



Consensus Commission Meeting – February 27, 2015
Location: Liverpool Village Hall, 310 Sycamore St., Liverpool, NY

Meeting Minutes

Present: Cornelius B. Murphy, Co-Chair; James T. Walsh, Co-Chair; Aminy I. Audi; Laurence G. Bousquet; Melanie W. Littlejohn; Andrew M. Maxwell; Hon. Mark A. Olson; Dr. Dennis J. Nave; Hon. Mark A. Nicotra; Ann Rooney. On the phone: M. Catherine Richardson, Esq. co-chair; William M. Byrne; Bethaida González; Darlene Kerr; Stephen F. Meyer; Sharon F. Owens.

Absent: Donna DeSiato; Hon. Patrick M. Kilmartin; and Hon. Chad M. Ryan

Staff: Kathy Murphy, SYRACUSE 20/20; Kevin Schwab, CenterState CEO; Laurie Black, SYRACUSE 20/20; Travis Glazier, Onondaga County; Dan Hammer, Onondaga County;

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 a.m. by Co-Chair James T. Walsh

Welcome – Deputy Village Mayor Nick Kochan

Deputy Village Mayor Nick Kochan welcomed the Commission members to the Village. He noted that the Village was incorporated in 1830 and is approximately 1 square mile. He spoke about many of the assets of living in the village. He noted that Liverpool has what most people want to have in quality of life, including mixed use housing, commercial, schools and libraries. It is a balanced community socially and economically. He informed the Commission that the Village is very innovative, including having created an incubator program in an historic home in the village. The Village has been able to keep the tax rate flat except when the County sales tax went away. They have also experienced growth in the assessed value of Village properties. He noted that the Village is succeeding and efficient. Deputy Mayor Kochan stated that Villages should be supported rather than targeted by the State.

Committee Updates

Public Engagement

Melanie Littlejohn provided the update for the Public Engagement Committee. The Committee has been busy framing the next steps for reaching out to the public. March 11th will be the first public roll out of the baseline at 12:15 in City Hall Commons. There are many groups helping to promote the public forum to encouraging people to attend the first presentation. The meeting will consist of a presentation from Joe Stefko, Neil Murphy and Melanie. Neil will speak to who is Consensus, Joe will present the baseline data and Melanie will speak to the public engagement process as a call to action. There are other meetings that have been scheduled at Southwest Community Center, Town of Salina and the DeWitt Library. This is the start and additional meetings will be scheduled throughout the community. It was emphasized that Commissioners can help us to engage folks and encourage them to attend the public forums. The invitation to the public meetings has been produced in a variety of formats and Commission members should circulate to their networks. Also, the baseline report is being translated into Spanish so we can encourage all to be part of the baseline discussion. There is a robust media strategy that includes traditional, non-traditional media and social media to drive the public engagement message. Congressman Walsh suggested that we should have a listserv that facilitates an ongoing dialogue and that brings the conversation to one place.

Infrastructure

Bill Byrne noted that the infrastructure committee has held two meetings and they are currently scheduling a third meeting on Parks. That will finish up the functional service meetings. They also have a white paper from Joe Stefko that shows the range of options and models available. Bill noted that there has been a lot of infrastructure news of late

and that technology and best practices in going to be a big part of the discussion around water and waste water. He noted that he attended a presentation by Matt Driscoll at City Hall where he spoke about the State's role in investing in infrastructure. Matt Driscoll spoke to the importance of having a comprehensive plan for State investment.

Municipal Operations

Aminy Audi presented the municipal operations committee report. The committee has had two meetings. The Committee is in a learning mode seeing how municipalities are functioning. The January 27th meeting focused on municipal finance and there were two guest speakers: Greg Maxwell that is the comptroller for Salina and Van Buren and Steve Morgan the chief financial officer for the County. The comptroller job varies; however, not all towns have comptrollers. When asked what they would do differently, the areas where they talked about centralization was IT, accounting and human resources. The second committee meeting focused on the white paper developed by CGR and discussed the framework to consider the range of options available. The white paper helps the committee envision what is and what is possible and to consider the various options in the frame of the local level, the regional level or in a hybrid level. The next meeting will focus on the court system.

Public Safety

Darlene Kerr provided the public safety update. The committee held its recent meeting with two for-profit providers of EMS services, Rural Metro and TLC. The committee also met with Anthony DiGregorio, County EMS Bureau. The County EMS Bureau provides technical training and coordination of Emergency Medical Services. The speakers have been very candid about the challenges facing the EMS service providers. The Committee is identifying areas for improvement within the system. The committee is still in need of data and so they committee developed a survey for the volunteer fire system asking them specific questions that will help the committee get a better sense of the challenges facing the volunteers. Kathy Murphy, Chief Linnertz and Mark Olson will be attending a fire breakfast and present the survey to the chiefs and ask for their active participation by completing the survey. The next meeting will focus on a white paper that will showcase various organizational structure options. The committee will wrap up fire and ambulance and move on to discussing police.

