



State & Commerce Committee - Board of Representatives

Lindsey Miller, Chair

Robert Roqueta, Vice Chair

Committee Report

Date: Thursday, August 20, 2020
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Place: Meeting was held remotely via Webinar

The State & Commerce Committee met as indicated above. In attendance were Chair Miller, Vice Chair Roqueta and Committee Member Reps. Adams and Graziosi. Excused was Rep. Policar. Also present were Reps. Cottrell, Mahoney, Morson, Nabel, and Zelinsky; Michael Pollard, Chief of Staff; Sandy Dennies, Director of Administration; Brian O'Connor, Connecticut Conference of Municipalities; and two members of the public.

Chair Miller began the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Item No.	Description	Committee Action
¹ 1. SC30.030	REVIEW; Discuss the Effects of Unfunded State Mandates on Property Taxes and Municipal Budgets. Identify Specific Mandates and Costs Affecting the City of Stamford and Board of Education Budgets. Explore How the State of CT Might Relax Mandates to Relieve Municipal Budget(s) during the Ongoing Economic Downturn. 07/08/20 – Submitted by President Quinones, Clerk Nabel and Rep. Mahoney 07/23/20 – Report Made & Held in Committee	Held 4-0-0

Ms. Dennies reviewed and discussed the [attached](#) chart.

- Many departments are unclear about what a mandate is, and the difference between regulations and mandates.
- There are many mandates right now involving the Governor's executive orders for COVID-19.
- Some departments operate almost entirely on state mandates, such as the Tax Assessor's Office, the Town Clerk's Office and the Registrar of Voters.
- The MS4 Stormwater Management is the costliest mandate for the City. It is federal, state and local, and many departments are involved in MS4 adherence.
- The Health Department has had to adhere to many mandates because of COVID-19, but the State has yet to tell municipalities what will be funded.

¹ Video Time Stamp: 00:01:20

There was further discussion with Mr. O'Connor and the representatives.

- We do not necessarily need to relax mandates, but we need to obtain funding.
- The City cannot rely on all budget savings coming from workforce cuts.
- Connecticut is overly reliant on property taxes. Stamford needs to diversify its revenue.
- The Connecticut economy is currently doing well but most likely that will not be sustainable into the next one to two years due to the current COVID-19 issues.
- The BOE is very clear on the unfunded mandates, which total approximately \$28M, but there is not the same clarity on the City side.
- The Governor has asked state agency heads to cut their departments by 10 percent. Municipal funding will be effected by this.
- The executive emergency orders for COVID-19 will expire in September and decisions will have to be made regarding which rules will become permanent, which will continue, and which will not continue.

For the next Committee meeting:

- Ms. Dennies will get dollar amounts for the unfunded mandates from the City department heads.
- Mr. O'Connor will get a list of the top 10 unfunded mandates for Stamford.

A motion to hold this item was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 4-0-0 (Reps. Miller, Roqueta, Adams and Graziosi in favor).

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| 2. SC30.028 | REVIEW; Likely Increased Demand For Absentee Ballots Due To Covid-19 and Plans to Address.
06/11/20 – Submitted by Reps. Cottrell, Stella and Zelinsky
07/13/20 – Held at Steering | Report Made |
| 3. SC30.031 | REVIEW; The Role of the Deputy Town Clerk and Other Support Staff in the Town Clerk's Office.
07/06/20 – Submitted by Rep. Cottrell, Stella and Zelinsky
07/13/20 – Held at Steering | Report Made |

A motion to discuss Items 2 and 3 together was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 4-0-0 (Reps. Miller, Roqueta, Adams and Graziosi in favor).

Ms. Ruijter explained how the Town Clerk's office works.

- The Town Clerk's office is very complex and serves as the nexus between the state and local governments.
- Town Clerk offices in large cities are underfunded compared to those in small towns in Connecticut.
- The State tells the Town Clerks what needs to be done, but it has been difficult for Ms. Ruijter to make changes in the office in order to get these things done.
- The Deputy Town Clerk is a statutory requirement, but is not in the Charter.

² Video Time Stamp: 01:01:25

- It is important to have a Deputy to assist the Town Clerk so there is more than one person who can perform certain duties.
- Mayor Martin has approved the Deputy Town Clerk position, but before the current employee can move to that position, a replacement for their current position needs to be found, otherwise they will be doing two jobs.

Ms. Ruijter discussed the upcoming presidential election absentee ballots.

- The Secretary of State has decided the municipal town clerks' offices will handle the absentee ballots for the election.
- This will be a complex task with 60K applications, 60K ballots sent, and 60K ballots returned.
- To accomplish this she would like to have two work shifts, and employees working outside of their job description. However, this will be in violation of HR and union rules.

Ms. Ruijter would like the BOR to possibly create an ordinance and/or changes to the Charter to give the Town Clerk more flexibility in making changes to the Town Clerk's Office to enhance efficiency.

Chair Miller adjourned the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lindsey Miller, Chair

This meeting is on [video](#)