

June 13, 2012

Key Findings:

- General assistance is a statutorily mandated social service that provides needs-based assistance of last resort.
- Capital Township has the professional resources to process additional general assistance applications, and has a pre-existing model of intergovernmental agreement with Chatham Township for this service-sharing.
- The Citizens' Efficiency Commission recommends that Township Supervisors examine existing cooperation opportunities, and consider alternatives to the current structure for GA administration.
- The CEC acknowledges statutory limitations related to general assistance provision, and suggests that a thorough review of general assistance legislation would be beneficial in the future.

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Citizens' Efficiency Commission Recommendation:

Increase Township Cooperation on General Assistance Administration

Introduction

This report represents a formal recommendation by the Citizens' Efficiency Commission. All information has been compiled, researched, and validated by the CEC and its volunteers. The Commission expresses its hope that relevant local leaders will review the recommendation and take strides toward its implementation.

In light of the analysis of the various available alternatives, the CEC recommends that township supervisors examine available opportunities to share GA administration responsibilities and give serious consideration to the possibility of entering into an agreement such as the one currently held by Chatham and Capital Townships. Benefits of such an agreement and steps for implementation of the recommendation are provided below.

The Commission stands ready to provide assistance to the greatest extent possible in the review and implementation process. The CEC may be interested in further review of efficiency considerations that develop based on this report, or of other recommendations that may arise.

Background

After its inception in autumn 2011, the Citizens' Efficiency Commission held a series of public input meetings to garner suggestions regarding existing efficiency opportunities in the County. At one of these sessions, comments from members of the Sangamon County Farm Bureau, County Treasurer/Capital Township Supervisor Thomas Cavanagh, and City Treasurer Jim Langfelder sparked a dialogue related to, among other issues, the provision of township general assistance.

The CEC requested follow-up reports regarding the issue. All parties involved provided letters related to general assistance and other efficiency opportunities. Upon reviewing this correspondence, the Community Development Committee of the CEC, tasked with examining social service provision in the county, determined that general assistance constituted a "finding" for its committee. According to the CEC's *Philosophy*



on *Recommendations* statement, when a committee identifies a finding, or an area in which it perceives that efficiency opportunities may exist and further research is warranted, it seeks support from the full Commission to review the issue. The Community Development Committee received such support at the CEC's February 2012 regular meeting, and proceeded to further investigate general assistance.

The CEC's research first entailed a survey of township supervisors regarding their GA costs, staff hours, salaries, amounts and types of relief provided, and other administrative details. The committee accumulated this information for 17 of 26 townships (a response rate of 65%). In order to analyze existing services in non-responding townships, the CEC, with SSCRPC staff support, also reviewed townships' FY 2007- 2011 budget documents provided by the Sangamon County clerk.

General Assistance is one of the three state mandated functions provided by townships in Sangamon County and Illinois. Each of the 26 townships in Sangamon County is responsible by state statute (305 ILCS 5/12-21.2 and 60 ILCS 1/70-50) for providing general assistance in their respective jurisdiction. Three categories of general assistance may be provided, including needs allowance, flat grants, and emergency assistance. Specific types of needs allowance are at the discretion of the township supervisor, and substantial variation exists within Sangamon County on the types of assistance provided.

General Assistance has many technical limitations under state statute. GA is therefore a complex system. The CEC reviewed this system through interviews, surveys, and budgetary data.

Illinois Statute requires guidelines (standards) for the efficient administration of the type(s) of general assistance relief benefits a township determines to offer. Townships are required to have adopted policies and procedures for benefit delivery, but may choose from any number of recommended policies and procedures or write and adopt their own policies and procedures to administer GA. The requirements to have written, adopted, and consistently applied policies. to provide applications to anyone requesting GA. and to provide written notices of GA decisions and calculation mechanisms to applicants, are the result of consent decrees which developed out of class action suits including *Henson v. East Lincoln Township* (814 F.2d 410). The Township Supervisors of Illinois, a statewide association of township supervisors, has adopted standards (GA MANUAL) and recommends their adoption by individual townships. The General Assistance Training Institute (GATI) utilizes this manual in its training seminars. The Department of Public Aid and the Department of Human Services also each have standards available for general administration, or townships may adopt their own variation of these standards. It is important to note that an applicant is NOT eligible for any type of township-administered general assistance if they are receiving any other type of relief from a state or federal program, or have income exceeding the established eligibility criteria. The GA MANUAL defines the types of assistance as follows:

Flat Grant: Townships adopt a standard grant level based on the number of people involved in a case and pays this amount regardless of whether the bills and/or needs exceed the amount. The Flat Grant method is recommended for most townships, especially small townships with few applicants. The policies /procedures for townships include recommended funding levels, and payment

amounts usually reflect those established by the state program. The current state recommended dollar amount for \$245.00.

