

Notes from Budget Fiscal Analysis Task Force Meeting
10/13/09

Task Force Members Present: Yvon Alexandre, Joe Kask, Tim Sullivan, and Lyle Wray

Council members Present: Jim Boucher, Luis Cotto, Larry Deutsch, Matt Ritter, and Pedro Segarra

City Staff: David Panagore, Jennifer Cassidy, and Sixto Lazu

Other Interested Constituents: Julio Conception, MetroHartford Alliance

Challenges and opportunities (some themes that emerged):

1. Structural issues regarding city departmental services: efficiencies & redundancies

- What efficiencies are in our departments?
- What level of services should be provided to the City of this size?
- Are there reorganization options that would reduce duplication of services (ie.: Schools Systems Buildings and Ground and City Public Works)?
- How do we compare with comparable sized cities?

2. Challenges to taxation

- We might need to review broad based strategies for revenue options and to not be totally dependent on property tax revaluation considerations

3. Departmental re-organization opportunities

- Take a hard look at cities/schools buildings and grounds, libraries, recreation, firehouses, etc.

4. Consider revenue enhancement options

5. **Basic Human Needs Services** (high unemployment, public assistance, high percentage of services and also high level of human need, high number of tax exempt properties) – what should be city’s share of providing resources for these services compared to region, state or non-profit institutions?

6. **Task force is a vehicle to independently provide fiscal analysis** to city council and the mayor

7. **Revenues have become a very significant challenge** as they are hard to predict accurately

8. Given the amount of time and supports needed for developing recommendations by the task force, that perhaps the best that might be achieved is **roadmap** for the city council and mayor to consider for a longer-term approach to the issues at hand.

9. Task force may need to develop both **short term** and **long term** approaches to the problem. Timeline is tight. 18 months may be more realistic especially for regional issues.

10. Budget process is often reactionary. Task force has more distance from the process and might be able to contribute with fresh ideas.

11. City staff is ‘hard pressed’ to have the capacity to do this type of analysis (with day-to-day demands in front of it), and this type of task force could be value-added to enhanced analysis.

12. Consideration should also be given to regionalism, where it might have the biggest financial impact

13. Need to get hands around revenues and the relationship to expenses
14. Consider the right combination and balance between(1) reducing expenses, (2) restructuring, and (3)increasing revenues – these are the three areas to further look at.
15. Need to have public hearings and be receptive to input from the “common person” impacted by the budget
16. Most discretionary funds in the next few years will be coming from the federal government and not the State of Connecticut
17. Is the City really ready to make tough choices?
18. Many cities are going through the same process
19. ‘Price of Government’ is a good book to read
20. Consideration of ‘process-flow analysis,’ and “web-based management” and whether enough time to do this
21. Should we be asking the departments further about what they could/should be looking at regarding savings, enhanced revenues, restructuring---

Administrative:

1. Need to consider filling vacancies on the task force
2. Need to select chair
3. Would like to see recommendations to Council and Mayor by the end of February
4. Need to establish meeting schedule
5. Council has allocated \$7,500 for staff support
6. CCM also has services that can be utilized
7. David Panagore and/or staff will be at all meetings: committee needs to clarify (a) focus on what they are doing, (b) clarity of what else is going on; (c) work with David on requests

Task member requests

1. Notification of OMB meetings
2. Copies of Quarterly Reports
3. Access to Department Heads and City Staff
4. Are we considering stimulus dollars?
5. Take the task force’s recommendations seriously and be ready to make hard decisions.
6. Copies of the last two bond ratings from all three reviewers
7. Organizational chart of how finance, budget, and revenue departments fit together
8. Updated information on ARRA funds and an inventory of these funds