

# Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

Hearing Room 1B, Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, Connecticut

Friday, January 6, 2017 – 10:00 A.M.

**Members Present:** Garrett Eucalitto (Chairman), John Filchak, Marcia Leclerc, Rob Michalik, James O’Leary, Neil O’Leary, Ron Thomas, Leo Paul, Lee Sawyer, Scott Shanley, Joyce Stille and Lyle Wray

**Members Absent:** Carl Amento, Sen. Stephen Cassano, Barbara Henry, and Lon Seidman

**Staff:** Bruce Wittchen

## 1. Call to Order

Commission chair Eucalitto called the meeting to order at 10:04 and asked members to introduce themselves.

## 2. Consideration of the draft minutes of the January 26, 2016 meeting

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the [January 26, 2016 meeting](#) and the motion was approved unanimously, with Commission members Eucalitto, Leclerc, N. O’Leary and Sawyer abstaining.

## 3. Consideration of additional 2017 meeting dates

Garret said this topic should be considered in Sec. 5a of the agenda.

## 4. Consideration of ACIR reports

### a. [2017 Session Mandates Report](#)

Bruce explained that this is the first of two mandates reports the ACIR is required to produce each year and provided an overview. **A motion was made and seconded to approve the report and the motion was approved unanimously.**

### b. [2017 Mandate Compendium Supplement](#)

Bruce explained that this year’s report is a supplement to the full compendium that the ACIR publishes every fourth year. He also pointed out that compendiums, unlike session mandates reports, include regulatory mandates. Supplements like this one are produced for the years between full compendiums and only include additions or changes that will be made in the next full compendium. The most recent full compendium was nearly 550 pages and Bruce said he will speak to the group later this year about ideas for condensing it so there can be greater focus on significant mandates. **A motion was made and seconded to approve the report and the motion was approved unanimously.**

## 5. Old Business

### a. [ACIR mission and suggestions for research](#)

Commission member Shanley said the minutes of recent ACIR provide a record of ideas raised by ACIR members. The ACIR is understaffed, but minutes show where the ACIR could go.

Commission member Leclerc said that, as a relatively new member, she would appreciate it if others could provide an overview of past discussions.

Commission member Wray mentioned the ACIR's involvement in publicizing the potential benefits of shared municipal services and other best practices. The ACIR and the [Capitol Region Council of Governments](#) (CRCOG) were cosponsors of a shared services conference. He added that back office integration between towns and schools is another opportunity to save through sharing services. He noted that CRCOG and the [Capitol Region Education Council](#) (CREC) are hosting a [conference](#) about that on Feb 1.

Commission member Thomas said it would be useful to examine services provided by the state and duplicated at the local level. He also mentioned that the ACIR's reports aren't read by legislators. Bruce Wittchen explained how reports are distributed and Commission member Thomas said legislators, towns and the MORE Commission are unaware of the ACIR's work. He mentioned Bruce's appearance in front of the MORE Commission and said people are interested.

Commission member Thomas said many legislators are unaware that they are passing mandates. He pointed out that more than fifty mandates have been passed in the last five years. Commission chair Eucalitto said OPM will look into how the distribution of ACIR reports can be improved.

Commission member Stille said she agrees with Commission member Wray about the potential benefits of shared services and noted that the [CT Conference of Municipalities](#) (CCM) is completing a report. Commission member Thomas described CCM's work and mentioned a state local partnership panel. CCM's board has not yet approved the report, but it is expected soon. He offered to have CCM do a presentation to the ACIR. Commission member Wray said the ACIR has been discussing various issues for years and suggested a subcommittee be formed to review that record and to look into options.

Commission member Shanley said the ACIR should look into state agencies' siting of group homes and other placement facilities. He explained that the [Department of Social Services](#) (DSS), [Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services](#) (DMHAS) are locating facilities without consideration of local impacts. This is proving to be costly and challenging for municipalities. He pointed out that this is not just a concern about parking demands or the occasional need for a police presence. There should be better coordination.

There was a discussion of the council of governments (COG) – human services coordinating committee approach encouraged by former Rep. Bowles. Commission member Filchak noted that Rep. Bowles based that on a committee established in southeastern CT. He added that the group is up and running and has opened some people's eyes.

Commission member Filchak said COGs can help with such approaches and his COG is open to helping the ACIR. There was further discussion of how such committees might help and Commission member Shanley pointed out that the agencies don't give advanced notice of facility placement. He said agencies should coordinate placements. He added that agencies recognize the benefits of locating facilities in cities having transit, hospitals and walkable stores, but those typically are lower income communities.

Commission member Shanley said Manchester is a welcoming community, but locating state facilities there imposes costs on the town and more thoughtfulness is required in the siting process. Commission member Leclerc said the problem is even broader and does not just involve those agencies. The distribution and management of state facilities require more consideration.

Commission member Eucalitto said we can get this started if members are interested in working on this. Commission Wray mentioned that minutes of previous ACIR discussions are available and

members can review them. Commission member Paul noted that such a group was formed previously and that he would be happy to do this.

Commission member Eucalitto pointed out that the ACIR seems to have been meeting to approve minutes and reports. He noted that he came to the state around the time the MORE Commission was formed and that commission seemed to have pushed the ACIR out of the way. Commission member Thomas responded that the ACIR is unique because it has more structure than the MORE Commission. Commission member Eucalitto added that it also includes state agencies, unlike the More Commission. Commission member Paul said the ACIR members are appointed, so there aren't new people at each meeting.

Commission member J. O'Leary asked who maintains the record of the ACIR's previous work? He said they looked into many issues, but only shared services have moved forward. Bruce Wittchen mentioned his unsuccessful efforts to open the ACIR's older computer files, but noted that print copies were submitted to and should be available from the state and legislative libraries. Commission member Thomas said he would check at CCM.

Commission member Stille said April Capone had traveled around the state to meet with ACIR members and asked if anything was done with that. Commission member Eucalitto said he will look into that and added that he might be able to have an intern research the group's older documents.

b. Other municipal, regional or state concerns

Commission member Eucalitto said there is a lot of uncertainty regarding federal devolution and mentioned concerns about human services and health needs. Commission member Shanley said capital planning is challenging and many municipalities will be harmed if the state does not honor its [Local Capital Improvement Program](#) (LoCIP) funding commitments. If OPM needs support to release the committed funds, ACIR members can help.

Commission member Leclerc mentioned a municipal concern about the loss of revenue sharing funds associated with state payment-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOT) for manufacturing machinery & equipment (MM&E). She noted that 1/3 of the state's municipalities have manufacturing facilities and said a way must be found to fund this. Commission member Stille described how the loss of the expected LoCIP funds would impact her town, which pools LoCIP funds for projects and could lose \$300,000.

Commission member Paul mentioned the potential impact of the 2½% spending cap created in [2015 Special Session PA 15-5](#). He said last year's ACIR budget report showed 99 of 169 towns had increases exceeding that amount and there was a discussion of the potential impact. He noted that towns with a town meeting can be disadvantaged because a conforming budget developed by town officials can be changed at the town meeting. Commission member Leclerc said East Hartford's taxes could increase with proposed state funding cuts.

Commission member Thomas said the state has yet to issue any guidance on implementing the cap and this is a grave concern of municipal finance directors. Referring back to Commission member Shanley's description of municipalities' capital planning, he pointed that this is a \$50 million cut when a cut of only \$20 million had been anticipated. Bridgeport would lose almost \$4 million.

