

INTRODUCTION

I. BACKGROUND AND CREATION OF THE COMMITTEE

Recognizing that continuing attention must be focused on the problems associated with the growth and development of urban areas in the state, the 1957 legislature created the urban problems committee pursuant to ch. 544. The act creating the committee was based on Bill No. 30, S., which was drafted by the urban development committee of the legislative council during the 1955-57 interim. The urban problems committee was assigned to the legislative council for administrative purposes only during the 1957-59 interim, and no separate appropriation or staff was made available. However, a substantial amount of time was devoted to research for the committee by the legislative council staff.

The broad purpose of the committee, set forth in ch. 544, was defined as that of conducting studies of the problems confronting city and village governments throughout the state resulting from urban expansion, and the effect of such expansion upon adjacent communities. The study extended to all parts of the state, except counties with a population of over 500,000. The specific duties assigned to the committee included:

- (1) To determine what areas of the state are or may be concerned with problems of urban expansion.
- (2) To consider the respective roles of the state and local governments in solving such problems.
- (3) To consider and recommend such revisions in the statutes as are deemed necessary to aid in the solution of urban expansion problems.
- (4) To report committee findings and recommendations, including specific legislative proposals, to the 1959 legislature.

The composition of the urban committee was specified in ch. 544 as follows: (1) 3 senators and 4 assemblymen, appointed as are the standing committees, representing both urban and rural communities; and (2) 8 citizens, appointed by the governor, having an interest in problems of urban expansion and its effect upon suburban and rural communities. The committee was authorized to hold hearings within the state, except in Milwaukee county, and was given the power to subpoena and swear witnesses.

The 1957 legislature also established, by ch. 421, a special commission to conduct a 4 year study of urban problems in Milwaukee county. This group was directed to report to the legislature at the beginning of the 1959 and 1961 sessions. The Milwaukee metropolitan study commission is composed of 15 persons, from Milwaukee county, all appointed for 4 year terms by the governor.

The committee realized the importance of interchanging views and information with the commission during the interim. Therefore, arrangements were made for a systematic and continuing exchange of reports and minutes of meetings. As mentioned in the preface to this volume, the fact that Richard W. Cutler served actively both as a commission member and

as a consultant to the urban problems committee facilitated coordination and cooperation between the 2 groups. At various times representatives of the commission appeared before the committee, and members of the urban committee attended several of the regular meetings of the commission.

II. SCOPE AND METHOD OF COMMITTEE STUDY

The urban problems committee held its organizational meeting in Madison on February 27, 1958. At this meeting the committee reviewed a staff report (Publication No. 59-8, February, 1958) which presented an analysis of the problems facing urban areas in Wisconsin in terms of the following general categories: (1) the number, structure, organization and powers of local governmental units; (2) financing government in urban areas; (3) provision of governmental services in urban areas; and (4) difficulties faced by urban communities in solving urban area-wide problems. The staff report also contained information regarding urban plans in other states, and a detailed pilot survey of the problems of the Madison urban area.

At the first 2 meetings, the committee discussed the broad aspects of the urban problem in Wisconsin and elsewhere. It was agreed that the urban problem in Wisconsin, outside of the Milwaukee county area, has not reached the magnitude found in more highly urbanized states. Nevertheless, the problem is becoming more acute, and the same stresses and strains which are so immediately apparent in the larger population centers in the county are becoming increasingly evident in Wisconsin. The large urban areas in the state have shown a decided population increase in the past decade, and to a lesser degree the same has been true for smaller urban areas. Since 1950 all of the cities in Wisconsin above 25,000 in population have grown in size, and other cities have reached that population. In particular areas the growth has been substantial, and in a few cases quite dramatic.

In attempting to isolate what are the major problems facing urban centers in the state, the committee heard from the Madison metropolitan development committee which had conducted a 2 year study of the Madison area. Also, the Waukesha city and county planners described the situation in that area of the state. It was clear to the committee after these appearances that each urban area has a set of problems peculiar to its own geographical location, economic base and historical development. It was also obvious, however, that there are certain basic problems common to all urban areas. Primary among these is the lack of a local governmental unit with broad enough powers to deal with matters over the entire urban area. All urban areas are similarly confronted with the problem of obtaining adequate revenues to maintain satisfactory services and functions of urban concern.

The committee was sharply aware of the fact that a detailed study of the entire broad range of urban problems would be impossible. To assist the committee in narrowing its interim investigation to manageable proportions, the legislative council staff prepared for the committee's consideration a list of suggested subjects which might be studied. At the April meeting the committee reviewed this list and decided to limit the scope of its inquiry mainly to: (1) possible revision of existing law to provide for

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state level review of incorporation and annexation procedures; and (2) strengthening the present regional planning commission law to encourage governmental units to form such commissions.

