



**Grand Valley Metro Council
Legislative Committee**

Agenda

**April 28, 2010
8:30 a.m.**

GVMC Offices – 678 Front Ave. NW, Suite 200 - Grand Rapids, MI 49504

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Approval of Minutes from March 10, 2009 meeting**
- 3. Review of draft issues survey vehicle for candidates seeking seats in the 96th Michigan Legislature**
- 4. Issues Update**
 - a. State Budget Negotiations**
 - b. Unfunded Mandates Legislation**
 - c. State and Federal Transportation Funding**
- 5. Other Issues and comments by members**

**GRAND VALLEY METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

March 10, 2010

8:30 a.m.

GVMC Offices
678 Front Ave., Suite 200
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

MINUTES

1. Call To Order

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

2. Roll Call

Present:

Alex Arends	Alpine Township
Chris Burns	Cedar Springs
Bill Cousins	Cascade Township
Sam Bolt	City of Wyoming
Jim Buck	City of Grandville
Mike DeVries	Grand Rapids Township
Denny Hoemke	Algoma Township
Jim LaPeer	Cannon Township
Bob May	City of Hastings
Don Stypula	Grand Valley Metro Council
Don Tubbs	City of Hastings
Keith Van Beek	Ottawa County

3. Minutes

**MOTION – To Approve the January 2010, Legislative Committee Minutes.
MOVE – Van Beek. SUPPORT – May. MOTION CARRIED.**

**4. Lansing Update – Bill Anderson & David Bertram, Michigan Township
Association**

The Government Appropriations committee in the House started yesterday out of subcommittee with a 3% cut to the budget and 3% cut to revenue sharing with a \$10 million hit to statutory and an adjustment of \$19 million to constitutional. Counties are getting hit 3.1% all statutory. MTA, MML & MAC testified. They were told it could have been up to 20% cut. Education has also taken cuts.

The census results will be received in a year. Traditionally, revenue sharing is implemented with that count. By next April, three of the six payments will already be complete and the remaining three will be on the new count. They are also talking about tinkering with that.

Keith Van Beek asked how that affected Detroit.

David Bertram said he thinks Papageorge is thinking about Detroit in the crafting of the budget.

Bill Anderson said there is concern for the \$20 million hole for those communities which are losing population.

Don Stypula asked what David and Bill would recommend GVMC members do.

David Bertram said GVMC members should talk with legislators about how the current cuts affect their communities and also about attempts to delay implementation of the census.

Bill Anderson reported the Senate has had its 2nd meeting on government reform legislation which would include the 20% mandatory public employee contribution to health care insurance. The Senate has put up a substitute which says local public employees must pay 20%, however they could opt out with a 2/3 vote of their governing body. State employees are not governed by the same laws. It is a volatile issue.

David Bertram reported on legislation regarding publishing of legal notices. A package of bills was introduced to get the law changed to allow for web site or public access channel notices to serve as notice. The press is fighting back. It could save local communities lots of money. Bills 5845 & 47.

Jim LaPeer asked about public employees' insurance regulation regarding health savings accounts. He has heard the bills require only 10% for HSA plans rather than 20%. Does it say who funds the high deductible?

Bill Anderson stated it doesn't. There is also another bill which would require competitive bids for janitorial, transportation, etc. for public entities which could end up costing locals \$20,000 to do.

David Bertram stated there is lots of talk regarding unfunded mandates, but no follow through so far. It is not being taken seriously at this point.

Jim LaPeer reported Cannon Township has passed a resolution regarding state unfunded mandates and has asked questions about suing the state over the issue.

Bill Anderson stated Durant did this and it took 15 years and lots of money. And it affects only mandates, not options.

David Bertram added it has to be a sizable issue to make it cost justifiable.

5. Issues Update

Don Stypula reported it is an election year and asked the committee if they had any ideas on how to engage the candidates. After the primaries are done, would it help if we brought them in to have a debate?

Alex Arends asked if GVMC would endorse a candidate.

Don Stypula stated we couldn't do that, but if we could get enough people to an event, we could make their views well known.

Denny Hoemke said if we do that we are likely to hear just a lot of political double talk. It is best to find people who are bringing in a fresh look and get to them early.

