

# Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

Hearing Room 1E, Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, Connecticut

Wednesday, October 1, 2014 – 9:30 A.M.

**Members Present:** April Capone (Acting Chairman, OPM), Barbara Henry, Scott Jackson, Liz McAuliffe (DEEP), James O’Leary, Mike Muszynski (CCM), Leo Paul, Scott Shanley, Joyce Stille and Elaine Whitney

**Members Absent:** Carl Amento, Frederick Baruzzi, Sen. Stephen Cassano, John Finkle, Rep. Frank Nicastro, Lisa Roy, Michael Stupinski and Jim Watson

**Staff:** Bruce Wittchen

**Others:** Eric Lindquist and Sheila McKay

## Opening Remarks:

### 1. Call to Order

Acting chair Capone called the meeting to order at 9:52 and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

A quorum was not present at first, so the group began with Item 4.

### 4. Old Business:

#### a. ACIR Work Group

Acting chair Capone said she contacted a number of the members to discuss their thoughts about the ACIR and its mission. Many have similar ideas and she noted that there is a strong interest in the potential for a review by the General Assembly's [Office of Program Review and Investigations](#) (PRI). She spoke with the PRI's director, who said the ACIR's request for a review was denied. She mentioned that legislative committee membership will change for the next session and added that the PRI director also mentioned the possibility for a [sunset review](#).

Commission member Paul asked how PRI can refuse a request to review the ACIR and Acting chair Capone explained that PRI cannot handle as many reviews as are requested. Commission member Henry asked where this leaves the ACIR and Acting chair Capone said another request can be made, a sunset review might be appropriate, or it might be possible to approach the legislature. There was a discussion of these options and potential ramifications of a sunset review.

Commission member O’Leary said expectations for the ACIR are established by statute and asked if OPM might be the impediment. He said OPM leadership sets the direction and asked if the ACIR could use other resources, such as

universities, the private sector or others. There was a discussion of options that might be available to the ACIR and Commission member O'Leary said he respectfully suggests the OPM consider a different direction or be led by a different chair. There was a discussion of the history of ACIR leadership and Commission member O'Leary said the ACIR should aim to function as it had from around 1993 to 2002.

Commission member Shanley said there is no need to have the ACIR oversee reports like those on today's agenda and noted the amount of time OPM dedicates to those reports. He said what the ACIR needs is research capacity. The group should discuss priorities regarding the relationship between the state and towns. He mentioned group homes as being an important topic deserving greater attention.

Commission member Shanley said OPM provides less staffing to the ACIR than in the past and its role is diminished. He noted that Commission member Cassano has mentioned the possibility of the legislature's [Office of Legislative Research](#) (OLR) taking on such responsibilities. Should the ACIR be closed; are there too many commissions with similar missions? There was further discussion.

Acting chair Capone said there is no push to disband the ACIR and described her recent efforts to reach out to members regarding their concerns and thoughts about increasing the ACIR's impact. Council member Henry asked why can't the OLR take a greater role and Commission member Muszynski said it's up to legislators to request an OLR review. Commission member Whitney asked if the ACIR could make such a request through a legislature and Acting chair Capone said the group can. Commission member McAuliffe mentioned advantages that universities can offer for such research.

Commission member Stille asked if there is a consensus about an approach to take. Acting chair Capone said the ACIR's efforts would have greater impact while legislation is still in the process of being approved rather than afterwards. Commission member Paul said the process is driven by the legislature. Municipal leaders see the ACIR as a resource for considering the potential impacts of legislation. A bill geared towards big cities can have a much larger impact on small cities. There was further discussion of the ACIR's role.

Bruce Wittchen described his understanding of previous ACIR practices, when the group would annually undertake a public policy research project and roll out the results at a symposium. The group discussed some examples. Commission member Shanley said that the ACIR had been led by Rep. Googins, who had a great interest in its mission, and the ACIR benefitted from OPM assigning multiple staff to it. It does not have those advantages now and there should be a nonpartisan review of the ACIR. He noted that it's been years since the ACIR last hosted a symposium. Commission member Paul said OLR is working at capacity during the legislative session; can they partner with us in their offseason? Acting chair Capone said one of the ACIR's legislative members should be able to speak to that at a future meeting.

Bruce Wittchen noted that universities have little interest in taking on research roles unless funding can be provided. He referred to CCSU's [Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy](#) which, based on its name, should be especially interested in collaboration like that envisioned by ACIR members. However, much of the institute's support is associated with criminal justice and the institute has little choice to focus on that. Commission member McAuliffe said OLR's offseason might be an opportunity for getting the needed support, but added that it will be necessary to make a case showing the ACIR's work is important.

Commission member O'Leary said the ACIR should pursue multiple options. We should approach universities ourselves and ask what they can do. We have to recognize OPM's limits. They don't have staff and don't have time to approach universities or pursue other options. Perhaps an ACIR subcommittee can do these things without having to rely on OPM. Commission member O'Leary said he agrees with people's descriptions of past ACIR activities. He mentioned the ACIR's role in the adoption of [CGS 7-148cc](#), which authorizes two or more municipalities to jointly perform any function that the municipalities can perform separately. He added that the ACIR was also involved in emergency management and mutual aid initiatives.

Commission member Whitney said she agrees that ACIR does not need to oversee reports. She asked if there is a way to identify short-term actions regarding legislation and asked about OLR's capacity for additional work in the legislative off-season. Commission member Shanley said OLR is busy all year. There was further discussion about an ACIR work group meeting and Commission member Shanley recommended the work group focus on identifying a couple issues for further attention by the full group. Commission member Capone said she will follow up with Commission member Cassano before then.

## **2. Consideration of the Minutes of the March 10, 2014 Meeting:**

A motion was made and seconded to approve the [Minutes of the March 10, 2014 meeting](#). There was no further discussion and the minutes were approved unanimously, with Commission members Henry and Stille abstaining because they had not attended the meeting.

## **3. Consideration of ACIR Reports**

- a. [2014 annual mandates report](#)
- b. [2015 mandates compendium supplement](#)

Bruce Wittchen described the two reports that are ready for consideration by the ACIR. He explained that the annual mandates report is due following the legislative session and describes new or expanded mandates as well as mandate reductions. The 2<sup>nd</sup> report is the mandates compendium supplement, which is due at the beginning of the next legislative session. He explained that he completed it early so ACIR members would have both at the same time so they can better understand the similarities and differences. Bruce said the mandates compendium supplement follows the full

compendium approved early this year and there will be two more annual supplements before the next full compendium.

Commission member O'Leary mentioned Bruce's suggestion earlier this year to eliminate legislative histories from the compendium. Bruce recommended the members look at listings in the compendium supplement to see how much space is taken up by lists of mandate amendments. He said those add many pages to the report and interrupt the flow from one mandate to the next. Bruce said the report is required by statute ([CGS 2-79a](#)) to describe the history of the mandate. He suggested that, with there being widespread access to the internet and legislative histories being available on the legislative website, links to that website should satisfy the legislative requirement.

There was a discussion of the two draft reports and of the recommended change to the compendium reports. A motion was made and seconded to approve both reports as presented and to eliminate mandate amendment lists from future compendiums reports, replacing them with links to the General Assembly website. The motion passed unanimously.

**5. New Business:**

There was no new business.

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

Bruce Wittchen explained that, with today's approval of the compendium supplement, the ACIR need not meet in January. He said the ACIR's next reports, the municipal budget adoption experiences and annual report, do not have a statutory deadline, but he will aim to get the budget report out by March. Bruce was requested to follow up by email with ACIR members to determine a date in the next month or so for a work group meeting. After that meeting, the group will look to schedule its next regular meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:42

*Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM*