACIR had been defunded during the same period.

Commission member Cassano pointed out that "regional" had been a four-letter word at that time and was considered an attack on legislative authority. He said the group must decide what the ACIR's function is and what it should be in the future. The ACIR's functions must be defined, as well as where it should be located. Commission member LeVasseur said the ACIR faces significant constraints. There was a discussion of whether the ACIR might be able to work with other entities, such as the [CT Council of Municipalities](#) (CCM) or Central CT State University's (CCSU's) [Center for Public Policy and Social Research](#).

Commission member Cassano said the General Assembly's [Planning & Development Committee](#) could refer relevant legislation to the ACIR for its review and the ACIR can conduct studies. Commission member Finley said the ACIR could have a strong role in planning. Commission member LeVasseur said the ACIR has to be cautious in choosing a new role and pointed out that an advocacy role, as mentioned by some members, would be problematic if using OPM staff.

Commission member Finley suggested the ACIR reach out to universities for input regarding research topics. Commission member LeVasseur recommended the group wait until after the beginning of the year and work through summer on developing ideas and roll them out in time for the following year. There was a brief discussion of possible activities and Commission member Nicastro said the group should ask the Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate to speak with the group.

Commission member Roy said the ACIR could partner with the [MORE Commission](#) and work through them. There was a discussion of the work of the MORE Commission and the extent to which legislators are unfamiliar with the ACIR. Commission member O'Leary said the issue is more with the Governor than with the Legislature. Commission member Paul said, if the ACIR begins to look at a topic and learns it is not acceptable to the Governor, the group can move on to another topic.

Commission member Shanley said a report is being prepared on detentions of emotionally disturbed persons in Manchester. He said this is an example of a significant intergovernmental issue for which it was necessary to develop better information to guide future decisions. This is a kind of role he sees for the ACIR. Commission member Paul said all municipalities will be part of a Council of Governments (COG) and perhaps issues arising from that relationship can be brought to the ACIR. Commission member Nicastro asked if ACIR minutes go to legislative leaders. Bruce Wittchen said they do not and described the availability of the ACIR's minutes and other documents on the [ACIR website](#).

Commission member Nicastro said the ACIR includes people from varied backgrounds and they have good insights and good intentions. He said the ACIR should have a more proactive role. Commission member LeVasseur said the ACIR had its greatest impact when Rep. Sonny Googins was chair, because she drew attention to the ACIR at the General Assembly. Alice Meyer had already retired from the legislature by the time she was chair. Commission member Roy recommended that a legislator be appointed chair.

Commission member O'Leary referred to the detentions report Commission member Shanley mentioned and said the same issue is also a concern in northwestern CT. He agreed that it is an intergovernmental issue that can be addressed in a group like this. There was a discussion about the possibility of the ACIR developing a report clearinghouse as a resource for municipalities and CCM's current activities. Commission member Finley said CCM is working with Trinity College to connect graduate students with government internships. There was a discussion of possible connections to other schools.

Commission member Finley said there is no current list, by town, of where state agencies are placing people receiving their services. He said cities believe they are being burdened with such placements, but placements outside cities can raise controversies too. He noted that Rep. Rojas, co-chair of the Planning & Development Committee, is very interested in this subject. There was a discussion of the state's limited capacity to study topics such as this and Commission member Amento pointed out that CT does not have a broad, university-based public policy institute. Commission member Finley said some are trying to bring UConn back into that kind of work, but UConn research now has an entrepreneurial focus and researchers must find funding.

There was a discussion of the state's need for public policy research, funding difficulties at state universities and the possibility of looking to private universities. Commission member Finley pointed out the example of Yale and the city of New Haven and their mutual self-interest. Maybe the state's higher education institutes can find ways to contribute. Commission member Roy said that can be a topic for another meeting and asked what resources are available to the ACIR. Commission member LeVasseur said the ACIR could consider what assets would be required to fulfill a think tank role and target the next biennial budget.

Commission member Cassano suggested the ACIR look to the General Assembly's Program Review & Investigation program for guidance. Commission member Finley agreed that it could be a way to get both

parties in the General Assembly to agree to provide resources. There was a discussion of having PRI review the ACIR and what ACIR members are looking for.

There was a discussion of what to do at the next work group meeting. Commission member Baruzzi said the group seems to be divided between the ACIR serving in an advisory or in an advocacy role and said his understanding in joining the ACIR is that he is serving in an advisory role. The ACIR can provide impartial information as a bill evolves without conflicting with members' other obligation. If, on the other hand, the ACIR advocates for specific outcomes, there might be conflicts with individual members' other roles.

There was a discussion of approaches the ACIR might take to reestablish itself as advisory and information resource, possibly with a symposium to which legislators are invited or with reports that make the connection between information and policy options. Commission member Shanley said a lot of the ongoing regional activities had their basis in a period of consciousness building. It was necessary to provide and draw attention to information demonstrating the potential of regional solutions. There was a discussion of the fiscal and quality improvements resulting from regional emergency dispatch operations.

There was a discussion of the work group's next steps, including determining whether the ACIR's current reports are useful and whether the General Assembly's PRI program would be interested in reviewing or working with the ACIR. It was felt that the ACIR needs an advocate at the General Assembly. Commission member Roy suggested the work group meet again to discuss PRI program options and changes the group might be ready to make now. Depending on feedback from PRI, the work group can meet in December and make recommendations to the full ACIR at the ACIR first meeting in 2014. Commission member Cassano said he will check with the PRI program.

Notes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM