

**GRAND VALLEY METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

May 30, 2007

8:30 a.m.

40 Pearl St. NW Ste. 410
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

MINUTES

1. Call To Order

ROLL CALL

Present:

Chuck Bloom	Cannon Township
Marta Brechting	Alpine Township
Haris Albasic	City of Grand Rapids
Jim Buck	City of Grandville
Jim Day	Kent County
Mike DeVries	Grand Rapids Township
Don Hilton	Gaines Township
Denny Hoemke	Algoma Township
Kurt Kimball	City of Grand Rapids
Gayle McCrath	Grand Valley Metro Council
Rick Root	City of Kentwood
Erika Rosebrook	Ottawa County
Don Stypula	Grand Valley Metro Council

2. Call to Order

Chair Rick Root called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m.

3. GVMC position on HBs 4780-4788 – Township Services Consolidation Act

Don Stypula reviewed HBs 4780 – 4788 which would move certain services such as elections, assessing, and taxation to counties. It would affect only townships between 10,000 and 20,000 thresholds.

SEMCOG is in opposition to the package of bills. It has not yet sent formal letters in opposition to legislators. Wants the legislature to do more study.

Rick Root questioned the language specific to certain townships. Is it an attempt to divide and conquer?

Don Stypula indicated it was. MTA, MML and MAC have collective power, and this would put a wedge between them. Villages are not affected, nor are townships of certain sizes or cities. The legislation is being crafted by unpredictable and inexperienced people and could be just the first of the attacks.

Kurt Kimball stated that it is his understanding there needs to be tax increases in 2008, and in order to do this, lawmakers need to also show reforms. He questioned if it was just a bargaining chip, or if the package might actually go somewhere.

Don Stypula indicated it might move.

Don Hilton expressed significant concerns as he has been aware of this threat for several months. It is not unexpected. If they were looking for reform across the board, he would react differently. There are a significant number of villages and smaller cities which are not being affected by this. Legislators don't have the background if all the forms of government to fairly and effectively bring about such legislation. This group should pass a unified motion against any type of divide and conquer actions taken by the legislature.

Jim Day indicated he agreed with Mr. Hilton.

Jim Buck asked what the MML position is.

Don Stypula indicated they are staying out of it.

Denny Hoemke asked if this in theory would save money. If so, it doesn't work as it is currently in a low cost situation and will cost more if the counties have to take over.

Erika Rosebrook stated legislators have asked the MSU Extension to do an analysis to see if it would save money. However, she does not believe it will be cheaper and does not see where the additional funding to cover the cost to counties would come from.

Much discussion ensued regarding the negative aspects and poorly constructed structure of the bills. Reform should start at the state level and go across the board.

Local governments should be engaged in this process so that any legislation crafted

is inclusive and reflects the realities of local government structure and produces actual cost savings.

Kurt Kimball stated that assessment services/funding may be a good candidate for reform. Most states already assess at the county level. In 2006, the 6 cities looked at a report on consolidating accessing which concluded it would probably not save a lot of money partially because costs are already low and higher labor costs mandated at the county level. However, it may be beneficial for several reasons even though there might not be much cost savings.

Kurt Kimball added that although consolidation of services might be beneficial in some instances, this particular package of legislation could be opposed by GVMC as a whole because: It is a divide and conquer tactic; it is not being done holistically; and genuine reform is don't done in this way.

Denny Hoemke stated that assessing may be ripe for consolidation; however this proposal is random and arbitrary.

Jim Buck stated that previous discussion regarding consolidation concluded that Lansing didn't have the knowledge of local government and its services to address this in a productive way. This action is a divide and conquer tactic. We can all agree on the strength of acting together on this. He agreed with Mr. Kimball on taking a position against the legislation.

Mike DeVries added that the most productive thing Lansing could do is to remove the obstacles to consolidation and collaboration.

Rick Root stated it would be appropriate for Don Stypula to craft a statement which opposed the package based on: divide and conquer tactic; the legislation is not all inclusive (why are there exceptions); there is opportunity for collaboration and consolidation, however the focus should be on removing obstacles to this.

Don Hilton added that the position should include the statement that we have been doing a significant amount of collaboration for several years.

Denny Hoemke stated that the position should state that we are not opposed to reform and consolidation, however it needs to be broad based and inclusive.

Don Stypula stated he would craft a letter and forward it on to all Legislative Committee members and then on to the Board.

4. FY 2007 Budget "Deal"

They are still behind closed doors in Lansing at this time. It appears any deal would include a tax increase for 2008.

5. Update on State Business Tax Debate

There is still no deal on the state business tax. The Michigan Chamber of Commerce is now o.k. with a dollar for dollar replacement.

6. Adjourn