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Ron Spencer
Judy Sharp
Mayor James Garner



LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY AND FINANCING STUDY COMMISSION

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MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: September 13, 2005
Meeting Time: 1:00 P.M.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington St., Chambers of the House of Representatives
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 2

Members Present: Rep. Phil Hinkle, Chairperson; Rep. Thomas Saunders; Rep. Win Moses; Sen. Marvin Riegsecker, Vice-Chairperson; Sen. David Long; Sen. Timothy Lanane; Sen. Frank Mrvan; Phil R. Stiver; Sam Talarico, Jr; Jean P. Lushin; Paul Ricketts; Ann Devore; Chris Ruhl; Darren Vogt; Ron Spencer; Judy Sharp.

Members Absent: Rep. Robert Kuzman; Mayor James Garner.

Rep. Hinkle called the meeting to order at 1:11 p.m. The meeting was devoted to public testimony on government mergers, consolidations, and collaborations.

¹ 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.

Marion County City-County Councilman, Phil Borst, DVM, began the discussion by proposing that effective collaboration is preferable to getting mired in the various legal issues that arise in the course of government consolidations. Dr. Borst reviewed the many instances in which governmental entities have in his view effectively worked together within Marion County without consolidating. Dr. Borst was skeptical of the notion that government consolidations can result in leaner budgets. The Commission questioned Dr. Borst at length on the effects of Uni-gov in Marion County, whether the form of local government should be determined within the locality itself, and whether his concerns about consolidations apply in rural counties.

Mr. Ed Charbonneau, Executive Director of the Northwest Indiana Local Government Academy, briefed the Commission on several studies of government in Northwest Indiana that have just been completed or are ongoing. Mr. Charbonneau reviewed some of the policy recommendations of the Lake County Government Finance Study (Exhibit 1). Mr. Charbonneau criticized access to government data and the quality of the data that is available. Mr. Charbonneau's remarks (Exhibit 2) concluded with the following recommendations:

- (1) Promote a consistent uniform method of reporting revenues and expenditures.
- (2) Promote the requirement that information be filed and stored electronically in a form readily accessible to the general public.
- (3) Promote the removal of barriers to intergovernmental collaboration and cooperation.
- (4) Promote the use of incentives for efficient and effective delivery of governmental services.

The Commission questioned Mr. Charbonneau with respect to the specific policy recommendations for Northwest Indiana, the use of data, and the general recommendations enumerated above.

Mr. Drew Klacik, Center for Urban Policy and the Environment, Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis, addressed the Commission on the topic of interlocal agreements. Mr. Klacik described the common uses of interlocal agreements, the benefits that are associated with interlocal agreements, and a number of lessons that may be taken from the utilization of interlocal agreements in other states. (Exhibit 3)

Ms. Deborah Driskell, President of the Indiana Township Association (ITA), expressed the frustration felt within the ITA in recent years as various entities have suggested changes either to the nature of township government or the various duties performed by township government. The ITA felt compelled to seek independent research on the role of township government in Indiana. The ITA commissioned the Institute for Family and Social Responsibility at Indiana University to do the requested research.

Dr. Katharine Byers, Ph.D., Co-director of the Institute for Family and Social Responsibility, presented the study to the Commission. (Exhibit 4 (summary) and Exhibit 5 (full report)) Dr. Byers reported that the researchers looked at three important functions performed by township government: township assistance, fire protection, and property tax assessment. With respect to assessment, the researchers believe that "it is likely that countywide assessment would create greater consistency of property assessments within the county". (See Exhibit 4, page 3). However, the study suggests that greater accuracy

may be accompanied by increased costs. The researchers concluded that township government provides efficient and cost effective fire protection. Much of Dr. Byers' presentation focused on township assistance. Dr. Byers reviewed the raw data generated in the study's look at township assistance. Dr. Byers discussed the numerous factors affecting the provision and delivery of township assistance that must be considered in addition to the raw data when evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of centralizing the system.

Sen. Long reviewed the recent history of the movement to bring a new form of government to the City of Fort Wayne and Allen County. Sen. Long emphasized that the goal of the movement is to protect the autonomy of the smaller cities and towns located in Allen County while consolidating certain functions performed by the county and Fort Wayne governments. He pledged his support to the efforts to consolidate in the City of Evansville and Vanderburgh County.

Mr. Vogt expressed his support as a member of the Allen County Council for new and progressive initiatives that would eliminate overlaps between city and county duties.

Mr. Talarico described the support that Sen. Long's charter government legislation had in 2004² from the Fort Wayne City Council. Mr. Talarico attributed much of the growth and success of Indianapolis to the unified leadership governing Indianapolis and Marion County.

Ms. Linda Bloom, president of the Allen County Board of Commissioners, also testified in support of charter government in Allen County. Ms. Bloom's view is that the ability to design its own governmental structure is important to Allen County because one size does not fit all and no one knows and understands the county better than its local officials.

Mr. Mike Cunegin, a member of the Allen County Council, focused his remarks on the potential for savings found in the law enforcement and judicial budgets of the county and the City of Fort Wayne. Mr. Cunegin presented a summary of the general fund budgets for Allen County in recent years. (Exhibit 6)

Following a brief question and answer period with the Allen County speakers, Rep. Hinkle adjourned the meeting at 4:35 p.m.

²See SB 225-2004.