

August 26, 2009

**Citizens Commission on Lewiston-Auburn Cooperation:
A Report of Commission Activities and Lessons Learned
November 2006 - February 2009**

Introduction

In November 2006, the Lewiston and Auburn City Councils jointly established the Citizens Commission on Lewiston-Auburn Cooperation (Commission). The City Councils charged the Commission to recommend ways to implement combining municipal services to save taxpayers money and to improve services. The Commission is advisory only and was tasked with developing recommendations for the City Councils to consider. To facilitate the Commission's work the Cities, through the Lewiston-Auburn Economic Growth Council, applied for and received \$163,000 in State grants which enabled the Commission to retain professional staff support, host a conference and hire consultants.

As required by Rider A Specifications of Work to be Performed in the December 14, 2006 grant from the State of Maine, this report addresses the eight grant requirements noted on page 3.

All the documents referenced in this report as well as other supporting documents are contained in the Appendix to this report.

The Commission is the successor to the Lewiston-Auburn Commission on Joint Services which issued its Final Report The Choices Facing Auburn and Lewiston to the Mayors and City Councils of Lewiston and Auburn in February 2006. Over the past two years, the Final Report has served as a template for department models for consolidating services.

By December 2007, models for consolidating most city departments (other than education) had been developed. Those models are contained in the Joint Services Coordinator Interim Report March 2007-January 2008. The models contain many creative ideas brought forward by the staffs of Lewiston and Auburn.

The Joint Services Commission's analysis identified approximately \$2 million in savings per year within five years of consolidating municipal services. Further analysis by the current Commission's staff, with input from the city departments, identified savings of approximately \$2.7 million per year. The Commission is certain there is more to be saved, in the as yet unexplored education budget, for example.

The Commission made two formal recommendations to the City Councils to combine assessing and information technology services. The Councils have not yet acted on either recommendation.

However, the Commission commends the two cities for progress being made to enhance cooperation in the areas of code enforcement and planning with the proposed purchase of new shared software to be paid for in part by remaining Commission grant funds. We agree with city staff this initiative has the potential to reduce costs and improve delivery of services beyond code enforcement and planning. We hope this initiative leads to the ultimate goal of combining city departments.

In January 2009, the Auburn City Council adopted a resolve to terminate its involvement with the Commission. The Lewiston City Council has taken no similar action. The consensus of the Commission is that it remains in existence since the agreement creating the Commission requires agreement of the City of Auburn and the City of Lewiston to terminate the Commission. Moreover, the grant funding the Commission requires the Commission to prepare and submit a final report.

The Commission agrees with Auburn's Mayor Jenkins that the burden for action is on the City Councils and that citizens commissions are not necessary for enhanced cooperation between the cities. However, the Commission stands ready to assist with that process if asked to do so by the Councils.

The idea of combining Lewiston and Auburn municipal services to save taxpayers money and improve services is supported by a sizable majority of the residents of Lewiston/Auburn, especially when asked about combining back office functions such as code enforcement and assessing.¹ The Lewiston Sun-Journal and the Twin City Times have published strong editorials in support of consolidation. A majority of City Councilors have yet to be convinced to take this historic step even on a trial or pilot project basis. Perhaps without the active involvement of a Citizens Commission, the Councils will find a way to consider and act on the recommendations of this Commission and others to save money and improve government efficiency for the people of Lewiston and Auburn.

History of Municipal Cooperation between Lewiston and Auburn

Cooperation has been the keynote of the development of Lewiston and Auburn since the first damming of the Androscoggin River in 1808, and the first bridge across the river in 1823, when most of what was then known as Lewiston Falls Village was on what is now on the Auburn side of the river.²

¹ 2005 polling by Joint Services Commission (insert cite to appendix) and 1996 polling by LA Together (insert cite to appendix.).

² A *Brief History of Lewiston*, Douglas I. Hodgkin, HTTP: //www.ci.lewiston.me.us/history/

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Lewiston and Auburn became a thriving manufacturing center, known nationally for making textiles and shoes with power from the Androscoggin River. As early as 1849, when they established a unified fire protection district, the Twin Cities sought lower costs and better service through municipal cooperation.

While instances of cooperation between neighboring municipalities are not unique, the extent of the sustained cooperative relationship between the cities of Lewiston and Auburn is notable. In the 1880's, the two cities established the Lewiston-Auburn Railroad Company, whose rail facilities continue to this day to be a dynamic factor in the economic development of the region. In the same decade, by legislative action, the cities undertook to share a common water supply, Lake Auburn. This arrangement continues to date.

After World War II, municipal cooperation increased markedly with the establishment of the Auburn-Lewiston Municipal Airport, where substantial industrial development has occurred. The airport and the Airpark, located in Auburn, are the subject of a municipal tax-sharing agreement, believed to be the first in Maine.

The 1970's brought the formation of the Lewiston-Auburn Water Pollution Control Authority, which now operates a multimillion dollar sewerage treatment plant serving both cities; the Lewiston-Auburn Transit Committee, which plans public transportation; the 9-1-1 Committee, which provides emergency service dispatch; and the Lewiston-Auburn Economic Growth Council, which administers loan programs and provides site selection and marketing services to encourage business investment and the formation of new jobs in the Twin Cities.

Other examples of this persistent cooperative policy include: The Androscoggin Unified Emergency Management Agency, which provides disaster planning and coordination for the Twin Cities and surrounding towns; The Lake Auburn Watershed Commission, which protects the water supply; The Lewiston-Auburn Cable Advisory Committee, which promotes a common cable TV policy; and the Charles Monty Hydro Project, another tax-sharing venture, which generates hydroelectric power at Great Falls, and provided funds to improve and beautify the riverfront.

Today, the amount spent on these cooperative services is more than 10% of the combined non-school general fund budgets.

LEWISTON AND AUBURN MAINE: STUDIES OF MUNICIPAL COOPERATION

1953 - Lewiston Mayor Roland Marcotte made efforts to encourage joint cooperation.

1972-1973 **Lewiston Auburn Cooperative Affairs Committee**, appointed by Mayors Clifford and Linnell, studied shared municipal services. Six citizen commissioners published a report in 1973 that dealt mostly with delivery of regional services by planning commissions, councils of government and the like.

1975 “**The Rockland Experience**” brought together fifteen top management personnel from the two cities for the purpose of improving working relationships along two dimensions: (1) on an intra-group basis working individually with the Lewiston and Auburn Management teams, and (2) on an intergroup basis via a planned confrontation around intercity issues. The *Rockland Experience* was undertaken in recognition of the fact that meaningful progress in intercity, and to some extent intracity, cooperation was not possible without an essential change in perception, attitudes, and behavior on both sides of the River. The challenge was to break through the cycle of distrust that had flourished for so long, and to create an interpersonal climate which would allow the participants to discuss candidly the issues before them without feeling personally threatened. [Extract from case study by James C. Pritchard]

1996 - **L-A Together, A Joint Commission of the Cities of Lewiston and Auburn**, appointed by Mayor’s Jenkins and Thorpe. It was composed of 14 citizens, representatives of the two City Councils, the City Managers, representatives of each school department and augmented by approximately 20 citizen volunteers and advised by the President of the Lewiston-Auburn Economic Growth Council, Lucien Gosselin, then of the Maine Development Foundation, Charles Morrison, President of the Androscoggin County Chamber and James Saunders, former Chamber of Commerce President.

L-A Together unanimously recommended a number of consolidations of municipal services to be authorized by the City Councils. Specific proposals included public safety, capital expenditures, institutional cooperation (at the City Council and City Manager level), purchasing, recreation, public works, economic development, social services and education. Most were ignored.

2004-2006: **Lewiston-Auburn Commission on Joint Services** This 10-member commission was co-chaired by Community Credit Union CEO Donna Steckino and Supreme Court Justice Robert Clifford. It was authorized by the City Councils and appointed by Lewiston Mayor Lionel Guay and Auburn Mayor Norm Guay. Findings included:

“... The failure to cooperate in the past may have made city services more expensive today than they had to be.

... analysis shows financial and service benefits from cooperation in several areas.

...The Citizens of Lewiston and Auburn support cooperation.

...There are few activities undertaken by city governments in Lewiston and Auburn separately today that would not benefit from an integrated approach to service delivery.”

The Commission on Joint Services made several recommendations, to be authorized by the Councils:

1. combined code enforcement;
2. combined arborist and traffic supervisor services;
3. combined “back office” support services including computer systems and staff functions; and
4. consolidated police, fire and public works services.

The Citizens Commission on Lewiston-Auburn Cooperation

Background

An interlocal agreement between the Cities of Lewiston and Auburn, Maine on November 20, 2006 created the Citizens Commission on Lewiston-Auburn Cooperation. Both city councils approved unanimously the interlocal agreement.

The Commission is the successor to the Lewiston-Auburn Commission on Joint Services which issued its Final Report to the Mayors and City Councils of Lewiston and Auburn in February 2006 after two years of study.

The Commission on Joint Services found that within five years of consolidating services (not including education), the two cities would save approximately \$2 million annually; it also developed a recommended approach and timeline for accomplishing consolidation.

The February 2006 Final Report made three main recommendations:

1. “the adoption of a joint resolution by both City Councils with specific objectives for consolidation and a specific timetable.”
2. “public accountability for progress...To achieve this, we recommend the creation of a Citizens Commission on Auburn-Lewiston Cooperation”; and
3. “the designation of a Coordinator of Joint Services with responsibility for furthering cooperation.”

The City Councils did not consider or act on the first recommendation; they approved the other two.

Broadly speaking, the Cities created the Citizens Commission on Lewiston-Auburn Cooperation to build on the solid foundation established by the Lewiston-Auburn Commission on Joint Services.

Purpose of the Citizens Commission on Lewiston-Auburn Cooperation

As stated in Article I, Section 1 of its bylaws, “the purpose of the Citizens Commission on Lewiston-Auburn Cooperation shall be to develop plans for the implementation of new and enhanced cooperative, collaborative and/or consolidated municipal operations and services to improve the quality and effectiveness of the services provided to the citizens of Lewiston and Auburn, while at the same time increasing the productivity of municipal government and reducing the cost to the taxpayers.”

Purpose of Grant Awarded by the State of Maine

The Commission on Joint Services recognized that developing and implementing plans for consolidation would require a full-time staff professional as well as grant money to fund the position. During the summer and fall of 2006, Lewiston and Auburn through the Lewiston-Auburn Economic Growth Council applied for two grants from the State Planning Office. The \$163,000 award was the largest grant in State history for enhancing cooperation between municipalities.

As stated in the September 18, 2006, grant application on page 1, PART Two: Project Description:

“The cities of Lewiston and Auburn have been in the forefront of intermunicipal cooperation in Maine for over 100 years. As Maine’s second largest population center in the state with a combined population of nearly 60,000, with this proposal, Lewiston and Auburn propose to take intermunicipal cooperation to an entirely new level - not just the merger of one service, but a broad look across the major functions of local government, with the goal of consolidated service delivery in several of these areas and \$2.2 million in annual savings by year three. (Emphasis added).

The proposal follows the recommendations submitted this past spring by the Commission on Joint Services. The Commission not only identified key areas where consolidation of services would be in the interests of Lewiston and Auburn, but also provided guidance about how the consolidation should occur.

...It provides the necessary funds to hire a Joint Services Coordinator for a period of 18 months to lead and staff the effort. The Coordinator will work with seven inter-municipal teams to design and implement consolidation plans for:

- Code Enforcement and Planning
- Public Works and Public Services
- Recreation
- Information Technology
- Police
- Fire
- Procurement and Joint Purchasing

The plans will be taken to a joint meeting of the Lewiston and Auburn City Councils and the Citizens Commission on Auburn-Lewiston Cooperation. The Councils will accept or revise the proposals, or send them back for more work. Once a plan is accepted, the staff and Joint Services Coordinator will immediately begin implementation activities. At the conclusion of the 18 months, the Joint Services Coordinator will present the results. The Councils will decide at that time whether the achieved and anticipated savings justify local funding of the position. This project will be a model to other communities in Maine in how to structure consolidation planning, how to combine basic infrastructure functions such as information technology, and how to get staff buy-in into the results.”

Powers of the Citizens Commission on Lewiston-Auburn Cooperation

As stated in its bylaws, Article I, Section 3, “The Commission is advisory only. The power to adopt any plans or recommendations developed by the Commission for cooperative or consolidated municipal operations or service delivery shall be and is retained by the Mayors and City Councils of the Cities of Lewiston and Auburn, as provided by their respective charters.”

Members

The Commission is comprised of 5 members from each city appointed by the respective city councils. Members may not be city employees or elected officials.

Membership has remained unchanged from the original appointments. Two Lewiston Commission members, Ronald Bissonnette and Mark Carrier, also served on the Lewiston-Auburn Commission on Joint Services. Having these two veterans on the Commission provides continuity and a bridge to the previous study of combining municipal services.

Lewiston Commission Members

Ronald Bissonnette
Mark Carrier
Ron Farris
Anthony Ferguson
Bette Swett-Thibeault

Auburn Commission Members

Roger Blais
Lee Jay Feldman
Peter Garcia
Eric Howes
Curtis Webber

At the first Commission meeting on March 1, 2007, Ronald Bissonnette and Peter Garcia were elected co-chairs of the Commission. On Jan. 24, 2008, Mr. Bissonnette informed the Commission his term was up and that the Lewiston City Council would need to appoint someone to replace him. Bette Swett-Thibeault was elected by the Commission to replace Mr. Bissonnette as co-chair. Mr. Bissonnette continues to serve on the Commission, as Lewiston has not named a replacement.

Joint Services Coordinator

Under Article V, Section 2. A. of the Commission bylaws, the “Lewiston City Administrator, the Auburn City Manager, and the President of the Lewiston-Auburn Economic Growth Council may designate a Joint Services Coordinator...”

In March 2007, the Commission hired former Rumford Town Manager Stephen Eldridge to be the Joint Services Coordinator. During his eight months in the job, Mr. Eldridge made substantial progress in forming department teams and facilitating a process that resulted in models of how consolidated departments could look and function. Those models are contained in the Joint Services Coordinator Interim Report March 2007- January 2008. They are ready for further discussion and input from the City Councils. Mr. Eldridge’s full-time effort moved the conversation about consolidation from the theoretical to the verge of practical application. The next step is refinement of the models and implementation.

At the end of 2007, Mr. Eldridge accepted the position of Town Manager of Lisbon. In March 2008, the Commission retained Kay Rand of Bernstein Shur Government Solutions as consultant to the Commission. Unlike Mr. Eldridge, Ms Rand did not work full-time for the Commission. However, she brought a wealth of experience from her many projects involving municipal government.

Commission Activities, March 2007 - February 2009

The Commission began its task by reviewing the history of collaboration efforts. At the Commission’s second meeting, past chairs of the Lewiston-Auburn Commission on Joint Services Donna Steckino and Justice Robert Clifford discussed their Commission’s work, its findings, and the difficulties of overcoming institutional barriers to consolidation. Ms. Steckino and Justice Clifford challenged the Commission to examine the Lewiston and Auburn school departments, an area the Joint Services Commission did not delve into. The school expenditure is more than 50% of the municipal budget in both Cities. Aside from one presentation from the School Department Chairs, the Commission has focused on municipal services to date. However, the Commission, like its predecessor, believes there are significant savings and efficiencies that could be realized if this area were thoroughly analyzed.

The Commission views the Joint Services Commission’s final report as a template for developing plans to consolidate municipal services. That report stresses the importance of a bottom-up approach to consolidation to gain staff buy-in, unless the cities are prepared to legally merge as Dover and Foxcroft did in 1922. It also assures city employees that any reduction in the work force of the two cities would occur through attrition. The Commission has taken this approach as well.

At the same time, several opportunities for a more top-down approach that could potentially accelerate consolidation emerged in March 2007 as the Commission began its work:

- The Auburn School Department Superintendent announced her resignation in January effective in June at the end of the school year. Could one superintendent manage both the Auburn and Lewiston school departments?
- The Auburn City Manager announced her resignation in February to be effective in June. Could Lewiston and Auburn share a City Manager?
- The Economic Development Specialist for the Lewiston-Auburn Economic Growth Council recently took another position. Would Lewiston and Auburn agree to house economic development solely at LAEGC?

In addition to these opportunities, in November 2008, the Commission wrote to the heads of the Lewiston and Auburn Public Library trustees offering “to facilitate discussions about the possibility of sharing the services of a common director” after the announcement of the retirement of the Auburn Library director. The trustees did not accept the offer. In June 2009, the Auburn Public Library hired a new Director.

The Commission directed Mr. Eldridge to identify areas from the Joint Services Commission final report that could result in an early bottom-up consolidation success and also to work with Commission members on the identified top-down opportunities.

Mr. Eldridge began his work by reviewing past collaboration efforts going back to 1975 as well as researching best practices and success stories elsewhere in consolidating government services, such as the federated approach which has enjoyed success in Canada. This resulted in the November 2007 “Dating Game” symposium held at the Ramada Inn in Lewiston. Several international experts presented their ideas and models for municipal and regional collaboration. Over 200 people attended the symposium. Governor Baldacci was one of the principle speakers. The symposium was sponsored by LAEGC, the Maine Development Foundation, and the Commission.

Issues and questions quickly surfaced during Mr. Eldridge’s review and research of past collaboration efforts: What effect if any would consolidation of municipal services and/or school departments have on revenues the cities receive from the State? How would this differ under consolidation versus merger of the two cities along the lines of Dover Foxcroft? Are statutory or charter changes needed to consolidate services? What role would interlocal agreements play? What can be done to move the two cities to a common information technology platform so that the computer systems can readily share information?

To answer the revenue questions, the Commission retained Planning Decisions, Inc. to study the issue and report its findings. Planning Decisions previously performed substantial work for the Joint Services Commission. In Planning Decisions’ September 20, 2007, report An Analysis of the Impact on Intergovernmental Revenue Flows of an Integration of the Municipal Governments of Auburn and Lewiston, page 10, Charles Lawton, PhD, Senior Economist, concluded in part that merging the cities and the school departments would result in “a loss of approximately \$275,000 in state education aid...and a gain in approximately \$480,000 in state revenue sharing funds...The net

result, therefore, would be a gain of approximately \$200,000.” Regarding the loss in state education aid from school consolidation alone, the report states on page 6, “It should be noted here, however, that should the two systems undertake any cost savings efficiencies, they could conceivably offset this loss...”

In keeping with the Joint Services Commission report recommendations, Mr. Eldridge also began meeting with department heads and key staff in both cities to form teams tasked with developing consolidation models. Mr. Eldridge served as the facilitator for the teams that worked from March until November to produce models of consolidation. Those models are contained in the Joint Services Coordinator Interim Report March 2007-January 2008 and are discussed in more detail below under Bottom Up Opportunities.

During the course of working with the department teams, Mr. Eldridge verified the approximately \$2 million in savings over five years identified by the Joint Services Commission. Additionally, another \$700,000 in savings was identified during the process for a total of approximately \$2.7 million savings within 5 years of consolidating services. The chart below, Cost Savings Projected after 5 years, is on page two of Mr. Eldridge’s interim report. It shows annual savings of \$2.6 million; however, later refinement of the numbers identified another \$100,000. Along with the savings there are one-time costs of \$150,000 to upgrade software, and \$600,000 to create wage and benefit harmony in the police, fire, and public works departments. Generally, Lewiston pays higher wages and offers better benefits than Auburn.

Later study by the Commission on software upgrade costs found that this money would be expended whether consolidation of the Information Technology function occurs or not since software is periodically upgraded when it becomes obsolete. There is a cost associated with that.

Annual Cost Savings Projected after 5 years

Departmental Administration	\$1,175,811
Administration Department	90,000
Police Department	400,000
Personnel Reduction	700,000
Public Works Equipment Purchase (known)	70,000
Public Works Efficiencies (estimated)	175,000
Total	\$2,610,811

One Time Cost Increases:

Software Upgrade (approx.)	\$150,000
Contract Harmony	\$ 600,000

During the summer and fall of 2007, some City Councilors from both Lewiston and Auburn questioned the accuracy of the projected savings. To address those concerns, the Commission formed a subcommittee to review the underlying assumptions and verify the numbers. It was during the course of this review an error was found that boosted the total projected savings to \$2.7 million. Following a meeting of the Commission subcommittee and the Councilors, there was general agreement that the projected savings were reasonably accurate based upon the assumptions used at the time of the analysis.

Top-Down Opportunities

School Departments

At its April 26, 2007 meeting, the Commission heard from Auburn School Committee Chair David Das and Lewiston School Committee Chair Jim Handy. Mr. Das discussed Governor John Baldacci's proposal to consolidate school districts and the efforts of Auburn and Lewiston to collaborate further and save money. A combined school district would have 8000 students; Mr. Das noted that bigger is not necessarily better. Mr. Handy indicated a concern about loss of State revenue if the two districts combined. He did say improvements could be made through innovations such as integrated teacher workshops and the creation of specialty programs that serve both school systems. Both Chairs reported that while there is already good cooperation between the school departments, more could and should be done. One idea they suggested was hiring a Joint Services Coordinator for the schools.

Regarding the then impending superintendent vacancy in Auburn, Mr. Das said that Auburn would likely name an interim superintendent before making a decision about the position. Assistant Superintendent Thomas Morrill was subsequently appointed as Interim Superintendent, and in January 2008, was named Auburn Superintendent of Schools.

Since the meeting with the school board chairs, the Commission has not focused on the school departments.

City Manager

In February 2007, Auburn City Manager Patricia Finnigan announced she would leave her post in June to become Portland's Assistant City Manager. Auburn began the search process for a new city manager that included a survey asking the public what they would like to see in their next city manager.

The Auburn City Council also approved a resolve March 19 "Regarding the Selection of the Auburn City Manager" to:

"explore the feasibility of searching for and hiring a joint city manager for Auburn and Lewiston and whether a joint city manager would be in the best interest of Auburn;

consider whether Auburn should hold an advisory referendum in November 2007 asking voters whether they would support the merger of Auburn and Lewiston; and report the findings and recommendations back to the Auburn City Council within 30 days.”

This was followed on March 23 by a letter from Auburn Mayor John Jenkins to Lewiston Mayor Larry Gilbert asking Lewiston to join with Auburn in a 30-day process to assist Auburn “in the development of the city manager criteria”...and “to discuss in earnest all possibilities.” Lewiston approved a companion resolve and a City Manager Committee was formed of the two Mayors and selected City Councilors from Auburn and Lewiston. Joint Services Coordinator Steve Eldridge also participated in the Committee’s discussions.

The Commission discussed the single city administrator/manager issue at length over several meetings beginning with its second meeting on March 22. On April 9, the Commission sent a letter to the Mayors and City Councils commending them for their decision “to move forward and begin a dialogue on the possibility of developing a position of joint city administrator or manager.” The Commission offered to use some of its funds to employ consultant Frank O’Hara of Planning Decisions, Inc. to assist with the process. Mr. O’Hara was a consultant to the Joint Services Commission. The Commission also offered the services of Joint Services Coordinator Steve Eldridge.

On April 10, an op-ed piece in the Lewiston Sun-Journal by the Commission Co-Chairs congratulated the Councils “for their courage and vision in forming a team to examine the challenges and opportunities created by the soon-to-be-vacant Auburn City Manager position.” They also wrote, “Whether it makes sense now or later to have a single city administrator for Lewiston and Auburn, never will there be a more opportune time to take a hard look at the issue. To paraphrase Mayor Jenkins at the March 26 joint city council meeting, if Lewiston and Auburn continue down this path toward greater collaboration, it’s not a question of if but when a single individual will manage both cities.”

Mayor Jenkins updated the Commission April 26 on efforts to gather citizen input into what Auburn should be looking for in its next city manager. At that time, over 200 responses to the survey had been received. Mayor Jenkins stressed the importance of the Commission’s work. He also emphasized the importance of Auburn’s pressing on with its manager search process since it was unknown what would result from the discussions between the two cities about sharing a city manager.

On May 25, the Commission sent a second letter to the Mayors and City Councils requesting that they “meet in joint session to discuss, with their respective management teams, the possibility of having a single manager or administrator on an interim basis. The purpose would be to explore the concept to see how it might work.” “Frankly the Citizens Commission has not identified a down side to trying this on a trial basis.”

At the June 26 Commission meeting, Mayor Jenkins asked the Commission to refrain from involving itself in the Auburn city manager issue. Mayor Jenkins assured the Commission that the topic would be discussed at a Joint City Council meeting to be scheduled in August. Commission members disagreed with the Mayor that the City Manager issue was outside the scope of the Commission's bylaws for study and recommendation to the City Councils.

On August 7, Joint Services Coordinator Steve Eldridge made a presentation to a Joint City Council meeting on his and the Commission's work to date on both top down and bottom up opportunities. Mr. Eldridge was asked by the Councils to refine the work on the shared City Manager concept and to make a presentation on the advantages and disadvantages at the next Joint Council meeting. During the August 7 meeting, a number of Councilors expressed their concern that cost savings from consolidation of services would not be immediate but only occur over time.

On September 25, Mr. Eldridge made a presentation to the Joint City Councils on the concept of a shared city manager. The Joint Councils voted to task the Commission with coming back with more specifics on how the position would work. Commission members and Mr. Eldridge worked with the Lewiston City Administrator and the Auburn Acting City Manager to develop a process/model for a shared manager/administrator. On November 20, Mr. Eldridge presented this to a Joint City Council meeting. His presentation included the pro's, con's, and policy decisions that would have to be made by the Councils for this to move forward. Councilors were generally critical or skeptical.

Meanwhile, the Auburn city manager search process was narrowing the list of candidates and conducting interviews. On March 31, 2008, the Auburn City Council approved the hiring of Glenn Aho as Auburn's new City Manager.

Economic Development Specialist Vacancy

Economic Development within Lewiston/Auburn municipal government occurs in three places: Each city has its own Economic and Community Development departments and staff. The Lewiston-Auburn Economic Growth Council (a non-profit agency) provides development services to both Cities. LAEGC is housed separately from the cities and works jointly with each of the departments. It is funded by both communities.

In early 2007, the Economic Development Specialist from LAEGC accepted another position. This created the opportunity to bring economic development under one roof by consolidating the separate municipal development staffs in the LAEGC. It was expected the change would lessen competition for development projects between the two cities and provide a stronger regional economic development team. The Acting Auburn City Manager and Lewiston City Administrator met to explore this opportunity but it did not progress beyond the discussion stage. The potential annual savings to the two cities in staff alone would have been approximately \$60,000.

Bottom Up Opportunities

Unless Auburn and Lewiston were prepared to merge, in which case consolidation would occur as part of the process, the Joint Services Commission recommended a mainly bottom up approach to consolidating municipal departments. The primary reason for this is to gain acceptance from city staff.

Mr. Eldridge began this bottom up process by meeting first with department heads. He assured them that the Commission's goal is cost savings and improved delivery of service and that any reduction in personnel resulting from the process would be through attrition.

Following the initial meetings, teams were formed consisting of two or three staff from each of the city municipal departments, including department heads. The teams met on average of every other week discussing policies, procedures, personnel needs, and work load. On a number of occasions, Commission members attended the department team meetings and were often impressed with the professionalism and creativity of a number of team members.

Each team was tasked with creating a consolidated model. The models developed by mid-November 2007 are considered drafts for discussion. The models assume no loss of personnel, but do show a reduction in the number of workers through attrition.

The Joint Services Coordinator Interim Report, March 2007-January 2008 contains models of consolidation for the following:

1. Public Works, including a separate model for the Arborist Division;
2. Combined Information Technology (L-A Technology Organization);
3. Combined Parks and Recreation;
4. Finance Department;
5. City Clerk of Lewiston & Auburn;
6. Lewiston-Auburn Assessing Department;
7. Lewiston/Auburn Planning and Code Enforcement;
8. Consolidated Police Department;
9. Fire Administration with subsets for Auburn Fire Fighting Division, Lewiston Fire Fighting Division, Fire Prevention Division, and EMS Division.

Policy Decisions

Department staff teams have taken the models as far as they can. If there is interest in pursuing consolidation of departments, the ball is squarely in the court of the City Councils to address policy issues that surfaced during the team discussions. The bottom up approach has reached the point where the direction must come from the top down.

Policy Issues to Consider

- How will the consolidation implementation occur?
- Who will have oversight of the consolidated departments?
- Which manager will the consolidated departments be accountable to?
- What does the political structure look like?
- Are there Charter changes needed?
- Would an inter-local agreement be the appropriate legal mechanism for consolidating departments?
- Is a citizens referendum desirable?

Commission Recommendations

As of February 2009, the Commission has sent two recommendations for consolidation to the Mayors and City Councils for their review and consideration. Neither Council has yet considered or acted on these recommendations.

Information Technology Recommendation

The Joint Services Commission February 2006 Final Report states on page 15, "The ultimate integration of Lewiston and Auburn's information technology systems is essential to expanding cooperation in virtually every service area."

The December 2007 Interim Report of the Joint Services Coordinator agreed with this assessment on page 5, "This department is a key component of the consolidation process and essential to all other departments as they merge. In the examination of all the departments except public safety, the differences in the two cities' software was a barrier that will need to be resolved."

Given those reports, the advice of city management and staff, and the technical nature of the subject, the Commission in summer 2008 retained Barry, Dunn, McNeil, & Parker at a cost of \$40,000 "to provide the Cities with an independent, objective review of the Cities' current IT infrastructure and business applications and other specific recommendations related to the design of a future consolidated IT environment." BDM&P issued its Report of Consolidation Recommendations on October 23, 2008.

