

The Ohio Commission on Local Government Reform and Collaboration
Ohio Township Association Building
June 25, 2010

Minutes

In Attendance:

Anita Lopez: Co-Chair	Tim Downing	Lynda Murray
Daniel Troy, Co-Chair	Jennifer Economus	Robert Roland
Michael Cochran	Chester Jourdan	Larry Wolpert

Approval of the Minutes of the June 4th Meeting:

Mr. Troy moved for the approval of the minutes and Ms. Economus seconded. The minutes were approved.

Budget and Finance Report:

Mr. Downing presented an invoice from the Glenn School to be approved by the Commission. Mr. Roland presented a motion to approve the invoice; Ms. Economus seconded; and the motion passed. Mr. Downing also asked OSU to provide by next Monday an estimate of hours necessary for completion of the report. The Commission authorized the payment of no more than \$5000 to complete the report.

Review of the Report:

It was noted that the majority of Commission members have reviewed the report and sent revisions. The target for inclusion of recommendations and submission of the next draft report is June 29. It was proposed that each of the recommendations be reviewed at this meeting.

Mr. Roland suggested that the overall language of the report should be revised to provide examples of potential benefits. Ms. Economus suggested that the report should focus on quality improvements. Discussion indicated agreement that the benefits should focus on improvements in quality and not just cost-saving strategies.

Mr. Cochran suggested that the recommendations throughout be reworded to include more objective language. He drew attention to the use of “substantial obstacles” to collaboration and suggested that the modifier be dropped. His comments were noted by the Chair.

With regard to the recommendation to encourage and incentivize local governments to collaborate, questions arose about the definition of incentives. It was suggested that the report add some language about the role of the General Assembly in establishing the incentives identified in the report.

With regard to the recommendation to incentivize municipalities to work together using a single-point of collection for income taxes, Mr. Roland suggested that the rationale section could stand to be improved. Ms. Murray suggested there is disconnect between the rationale and the proposed solution.

With regard to the recommendation to create seed funding to support start-up and transition costs associated with collaboration efforts, it was again suggested that the rationale could be improved. It was also suggested that, though the New York example is okay, local examples should be provided including ODOD. Mr. Cochran also suggested that the language within the rationale that states that local governments “face many obstacles” be changed to say that local governments “face problems...”

Mr. Roland suggested the mention of the Regional Prosperity Initiative in the report and provided a copy of a descriptive document to be woven into the report.

As a review of the discussion and debate thus far in the meeting, Ms. Lopez indicated that the rationales were the arguments for their conclusions and need to be beefed up by OSU in the final report. Mr. Downing noted that the Commission had asked for better alignment between rationales and recommendations (e.g., the single point of collection). In the rationale section on local revenue sharing, it should also note that competition between jurisdictions should be reduced.

In the testimony sections, it should be noted that revenue sharing was brought up in multiple public meetings in addition to those listed in the report.

Ms. Lopez asked whether the remaining sections should be discussed fully at this meeting or recommended back to the members to consider and return comments. Mr. Roland suggested, with Commission support, that discussion continue.

With regard to the recommendation to encourage the General Assembly to overhaul joint economic development districts and zones (JEDD’s and JEDZ’s), Mr. Cochran indicated that the need for corrections of this section is related to the current confusing nature of the legislation. Ms. Murray asked that Mr. Cochran provide OSU with examples so that his point could be included within the report.

With regard to the recommendation on amending the ORC to limit the use of abatements, Mr. Troy recommended that current waivers and exemptions be tightened up. Mr. Roland suggested that the reference to testimony at Worthington be removed to include testimony received at other public meetings as well. Mr. Wolpert suggested that the report (perhaps in a footnote) reference the challenges of interstate competition for business particularly in border counties. Ms. Economus suggested the mention of other working groups and their work on this topic. Mr. Cochran recommended the removal of the word “fierce.” The Commission agreed.

With regard to the recommendation encouraging ODOD and ODOT to work together, it was noted that ODOT actually should be changed to the Ohio Department of Taxation. Ms. Economus raised the potential of inclusion of references to other groups engaged in consideration of these issues. She was charged to provide information to OSU to expand the testimony section.

With regard to the recommendation that regions be encouraged or required to adopt a regional economic plan, Mr. Roland inquired about the inclusion of more data, some of which was provided to the Commission in the university reports. Ms. Murray suggested an analysis of the

university reports and the creation of an appendix to that affect. The Commission asked the Glenn School to review the reports and identify the statistics that might be included as examples. Mr. Downing suggested that statistics be included as examples with direction of the reader to the reports themselves. Discussion later focused on the recommendation's use of the word "required." It was decided that "required" would be dropped and "strongly encouraged" be used.

With regard to the creation of one-stop services for business, it was suggested by Mr. Troy that the Glenn School reference the testimony from Ron Becker at the Canton meeting and his clear articulation of the issue. Mr. Cochran noted that businesses have the same coordination problems with various agencies of the State of Ohio. It was recommended that the Glenn School include recommendations on one-stop services for state services as well.

With regard to the recommendation for blanket legislation on home rule, Mr. Roland asked that the first statement be rewritten to be more succinct and concise. Mr. Troy suggested that the section be reconsidered to include language indicating that barriers to collaboration be eliminated. Mr. Cochran indicated that many portions of the ORC pertain to jurisdictions of government and that a blanket statute would be appropriate allowing two or more units of government to collaborate, notwithstanding other portions of the ORC. Mr. Roland noted that the last two sentences in the rationale are argued in the negative and suggested that they be reworded or eliminated. Mr. Troy recommended the elimination of the first part of the sentence beginning with "It can be said...."

With regard to the recommendation on increasing the flexibility of local governments to determine the most effective operations framework, Mr. Cochran noted that he has had problems with this section because it is not clear, in part because of its implication that different units of government (e.g., counties and cities) could be merged. Mr. Jourdan also asked for clarity. Mr. Downing suggested that the recommendation was intended to allow those mergers to occur (e.g., engaging in mergers similar to those used in Louisville, Kentucky). Mr. Jourdan asked if the recommendation was focused on combining operations in specific areas (e.g., coroners). Mr. Troy suggested that three issues are embedded in that recommendation:

- Allowing jurisdictions to combine administrative or operations functions within a county (ORC Section 402)
- Mergers of same units of government (e.g. shared coroners)
- Merger of dissimilar units of government

Ms. Murray noted that the first sentence of the recommendation creates the confusion. Mr. Cochran suggested that the recommendation be broken up or clarified. Mr. Cochran and Mr. Roland questioned the source of testimony on these subjects. Ms. Murray and others suggested splitting the recommendation. Mr. Troy noted the lack of discussion on the third component. Ms. Lopez suggested that the Commission reconsider this recommendation after this meeting.

With regard to requiring ODOD to establish a clearinghouse of information, no changes were noted.

With regard to the recommendation to permit counties to contract for services beyond political boundaries, no comments were noted.

With regard to the recommendation to formalize the role of MPOs, Mr. Jourdan provided clarifying comments and focused attention on requiring the state to formalize the role of the MPOs. Mr. Cochran noted the role of MPOs in making recommendations and endorsed the recommendation as long as it is made clear that accountability for decisions must be vested in elected officials. Mr. Troy noted the significant discussion that had occurred with Dr. Cowley and described the logic of the recommendation. Mr. Jourdan noted the use of the MPOs by states that Ohio competes with for jobs and business. Mr. Roland asked for the inclusion of examples. Mr. Jourdan will contact and work with OSU to include examples.

With regard to the recommendation regarding libraries, the Commission noted that additional work needs to occur. Ms. Murray indicated that money is available to examine the issues related to libraries. Mr. Roland suggested the creation of a new commission to look at library issues. Mr. Cochran and others disagreed. Mr. Troy agreed to meet with Ms. Murray to create wording for a recommendation.

With regard to concepts for consideration (those recommendations that received 3-7 votes), Mr. Troy indicated that the Commission had agreed to list them without embellishment beyond the two or three sentences included in the draft report. Ms. Economus moved that a statement be added to indicate that “These concepts were thought to be important by some Commission members and were considered but did not receive adequate support for inclusion in the report and, as such, are not recommendations of the Commission.”

Scheduling of the Next Meeting

Mr. Troy suggested two additional meetings: a working meeting in July which would include the report in its final layout form and an August meeting to take the final vote.

The next meeting will be held on July 30.

The August meeting will be held on August 27.

Mr. Downing asked Mr. Wirick to provide an estimate of any additional costs to be incurred by OSU by Monday.

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Economus and seconded by Mr. Downing. The motion was approved and the meeting was adjourned at 12:39.