Subsequent committee meetings were devoted to developing legislative proposals relating to these 2 subjects. In connection with a discussion of these matters, consideration was given to the way the state planning division might more effectively assist urban areas in solving area-wide problems. The committee also revised s. 66.30, relating to joint cooperation among governmental units. This revision was intended to encourage municipalities to join together in the performance of functions of mutual concern.

In developing its final proposals, the committee relied on the legislative council staff and members of the drafting subcommittee for the preparation of specific drafts of the bills. Information and advice was also received from the League of Wisconsin Municipalities and various other persons. The reports and materials filed with the committee can be found in the files of the legislative council, as well as a complete set of the minutes of committee meetings.

III. LIST OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The committee held a total of 10 meetings in Madison on the following dates:

February 27, 1958
March 18, 1958
April 17, 1958
June 2, 1958
July 8, 1958

August 13, 1958
September 17, 1958
October 15, 1958
November 24-25, 1958
January 8, 1959

SYNOPSIS OF COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Following is a synopsis of the principal recommendations of the urban problems committee.

1. The problems arising from the rapid expansion of urban areas in the state are so numerous and complex that further study is essential. It is urged that the governor and the 1959 legislature seriously consider continuing the urban committee as one means of seeking solutions to the problems associated with urban growth and development.
2. The statutes relating to the incorporation of villages and cities should be clarified and modernized, and the procedures made uniform.
3. There is a need for state level review of all incorporations. Consolidations and large annexations should also be reviewed.
4. A state administrative agency—specifically, the state director of regional planning—should apply flexible standards established by the legislature to all incorporations. Other procedures for changing territorial boundary lines should also be reviewed.
5. The courts should review incorporations in terms of certain non-discretionary standards.
6. The standards to be applied by the director of regional planning should attempt to measure the ability of the territory proposing incorporation to assume the responsibilities and obligations of municipal government.
7. The director should have the power to alter the boundaries of a proposed incorporation if such an adjustment would promote orderly land use development.
8. The director should carefully consider the impact of an incorporation upon the remainder of the town from which the territory is to be incorporated.
9. To prevent the fragmentation of an urban area, the director should determine that a proposed incorporation will not hinder the solution of governmental problems affecting the entire urban complex.
10. Parties having an interest in the incorporation should be allowed to appear in the proceedings.
11. The formation of regional planning commissions should be encouraged as a means of meeting the problems of urbanization.
12. The power of the governor to create regional commissions should be expanded.
13. Local units should have substantial latitude in determining the composition and terms of such commissions.
14. Provisions for membership composition should be geared to the needs of different kinds of regions which might be created. The unusual conditions in the southeastern area of the state, centering on Milwaukee, require a special provision regarding membership composition.

15. The advisory and contractual powers available to a commission should be broadened.

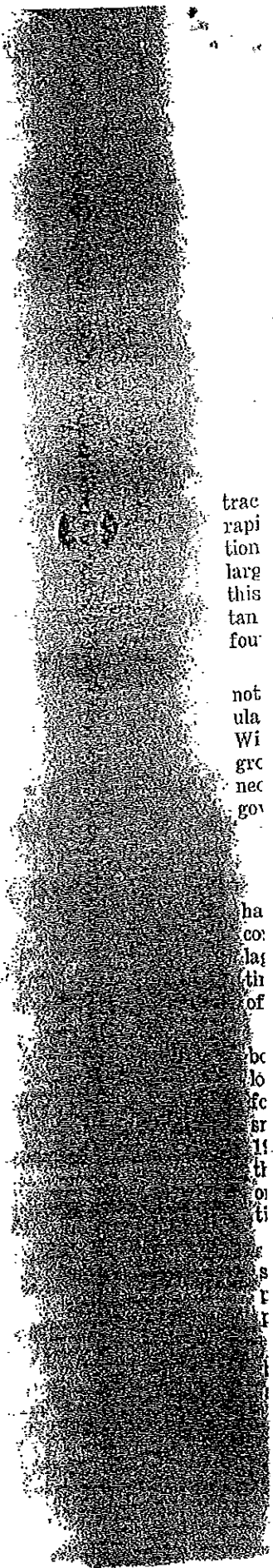
16. Dissolution of a commission and individual unit withdrawal should be permitted, but there should be adequate assurance that a stable planning area can be maintained by a commission.

17. The joint cooperation statute [s. 66.30, Wis. Stats.] should be strengthened and clarified to encourage governmental units to joint together in the performance of functions of mutual concern.

18. The legal basis of contracts entered into under the joint cooperation law should be stabilized.

19. No alteration in the basic organization of the state planning division is recommended at this time.

20. The technical planning assistance made available by the state planning division to local units warrants an increased budgetary appropriation for that division to permit the expansion of staff and facilities.



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