The substance of the report is that Lewiston replace its older system, when necessary, with the more modern system recently purchased by Auburn, and that Auburn replace its assessing software with the product offered by the same vendor from which it purchased all its other new systems. The result will be an efficient and cost-effective system which will enable superior communications, record keeping, reporting, and operations.

The Commission met several times to receive the presentation by the consultants, to question the recommendations, and to hear from city staff. The Commission was

of the joint service. This direction was recommended by the Joint Services Commission and reflects input provided by several elected officials serving the two cities.

Auburn City Council Ends Auburn's Involvement with Citizens Commission on Lewiston-Auburn Cooperation

On January 26, 2008, by a 5 to 2 vote, the Auburn City Council approved a "Joint Resolution Regarding Citizens Commission on Lewiston and Auburn Cooperation" that ended Auburn's participation with Lewiston on the work of the Commission.

"Now therefore let it be resolved that the Cities take time to honor the work of both current and past Citizen Commissions by conducting, in earnest, an administrative review of all work to ascertain what information may be used now to assist with our daily operational decisions in our endeavor toward operational efficiencies and property tax relief; and

Let it further be resolved that the Cities hereby enact Section 8(b) ("Termination & Modification") of the November 20, 2006 Inter-local Agreement Establishing the Citizens Commission on Lewiston-Auburn Cooperation to be effective January 31, 2009."

The Lewiston City Council has not taken similar action. At its February 19, 2009 meeting, the Commission reviewed and discussed the Commission's status and responsibilities. The Commission concluded it remains in existence since the agreement creating the Commission was not terminated by agreement of the City of Auburn and the City of Lewiston. The Commission also concluded that its responsibilities include conducting meetings and filing an annual report.

Lessons Learned

L/A Together in 1996 recommended the consolidation of municipal services in Lewiston and Auburn. The Lewiston-Auburn Commission on Joint Services in 2006 also called for combined services. After the Lewiston-Auburn Commission on Joint Services issued its final report, the Cities sought and obtained nearly \$163,000 from the State of Maine Planning Office to implement the recommendations of the Commission. In their application for funding, the Cities represented as follows:

"The Mayors and City Councils of Lewiston and Auburn initiated the Commission on Joint Services in 2004, and have supported the Commission at every step. Now, by submitting this grant [application], the elected leaders of Lewiston and Auburn are indicating their support for implementation. The projects in this proposal are a direct result of the Commission's recommendations and the Cities' commitment to follow through and not let the report "gather dust" but instead bring long-term savings to taxpayers and improved service delivery."

Despite the consensus that joint services are in the best interest of the citizens of Lewiston and Auburn, why have the Cities been unwilling to consolidate a single government function?

We conclude that the process is fatally flawed. We agree with the statement made by Auburn Mayor John Jenkins after he drafted the Auburn City Council resolution to dissolve the Commission:

“It’s time for the councils in both cities to no longer hide behind a commission. It’s our job [as elected officials] to consider [consolidation]. It’s our job to make this all happen.” (*Lewiston Sun Journal*, Jan. 22, 2009, at A1.)

The process of appointing a commission to study and make consolidation recommendations is too time consuming and too far removed from political process to succeed. If the consolidation of services is to occur, the elected officials of each city must make it happen.

The election of both the Lewiston and Auburn City Councils take place every two years. The life of any Commission likely will overlap an election cycle. A drastic change in composition of the respective City Councils occurred after the Cities sought State funding for implementation of the consolidation recommendations of the 2004 Commission. Voters in Lewiston elected an entirely new City Council and voters in Auburn elected five new members to its seven-member Council. Newly elected officials bring with them new ideas. Newly elected officials also may be overwhelmed with matters relating to the day-to-day operation of the City. Newly elected officials prioritize front-burner issues such as the budgetary process over less immediate matters. Also, there is no clear indication that either Council had much awareness of the process already begun for consolidating services by the previous Councils.

Change is difficult. Change proposed by non-elected Commission members is more difficult. The promise of improved municipal services at lower cost may be no match for city employee resistance to consolidation, municipal pride on both sides of the river, political tensions between the two Cities, and the feeling by some elected officials of a loss of autonomy and political control.

Submitting the matter directly to voters may be an alternative. Article II, Sec. 32-31 of the Charter of the City of Lewiston specifically allows the Council to submit to the electorate a proposed “ordinance, order, resolve or question.” Article II, Sec. 32-41 of the Lewiston Charter allows the Council to place on the ballot non-binding questions in order to determine the collective view of the voters.

While we could not find comparable provisions existing in the Auburn Charter, the Auburn City Council presumably has the authority under its general powers set forth in Article I, Sec. 2.1 of the Charter of the City of Auburn. Such a referendum could be limited to the consolidation of a single municipal service or as broad as the merger of

Lewiston and Auburn into one city. Merger of the two cities into one, as noted in the February, 2006 Final Report of the Lewiston-Auburn Commission on Joint Services, may also be submitted to the electorate for a binding vote pursuant to the applicable State statute.