Jim LaPeer added we should keep a scorecard. Give them our three top issues and track them.

Keith Van Beek stated if we wait until after the primary, most of the races will already have been decided. We should put a packet out with our positions and the background and tell everyone we will track them on it. Have them sign a letter regarding their positions.

Mike DeVries stated we should define the top GVMC issues.

Jim Buck added that being prior to the primaries would be key.

Mike DeVries said it should be on GVMC letter and direct them to talk to the GVMC member communities for clarification.

Keith Van Beek said we must ask them to respond, send out a media release, and report the outcome to members.

Bob May added we should also include the MTA, MML & MAC as affiliations to let them know these are also included.

Mike DeVries reported we need to let them know who GVMC is, what it does and who its affiliates are. We need to define our process and hold people accountable.

Jim Buck stated we needed to get this information out to candidates by mid May and ask for its return by June 10.

Jim LaPeer asked if we should fine tune the legislative priorities for this.

Keith Van Beek indicated it should be done at the April meeting.

Mike DeVries directed Don to send out the five top GVMC issues to be reviewed in April.

Don Stypula stated there was a problem with the April Legislative committee meeting date and he would send out a notice with an alternative date.

Don Stypula reported there was nothing new to report on the Municipal Partnership Act. Also state transit funding will not move until the lame duck session.

Federal transportation funding has been extended, but reduced for this month. Some time this month the Senate will send over an extension to last to the end of the year.

6. Other

7. Adjourn - 9:50 a.m.

MOTION - To Adjourn. MOVE – Buck. SUPPORT – Arends. MOTION CARRIED.



The Grand Valley Metropolitan Council

Candidate Questionnaire

Senate and House Candidates for the 96th Michigan Legislature

Who is Rob VerHeulen, candidate for the 86th District, Michigan House of Representatives?

Age:

Family:

Education:

Professional Background:

Civic background:

Top priorities if elected to the Michigan House / Senate:

What are your views on the role of county and local governments in delivering essential services to the people of your district?

State Tax Policy and Local Fiscal Stability

State Revenue Sharing for Counties, Cities, Villages and Townships

In the early 1970s, Michigan established a system of revenue sharing intended to return state tax dollars to local governments to assist with the provision of essential services. In return, counties and communities gave up the ability to raise taxes locally. In recent years, state government has cut payments to local governments by more than \$2 billion – forcing the layoff of more than 1,800 police officers and scores of firefighters and increasing the pressure on local property tax payers to fund critical local services that provide a high quality of life.

The Grand Valley Metro Council supports the reauthorization of the formula for distributing the statutory portion of state shared revenues in a manner that restores revenue sharing payments to Michigan Counties and fully funds the state’s historic revenue sharing obligations to Michigan’s cities, villages and townships.

Question: As a legislator, would you work to restore statutory revenue sharing payments to counties, cities, villages and townships to ensure that essential public services are maintained? Please share your thoughts on the responsibility of the state to assist county and local governments in the delivery of public services.

Business Tax Restructuring

The state’s current business tax structure has been cited by many groups as a deterrent to business startup and expansion, with many organizations calling for a significant restructuring of the state’s system of taxation to reward business investment and hiring.

The Grand Valley Metro Council supports the restructuring of the state business tax code to provide incentives for business retention, expansion and recruitment while maintaining adequate revenues to support critical state and local government services.

Question: Do you support business tax restructuring in a manner that maintains adequate revenues for county and local services? Please share your thoughts on how business taxes could be structured to encourage investment and job creation while maintaining sufficient levels of funding for services at the county and local level.

County and Local Inducements for Business and Tourism Development

For decades, the Legislature has authorized the creation of numerous assistance programs, grants, tax incentives and other inducements that are used by certain county and local governments to spur economic development and promote tourism. The Grand Valley Metro Council supports the creation of new, and reauthorization of existing, statutory funding mechanisms that enable county and local governments to assist in retaining existing businesses, attracting new businesses and promoting convention and tourism, provided that tax receipts and

other funds are distributed based on an equitable formula that provides funding to all regions of the state.