Economic Development

Larry Bousquet provided the update on the work of the Economic Development committee. The Committee met last week and Andrew Maxwell provided an overview of zoning, planning and land use planning within the county. There are 103 planning/zoning boards with the county with about 557 members involved in the planning/zoning decisions in Onondaga County. Andrew updated the committee on how the planning committees operate and how they are staffed. Andrew provided an overview of the regulatory environment facing the municipalities. The committee discussed the impact of having so many planning agencies within a relatively small geographic area. Committee member Rob Simpson discussed some of the challenges that our existing land use and zoning structure has on regional economic development. The Committee discussed the motivations that effect municipalities in the pursuit of economic development. The Committee is exploring best practices such as regional tax sharing. The next meeting there will be a panel of Town and Village representatives to hear about land use and planning from the point of view of the towns.

Governance

Steve Meyer provided the update on the Governance Committee. The Committee is just getting underway and preparing for the first full committee meeting. CGR has developed a white paper that explores the range of options to consider when thinking about governance. The Committee will look at what other communities have been able to achieve.

Process Update and Next Steps - Joe Stefko, CGR

Joe Stefko provided the Commission with some handouts as part of an effort to do a process re-set. Joe noted that it is helpful to look back to see where we have been and then to take a look at where the Commission is going forward. At the start of the process was to develop the baseline which gave us all a common point of departure. The baseline was an information and data analysis process of what currently exists in the community. Where the Commission is right now is straddling the committee phase. The committees are all at different stages. They started by developing the portfolio of work that the committee would focus on, to make sure that there wasn't duplication and all issues had a committee. In the committee process, there are additional data elements being requested and efforts to collect that data has continued. Where the committees are beginning to pivot is from information gathering and stakeholder

discussions to beginning to contemplate the range of alternatives. It is important to note that in each white paper, the status quo is on the continuum of options.

Committees will be fleshing out quantitative and qualitative impacts of the range of options. By later spring, the committees will need to move toward one or two recommendations. Those recommendations from the committees will eventually move to the full Commission.

Joe discussed how the individual committees fit into the bigger picture discussion about government modernization and what we are doing as a community and region. He noted that there are three operational and service area oriented committees – public safety, municipal operations and infrastructure. These committees will invest a lot of time on the nuts and bolts of service delivery and how those compare to other communities. These committees are working at the ground level of government service delivery.

There is also a more global conversation taking place in the governance and economic development committees about structural options. These are conversations about bigger picture issues. What other options in structure are available and what are the pros and cons of those other options. There is a range of organizational options – small box to large box to regional service delivery. What fiscal imperatives are created in small box versus large box government structures? There are many interesting models that we would want to think about in the context of what we want to do in Onondaga County. Models like revenue sharing as is showcased in Minneapolis, St. Paul would be considered and the committees would reach out to other communities to hear about what has worked and what has not worked.

Joe noted that it is likely that the final report will be a two-leveled final report. There will be recommendations at the ground level – service level recommendations. Who does what and where? To rewrite the baseline in 20 years, what would it look like? Public works, Police, Fire, EMS, Assessment etc. There will also be the global level recommendations that will be around governing structures and fiscal connections. Where would decisions be made for different services? These are parallel path discussions.

Neil Murphy reminded the Commission that there has been a promise to identify State barriers to local government in the final report. Joe agreed and noted that the Governance committee has agreed to include the State mandates and other barriers in their work. Jim Walsh noted that the white papers are very helpful in framing the range of options.

Additional Items

Neil Murphy noted that the next meeting is scheduled for March 27th at noon. The Mayor and County Executive have been invited to discuss the work of Consensus. The location is to be determined.

It was suggested that the Commission approve a motion to thank the five foundations for contributing roughly \$150,000 for the public engagement process and specifically Meg O'Connell for helping to facilitate the process. The foundations have not only provided funding but they have been active in discussions on how we could better reach the community. A motion was made and unanimously approved.

Neil spoke to the recent Sienna Institute poll and the faith that individuals have in their local government as opposed to the State. Local governments were considered better at protecting the local tax payer.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 a.m. To view the full Consensus meeting, go to [www.https://www.cgr.org/consensuscny/calendar/](https://www.cgr.org/consensuscny/calendar/)

The next meeting is scheduled for March 27th at 12:00 p.m.