Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations
Hearing Room 2A, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, Connecticut

Monday, March 10, 2014 - 10:00 A.M.

Members Present: Dave LeVasseur (Chairman), Frederick Baruzzi, Sen. Stephen Cassano, Scott Jackson, Robert Kaliszewski, Bob Labanara, James O'Leary, Mark Paquette, Leo Paul, Lisa Roy, Scott Shanley and Elaine Whitney

Members Absent: Carl Amento, John Finkle, Sarah Hemingway, Barbara Henry, Linda Krause, Rep. Frank Nicastro, Joyce Stille, Michael Stupinski and Jim Watson

Staff: Bruce Wittchen

Others: April Capone and Sheila McKay

Opening Remarks:

1. **Call to Order**

   Commission member LeVasseur called the meeting to order at 10:05 and, due to the presence of new ACIR members, asked everyone to introduce themselves.

2. **Consideration of the Minutes of the September 18, 2013 Meeting:**

   A motion was made and seconded to approve the Minutes of the September 18, 2013 meeting. There was no further discussion and the minutes were approved unanimously, with Commission member Whitney abstaining because she was not yet a member.

3. **Consideration of ACIR Reports**

   a. 2014 Mandates Compendium

   Bruce Wittchen explained that this year's compendium is the full compendium required every 4th year, so is much larger than the compendium supplements produced the previous three years. A motion was made and seconded to approve the 2014 Compendium. Bruce noted that the report index still needs to be updated, a process he deferred in case any changes made today change the numbering. He explained the organization of the compendium and noted that the agenda raises a question about the compendium' format and the definition and classification of mandates.

   Bruce distributed a copy of one page of the compendium showing how the compendium's statutory amendment lists often overwhelm the actual mandate description. He added that the compendium lists all amendments to a section of statute, not just amendments affecting the mandate contained in that section. He recommended that ACIR members consider eliminating the amendment lists from future editions of the compendium and replace them with a link to the section of statutes at the General Assembly website.

Bruce Wittchen said that the General Assembly website provides statutory history information that was not readily available at the time of earlier compendiums and suggested that future compendiums provide links to that information instead of lists of amendments. Bruce said a decision is not necessary today and that he only wanted to raise the question today for the members' consideration. There was a discussion and Bruce was asked to convert a portion of the compendium to his suggested format and provide it to members so they can review the change. Bruce said he will do that and added that the appropriate time to begin such a change would be with the annual mandates report due in later September.

There was a discussion of how mandates are quantified, expanding on the group's discussion summarized in the 9/18/2013 meeting minutes. Bruce pointed out that we do not have the capacity to do detailed financial analysis, especially given the variation of impact from town to town. He noted that the CT Insurance Dept. has a funded program for evaluating impacts of mandated health insurance benefits and others also quantify the impact of particular mandates. There was further discussion of the compendium and members decided to continue the discussion of possible changes at the next meetings of the work group and of the full ACIR. There was a unanimous vote to approve the 2014 mandate compendium.

b. 2014-2015 Municipal Budgeting Experiences

Bruce Wittchen described the previously-circulated draft report and a motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. Bruce noted that, overall, municipalities' experiences in adopting the current fiscal year's budget were comparable to recent years. He pointed out that 75 municipalities adopted their budget by referendum, which is the same as the previous two years, but we do not know how many were a referendum by petition. He said it appears that more towns now routinely adjourn their town meeting to a referendum vote on their budget. This is a very different from the situation in which people from a town petition for a referendum on a previously approved budget. Bruce said he has tried to expand the current survey process to obtain information that would distinguish between such referendums, but has not been successful.

Bruce mentioned that he attempts to find budget adoption information online when a town does not respond to his surveys or provides an incomplete response, but this proved to be more difficult this year. He said there seems to be much less media coverage of local budgeting processes and suggested that the closing of some towns' Patch community news site might be one of the causes.

There was a discussion of the fact that two municipalities had budget increases exceeding 8%. Bruce said one of those increases was much larger than 8% but, as noted with an asterisk in the report, he did not list it as being the highest because that budget was inflated by an unusually large capital expense. There was a discussion of the availability of this budget data and Bruce said the spreadsheet of budget adoption is not posted online, but it is public information that he provides to anyone who requests it. Several members said it should be available online and Bruce said he can do that, but the spreadsheet is a working spreadsheet with columns comparing alternative data sources and comments describing where he obtained missing data. He said he can condense that to the specific data people would want to access, including data from previous years not included in each year's working spreadsheet. The group voted unanimously to approve the 2014-2015 Municipal Budgeting Experiences report.

c. 2014 Annual Report

Bruce Wittchen described the draft report and a motion was made and seconded to approve the report. Bruce explained that this report does not provide any new information and instead provides highlights from the ACIR's other annual reports. He noted that the annual report also used to provide an overview of other ACIR activities during the year but, in recent years, the ACIR has not conducted research projects or hosted conferences as it did in the past. There was a discussion of the changed expectations for the ACIR and Commission member LeVasseur explained changes in staffing and funding that limit the ACIR's ability to do more than the legislatively-mandated annual reports. There was further discussion and the group voted unanimously to approve the annual report.

4. **Old Business:**

a. ACIR Work Group

Commission member LeVasseur explained that the work group decided that an outside review of the ACIR would be beneficial. As agreed at that meeting, he and Commission member Cassano met with the General Assembly's Office of Program Review and Investigations (PRI). The meeting was with PRI director Carrie Vibert, and was productive. Commission member Shanley added that the goal is to assess the ACIR's activities and its role. Commission member LeVasseur said PRI schedules its studies well in advance and a study of the ACIR might be possible in next year.

Commission member Paul asked if PRI can consider new roles for the ACIR. Commission member LeVasseur said PRI can do that and noted that the ACIR's role has evolved but has been static recently. PRI is interested in studying the ACIR and Commission member LeVasseur explained the study process, based on his experience with studies of programs in his division of OPM. He said PRI looks back at the history of a program and he expects that all the members would be interviewed. He does not know what the schedule would be if the ACIR is selected for study.

Commission member O'Leary said PRI should look at the ACIR's reports to get a sense of what the ACIR can do. There is a wealth of information in those reports. There was a discussion of the availability of those reports and Bruce said the only older report available online is a local government cooperative ventures report. He mentioned that he recently found several boxes of old ACIR information and moved those into his office. He hasn't taken the time review everything, but he noticed reports he had not seen before. Commission member Labanara said CT Council of Municipalities' (CCM's) library includes the old reports. Bruce said he has boxes of computer disks containing ACIR documents, but his computer cannot read the older disks. He said he will try to open them on other computers. There was a discussion of scanning old reports so that they can be made available on the website.

Commission member Cassano arrived from a legislative committee meeting and followed up on the earlier discussion of a possible PRI study of the ACIR. He explained that he has discussed the possible study with Sen. Kissel, co-chair of the legislature's Program Review & Investigations Committee, of which he is also a member. The committee's

[3/13/2014 meeting agenda](#) includes a discussion of new study topics. He hopes to see a study of the ACIR that looks at what we are, where we are going and what we could do.

5. **New Business:**

There was no new business.

6. **The next meeting will be at a time and place to be determined**

Commission member LeVasseur said the ACIR should convene for its next meeting immediately after the legislative session and members agreed. We will look into scheduling the next work group meeting before then.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM