

M.O.R.E.

Municipal Mandates Sub-Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Friday, February 14, 2014

1:00 PM in LOB Room 1B

The meeting was called to order by Chairman, Representative Sayers at 1:08 P.M.

The following sub-committee members were present: Rep. Peggy Sayers (Chair), Rep. David Arconti, Rep. Frank Nicasastro, Rep. Melissa Ziobron, Betsy Gara, Kimberly Glassman, Bob Labanara, Fillmore McPherson, Leo Paul, David Roche, James Jaskot

Guests: John Elsesser (Town Manager, Coventry), Attorney Michael Ryback (Harwinton)

Chairman Rep. Sayers welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending despite inclement weather. She then introduced a presentation on a possible municipal health insurance exemption from the state mandated premium tax.

Ms. Gara, speaking as the Executive Director of COST, recommended eliminating the tax on municipal health insurance premiums. She expressed her pleasure that Governor Malloy has made this part of his budget. She further stated that this initiative would save 1.75% for small towns in particular and close to \$9 million total per year. She said that boards of education would also benefit. She distributed a handout to sub-committee members listing many of the towns that will benefit from this initiative.

Mr. Elsesser, Coventry Town Manager, supported COST's recommendation. He said that towns are looking for equity in their partnership with the state government. He continued that even larger cities would benefit from this exemption. Additionally, he expressed appreciation to Governor Malloy for having proposed this exemption.

Rep. Sayers (Chair) asked if sub-committee members had any questions.

Mr. McPherson stated his support for Mr. Elsesser's remarks.

Mr. Paul also affirmed support of Mr. Elsesser's remarks.

Rep. Nicasastro offered a motion, seconded by Mr. McPherson, that a letter of support for this exemption be sent to Governor Malloy.

The vote was unanimous by all members present.

Ms. Gara suggested sending the letter of support to the General Assembly's Finance Committee as well.

Rep. Sayers (Chair) agreed with Ms. Sayers' suggestion and suggested that the letter also be sent to the Speaker of the House and President Pro Tem of the Senate. She then asked Rep. Nicastro to give a report on the recommendations of the Pest Management Working Group.

Rep. Nicastro yielded to Rep. Ziobron to report on the working group's most recent meeting.

Rep. Ziobron presented the Working Group's written report, including three major consensus items the group recommended that the sub-committee adopt. She stated that the group had most recently discussed the town by town reporting system used by Massachusetts to track pesticide application. She also stated that phosphorous levels have become worrisome. She said that other pesticide legislation is being monitored. She related that Glastonbury, for example, is now paying significantly more to care for its fields than in previous years because of current statutory requirements.

Rep. Sayers (Chair) thanked Rep. Ziobron for her report. She then stated that legislation has not yet provided complete safety for school athletic fields, so the issue should be examined further. She then said that a tracking website similar to the one in Massachusetts would be very helpful so state officials could see how each town manages its fields and assess the overall effect of pest management across the state. She stated that more information on the Massachusetts system should be forthcoming.

Mr. McPherson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Paul, that the sub-committee adopt the consensus items from the Pest Management Working Group report and add them to the sub-committee's recommendations to the General Assembly.

The vote was unanimous by all members present.

Rep. Nicastro questioned the differences between the Massachusetts and New York laws previously discussed.

Mr. McPherson stated that the Massachusetts law referred to a reporting system, while the New York law dealt with specific standards for the use of certain pesticides (more forgiving than current CT law).

Rep. Sayers (Chair) asked Mr. Paul to proceed with his presentation on notice requirements for municipalities seeking to sell or transfer property.

Mr. Paul stated that the law had recently been changed to require towns to post public hearing notices twice in a newspaper plus a large sign must be posted on the property itself. He considers this an unfunded mandate which could potentially be costly. He

would like the legislature to consider amending current law to exempt town meeting forms of government from these public notice requirements.

Attorney Ryback concurred with Mr. Paul's comments. He said that the current law was passed in 2009 for transparency purposes, likely in response to the Kelo case in New London.

Rep Nicastro thanked Mr. Paul and Attorney Ryback for their presentation.

Mr. Paul asked what action the sub-committee needed to take for this issue to come before the legislature this session.

Rep. Sayers (Chair) stated that it might be possible to send a letter of support to the Speaker of the House and the Planning and Development Committee. She said that MORE Commission staff had already discussed the issue with the Speaker. She then offered to place the subject on the subcommittee's next meeting agenda.

Mr. Paul thanked Mr. Labanara for bringing this issue forward.

Mr. Labanara asked how to get other items onto the next agenda.

Rep. Sayers (Chair) stated that members could bring agenda items to the sub-committee administrator before the next meeting.

Ms. Glassman stated that the sub-committee should only vote on items previously discussed in public meetings.

Rep. Sayers (Chair) agreed with Ms. Glassman.

Mr. McPherson asked whether the next meeting on February 28th would be the last sub-committee meeting.

Rep. Sayers (Chair) responded that, because of the timing of the legislative session, the next meeting might be the sub-committee's last.

Sub-committee members thanked the sub-committee staff for their hard work.

Rep. Nicastro stated that he was impressed by the various actions taken by this sub-committee. He expressed his hope that the Speaker would re-authorize this sub-committee next year. He also thanked the Chair for an outstanding job.

Rep. Sayers (Chair) sought a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Rep. Nicastro and seconded by Mr. Paul at 11:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted: Barbara Gordon and Dave Desjardins