

**Members**

Rep. Phil Hinkle, Chairperson  
Rep. Thomas Saunders  
Rep. Robert Kuzman  
Rep. Win Moses  
Sen. Marvin Riegsecker, Vice-Chairperson  
Sen. David Long  
Sen. Timothy Lanane  
Sen. Frank Mrvan  
Phil R. Stiver  
Same Talarico, Jr  
Jean P. Lushin  
Paul Ricketts  
Ann Devore  
Chris Ruhl



# LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY AND FINANCING STUDY COMMISSION

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**Authority:** P.L. 64-2004

## MEETING MINUTES<sup>1</sup>

**Meeting Date:** August 23, 2005  
**Meeting Time:** 1:00 P.M.  
**Meeting Place:** State House, 200 W. Washington St., House Chambers  
**Meeting City:** Indianapolis, Indiana  
**Meeting Number:** 1

**Members Present:** Rep. Phil Hinkle, Chairperson; Rep. Thomas Saunders; Rep. Robert Kuzman; Rep. Win Moses; Sen. David Long; Sen. Timothy Lanane; Sen. Frank Mrvan; Jean P. Lushin; Paul Ricketts; Ann Devore; Chris Ruhl; Darren Vogt; Judy Sharp.

**Members Absent:** Sen. Marvin Riegsecker, Vice-Chairperson; Phil R. Stiver; Sam Talarico, Jr.

The first meeting of the Local Government Efficiency and Financing Study Commission was called to order at 1:05 p.m. The meeting began with the members introducing themselves to the audience. Following the introductions, Rep. Hinkle reviewed the topics

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<sup>1</sup> Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.ai.org/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

that have been assigned to the Commission for study by P.L. 64-2004 and the Legislative Council.

Rep. Ryan Dvorak addressed the Commission to urge the Commission, the General Assembly, and local governments to plan for community growth in ways that reduce sprawl. Rep. Dvorak noted that other states are already developing strategies to manage growth. Rep. Dvorak submitted to the Commission a written statement (Exhibit A) and a leaflet describing policy recommendations of the National Association of Home Builders and growth initiatives from around the country (Exhibit B).

Rep. Eric Koch then addressed the Commission concerning the fiscal impact of public lands in Indiana. A significant amount of acreage in some counties is owned by the state or federal government and excluded from the property tax rolls. Rep. Koch stated that in recent years payments in lieu of taxes, public safety fees, and surcharges on gate fees have been proposed to mitigate the impact upon local governments. Fiscal analyst Valerie Ruda identified the number of acres owned by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources that are located within each county. Ms. Ruda's maps and tables were distributed to the Commission (Exhibits C, D, and E).

Nearly twenty percent of the total acreage in Brown County is owned by the DNR. No other county's percentage of DNR acreage exceeds nine percent. Mr. David Critser, president of the Brown County Council, lead a bipartisan delegation of taxpayers and county office holders to the meeting. Mr. Critser presented the county's view of the fiscal impact on county government and the county's taxpayers (Exhibit F). Mr. Critser directed the Commission's attention to the services provided to the visitors of Brown County State Park and other public lands in the county: roads, law enforcement, animal control, fire protection, and emergency medical services. Much of the Commission's discussion with Mr. Critser focused on emergency medical services and the costs borne by the county.

When asked by Sen. Long about the benefits of tourism to the county, Mr. Critser replied that the benefits are not as big as they used to be and that the county would stand to benefit even more if some of the sales taxes paid by tourists could be retained by the county.

The discussion then turned to other taxes imposed in Brown County with Mr. Critser pointing out that the food and beverage tax is imposed by, and only within, the Town of Nashville. Mr. Critser also reminded the Commission that innkeeper's tax revenues are not available for general county purposes as they are used to promote conventions and tourism.

Following Mr. Critser's remarks, Ms. Angie Bixler appeared on behalf of the Association of Indiana Counties. Ms. Bixler introduced Ms. Joyce Poling, Monroe County, and Ms. Pat Gentry, Union County.

Ms. Poling, a county commissioner, distributed a map of Monroe County highlighting the location of the state owned properties in the county (Exhibit G). Ms. Poling also described the county services provided to state owned properties. Ms. Poling suggested that a gate surcharge might be one way for the counties to recoup some of the costs of providing services to the state owned properties.

Ms. Gentry, President of the Union County Council, announced that she was also appearing on behalf of the county officials in Franklin County. Ms. Gentry agreed with Mr. Critser and Ms. Poling that the costs of providing services to state owned properties are increasing. She cited the particular needs of providing law enforcement in the back country

where four wheel drives and all terrain vehicles are required. Moreover, visitors to the public lands who are arrested also burden the county jail and county court system. Sometimes the extra burden pushes the number of inmates beyond the capacity of the county jail.

Ms. Gentry noted her county's support of legislation to impose user fees on DNR property for the benefit of the county governments.

Ms. Lynn Dennis, representing the Nature Conservancy, briefly addressed the Commission to point out that while some lands that the conservancy acquires are tax exempt, many of the conservancy's larger properties remain on the tax rolls. Ms. Dennis cited as examples of properties that have remained taxed a 400 acre property in Brown County and a 7,200 acre property in Newton County.

Mr. Tim Maloney, Executive Director of the Hoosier Environmental Council and a resident of Brown County, urged the Commission to consider the view that public lands also provide great benefits such as: enhancing the quality of life in the county; enhancing property values, and drawing tourists to the county.

Following Mr. Maloney's remarks, Rep. Hinkle announced that the Commission's next meeting will take place on Tuesday, September 13. Rep. Hinkle adjourned the meeting at 2:35 p.m.