



**Grand Valley Metro Council
Legislative Committee**

Agenda

**Wednesday October 10, 2007
8:30 a.m.**

GVMC Offices 40 Pearl St., Suite 410 Grand Rapids, MI

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Approval of Minutes from September 12, 2007 meeting (attached)**
- 3. GVMC Policy Resolution on Transportation Funding**
- 4. Proposed Amendments to the 1992 Legislative Term Limits Law**
- 5. Issues Update**
 - a. FY 2008 State Budget**
 - b. Status of "Governmental Reforms"**
- 6. Other Issues**



Grand Valley Metropolitan Council

MEMORANDUM

To: GVMC Legislative Committee
From: Donald J. Stypula, Executive Director
RE: October 10, 2007 GVMC Legislative Committee
Date: October 8, 2007

Attached are the agenda and support documents for the next meeting of our **GVMC Legislative Committee** set for **8:30 AM, Wednesday October 10, 2007 at the GVMC Offices in downtown Grand Rapids.**

This month, we are focusing on two issues: a GVMC Policy Resolution on Transportation Funding, and the beginning of our discussion on legislative term limits. We will present for your consideration a draft resolution regarding the issue of state and federal transportation funding. We would like your views on this approach and, ideally, your authorization to take this resolution to the Executive Committee and on to the full Metro Council for final approval on November 1.

We'll start our meeting by reviewing and accepting the attached minutes from our September 12, 2007 meeting.

GVMC POLICY STATEMENT ON TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Based on our detailed discussion on transportation funding at last month's meeting, together with conversations with policy makers in Washington and Lansing, I am putting the finishing touches on a resolution outlining GVMC's policy regarding increased funding for transportation infrastructure. I will have that ready for your review at our meeting on Wednesday. The resolution will reference the recent actions by the U.S. Congress to further cut federal appropriations for transportation improvements (roads, bridges and transit), together with references to the continued erosion of state financial resources distributed through Public Act 51 of 1951. The resolution will call upon our elected officials in both Washington and Lansing to take the necessary steps to increase funding for transportation improvements and give counties and local units local funding options to augment federal and state resources.

As GVMC Transportation Director Abed Itani and I noted last month, absent an increase in resources for transportation planning, construction and operations, our network of roads and bridges will continue to deteriorate and our region's award-winning transit system will falter. When lawmakers in Washington and Lansing realize what's at stake, this resolution will give us a seat at the table during the discussions on how to resolve the issue.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE 1992 LEGISLATIVE TERM LIMITS LAW

The recent FY 2008 state budget debacle in Lansing is prompting the Michigan Chamber of Commerce and other groups to ramp-up efforts to ask voters to change the 1992 initiated law that created sharp limits on legislators' terms of office. And now backers of a plan to change the state's term limit law have drafted additional language that would help avert another government shutdown threat and entice voters to support the amendments to the term limits statute.

Robert LaBrant, veteran political director for the Michigan Chamber, leads a coalition of groups seeking to include a provision in state law that requires the Legislature to adopt a new budget by June 30, three months prior to the beginning of the fiscal year on Oct. 1. If the governor and lawmakers missed the June 30 deadline they would be required to hold a continuous session, without pay, until any budget impasse was resolved.

As noted earlier, the proposal that would go before voters at the January 15 Michigan Presidential Primary would modify the term limits law to give an individual the opportunity to seek election to and serve in either the House or Senate for up to 12 years. Currently, legislators are limited to 6 years in the House and 8 years in the Senate, a timeframe that does not give legislators an opportunity to develop relationships and leadership skills. That was painfully evident during the recent budget debate.

Commenting on what the state has just been through during the recent impasse on the state budget, LaBrant argued, "I can't think of a more perfect storm. The Legislature is a mess. Our version of term limits has institutionalized inexperience."

With the budget crisis partially resolved (they still have to trim \$450 million in spending by October 31), LaBrant and other members of the term limits coalition are continuing discussions with House Speaker Andy Dillon (D-Redford Twp.) and Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop (R-Rochester) along with organized labor and other special interest groups who want to change the term limit law. The addition of this new budget language, coalition members say, makes the proposal more saleable and gives lawmakers cover to support it.

