

Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

1849 Room, CCSU Student Center
Ella Grasso Boulevard, New Britain, Connecticut

Thursday, January 26, 2012 - 10:00 A.M.

Members Present: David LeVasseur (Chairman), Mark Allaben, Sen. Stephen Cassano, Ronald Harris, Barbara Henry, Robert Kaliszewski, Linda Krause, Frank Nicasastro, Mark Paquette, James O’Leary, Leo Paul, Virginia Seccombe, Joyce Stille, Michael Stupinski and Ron Thomas

Members Absent: John Finkle, Alice Meyer (Vice-Chairman) and Scott Shanley

Staff: Bruce Wittchen

Other Attendees: John Pasco

Opening Remarks: Commission member LeVasseur called the meeting to order at 10:03 and introduced John Pasco of CCSU’s [Center for Public Policy and Social Research](#). Mr. Pasco thanked the ACIR for meeting at CCSU and mentioned that the Institute will host a conference on how municipalities can share services and combine administrative functions. He said the conference will be 3/20/2012 and described the sponsors and agenda. Commissioner DeFronzo of the CT Department of Administrative Services is scheduled to speak, as is Ronn Kolbash, of Yale’s shared services program and formerly director of Ohio’s Shared Services center. There will be a panel, including Mary Glassman, representatives of public employee unions, Tom Condon of the Hartford Courant, legislators and others. The program will begin at 8:30 and finish by 12. Pre-registration will not be required.

Noting the presence of a new ACIR member, Commission member LeVasseur asked everyone to introduce themselves.

1. **Consideration of Minutes of October, 2012 Meeting:** Commission member Kaliszewski made a motion to accept the [October minutes](#) and Commission member Allaben seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, with Commission members Krause and Nicasastro abstaining because they had not attended the meeting
2. **Consideration of ACIR reports:**
2012 Supplement – Compendium of Statutory and Regulatory Mandates: Commission member Paquette made a motion to accept the [2012 Supplement](#) and Commission member Henry seconded it. Commission member Kaliszewski pointed out the need to change the reference to DEP in the membership list to DEEP. Bruce Wittchen said he will correct that. The motion passed unanimously, with Commission member Nicasastro abstaining.
3. **Old Business:** There was no old business.
4. **New Business:**
 - a. CT Insurance Department – Mandated Health Insurance Benefits Reviews: Bruce Wittchen said he had learned of the [Mandated Health Insurance Benefits Review](#) program while preparing the just-approved mandate supplement. [Legislation creating](#)

[this program](#) was approved in 2009 and the program was established in the Department of Insurance and charged with identifying all health insurance mandates existing at that time and with reviewing proposed new mandates as requested by the General Assembly's Insurance Committee. Bruce added that the review program was apparently prompted by a concern that the state might be responsible for the costs of some such mandates when federal health insurance changes go into effect in a couple years.

Bruce pointed out that new health insurance mandates are approved every year. Even though the ACIR's full [Compendium](#) already identifies a number of such mandates, the review program's 2010 report included some not in the Compendium. Bruce added that he included the missing ones in the just-approved compendium supplement so that they can be incorporated into the next full compendium in 2014.

Bruce said health insurance benefits reviews are much more detailed than the ACIR mandate reviews and that the Department of Insurance contracts with [UConn's Center for Public Health and Health Policy](#) to do the reviews and that an actuary is hired to assess mandate costs. He said that if ACIR would like to learn more about this program, he will find out if someone can make a presentation at the ACIR's April meeting. There was a consensus that he should do that.

- b. 2012 Legislative Session: Commission member LeVasseur asked Commission member Cassano to describe the upcoming session. Commission member Cassano noted that it will be a short session and described the procedures and limitations of such a session. He mentioned that there have been some concerns about bills passed in 2011 and the 2012 session will likely include some corrective legislation. Commission member Cassano added that, because of time demands during the session, he would prefer having the ACIR's April meeting in Hartford and offered to find a room in the Legislative Office Building.