Question: As a legislator, could you support the creation of new mechanisms that enable West Michigan counties and local units to incent private investment, job creation and the promotion of West Michigan as a destination for tourists? Please tell us your ideas for the role that county and local governments can play in enhancing economic development in West Michigan.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

Elimination of Obstacles for Multi-Jurisdictional Service Sharing

Current state laws, enacted in the late-1960s, contain specific statutory obstacles that significantly impede the ability of Michigan counties, cities, villages and townships to form partnerships for the purpose of jointly providing critical public services. For decades, state statutes enabling county and local governments to form multi-jurisdictional compacts to share the cost of service provision have contained language that requires payment of the highest level of wages and benefits to public employees assigned to such work arrangements. These statutory provisions have stalled service sharing partnerships across the state.

The Grand Valley Metro Council is seeking amendments to several existing state statutes that will make it easier for counties and communities to share resources and more efficiently deliver essential county and local services:

1. 1967 Public Act 7 – Urban Cooperation Act
2. 1967 Public Act 8 – Intergovernmental Transfer of Functions and Responsibilities Act
3. 1989 Public Act 292 – The Metropolitan Councils Act

Question: As a legislator, could you support amendments to these statutes that will encourage counties and local units of government to share the responsibilities and costs of providing public services in a more efficient manner? Please discuss your thoughts regarding the Metro Council's goal of sharing resources and more efficiently delivering essential county and local services.

Restoring Common Sense to Collective Bargaining

In 1969 state lawmakers passed Public Act 312, a law that triggers compulsory binding arbitration when public safety employees -- police and firefighters -- and a county or local government employer reach an impasse during the process of collective bargaining for wages and benefits. In exchange, police officers and firefighters relinquished the right to strike.

Over the years, Act 312 has cost local communities and their taxpayers millions of dollars in increased costs. Under the law, the arbitration panel assigned to any particular dispute must choose either the employer's offer or the union's offer -- not something in-between. What's more, the arbitration panel is prohibited from considering the fiscal health of the community and, therefore, its ability to pay the wage and benefit levels selected by the arbitration panel.

The Grand Valley Metro Council strongly supports amendments to Act 312 of 1969 to restore balance to the arbitration process and require arbitration panels to consider the community's fiscal health and ability to pay an arbitration award. In addition, the Metro Council supports amendments to Act 312 to improve the process used to select arbitration panel members.

Question: As a legislator, would you support common sense reforms to Act 312 – the Compulsory Binding Arbitration law – that would allow arbitrators to consider the fiscal health of the county or community; improve the process for selecting arbitrators; and make other changes to restore balance to the arbitration process?

Transportation Funding

Michigan's transportation network – roads and highways, bridges and public transportation systems – is deteriorating at an alarming rate due to lack of steady and secure funding, coupled with rising costs for the materials needed to maintain our existing system. With transportation needs increasing and available funding not able to keep pace with the growing demands of the state's transportation network, our state needs a comprehensive strategy for fully funding Michigan's transportation system in the 21st century

The Grand Valley Metro Council joins a diverse group of voices in the private and public sectors in supporting a substantial increase in both state and federal funding for transportation infrastructure improvements, public transit operations and regional planning activities through Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

Question: As a legislator, would you support the effort by a broad-based coalition of state and regional organizations to increase state transportation funding? Please articulate your views on how the state can best finance needed improvements to its total transportation network.

Unfunded State Mandates

State government has routinely ignored the 1978 Headlee Amendment to the Constitution which prohibits the Legislature or state agencies from mandating actions by counties, cities, villages and townships without providing the funding needed to implement those changes, according to the report of the Legislative Commission on Statutory Mandates. The Commission, empanelled by the Legislature, found that in just 2009 alone, the state imposed more than \$2.2 billion in unfunded mandates on counties and local units. The LCSM proposed new statutes to mitigate the impact of unfunded mandates and new rules to prevent the Legislature and state agencies from imposing unfunded mandates on counties and locals.

The Grand Valley Metropolitan Council steadfastly opposes the imposition of unfunded state mandates on counties and local units and strongly encourages the Governor, Legislature and Supreme Court to adopt the recommendations cited in the final report of the Legislative Commission on Statutory Mandates.

Question: As a legislator, would you vote against legislation that imposes unfunded state mandates on our counties and home towns? Would you support legislation to prohibit the imposition of unfunded state mandates on counties and local units? Please discuss your views on how unfunded mandates should be addressed.