



Consensus Commission Meeting – June 3, 2014
CenterState CEO, 115 West Fayette Street, Syracuse
Meeting Minutes

Present: Cornelius B. Murphy, Co-Chair; M. Catherine Richardson, Esq., Co-Chair; Aminy I. Audi; Laurence G. Bousquet; William M. Byrne; Dr. Donna J. DeSiato; Darlene D. Kerr (by phone); Hon. Patrick M. Kilmartin; Melanie W. Littlejohn; Andrew M. Maxwell; Stephen F. Meyer; Hon. Mark A. Nicotra; Hon. Mark A. Olson; Sharon F. Owens.

Absent: James T. Walsh, Co-Chair; Bethaida González; Dr. Dennis J. Nave; Ann Rooney; and Hon. Chad M. Ryan

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

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m.

Welcome and Introduction of CGR

Neil Murphy welcomed the Consensus Commission members to the July meeting noting that there has been some substantive progress made over the past month. The consultants that have been selected by the Commission are with them today, the website is live and the public engagement committee continues to build a strategy. Cathy Richardson noted that an agreement had been reached with the Center for Governmental Research (CGR) and the contract is being signed. Cathy welcomed and introduced the consultants to the full Commission. CGR is a well-renowned organization and has been working in New York State since 1915. Dr. Joe Stefko is the President and CEO of CGR and is the project lead for Consensus. Also present with Dr. Stefko was Scott Sittig, Associate Director at CGR and Brian Roulin, Director at CGR. Dr. Stefko provided an introduction to the work of CGR and the organization's history. Based in Rochester, CGR serves the municipal sector and has done approximately 2/3 of its work in the State of New York. Since 2007 they have done 72 local municipal efficiency projects. More recently they have moved into work with other communities including New Jersey, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. These other communities in other States are working on the same questions. The issues are not unique and there is a lot to learn from other parts of New York and the other communities.

CGR's priority is to support the Commission in its analysis of what government operations exist currently in Onondaga County and to help develop a range of options for consideration. It begins by developing an information rich environment and developing a baseline assessment. CGR will introduce into the discussion some best practices from other communities and an assessment of what might be possible in our own community. CGR will define a range of options along a continuum including potential costs savings as well as process efficiencies. Finally, CGR will assist with a robust public engagement effort that complements the work of the Commission's public engagement committee. The process will not go anywhere without a robust public engagement dialogue about where we are, what we like and don't like about where we are and what some potential options might be.

Dr. Stefko presented CGR's project timeline and deliverables for the various phases of the project. First is the baseline phase, then the options phase and finally, the Commission issues its recommendations. Dr. Stefko then responded to specific questions from the Commission members about the process and the data that will be utilized for the baseline analysis.

Public Engagement Committee Update

Melanie Littlejohn provided the public engagement committee update. Melanie noted that the website continues to be enhanced and it will continue to be a work in process. She thanked Travis Glazier and Kevin Schwab for their work on the website. Suggestions for website enhancements from the Commission members are welcome at any point. The committee wants to make sure that it is an inclusive sight and that everyone has a seat at the table. Public engagement must be inclusive.

Melanie also provided an overview of what outreach efforts have been over the past month. There were three presentations in May – Town Supervisors/Village Mayors meeting, FOCUS Greater Syracuse and a Syracuse Rotary. Consensus has officially presented to over 200 individuals. The feedback has been cautiously optimistic and the Commission has been urged to ensure that individual voices and concerns be heard. The committee is thinking about how we capture data at the meetings and how we share that feedback. There are two meetings scheduled in June and certainly more to come.

The Consensus outreach strategy includes targeted stakeholder groups. The Committee put together a list for review and requested feedback. The intention is to have large group meetings over a period of time starting in the summer and fall. Consensus will drive these meetings and invite stakeholder groups to attend. These stakeholder groups will help maximize efforts to reach large numbers of individuals in an efficient manner. Right now the Consensus presentation is about “who we are, what we are trying to accomplish” and explaining the process. While CGR is doing the data collection Consensus commission members will be getting the name and awareness out to the public. The hope is that all of the Commission members will be in front of groups and making presentations.

Also the public engagement committee is working on providing the talking points and elevator speech to the full commission. The committee will work to present the full Commission with these materials at a future meeting. The Public Engagement team welcomes full Commission member participation and meetings are open to everyone.

Meeting Schedule

Kathy Murphy reviewed the next four months of Commission meetings with the members. Below are the meeting dates and times for Consensus meetings:

July 25, 2014 at noon

August 22, 2014 at 7:30 a.m.

September 26, 2014 at 7:30 a.m.

October 24, 2014 at noon

At the next meeting Mark Olson and Mark Nicotra will provide an overview of the local government structures that they are respectively involved with as Village Mayor and Town Supervisor.

Other Conversation

The co-chairs opened up the discussion to the Consensus members. Among the comments made was the importance of including per capita comparisons when looking at local government expenditures. It was also noted that the comparisons have to be as close to “apple to apples” as can be given that local governments account for expenses differently and it can make it challenging to compare local communities to other communities. Finally, it was recommended that Consensus engage the youth voice in this process, because much of the reason for doing this is for their future and they will be living with the changes that will be made.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 A.M. To view the full Consensus meeting, go to www.consensuscny.com/about/video/;