

## December 9, 2008 LUARC Commission Meeting

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LUARC Commission members present: Jack Fisher, Chair; James Souder (for Commissioner Joseph Doria); Marvin Reed; Robert F. Casey; Steven M. Cozza; Joseph Donahue (for State Treasurer David Rousseau). Absent: Jane Kenny and Mayor Gary Passanante.

The minutes of the November 22, 2008 meeting were approved. James Souder abstained.

Hannah Shostack indicated that she had spoken to Rutgers and we can expect five reports from them by next week. Commission members and staff will have five days to review them and offer comments. Prior to the next Commission meeting on December 22, the staff will have the first draft of the progress report required to be submitted to the Governor and Legislature by January 31<sup>st</sup> for the Commission's review. The hope is that the Commission Members will be able to adopt the report at the January 22, 2009 meeting in order to have report delivered by the January 31, 2009 deadline. The March 2009 report will discuss the Commission's data initiative in greater depth and will focus in depth on the material to be received from Rutgers. Included will be the Somerset, Morris and Gloucester pilots. We will determine if we are ready to come up with criteria or to report on what we are doing in working towards criteria.

Marvin Reed suggested we should include information on what we are doing to date with service areas in order to show that LUARCC is taking a position to move forward.

The progress report must include what has been presented to the Commission thus far in terms of testimony along with the follow-up discussions that have taken place.

Jack Fisher wants to be sure that we also include any obstacles that the Commission is finding.

Robert Casey indicated that the Commission needs to buy some time. The Commission cannot be premature in making recommendations, i.e. pertaining to Health Departments and the statutory requirements for consolidating them. Need to show the Legislature that we are here and we are working. If we had the two years, it would be different.

Marvin Reed would like the report to include observations and recommendations and not just a report that only includes research. The report needs to show the Legislature that we are moving toward a more efficient government.

Marvin Reed brought the discussion back to Health and the testimonies that the Commission heard. He had wanted to know how much can be done with the regulations that DEP imposes. He suggested that you do not have to create a separate enforcement agency for environmental protection when dealing with health. You can have well trained people in the Health arena do the job.

Steve Cozza agreed with the report deadline of January 22, 2009, but is not sure what needs to be included in the March report. He asked for the Commission to give him an opportunity to get back to them with his opinion.

Jack Fisher was at the forum on Shared Services recently held by the New Jersey Association of Counties and he indicated that he told the audience of the four areas that the Commission has been researching and also indicating that there is more work to be done, i.e. Police and Fire.

Hannah Shostack asked what follow-up was needed with the 911 dispatch.

Marvin Reed said that he would like to visit Camden and Gloucester to see their implementation of County Dispatch, and State Police dispatch in Hamilton.

Robert Casey said that there are two issues in funding set-aside that need to be discussed:

1. Funding for 911 dispatch was diverted to the State's general budget.
2. Lack of knowledge that has been put out concerning PSAP rules. There is an absence of information getting out to policy makers. DCA should perhaps issue a Local Finance Notice so it gets out to everyone.

Hannah Shostack will follow-up with LGS to see if this is an appropriate avenue.

Steve Cozza said that the Commission must stop referring to this topic as 911 dispatch because we are talking about communication centers. OETS and 911 Commission are just talking about answering points not dispatching. When the Commission discusses the topic, we are discussing total communication. If we want to expand we need to go to the next level and talk to the regional communications people.

Jack Fisher stated that there is also a Homeland Security aspect involved in this, and that Gloucester County's dispatch be used as a model program.

Steve Cozza said that the Police Chief's Association can be counted upon to discuss the negative aspects of regional dispatch and communication.

Marvin Reed said that 566 municipalities have no idea where or which way to go on regional dispatch and communication.

Robert Casey asked how far should we go in getting involved in these governmental functions? We should avoid getting bogged down in nitty gritty details.

Marvin Reed has heard that there are a lot of variations on regional dispatch and communication – which says everything and nothing.

James Souder said we should look outside New Jersey for workable models of regional dispatch and communication. We should bring in the information, and let the Legislature find the political will to get it done.

Jack Fisher said the model for Gloucester County's regional dispatch was Fairfax County, Virginia.

Robert Casey asked where do we go next?

James Souder said we should direct Rutgers as to what to do and where to look.

Jack Fisher said that Camden City acts as regional dispatch for surrounding area, but we need more information on their operation.

Hannah Shostack said that spending issues must be considered and addressed.

Robert Casey asked do we do nothing about Homeland Security or do we bring in someone who is dealing with it?

Steve Cozza said we need to look at redundancy in case central communication goes down. What happens next?

Hannah Shostack asked do we want to bring in more people to discuss central communications in January 2009? There may be other viewpoints to consider besides the counties.

Jack Fisher said that finding one good model may solve the dilemma.

Hannah Shostack said we need to ask better questions which will yield better information so we can instruct Rutgers.

Susan Jacobucci remarked that the questions have to be structured within the limits of the contract with Rutgers.

Dennis Smeltzer gave the update on Data Collection Efforts.

Robert Casey said we need to define what we want from municipal budget information. We should be looking smaller scale, not larger scale.

Steve Cozza said we should stick with Somerset County as model data collection effort.

Marvin Reed said that Somerset's data taken alone may be misleading and lead to incorrect conclusions.

Hannah Shostack said you are making choices when you are entering data. Are you considering what functional areas need to be included first or will this have to be revisited?

Joseph Donahue asked what are we shooting for here? Do we list recommendations based mainly on which ones might yield the biggest savings, or pinpoint areas most ripe for consolidation. For instance, merging police departments might create huge savings. Such mergers also would likely encounter the most resistance. On the other hand, better sharing of emergency management services might not save as much. But these programs have been proven to work in counties like Gloucester, they would create some savings and might help lay the groundwork for other consolidation efforts.

Robert Casey said both the easy and the difficult must be considered at the same time. Also, the character of the municipalities as, for example, shore communities or industrial centers must be considered.

James Souder asked where do we want our focus to be? We must move larger discussion forward.

Marvin Reed said we need comparative data in order to make recommendations on consolidation.

James Souder said that the first report should address major topics in order to get and keep the attention of the Legislature.

Commission agreed that Robert Casey would look at all 21 municipalities in Somerset and concentrate on selective data. This would provide a jumpstart for our model at looking at comparabilities.

Hannah spoke about one of the topics that the Commission was to hear testimony on – Codes. She would like to get an opinion as to whether looking at fees is part of what the Commission should explore as part of its mandate.

Marvin Reed said local fees, as well as property taxes, should be considered as part of LUARCC's charge.

The next meeting will be December 22, 2008.

Courts will be the topic. Casey suggested that we include a rep. from the Chiefs association. Interested in new mandates on court security.

Joe Donahue would like us to ask speakers if they know the average population of towns doing consolidation in regards to courts.

Commission will look at lists that LGS may have to see mergers but should also look at pension list.

Adjournment was unanimously agreed to.