



Consensus Commission Meeting – January 23, 2015
Location: Camillus Town Hall, 4600 W. Genesee Street, Syracuse, NY 13219

Meeting Minutes

Present: Cornelius B. Murphy, Co-Chair; Aminy I. Audi; Laurence G. Bousquet; William M. Byrne; Hon. Patrick M. Kilmartin; Melanie W. Littlejohn; Andrew M. Maxwell; Stephen F. Meyer; Hon. Mark A. Olson; Dr. Dennis J. Nave; Hon. Mark A. Nicotra; Ann Rooney. On the phone: Darlene Kerr

Absent: James T. Walsh, Co-Chair; M. Catherine Richardson, Esq. co-chair; Donna DeSiato; Bethaida González; Sharon F. Owens; and Hon. Chad M. Ryan

Staff: Kathy Murphy, SYRACUSE 20/20; Rob Simpson, CenterState CEO; Kevin Schwab, CenterState CEO; Laurie Black, SYRACUSE 20/20

Consultant: Joe Stefko, Center for Governmental Research (CGR)

The meeting was called to order at 12:10 p.m.

Welcome – Hon. Mary Ann Coogan, Town of Camillus

Camillus Town Supervisor Mary Ann Coogan welcomed the Commission to the Town of Camillus. She thanked Commissioners for their service on this necessary initiative. Each year it becomes more and more difficult to put together the Town budget without reducing or eliminating services. Keeping taxes stable without having to increase them has become close to impossible. The Town has made changes to try to keep taxes stable. The Town has had hiring freezes, have changed/reduced services, combined services, shared services with other Towns, leased consolidated water district to OCWA. Even with the changes, the Town is still facing budgeting challenges. Local governments are facing government mandates, tax caps and rising costs of government benefits. They are doing the best that they can, but also realize there need to be changes in the way that local government does business.

Supervisor Coogan reminded the Committee, as they move forward with their work, to remember the passion that people have for their community. That one size does not fit all and that bigger is not better. She noted that she is interested in what the public has to say with regard to the baseline. Supervisor Coogan spoke to the Village dissolution vote that took place a few years ago. She noted that the village residents opposed the merger with much of the vote coming down to the fact that the residents were not willing to give up the higher end trash service that was part of the Village services. She noted that it could have been more successful with better communication. Supervisor Coogan also spoke to the newly negotiated agreement with the Town of Geddes to partner more closely with the two police departments. Neither local government wanted to dissolve police departments and the negotiated agreement are baby steps for working more closely together.

Baseline Release Update

Dr. Murphy provided an update on the release of the Baseline. A press conference was held to educate the various media outlets on the contents of the baseline. There was also a constructive meeting with the Editorial Board. The paper is willing to be a partner with us moving forward, helping to educate the public. Joe Stefko stated that the editorial board is interested in leveraging the data that has been collected and that could be interactive. Rob Simpson added that the editorial board was interested in knowing what the next steps are, what are the solutions being considered. He informed the Commission that they have restated to the paper that this is a transparent process where the results have not been predetermined.

Foundations Update

Rob Simpson provided the update on the efforts to secure funding from the Foundations for the public engagement efforts. Neil Murphy, Kathy Murphy and Rob had been meeting over the course of several months with five of the local Foundations. The Allyn Foundation/Welch Allyn had agreed to \$50,000 and Rob noted appreciation to Meg O'Connell at the Allyn Foundation and Steve Meyer for supporting the effort. Consensus also received a \$5,000 award from the John Ben Snow Foundation. Larry Bousquet announced that the Gifford Foundation had awarded \$25,000. They expect to hear from the Reisman Foundation soon and they will be meeting with the Community Foundation in the days ahead with a request for \$50,000. The combined grant awards will come very close to the budget amount that Melanie Littlejohn and the Public Engagement committee had put together. Rob noted that for our local Foundations those are significant investments in this project. It is a good vote of confidence in the work that is being done.

Committee Updates

Committees are meeting and the Committee chairs were asked to provide an update of their activities:

Public Safety

Darlene Kerr gave an update on the work of the Public Safety Committee. The committee is broken down into fire, emergency medical services (EMS) and police. The committee is meeting with experts in each of the areas to get a better understanding of the service delivery. Ann Rooney and Andrew Maxwell and the County employees from 911 and Emergency Management have been extremely helpful in identifying available data and sharing it with the committee. The committee has requested data by population density, current location of facilities and an inventory of apparatus that exists. The committee will overlay data on existing maps to evaluate existing system and to model additional service delivery opportunities. The police subcommittee has not yet started to meet; however, data collection is currently underway. The biggest challenges are with regard to the consistency and accuracy of data and how it is reported.

Public Engagement

Melanie Littlejohn provided the Public Engagement committee update. In addition to the media rollout the committee is now working on the community rollout of the baseline, the public forums. Currently, the committee is looking at the last week of February and the location for the kickoff will be downtown. Following the large meeting, the committee will schedule additional meetings in areas throughout the community. The committee will plan to offer food at the public forums. More aggressive outreach in small and large environments will take place after the public forum. The committee is discussing how to maximize existing public opportunities where groups are gathering. The committee is evaluating all aspects of communication including social media, formal meetings and informal opportunities to engage the public. Kevin Schwab added that the media has agreed to help us promote the public forums as they get scheduled.

Infrastructure

Bill Byrne provided the update on the Infrastructure Committee meetings. He noted that there have been two meetings since Consensus last met. On December 15th the committee held a joint meeting with SYRACUSE 20/20's Task Force working on Infrastructure and the meeting focused on Highway and DPW services with Jim D'Agostino (SMTC), Megan Costa (SOCPA), Ron Berger (20/20), David Panasci (20/20), Judy Mower, Ryan Donnelly (Onondaga County DPW), Pete O'Connor (Syracuse DPW), Jim Crow (Manlius DPW). In Onondaga County there are 36 departments focused on roads and highways with a wide range in coverage area. Bill reviewed the major findings from the meeting and noted that six of the seven findings are related to the fact that there are too many entities. He noted that there is a lot of work to be done in this area; yet, it will be difficult. There are a lot of entities and a lot of local control. The second meeting focused on water and sewers. Tom Rhoads from County WEP and Deborah Somers from City Water Department were the guest speakers. Bill noted that our costs for water and sewer are significantly lower than the national average. However, where we are in difficult shape is with regard to capital requirements and as they related to the City of Syracuse. The capital needs for water and sewer are significant. Mark Olson added that the Sewer and Water challenges faced by local municipalities do become the most expensive challenge repairs they face.

Municipal Operations

Aminy Audi provided the update on the Municipal Operations Committee meeting on December 17th. The Committee had invited three clerks from Towns and Villages. Specifically, Guest speakers; Lisa Goodwin of the Town of Onondaga, Jeannie Ventry of the Town of Salina and Martha Dygert of the Village of Manlius. Clerks play a central role in the operations of the Towns and Villages. Their roles are defined in law; however, their responsibilities are very diverse. The Village Clerk is appointed and works with departments as well as the village trustees and the mayor on village budget. Town Clerk can be elected or appointed depending on municipality. The next meeting will focus on the financial operations of the various local governments. Mark Nicotra added that in many ways the Clerk is central to the operations of the local government. He added that you need to have the right person.

Economic Development

Larry Bousquet provided the update on the Economic Development Committee. He noted that the scope of the committee includes economic development, land use planning, and permitting. The Committee is looking at the structures, the costs, the decisions in each of those areas. Rob Simpson is helping the Committee get a better understanding of the economic development entities that are operating in this space. Andrew Maxwell is putting together information on the landscape of planning in Onondaga County. The Committee will look at the costs, the number of Boards and the overlapping jurisdictions. The Committee is also looking at the issues surrounding permitting and the right to build processes in the community. The Committee will look at the role that government plays in economic development and job growth. The Committee is collecting reading materials and other literature on the impact of local government on Economic Development. How local government incentivizes growth in a no-growth population community.

Governance

Steve Meyer provided an update on the Governance Committee. He and Donna DeSiato are co-chairing the committee. The Committee had a teleconference a week ago discussing Committee timeline, meeting frequency and what success will look like for the Committee. The Committee will create a whitepaper for the full Commission which will showcase obstacles to change and innovation. Second, the white paper will showcase the governance options and will look to benchmarks from other communities that have demonstrated positive outcomes. The Committee is scheduled to meet in three weeks.

CGR Whitepapers

Joe Stefko noted that CGR is currently in the process of developing white papers for each of the committee that is considering service delivery. The white papers will highlight options, or range of alternatives for the committees to consider. For example, a white paper on fire would provide options of what it would mean to provide services at the very local level where each municipality has its own fire service. On the other end, what would it look like to provide regional service, showing examples from other communities. The white papers will inform the committees work regarding the range of options. The committees can then pick and choose within the range of options and redirect for more information to be gathered. The white papers help to frame the conversation of the committees.

The meeting adjourned at 1:20 p.m. To view the full Consensus meeting, go to [www.https://www.cgr.org/consensusny/calendar/](https://www.cgr.org/consensusny/calendar/)

The next meeting is scheduled for February 27th at 7:30 a.m.