

**Board of Allen County Commissioners
Efficiency and Effectiveness Task Force**

Wednesday, March 25, 2015 (2-4pm)
Cornerstone Youth Center, Monroeville, Indiana

Task Force Members Present: Roger Hadley, Kent Castleman, Terry McDonald, Ben Eisbart,
Bob Taylor, Michael Eikenberry, Ellen Cutter (facilitator)
Commissioners Present: Therese Brown, Nelson Peters, Linda Bloom
Others Present: Kevin Leininger, Ellis McFadden, Deb Sorg, Gerry Wyss, John D. Henry,
Harold Kleine, Roy Buskirk, Chris Cloud, Bill Fishering, Ashley
Wierzbinski

Welcome & Introductions

Ellen Cutter called the meeting to order at 2:06 PM.

Purpose of the Task Force

Ellen Cutter then discussed the referendum in November 2014 to replace the three county commissioners with a single county executive and expanding county council from seven to nine members. She stated that after the referendum did not pass that Commissioners Peters and Brown requested the Community Research Institute's assistance in facilitating a continuing conversation and bring both sides of the debate together. Ellen then describes the actions taken by her and the Community Research Institute (CRI) to prepare for the first meeting. These actions included one on one interviews with the members of the Task Force, all three commissioners, Chris Cloud, and Bill Fishering to understand some of the key issues in terms of county government effectiveness and efficiency to help form the initial discussion, creating a working draft of a comprehensive organizational chart for Allen County, and reviewing the county's existing strategic plan which was done in 2009 and updated in 2010 and 2011. Ellen stated that no updates had been made to the strategic plan since 2011.

Ellen explained that people she interviewed on both sides of the restructuring debate indicated that there were always improvements that can be made to increase effectiveness and efficiency in county government and that organizations must commit to a process of continuous improvement in order to use its resources wisely. She stated that the charge of CRI was therefore to find mutually acceptable ways to improve Allen County's government's effectiveness and efficiencies. She also indicated that everyone that she interviewed indicated that no one at the table was interested in revisiting the single county executive issue, rather the intent was to find ways to improve Allen County government without contradicting the message that the Allen County voters sent in November.

Ellen then opened the discussion to the Task Force members to describe what a successful outcome of the Task Force would look like. All members of the Task Force provided input; three highlighted the need for there to be more dialogue which would help build trust, especially with those towns, cities, and communities outside of Fort Wayne, so that we are all working together. Other points raised by members included improving timeliness of processes or responsiveness, providing assistance in navigating the system, assuring access to county government, and creating accountability. There was also some discussion about making enough investment to get quality results.

County Organizational Chart

Meeting participants gathered around the county organizational chart posted on the wall. Ellen Cutter explained the organizational chart to the group, highlighting each category represented on the chart and how each section corresponds to the county budget included on the chart. Due to the structure, participation in any efforts to coordinate across the entire county organization, like Strategic Planning, is voluntary. Ben Eisbart then asked if any training or strategic planning participation could be required as part of the county council approving a department's budget. This was followed by a brief discussion about whether or not department budgets are tied to a strategic plan.

Commissioner Therese Brown indicated that several departments have statutory responsibilities, leading to a discussion about which elected officials are constitutionally required. Bill Fishing responded that most are required, but that duties can be moved around.

Discussions around process flows between departments related to permitting and economic development were tabled.

Ellen returned the conversation back to the budget requirements, stating that the state requires a line item budget so a program budget would require extra work. Ellen then asked the group to discuss if greater fiscal authority within the Board of Commissioners would improve efficiency and what would greater fiscal authority look like.

Chris Cloud stated that Indiana is the only state with a separate fiscal body, in other states there is some executive board that holds both the legislative and fiscal functions.

Roy Buskirk from County Council added that there were not always county councils; the state added them in 1899 thinking county commissioners had too much power.

Commissioner Peters suggested that maybe one option would be for the county commissioners to recommend a county-wide budget to county council, solidifying a relationship to the executive body. Discussion then focused on what other counties in Indiana might have done that may work for Allen County, several examples were given with possible options that included moving legislative functions to county council and having a county administrator with part-time commissioners.

Ellen then asked the group if there would be a potential for an internal audit department, where would it fall, and would the department be able to push efficiencies. Bob Taylor discussed what activities the internal audit department might be involved with, but Ben Eisbart noted that an internal audit department would not have authority due to the structure of the county government. Bob Taylor suggested measuring departments against a scorecard that is applicable to that department.

Follow up

Ellen listed what items are going to be followed up for the next meeting: delineate on the organizational charts which offices are required by state statute and which would have more flexibility, and present options on what other counties are doing. It was also determined that County Council President Tom Harris would be invited to the next meeting to discuss the budget and strategic planning process.

Bob Taylor mentioned the county strategic plan, wondering how active it is, what has been done as far as planning efforts, and making it a document that outlines the next year work.

Commissioner Peters indicated that it brings the discussion back full circle as there is no one body who can carry on the strategic plan. Bob Taylor said that the planning piece has to connect to the budget and if someone is not executing there have to be consequences.

Commissioner Brown suggested maybe routing budget review through the commissioners so they can see if departments are meeting plans and then recommend the budget to the council with the commissioners and council working together to have the repercussions or rewards based on meeting strategic plans. She also indicated that IT is an important component of many of the goals and that changes in funding by the state legislature can have an impact on what can be accomplished.

Next Steps

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, April 29 at 2 p.m. in the New Haven Police training room.

Comments from the Floor

Roy Buskirk from County Council discussed their previous attempts to work with departments to cut their budgets.

Motion to Adjourn

Roger Hadley submitted motion to adjourn and Michael Eikenberry seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 3:47 p.m.