Commission member Nicastro agreed with Commission member Cassano that the short session limits what the legislature can accomplish. He added that municipalities are concerned about the financial impact of mandates and perhaps mandates can be suspended for a period of time or reconsidered. Commission member Nicastro mentioned 2011's [PA 11-52](#), which requires employers having at least 50 employees to provide paid sick leave, and said the state should not have a role in an employer's decision to provide sick leave. He also mentioned the in-school suspensions, required by [Sec. 10-233c](#) of the statutes. Serving a suspension in-school is a good idea because it provides a supervised environment, but requiring that imposes a cost on towns.

Commission member Nicastro said he and Commission member Cassano are former mayors and few other legislators have that experience. He mentioned the legislature's [MORE Commission](#) and said it had accomplished some worthwhile things. ACIR member Henry said that commission should have continued another year.

Commission member Nicastro said small businesses are important and the state has to consider the impact of its actions. He mentioned proposed changes that would harm the owners of small liquor stores and allow bars to remain open until 2 AM. Commission member Nicastro also mentioned the state's [minimum budget requirement](#) (MBR) for schools and noted the safe harbor provision. He pointed out that Bristol had not complied with the requirement and cut its school budget, so had to use reserve funds.

Commission member Cassano mentioned [PA 09-56](#), which prohibits the use of pesticides on school fields used by students up through the 8th grade and said a coalition of golf courses, towns and others hope to reverse that. He said pesticides can be used safely and described how Manchester's golf course is in the watershed of the town's water supply. Commission member Henry noted that towns' cost for organic control is much higher.

Commission member Krause asked if any legislation is expected regarding regional planning organizations (RPOs). Commission member Cassano said the legislature might consider additional funding for shared services. He said one option is to establish a minimum amount for town aid with additional funding distributed to regions to support intermunicipal efforts. There was a discussion of the number of school superintendents and other examples of potential redundancy among towns. Commission member Stille mentioned school reform and there was a discussion of urban schools and reorganization.

Commission member Cassano said 40% of the state's future workers will come from the state's five largest cities. Machine shops want workers who have a good education and do not have a criminal record. Commission member Allaben noted the differences between different students and different school systems and said there will not be a single solution for all. We need to change things that do not work without damaging the things that do. Commission member Cassano said all education proposals go through the legislature's Education Committee and 2/3 of municipal spending is governed by what that committee does. That committee is dominated by education interests and we now have towns and school boards that are suing each other.

Commission member Krause referred to various consolidation proposals and said the state's experience in merging its own departments has been mixed. She mentioned the ongoing effort to merge two RPOs and said the devil is in the details. Can the state provide guidance to help such entities merge gracefully? Commission member Cassano mentioned that Governor Rowland had said there would be only 5 workforce boards and their consolidation has worked well. Commission member Krause said mergers can work when they include the right people and Commission member Cassano said this is an example that mandates do sometimes work.

Commission member Krause said the consolidated probate courts are working well now and Commission member O'Leary agreed. He added that he and Representative Miner had looked into the prospects for a merger between the Litchfield and Region 6 school systems, but too many complications were found. He asked how forcefully we can mandate such a change and said carrots can work if big enough.

Commission member Stille mentioned Maine's school district consolidation initiative that reduced the number of districts by 50% and Commission member Nicastro described how workforce board changes were done. Commission member Krause said the greater New Haven workforce board is unable to get quorums at its meetings. Commission member Cassano pointed out that each mayor or first selectman on a workforce board is personally liable for the board's spending, so it is risky to not attend the meetings.