Backers of the new approach cite the recent example of Rep. Dave Agema (R-Grandville) who shuffled off to Russia to hunt sheep in the middle of the budget debate. Under the chamber's proposal, Agema would have been docked pay for each day he was absent.

The Chamber is ruling out a petition drive to place this new proposal on the January presidential primary ballot conceding that the coalition cannot raise the \$1.2 million to gather the signatures, which means the only way for this to go before the voters is for two-thirds of the Legislature to put it there. They have until Nov. 15 to do that.

Whenever lawmakers decide to place the term limits issue before Michigan voters, GVMC will be asked to weigh in on this initiative. We need to be prepared. Based on the comments I have heard at Metro Council meetings, together with conversations I have had with individual county and municipal leaders, I believe our membership would support a change in term limits that will give novice lawmakers more time to get to know one another, to become more familiar with complex issues, and to develop the leadership skills that are needed to take the proverbial ball all the way down the court.

ISSUES UPDATE

Lawmakers are back at it in Lansing as conference committees work to resolve differences on the \$450 million in cuts that must in place before state agency budgets can be finalized. Statutory revenue sharing for cities, villages and townships will likely be frozen at current levels under the new budget, which means that any increases in your constitutional allocations will result in corresponding decreases in your statutory allocations to arrive at a zero increase for your community.

The so called “government reforms,” including those championed by GVMC and our partners in Lansing, are still in-play, but lobbyists for public employee unions are fighting to keep those bills off of the Governor’s desk. Everyone keeps talking about government reforms, but at this stage, nobody is willing to put up votes to enact them.

I’ll have some additional thoughts and information to share on this at our meeting tomorrow morning. I hope you can attend and add your voice to the discussion.

I’m looking forward to seeing you and having a productive meeting on Wednesday. As always, if you have any questions, or if we can be of further assistance, please call me directly at 776-7604, on my cell at 450-4217, at home at 257-3372 or via email at stypulad@gvmc.org.

**GRAND VALLEY METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

September 12, 2007

8:30 a.m.

Kent County Building
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

MINUTES

1. Call To Order

ROLL CALL

Present:

Haris Alibasic	City of Grand Rapids
Chuck Bloom	Cannon Township
Marta Brechting	Alpine Township
Jim Buck	City of Grandville
Sharon DeLange	Village of Sparta
Mike DeVries	Grand Rapids Township
Jim Fetzer	ITP / The Rapid
Don Hilton	Gaines Township
Bill Holland	Georgetown Township
Abed Itani	Grand Valley Metro Council
Andy Johnston	Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce
Dennis Kent	MDOT
Elias Lumpkins	City of Grand Rapids
Bob May	City of Hastings
Gayle McCrath	Grand Valley Metro Council
Jon Rice	Kent County Road Commission
Rick Root	City of Kentwood
Don Stypula	Grand Valley Metro Council
Keith Vanbeek	City of Kentwood
Peter Varga	ITP / The Rapid

2. Call to Order

Chair Rick Root called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

3. Approval of Minutes from August, 2007

MOTION – To Approve the August 2007 GVMC Legislative Committee Minutes. MOVE – Holland. SUPPORT – May. MOTION CARRIED.

4. State Budget Discussion

Don Stypula reported there is nothing new on the state budget. Negotiations are still underway.

5. Transportation

Don Stypula welcomed the group and discussed the deteriorating shape of transportation funding.

Abed Itani reviewed the various types of transportation funding and their projections for the upcoming years. Reduced revenues are expected in every form of transportation funding for the foreseeable future. The rising cost of transportation projects are also seriously eroding the buying power of what funding is available.

It needs to be addressed at both the state and federal level.

Abed Itani reviewed previous attempts to increase funding through gas tax, etc. which failed.

Don Stypula explained he is looking for everyone's ideas which can be crafted into a GVMC position. He doesn't expect any movement until 2009 as 2008 is an election year.

Discussion ensued regarding the situation and possible fixes.

It was determined a smaller study group would meet to bring back to the full committee recommendations. Participants would include representatives from the various transportation organizations as well as the Chamber of Commerce; Kent, Ottawa, and Barry Counties; and the City of Grand Rapids.

Don Stypula will coordinate this meeting and bring back their recommendations to the next Legislative committee meeting.

6. Adjourn – 10:00 a.m.