



OHIO CONSTITUTIONAL MODERNIZATION COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE

**JOINT MEETING OF THE
PUBLIC EDUCATION AND INFORMATION COMMITTEE AND
LIAISONS WITH PUBLIC OFFICES COMMITTEE**

**FOR THE MEETING HELD
THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2015**

Call to Order:

Roger Beckett, Chair of the Public Education and Information Committee, called the joint meeting of the Public Education and Information Committee and the Liaison with Public Offices Committee to order at 3:00 p.m.

Members Present:

A quorum was present with committee members Beckett, Macon, Curtin, Peterson, Readler, and Saphire of the Public Education and Information Committee in attendance, and committee members Asher and Mills of the Liaisons with Public Offices Committee in attendance.

Approval of Minutes:

The minutes of the September 11, 2014 meeting were approved.

Presentation:

*Shaunte Russell
Director of Communications
Ohio Constitutional Modernization Commission*

Shaunte Russell, Director of Communications, provided an update on the Communication Plan that was initially presented to the committees in September 2014.

Ms. Russell introduced a draft of the Commission's proposed newsletter, designated the "OCMC Quarterly," which will be distributed later this month, and each quarter between the 15th and the 30th of January, April, July, and November. She is working on compiling a mailing list, and asked the committee members to provide names they think should be included on the list and

ideas for stories. Chair Beckett suggested that Ms. Russell share this information with the entire Commission to see if they also have story ideas.

Ms. Russell has been working on creating a more up-to-date website, and is hoping to have it revamped by March.

Committee member Sapphire suggested that if the newsletter will be widely circulated, it might be useful to have the names of the members serving on the Commission and contact information for them, so people know who to contact. Ms. Russell agreed this is a good idea and will implement it.

Ms. Russell reported she has created a social media presence for the Commission, specifically on Facebook and Twitter, with a Twitter account name of: @ocmc2021.

She is maintaining a biweekly email called “OCMC in the News,” a collection of news stories, coverage on redistricting and other timely topics.

Ms. Russell introduced Ryan Suskey, director of professional development programs for the Ohio Center for Law Related Education (“OCLRE”). She said she is hoping to work with him on the educational outreach portion of the Communication Plan.

Mr. Suskey presented to the committees on OCLRE’s role in helping with the public education/classroom component of the plan. He said OCLRE has created programs for classrooms, and is available to advise the Commission on what teachers are looking for when teaching about state government and the constitution. Mr. Suskey asked whether the committees have questions about how OCLRE can be of use to the Commission. Chair Beckett asked what resources are already available on the constitution, wondering whether the Commission needs to help develop some broader resources.

Mr. Suskey answered there is a scarcity of resources on Ohio government and specifically the Constitution, noting that teachers complain they do not have any materials to give the students. He said the requirement for teaching Ohio government is new, so teachers are scrambling for information, including lesson plans, rubrics, and ways to adopt to talk to students at lower levels. The requirement begins with the 4th grade, he said.

Chair Beckett asked who else in the state might work with the teachers, and whether there are other organizations that the Commission might work with in preparing materials. Mr. Suskey mentioned the Ohio State Bar Foundation, the Civics Education Program at the Supreme Court of Ohio, the Ohio Resource Center for Social Studies Educators at The Ohio State University, and the Ohio History Connection (formerly the Ohio Historical Society).

Rep. Curtin asked if there is an inventory of what is out there that is helpful. Rep. Curtin mentioned that the State Library of Ohio has material that goes way back, as does the Legislative Service Commission library and the League of Women Voters, and that some state officeholders have published materials for school kids. He said these resources may have retained some archival items and basic level documents that could be updated. Mr. Suskey agreed and mentioned a textbook entitled “Ohio Government in Action” that would be outdated but could be updated.

Chair Asher mentioned the booklet “Know Your Ohio Government,” which was updated in the 1990s, saying it is sort of basic, but short and comprehensive, and would be a good document to start with. Mr. Suskey said that teachers now are looking for materials that would be accessible both in print and online, using interactive content, links to video, and multimedia.

Chair Beckett commented that Commission will have ballot initiatives and will need to get information to the schools about this. He said there is a need for resources about the Ohio Constitution and sees the Commission as being a bullhorn for that effort, to help seek out private support and put resources together. He wondered if Commission resources can be committed to help promote ballot issues. Rep. Curtin mentioned the Capital Square “iCivics initiative,” noting that the committees should see what is happening with that program.

Mr. Suskey suggested that a lesson plan could include allowing students to serve as Commission members, and to talk about whether and how to change Ohio Constitution. He said this would let them look at legislation, create a position, and provide evidence for it. He said that students can do that work knowing that the Commission is a regular part of our government.

Ms. Russell added to her remarks that a new Ohio Constitution booklet has been printed with Commission branding and is available for anyone who would like one.

Committee member Macon asked whether it is possible to have speakers assist in disseminating information to a particular audience. For example, he mentioned the Education, Public Institutions, and Local Government Committee’s consideration of the “thorough and efficient” clause (Article VI, Section 2); is it possible to have a speaker who can advise on the best way to reach people on this issue? Ms. Russell answered that she needs a little time to think about that, especially categorically, and that she may be able ask some people who they think is the best group to help spread the word. Mr. Macon gave the example of people who do not use social media, wondering how to communicate to them.

Committee Discussion:

Chair Beckett asked about the joint resolution on redistricting that will be on the ballot for voters to decide in November, wondering what role the Commission should have at this point. Chair Asher said he asked Rep. Huffman and Rep. Sykes what they thought the Commission’s role should be, saying they were enthusiastic, and are now in the process of hiring consultants to work on the ballot issue. Chair Asher indicated these former representatives are thinking the Commission will remain active in the campaign phase.

Mr. Mills said he talked to Senior Policy Advisor Steven Steinglass and Executive Director Steven Hollon about this, and the conclusion was that this issue will be an agenda item at the next meeting of the Legislative Branch and Executive Branch Committee. He said the question at hand is whether the Commission has the authority to publically endorse the proposal. He said the Legislative Branch and Executive Branch Committee never got to that point in their group discussion of redistricting, but that it does want to stay involved. Mr. Mills has asked for legal research looking at whether the committee/Commission can contemplate further action after the General Assembly passes something. Mr. Mills said he thinks there is room for further

involvement, but that he hasn't talked to the Commission co-chairs about what their feeling is on that question.

Committee member Sapphire said he believes that unless the Commission adopts an identical provision or endorses the legislative proposal in some formal way, it is hard to see how the Commission or commission members in their official capacity have much authority to move forward in the public arena. He noted that Secretary of State Husted spoke at an event at which he indicated if a proposal is adopted and fails, then the ball is back in the Commission's court. Mr. Sapphire is not sure how personal support translates into Commission action.

Chair Asher said that if one looks at what happened with redistricting, the key players were Commission members. He said he thinks it would be odd if the Commission did not in some way support this effort: "Our non-involvement might send a negative message after all of these events."

Chair Beckett asked Commission Counsel Shari O'Neill to look at the ethical aspect of this question, requesting a presentation for the next Legislative Branch and Executive Branch Committee meeting.

Rep. Curtin commented that the Commission is not set up to endorse, but to recommend a constitutional change. He said that statutorily the Commission is not authorized to do more than that, and that doing more could set a dangerous precedent. He noted that redistricting is an easy question, but other issues will be more contentious.

Adjournment:

With no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Attachments:

- Notice
- Agenda
- Roll call sheet

Approval:

The minutes of the January 15, 2015 joint meeting of the Public Education and Information Committee and the Liaisons with Public Offices Committee were approved at the May 14, 2015 joint meeting of the committees.

Public Education and Information
Committee

/s/ Roger L. Beckett

Roger L. Beckett, Chair

/s/ Larry L. Macon

Larry L. Macon, Vice-Chair

Liaison with Public Offices Committee

/s/ Herb Asher

Herb Asher, Chair

/s/ Robert A. Taft

Robert A. Taft, Vice-Chair