There was a discussion of the ongoing merger of state public safety and homeland security agencies and that their missions are very different. Commission member Nicastro described the evolution of regional waste management in the Bristol area and

Commission member Krause said towns will do things like that when they perceive an advantage. She described the difficulties faced in even voluntary mergers and said the state should provide guidance. Commission member Seccombe mentioned that a bill to fund early childhood programs is anticipated and said the state's efforts should focus on regions, not individual towns. Commission member Cassano pointed out the potential cost savings for towns that coordinate their work on a road crossing their border and Commission member Seccombe noted that losing a few students does not reduce a school district's costs.

Commission member Stille mentioned the burden imposed on towns by the state's requirement, in [Sec. 1-217](#) of the CT statutes, that towns not disclose information that might reveal the home addresses of police officers and others specified by the state. Commission member Cassano said the legislature's Government Administration and Elections committee is looking to address the problem. Commission member Thomas agreed that discussions are ongoing and added that the requirement is unworkable in its current form. He pointed out that the town in which someone lives has no way of knowing that a particular resident has such a job in another town.

Commission member Henry mentioned the MORE Commission's discussion of prevailing wage requirements and the need for change. Commission member Paul said a private group built an addition to a public school, using private funding, and ran into trouble with the prevailing wage requirement. The thresholds need to be raised and that will lead to more work being done and more of it being done by local businesses. Smaller businesses can't compete with larger companies for prevailing wage work because of the burdensome book-keeping requirements. Commission member Henry said the prevailing wage requirement can triple the cost of a project. She added that unions claim they have to repair substandard work done by non-union workers, but there are plenty of examples of substandard union work in the state that has to be redone. The next session of the MORE Commission was supposed to deal with this issue, but the commission did not meet again.

Commission member Paul said the state's minimum budget requirement for education spending discourages his town from shifting work currently done by Board of Education employees to municipal employees, even though that would increase efficiency. Commission member mentioned the question of whether crossing guards should be municipal or Board of Education employees and said towns have 169 different ways of dividing costs. Commission member Allaben said that his town's municipal budget handles everything outside of the school buildings.

There was a discussion of how costs are divided between municipal and education budgets and Commission member Nicastro described the advantages of using line item budgeting for school budgets. Commission member Cassano mentioned a bill he had introduced to encourage the consolidation of school districts' non-educational services and said that although the bill, [SB 894](#) died in committee, it will come back. Commission member LeVasseur noted that regional district school boards are even less open and towns have less opportunity for input into their budgeting.

Commission members Henry and Paul said towns can help themselves by doing some things regionally and pointed out that their towns are part of a 20-town group that reduces the cost of purchasing signs, plow blades and other items. The group crosses

RPO lines and Commission member Paul noted that, although he and Commission member Henry have recommended their regions plan for the possibility of merging, not everyone agrees.

Commission member Cassano said there are opportunities for CT towns to reduce their costs by regionalizing services and mentioned the state has many more dispatch centers than southern California, but fewer people and less area to cover. Commission member Paul noted that if a more local dispatch center is not available and a state trooper must transport a prisoner to a location several towns away, the trooper can be away from the town for more than an hour. Commission member Henry said towns should be able to share resident state troopers, but the state makes excuses for not allowing it. Towns should be able to share the constabulary too. Commission member Paul said Litchfield has switched from two to one resident state trooper and has hired a retired trooper, reducing the town's cost.

Commission member O'Leary said we were discussing these same concerns 20 years ago and he is concerned by our inability to solve problems. Commission member Thomas said there is a tendency to keep doing things the same way. Commission member LeVasseur noted that there is often antagonism between fire and police departments regarding the location of dispatch centers. Commission member O'Leary mentioned the success of the [Litchfield County Dispatch](#) and Commission member LeVasseur said it is easier in an area having volunteer fire departments and no municipal police.

Commission member Krause pointed out that children learn in our schools to compete with neighboring towns and there was a discussion of how long-ago disagreements led to the state's current arrangement of towns.

5. The next meeting will be at 10:00 AM, April 19, 2012, in the GAE Committee area, Room 2200 of the Legislative Office Building, 210 Capitol Ave., Hartford.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30.