

Governor's Task Force on Shared Municipal Services  
August 16, 2012, 2:00 p.m.  
Central Falls City Hall Council Chambers

Present: Chairperson John Simmons, Executive Director Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council (RIPEC); Mayor Donald R. Grebien of Pawtucket; Peter Grazcykowski, City Manager City of East Providence; John McJennett, Receiver City of Central Falls; and Susanne Greschner, Director of the Office of Municipal Finance

Also in Attendance: Gayle Corrigan, Chief of Staff to the Receiver City of Central Falls

Mr. Simmons opened the meeting and asked for comments on the minutes from the July 24, 2012, meeting. There were none, and Mr. McJennett moved for approval. Manager Grazcykowski seconded the motion and all were in favor of approving the minutes.

Mr. Simmons gave an update on the joint refuse bids that were discussed at the previous meeting, saying that the communities are moving forward and they hope to have a firm announcement by the next meeting.

Manager Grazcykowski then gave an update on the examination of the possible sharing of a purchasing agent between East Providence and Pawtucket. He said that he was hopeful to meet with the parties in the coming weeks to discuss the data Pawtucket had requested, as well as cost structures and other related issues.

Mayor Grebien said he is in favor of exploring the possibility, and also mentioned that Pawtucket is currently exploring shared services between the city and the school department in the areas of finance, information technology, and human resources. The Mayor then introduced David Clemente, Pawtucket's Purchasing Director, and asked Mr. Clemente to comment.

Mr. Clemente stated that he requested information from East Providence about their current purchasing operations and systems. He also said that he believes that the cities could successfully share a purchasing agent as long as the appropriate resources are provided.

Mr. Simmons then discussed the shared services survey that the task force sent to all cities, towns, and school districts across the state. Mr. Simmons expressed thanks for Tim Duffy's help in distributing the survey to the school districts. Mr. Simmons said that RIPEC would work with Suzanne Greschner and Municipal Finance to get responses from the communities that did not respond prior to the meeting. Ms. Greschner indicated that she was disappointed by the low number of initial responses.

Manager Grazcykowski stated that East Providence is interested in a joint RFP for an ERP system. Mayor Grebien said he was interested in exploring the opportunity as well.

Mr. Simmons moved on to the topic of joint bidding for property revaluation services related to tax assessment and introduced Janice Peixinho, East Greenwich Tax Assessor, and asked her to speak on the topic. Ms. Peixinho said that she believes that the price per parcel would be

reduced by joint bids. She also believes that going out to bid for multiple years could yield savings. Ms. Peixinho said that communities tend to stay with the same vendor because of software systems. She pointed to East Greenwich and Barrington as likely partners for a potential joint bid because they are both up for a full revaluation in 2014 and use the Patriot system. She said that other, larger communities tend to use the Vision Appraisal system. She stated that Cranston is also due for a full revaluation in 2014, and that she had spoken to Cranston and Barrington already to gauge their interest.

Mr. Simmons asked Ms. Peixinho if she felt that joint bidding could be effective for statistical updates as well as full revaluations.

Ms. Peixinho believed a bid could be crafted for either, or to include both. She said that Municipal Affairs has a full listing of which communities use which system and the revaluation cycle.

Ms. Greschner said that her staff is currently in the process of updating that information, and that she thinks exploring joint bidding for revaluation is a good idea.

Mr. Simmons asked Ms. Peixinho what her office's timeframe would be for its work on the 2014 revaluation bid.

Ms. Peixinho responded that she will be creating the bid in the coming months, and it is her goal to have it ready before November. She said that some larger communities have to start earlier.

Mayor Grebien said that Pawtucket is finishing its process up presently, and that he believes that joint bidding could work.

Ms. Greschner suggested that the task force should form a sub-committee on the topic of joint assessment and bring in other experts to discuss the issue further.

Ms. Peixinho said that the Assessors' Association could help with the conversation. She also added that joint bidding could be further complicated by cities with cash flow problems which could create payment inconsistencies.

Mr. Simmons said that RIPEC would be happy to help with the sub-committee.

Manager Grazykowski said that East Providence recognizes that joint bidding is dependent on software packages, but that he thinks a joint bid would create savings if done properly. He emphasized the importance of working with the assessors around the state, and said that East Providence would continue to participate in the conversation.

Mr. Simmons then asked for public comments.

Ms. Peixinho asked to speak about the DMV system in Rhode Island. She believes cities and towns should be allowed to handle DMV responsibilities in areas such as change of address and collection of license plates. She said something similar is done in Massachusetts. She believes

this would be a great way for municipalities to collaborate with the state on shared services. She said other assessors share this view and want to move forward with it.

John Burns, a staff representative of Council 94, said that the unions should have a seat at the table for these discussions so that there is input from all sides.

Manager Grazykowski said that it is important to work with the unions.

Mr. Simmons said that the conversations will start with the task force, and the unions will have to be involved down the road as the conversations evolve and progress. He thanked Mr. Burns for attending the meeting and asked him to keep coming. Mr. Simmons then discussed the importance of also working cooperatively with the legislature's Joint Municipal Shared Services Study Commission, co-chaired by Senator DiPalma and Representative Gallison, Jr.

The task force decided that its next meeting will be held at East Providence City Hall on Thursday September 20 at 1:00pm. The task force agreed that it will try to meet on the third Thursday of every month at 1:00pm, and the meeting sight will rotate from Pawtucket to Central Falls to East Providence.

Mayor Grebien moved to adjourn, Mr. McJennett seconded, and the task force adjourned.