

Minutes - APPROVED
Nominations and Engagement Committee
June 14, 2021 – 3:30 p.m.
Remote Meeting by Zoom

Present: Ed Fairbrother, Gary Mutchler, Terrance Baxter, Nancy Webster
Absent: Laura Shawley
Staff/Guests: Elin Dowd, Executive Director; Don Barber, Consultant; Michelle Cocco, Clerk of the Board; Judy Drake, Chair of the Board

Call to Order

Mr. Fairbrother, Chair, called the 3:30 p.m.

Approval of Minutes of May 17, 2021

It was MOVED by Mr. Baxter, seconded by Mr. Mutchler, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve the minutes of May 17, 2021 as submitted. MINUTES APPROVED.

Changes to the Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

Executive Director Report

Strategic Planning Poll

Ms. Dowd said as work begins on strategic planning she will be asking members of committees what they think the Consortium does well. At this time a poll of members was initiated and resulted in the following responses: good job with financial management, transparency, balancing the needs of employees and organizations, keeping labor and management engaged, and being active with claims issues. Ms. Dowd said going forward the Consortium will continue to build on its strengths and will continue to perform at that level.

Open Meetings Law Compliance

Ms. Dowd raised the question of how the Consortium will continue to keep members engaged coming out of a pandemic. The Consortium continues to follow the Open Meetings Law and the rules that allow meetings to be held remotely as some of the stricter meeting rules are waived. Those rules have been extended through July 5 and the Consortium awaits further direction from the State on how it can continue to offer a hybrid model that includes remote meetings. It is unknown at this time whether Tompkins Cortland Community College will be available for meetings; however, there are aspects that need to be considered for any location that is considered for meetings. Those aspects include equipment and technology, and possibly staffing from the location. Ms. Dowd asked members how they will be managing this at their municipalities going forward.

Mr. Baxter said the Town of Moravia is looking at opening its meetings back up. They have a couple of employees who have chosen not to be vaccinated and will likely be required to wear a mask. The Town is in the process of opening a new Town Hall that will have a capacity of approximately 80. He commented that he supports moving Consortium meetings around the area.

Mr. Fairbrother said the Town of Big Flats has resumed in-person meetings; however, the Community Center has not yet reopened. They are also looking into technology to allow the ability for persons to attend remotely. The Big Flats Town Hall has a capacity of 45 persons. Unvaccinated individuals are required to wear a mask.

Ms. Drake said this evening the Town of Ithaca will hold its first hybrid meeting with technology that has been added to the Town's Board Room. The Town has been open and has rules in place for unvaccinated individuals.

Mr. Mutchler said the Town has resumed in-person meetings in its small meeting space with unvaccinated individuals being asked to wear masks.

Ms. Webster said although the front desk at the Tompkins County Recycling and Solid Waste Center where she works has been open with different degrees of masks and social distancing requirements, meetings at Tompkins County continue to be held remotely.

Term Limits

Ms. Dowd said she has been speaking to consultants about their experiences with other groups that have term limits. While there are no other Consortiums like this one, there are other organizations that have term limits in place to make sure that new incumbents have the opportunity to get involved. She said the Municipal Cooperative Agreement states that the Consortium will elect officers annually and has a process of appointing and reappointing committee membership; however, there currently are no term limits in place. She asked members for feedback on instituting term limits.

Mr. Mutchler said the Town of Scipio has difficulty getting people to serve; therefore, term limits may be problematic. Mr. Fairbrother said the Town of Big Flats has also had difficulty getting people to get involved and make a time commitment. However, the Town recently enacted term limits that can be waived by the Board. He favors term limits because of the role they play in inspiring new people and new ideas.

Ms. Webster said term limits make sense if there are people to fill the seats. She stressed the importance of municipalities encouraging and supporting engagement.

Mr. Barber spoke of the model used by NYMIR (New York Municipal Insurance Reciprocal) Board which is similar to the Consortium but on a larger scale. Within that structure there is a protocol by which members are elected to serve in leadership roles. He feels this protocol allows the Board to function at a higher level of engagement due to the succession plan that is in place.

Mr. Baxter suggested if term limits are put into place that there also be a waiver provision in the event a member cannot be found to fill a seat. Ms. Dowd understood this concern and said a provision could be included; however, instituting term limits would provide an opportunity to have a conversation about creating a succession plan along with a way to mentor people to move them through the ranks. She will work on drafting language to present to the Committee for consideration at its next meeting. Ms. Drake expressed support for creating opportunities for past chairs to remain involved. She also called attention to turnover that could result from municipal elections and asked that be taken into consideration.

Committee Members with Terms Expiring December 31, 2021

Ms. Dowd reviewed a list of committee seats that are expected to become vacant at year-end and reported all current Officers have expressed an interest in continuing to serve. Also, she noted the ability exists to appoint individuals to additional At-large seats on the Executive Committee. She said she has had conversations with Jim Bower, Chair of the Joint Committee on Plan Structure and Design, about recruiting additional labor Directors. Currently, six out of eight labor Director seats are filled. Ms. Drake said she prefers filling labor seats on committees with Labor Directors.

Mr. Mutchler questioned how labor representatives are chosen and what the Consortium can do to get labor more involved. Ms. Dowd explained each collective bargaining unit is entitled to one representative on the Joint Committee on Plan Structure and Design; there are also a fixed number of seats the Joint Committee selects as labor representatives on the Board of Directors. Typically, when there are little to no major benefit changes being made to plans there has been little involvement or interest by labor in attending meetings. Ms. Webster reiterated that in order for the Consortium to work there needs to be buy-in from the heads of departments and municipalities and this includes offering paid time to attend meetings. Ms. Drake said the Town of Ithaca provides one hour per month for employees to be involved in the Consortium.

Board Survey

Ms. Dowd reviewed the results from 35 of 55 Directors to the Board Survey noting most responses were very positive. Based on responses she will be working with the Chair to present information at the August Board meeting on the preliminary budget and on plan options and comparisons that include retiree options. Included in that will be a look at whether the Consortium is remaining a robust plan that employees feel is meeting their needs. The August Board meeting will be an educational and informational meeting.

With regard to how the Consortium moves forward with in-person versus holding remote meetings there was a strong feeling by Directors who responded to the Survey that members should have a choice of whether to meet in person or remotely; the second preference was for Board meetings to be held in person and committee meetings to be held by a hybrid of remote/in-person meetings. With regard to serving there were some Directors who indicated an interest in serving on a Committee; Ms. Dowd will follow-up with those Directors.

Mr. Mutchler said he feels the Zoom technology is improving and he appreciates being able to see a name attached to a person in the Zoom window.

New Membership

Ms. Dowd said there are municipalities outside of the Consortium's current geographic region that have expressed interest; however, she is waiting for a return call from an individual at the Department of Financial Services regarding the approval status of the Consortium's Certificate of Authority.

Next Meeting Date

The Committee will meet next on July 12th.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:46 p.m.