There was a discussion of the ACIR taking a position on releasing committed LoCIP funds. Commission member Shanley said his understanding is that bonding authorization to provide those funds has been maxed out and said the authorization should be raised to match the commitments already made. **A motion was made and seconded to convey that message to the state and the motion passed unanimously, with Commission members Eucalitto, Michalik and Sawyer abstaining.**

A motion was also made and seconded to request to lift or eliminate the 2½% cap, especially in light of state funding cuts. Commission member Stille pointed out that, in addition to the impact of state funding cuts, new mandate also are an issue with regard to application of the cap. There was further discussion of whether the cap's exemptions should be broader or if the cap should just be eliminated. Commission member Shanley said the cap is problematic as crafted.

Commission member Paul pointed out that the exemption for bonding has no immediate impact and Commission member Thomas said municipalities have not received needed guidance. Commission member Leclerc said this is being reactive, not proactive, and asked if the ACIR should have a role in reviewing such legislation prior to its passage. Commission member Eucalitto asked if she envisioned the ACIR reviewing all legislation and she said the ACIR should review legislation affecting towns. **The motion was revised and seconded to request that the cap be repealed as crafted and the motion passed unanimously, with Commission members Eucalitto, Michalik and Sawyer abstaining.**

Commission member J. O'Leary said the ACIR used to have a greater role twenty years ago, but some Governors and legislators did not want the ACIR to be involved in some things. There was a discussion of how the ACIR could play a greater role, perhaps providing a more focused version of an [Office of Fiscal Analysis](#) (OFA) fiscal note.

Commission member Leclerc said the legislature should not make changes, such as the PILOT change affecting manufacturing communities, without providing alternatives. The ACIR can provide a reality check and inform legislators of the potential harm to municipalities. Commission member Filchak said an ACIR report could be a great addition to the bill reports prepared by OFA and the [Office of Legislative Research](#) (OLR).

Commission chair Eucalitto pointed out that the General Assembly would probably have to adopt such a change in its rules. There was a discussion of the authorization for OFA's and OLR's reports and Commission chair Eucalitto said he will look into this and report back to the group.

Commission member Leclerc said the ACIR is not trying to take over a role of the legislature's offices and Commission member Paul said he is not concerned about how an ACIR report would fit in with the rules. He said the ACIR would only be providing information, not dictating action. Legislators should want to receive information about local impacts.

Commission member Filchak said there should be an automatic referral to the ACIR and there was a discussion of how that could be handled. Commission chair Eucalitto said the ACIR can meet mid-session to review legislation and there was further discussion. Commission member J. O'Leary described the ACIR's former process, which he said was less formal. He explained that the group met monthly and that legislative issues were front & center. It should be an exchange of ideas. Commission member J. O'Leary added that the ACIR can invite the legislator behind a particular proposal to attend the ACIR's meeting.

Commission member Thomas recommended that the ACIR meet more frequently during the session, such as monthly. Commission member Shanley said he concurs and noted how often a bill fails for lack of a fiscal note at 3 AM. He added that the ACIR needs a legislative champion in order to gain that level of influence. Commission chair Eucalitto said the group can meet monthly and added that the group might invite the General Assembly's [Planning & Development \(P&D\) Committee](#) chairs to attend the next meeting.

Commission member Stille mentioned another concern: an expected DPH proposal to consolidate health districts in a manner that would greatly increase many municipalities' cost. Commission member Wray noted that there are 13 health departments within CRCOG's area and we do not need so many. Commission member Filchak said there are different options for streamlining and pointed out that the three departments in NECOG have taken different approaches. **A motion was made**

**and seconded to not request that health departments not be consolidated in the manner proposed and the motion passed unanimously, with Commission members Eucalitto, Michalik and Sawyer abstaining.**

Commission member N. O’Leary pointed out that there are other potential items of concern this legislative session, including changes in educational cost sharing. Commission chair Eucalitto said OPM will distribute lists of potential meeting dates and research to members and Bruce Wittchen added that OPM will also distribute draft language regarding the votes taken today.

**6. New Business:**

a. 2017 Legislative session

There was no further discussion of the legislative session or of any other old business.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40

*Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM*