

The Ohio Commission on Local Government Reform and Collaboration
Sycamore Township Meeting Room
11560 Deerfield Road
Sycamore Township, OH 45242.

Minutes
September 25, 2009

The Commission on Local Government Reform and Collaboration meeting was called to order on September 25, 2009 at 10:40 by Chairperson Daniel Troy. A quorum was present.

In attendance:

Daniel Troy, Chair	Tom Weidman	Martin Jenkins
Anita Lopez, Chair	Michael Cochran	Larry Wolpert
Rob Roland	Chester Jourdan	Lynda Murray
Dan Foley	Jennifer Economus	

Tom Weidman moved and Jennifer Economus seconded to approve the August 28, 2009 minutes. The motion was adopted unanimously.

In Tim Downing's absence, the finance report was given by Anita Lopez. There are a few outstanding questions on the recent invoice from the John Glenn Institute. Mr. Downing and Ms. Lopez expect to have those resolved by the October Commission meeting.

Trustee Bishop from Sycamore Township welcomed the Commission. Mr. Bishop described the Robert Schuler Public Park and the newly opened fire station and public building. All services are provided with no earnings tax.

Paul Crabtree, John Glenn Institute, provided an Annotated Bibliography of Studies and Data of Local Government Reform Commissions in other states. At the October commission meeting, the Institute will provide summary materials on similar studies from other states.

Commissioner Troy suggested that we actually start to "bank" some suggestions based on the public hearings testimony for our final report. Mr. Troy discussed that last month's testimony indicated that the law allows joint fire districts involving townships and municipal corporations, but doesn't allow for joint police districts. Mr. Troy thinks that is something that we should include in our final recommendations. Also, if a township wants to become a municipality, there is statute that requires the neighboring municipal corporation (within 3 miles) to agree. Mr. Troy questioned whether or not that was useful. Mr. Cochran responded that the Municipal League has always supported that statute. Eliminating that statute would probably actually create additional local

governments. Mr. Cochran also recommended that some type of statute to grant a limited home-rule that would apply to services. Mr. Jenkins suggested that the idea of banking ideas might really belong in the Commission's sub committee process.

Public Testimony:

Senator Richard Finan - Senator Finan served in the Ohio Senate for over 30 years. Currently working with the Government Cooperation and Efficiency Program (GCEP). GCEP works to get government entities to cooperate to get things done more efficiently and more cheaply. It covers a broad spectrum of government entities. They have received about \$300,000 (\$100,000 from the county, \$100,000 from Cincinnati, and \$100,000 from the Business Center). Their approach has been to incentivize collaboration.

1. Bulk purchase of salt and fuel
2. Fire plug maintenance
3. Line stripping services
4. Joint application for grants (one grant for sharing heavy equipment and one grant for joint code enforcement)
5. Examining 911 services
6. Studying a collection system for income tax; locally producing a RITA-like product.
7. Some consolidation of fire systems.

GCEP would like to go out of business in two years. The goal is to establish a good foundation, and then the communities will take over the work and continue. GCEP was initially formed by the suburban communities, and now the city and the county are involved. GCEP has two recommendations for the Commission:

1. Centers for local development should be developed throughout the state to oversee the work of cooperation.
2. The centers ought to be funded, perhaps by carving out a very small part of the LGF.

Mr. Troy: We have mayor's associations, etc. up in my area of the state. Do you think that these can be combined into a GCEP-like organization? Mr. Finan: No, because they don't cross over different types of entities.

Mr. Jenkins: How are these different from the Councils of Government? Mr. Finan: I'm not familiar with them. Mr. Troy: Councils of Government didn't really work in our area because larger local government entities said that the dues were too high and/or they thought "there wasn't anything in it for us" in terms of their individual community, and so they dropped out.

Mr. Foley: It seems like you believe that there really isn't a structure to have this cooperation conversation? Mr. Finan: Exactly. You really need some operation that does the research and initiates and facilitates the conversation. Mr. Foley:

Do you think that they have to handle the implementation issues? Mr. Finan: In some cases.

Ms. Lopez: How is GCEP funded? Mr. Finan: Through dues. Will send Articles of Incorporation to Ms. Murray.

Mr. Wolpert: How about including all of the taxing authorities beyond counties, municipalities, villages, and townships? Mr. Finan: I would be concerned about doing that initially because it might be too broad to accomplish anything, at least initially. Mr. Wolpert: I've always been told that there is so much animosity between political subdivisions. Can we really provide a big enough carrot to accomplish something? Can't we say that if you want to keep some of these things, that you will lose your LGF. Mr. Finan: I think your idea is closer to a stick than a carrot.

Ms. Lopez: I worry that these centers would increase the number of local government entities. Can we look within our own budgets to make this happen? Mr. Finan: You could spend less, but I think that you will always need some central agency. I think that a lot of the animosity is starting to fall away.

Mr. Jourdan: We already have the Regional Planning Commissions that could be the beginning of local development agencies. Let's look at the synergies that already exist, OPI for example. Mr. Finan: The problem with OPI is that really haven't done the job, at least not down here. They really are using a lot more "stick" and not much "carrot". They really are primarily transportation (highway) oriented. Mr. Jourdan: I agree that has been a problem, but at least in central Ohio, we're moving away from that model.

Mr. Troy: How do we change the mindset of the players? Mr. Finan: I think that public officials are more and more interested in looking at these opportunities.

Mr. Troy: What ever happened to the State and Local Government Commission? Mr. Finan: Vanished for lack of money. It was never regionally based.

William Jetter - Sycamore Township EMS & Fire. Presented his power point. There are rules on the books that limit what we can do. Working with our neighbors has brought more efficiencies to this area. They are saddled with restrictions with regard to safety, but they're working together so they can streamline their costs. In 1995 they had 1400 runs, in 2009 4500 runs. If they don't have something, they call their neighboring communities. Mutual aid has really grown out of proportion. They actually operate as one big fire department with neighborhood units.

Mr. Foley: Can we set standards or benchmarks? Mr. Jetter: We have to have obstacles removed. CalFire is an example of the problems with too much consolidation. Mr. Foley: I'm wondering if we could come up with a matrix or

standards? Mr. Jetter: There is also an insurance rating problem. There should be some credit for cooperation.

Mr. Weidman: How did you handle recent budget reductions? Mr. Jetter: We worked with our bargaining unit and eliminated one position, reduced sick time abuse which reduced overtime expenses.

Mr. Cochran: Once you go over 1500 hours you have to provide benefits, and that would be financially devastating. Mr. Jetter: It still should be explored.

Dave Distel - Education Service Centers, Superintendent of Hamilton County. There are some possibilities to crossover local government types; for example H1N1 flu. You need to trust each other and the facilitator.

Dan Hare - Education Service Centers, Superintendent of Butler County. WE share in the work, the risk and the rewards.

Mr. Troy: How are you funded? Mr. Hare: \$6/student from state funds and 90% of our total funding comes from fees.

Mr. Wolpert: The ESCs were created along time ago, when things were very different. Mr. Distel: statewide the ESCs get \$7 million. Mr. Wolpert: Can school districts contract with ESC to provide services across multiple school districts? Mr. Distel: Yes. Most school districts don't need full time people to do some these tasks. There are also third party contractor advantages because of the union situation.

Ms. Lopez: Is there evidence that this works? Ms. Economus: Yes. Will provide to the commission.

Mr. Jourdan: MORPC looked at the issue of school transportation in central Ohio. We spend \$124 million for school transportation in Franklin County.

Jeff Berding - Cincinnati City Council. The city is looking at the GCEP recommendations and believe that they will help with a 2010 \$40 million deficit. They also have a good track record of working with other organizations like United Way across political sub divisions. You need to pick the areas for merger carefully, but if your successful, you have more money to do other things.

Tim Riordan - Efficiencies are nice, but dramatic action is what will make a difference. Recommends consolidated regions (could be county or multi-county)

1. Central taxing authority
2. Zoning
3. Economic Development Incentives
4. Issuance of bonds

The consolidated region would have one school district and neighborhood governance that would allow local options.

Mr. Troy: Are you referring to some specific example where this has worked? Mr. Reardon: Marion Co., Indianapolis. You need size and scope to operate in this global economy.

Mr. Cochran: Are you aware of how the Indianapolis model has worked? Mr. Reardon: It has provided a better leadership base. Mr. Cochran: Has government delivered services or the schools better? Mr. Reardon: I don't have any specifics.

Mr. Jenkins: There is a real danger in misunderstanding unigovernment.

David Pepper, Hamilton County Commissioner. We found that the GCEP process really did save money and improve services. Learned several important things:

1. State assistance has really made a difference to study the issues.
2. Up front costs may be substantial for long term savings; you need those up front dollars.
3. Ability to provide carrots, and that's not necessarily new dollars.

The Local Government Commission could be helpful in providing good information and case studies.

Mr. Troy: What about the structure of local government? Mr. Pepper: It is important to try and streamline and modernize the structure.

Mr. Cochran: Should this be locally or state imposed? Mr. Pepper: You can't lightly take away people's right to vote on things.

Mylita Gregg, Agenda 360

1. Create a matrix of accountability
2. Revenue sharing incentives would support collaborative efforts
3. term limits and open meetings has caused difficulty in elected officials to get to know and trust one another
4. Having Best Practices is very helpful

Danny Crank, Records Association left written testimony.

Jim O'Reilly, Mayor, Wyoming. Four areas of review:

1. Oxen
2. Gangs
3. Drugs
4. Silos

We should work on a better tax collection system.

Mr. Wolpert: Time for a Constitutional Convention? Mr. O'Reilly: Yes.

Christopher Finny - Discussed the prevailing wage law. Offered examples of where prevailing wage forced a political subdivision to pay more for a project, thus costing more taxpayer dollars. Urged Commission to recommend changing the Ohio Civil Service Law and the Prevailing Wage Law.

Christine Maticic - Liberty Township Trustee (Butler County) Provided the Commission with examples of collaborative efforts in Butler County. Supported the Center for Local Government and encouraged the same type of programs in other regions of the state.

Phillip Sparks - Local Government Law Center, Northern Kentucky University - Provided Commission with many examples of previous law and commissions at the state level that examined collaboration and consolidation. Local governments have to be on a scale that reflects what the local economy best supports, and in Ohio today the county best matches that economy of scale.

Edwin Humphrey - Clermont County Commissioner - Shared different collaborative efforts happening in Clermont County. Provided Commission with a list of recommendations to consider including:

1. Broader scope for the current ORC 715.02 to allow collaboration through statutory authority to enter into agreements broader than "capital improvements".
2. Remove impediments to intra-jurisdictional cooperation.
3. Eliminate special fees/earmarks of fees.
4. Allow collection of fines/fees owed to counties, DJFS, and other local jurisdictions through an income tax refund offset program.
5. Speed up time in which the state returns sales tax revenues to counties.
6. Allow a board of county commissioners to transfer funds from various county special funds, if the funds have a surplus, to the General Fund. Remove ability of courts and other special entities to order a board of county commissioners to appropriate funding.
7. Reduce legal advertising notice requirements and allow notices to be published on county websites.
8. Allow county commissioners the ability to selectively do quarterly budgets for a single office holder rather than for the entire county.
9. Allow counties to combine agencies or offices across county jurisdictions.
10. Allow housing of prisoners serving sentences to serve their time in jail in other states.
11. Centralize misdemeanor courts into one misdemeanor court per county.

Mr. Jourdan: Mentioned TIDs in your testimony, what do you think of the proposed TIA legislation? Mr. Humphrey: I believe it would be useful.

Jack McDaniel - Spoke as concerned citizen and taxpayer. Outlined several cost cutting measures that could take place, using Fayette County as an example. Recommended that local government structure in Ohio be altered.

Mr. Cochran: Are you aware that there are 22 states in the USA that have some form of township government? Mr. McDaniel: I knew of some of the other states.

Mr. Cochran: The Indiana Commission report recommended eliminating townships but Indiana townships do not offer the same services townships in Ohio offer. Are you aware of any special districts in Ohio that would be able to do what the townships in Ohio are doing? Mr. McDaniel: I believe that the counties will be able to take on most of the responsibilities.

Mr. Wolpert: Thank you for your time and research efforts.

Tom Brinkman - Former State Representative now representing COAST. Recommended eliminating most special districts in Ohio including making one health district in each county and one library district in each county. Encouraged recommendations from the Commission that would incentivize local governments to collaborate and save tax payers money.

Robert Johnson - Director of the Center for Local Government. Discussed role of the Center in Cincinnati region.

Henry Dolive - Administrator for Anderson Township (Hamilton County) - Stressed importance of the Commission locating good, solid examples of collaboration efforts at local level. Discussed importance of township government at local level and its connection to growing regions. Gave recommendations including:

1. Eliminate all special districts in Ohio.
2. Make sure incentives are for intra-collaboration, not just inter-collaboration.
3. Identify and support local/regional organizations that provide assistance to political subdivisions that wish to collaborate.

Mr. Wolpert: Why are townships so large down here in this region, specifically in Hamilton County? Mr. Dolive: Townships were given access to water and sewer through the Hamilton county Water & Sewer District so annexation for those services was not an issue.

Kevin Celarek - Administrator for Green Township (Hamilton County) - Provided examples of collaborative efforts in Hamilton County. Provided Commission with detailed statistics about growth in Hamilton County, which happens to be primarily in townships.

Tom Dix - Trustee in Washington Township (Clermont County), President of the Clermont county Township Association - Townships are the grassroots of government in Ohio. Stressed the need for all local governments to simplify and budget accordingly.

End Public Testimony

Commissioner Troy initiated a discussion regarding the Commission's subcommittee process. Due to the Commission's one meeting a month schedule, and the length of the public hearings accompanying them, separate meetings of the subcommittees has not occurred. He asked the subcommittee chairs and the Commission members to give serious thought to possibly designating additional days in our busy schedules over the next few months to meet and conduct subcommittee meetings/work sessions. He asked that members bring back their thoughts on this for discussion at the October Commission meeting.

Commissioner Troy also indicated that Auditor of State Mary Taylor's office will be conducting an all day Summit on Local Government Sustainability on November 19th in Columbus and that our Commission has been invited to participate and allocated its own panel time slot. Commissioner Troy suggested that Auditor Lopez and he as the co-chairs could represent the Commission at this Summit in the approximate one hour time slot scheduled for us. Hearing no objections to this suggestion from the members, he indicated to the representative of the State Auditor's office present in the audience of our intent to participate in that fashion.

At approximately 4:30 PM, Commissioner Troy thanked the members of the Commission still in attendance for their dedication and commitment in conducting the lengthy business of the Commission today, and without objection, declared the meeting adjourned.

He announced that the next meeting will be held on Friday, October 30, in Montgomery County. It will be hosted by Commissioner Foley, who will secure the appropriate meeting site for the event and so inform the members.