If the Cities should ever establish a future Commission related to consolidation of services, we recommend that it contain a proportionate number of elected officials from each City. In recommending the creation of the present Commission, the Lewiston-Auburn Commission on Joint Services in its final report stated that the Commission could include some city councilors. The inclusion of City Councilors on any future commission would give, in our view, those Councilors a better and more informed understanding of the work of the Commission and the analysis and deliberation behind any specific recommendation of the Commission. Councilors serving on the Commission may be in a better position than citizen members to present the commission's recommendations to the full City Councils.

Next Steps

The Commission stands ready to assist the Cities with the difficult work of consolidating services if there is a desire and interest on the part of the City Councils to do so.

Appendix

List of documents

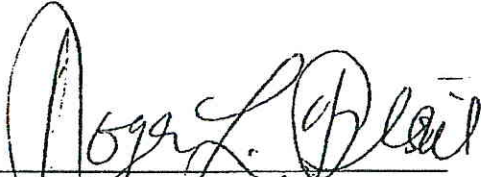
- Interlocal Agreement, November 20th, 2006
- Citizens Commission on Lewiston-Auburn Cooperation Bylaws
- Commission Members List
- Grant documents
- Accounting of how much grant funding was spent and what it was spent on
- Joint Services Coordinator Interim Report March 2007-January 2008; Joint Services Coordinator's Report of September 7, 2007 to the State of Maine Department of Administration and Financial Services
- Auburn and Lewiston City Councils Resolves authorizing Commission to research combining assessing departments locally as well as possibly on a regional basis, March 31, 2008
- Assessing Recommendation, December 2008
- Information Technology, Report of Consolidation Recommendations, Barry, Dunn, McNeil & Parker, October 23, 2008
- Information Technology Recommendation, December 2008
- Auburn City Council Resolve ending Auburn's participation with Lewiston on the work of the Citizens Commission on Lewiston-Auburn Cooperation, January 26, 2009; Special Report by Glenn E. Aho, Auburn City Manager

- Planning Decisions, September 20, 2007 report, An Analysis of the Impact on Intergovernmental Revenue Flows of an Integration of the Municipal Governments of Auburn and Lewiston
- Commission subcommittee review of savings from consolidation, letters to Council, summer/fall 2007
- Auburn City Council Resolve "Regarding the Selection of the Auburn City Manager", March 19, 2007
- Letter on manager issue from Mayor Jenkins to Mayor Gilbert, March 23, 2007
- Letter from Commission to mayors and council commending them for their decision to explore the possibility of sharing a manager, April 9, 2007
- Op-ed piece in Lewiston Sun-Journal congratulating the councils and encouraging the process, April 10, 2007
- Letter from Commission to councils requesting the councils meet in joint session to discuss the possibility of a single manager on an interim basis
- Joint Services Coordinator presentation to Joint City Council on Commission progress to date
- Joint Services Coordinator presentation to Joint City Council on the concept of a shared city manager, September 25, 2007
- Op-Ed piece Lewiston Sun Journal, Commission Chairs, City Can't Leave \$2.7 million on the Table
- Dating Game material, November 2007
- Press Clippings
- The Rockland Experience
- Report and Proceedings L/A Together
- Final Report of the Lewiston-Auburn Commission on Joint Services; Cities of Lewiston & Auburn Efficient Delivery of Local and Regional Services Grant - L-A Commission on Joint Services

SIGNATURE PAGE

AUGUST 27, 2009

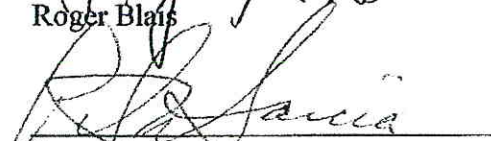
CITIZENS COMMISSION ON LEWISTON-AUBURN COOPERATION:
A REPORT OF COMMISSION ACTIVITIES AND LESSONS LEARNED
NOVEMBER 2006 – FEBRUARY 2009




Roger Blais



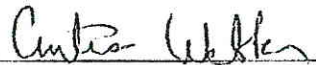
Lee Jay Feldman




Peter M. Garcia




Eric Howes




Curtis Webber



Ronald Bissonnette



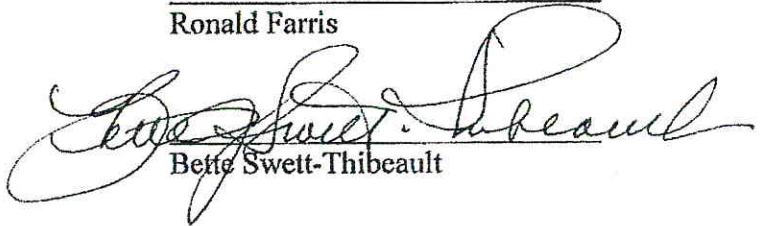
Mark Carrier



Ronald Farris



Anthony Ferguson



Bette Swett-Thibeault