Needs Allowance: Townships adopt a grant level for various needs like shelter, utilities, food, clothing, etc. The recipient must show needs in these categories to receive assistance. Each category has a maximum payment amount based on a thirty day cycle. Payment amounts are reviewed annually.

Emergency Assistance: Townships may provide this financial assistance once in any twelve-month period to alleviate a life-threatening circumstance or assist in attaining self-sufficiency. An assistance unit already receiving General Assistance, TANS or SSI is NOT eligible for Emergency Assistance.

Recommendation Questions

In pursuing its research, the CEC found it necessary to define and articulate the question(s) at hand in the area of township general assistance administration. It identified questions such as:

- Who is currently responsible for administration of general assistance in Sangamon County, and how it is administered in Sangamon county townships?
- Does a need for more efficient or effective general assistance provision exist? If so, how might the CEC encourage it?
- Should township-level general assistance be provided? By whom?
- What are the best practices for standardized delivery of general assistance? Do successful models exist for township cooperation?
- What is the most effective and efficient way to provide general assistance? Is the current structure for general assistance the most effective way to provide needs-based assistance in Sangamon County?
- What are statutory requirements for general assistance provision? Do these requirements create limitations for efficient and effective service provision?

Overview of Existing Services

Although all townships function under the same statutory requirements, substantial variation exists in the number of applications townships receive and the dollar amounts of assistance provided. For instance, while Capital Township, which has coterminous

boundaries with the City of Springfield, provided over \$1 million in GA in FY 2011, other townships within Sangamon County had no GA applications. This variation is generally tied to the income demographics within a township, since some townships' populations include more eligible applicants than others.

Townships have wide disparities in their GA budgets, based on differing need levels, administrative structures, and historical treatment of fund balances.

As Table 1, below, suggests, Capital Township accounts for a large percentage all general assistance applications processed in the County. Aside from Capital Township, the highest GA figure



budgeted in a township's GA fund is \$83,000 in Woodside Township, although some of these budgeted expenditures may include fund balances not actually spent, as discussed below. The low figure for budgeted assistance is \$3,000 in both Island Grove and Loami Townships. Tax levy rates vary from .0021 in Ball Township to .0883 in Springfield Township. When compared to population in the township, per capita budgeted GA expenditures range from an annual \$0.63 in Ball Township to approximately \$70 in Talkington and Cotton Hill Townships.

Table 1: Sangamon County Townships General Assistance Overview

Township	Total FY10-11 Township Budget	General Assistance Fund FY10-11 Budgeted Expenditures	GA Tax Rate (based on proportion of total township levy rate, FY 2010)	5-Year Average GA Applications Received	5-Year Average GA Applications Approved	Total GA Appropriations Per Capita FY2010
Auburn	\$ 122,177	\$ 12,524	0.0143	19	2	\$ 1.98
Ball	\$ 97,275	\$ 4,375	0.0021	7	4	\$ 0.63
Buffalo Hart	\$ 53,786	\$ 6,600	0	0	0	\$ 39.52
Capital	\$ 2,740,639	\$1,522,195	0.0669	10,977	5,195	\$ 13.24
Cartwright	\$ 356,328	\$ 14,228	0.0206	4	2	\$ 9.49
Chatham	\$ 247,892	\$ 22,350	0.0816	15*	17	\$ 2.95
Clear Lake**	\$ 849,194	\$ 72,727	0.0504	90	71	\$ 8.32
Cooper	\$ 62,288	\$ 14,200	0.0075	1	1	\$ 15.69
Cotton Hill	\$ 372,214	\$ 64,050	0.0409	NR	NR	\$ 70.62
Curran	\$ 262,832	\$ 62,100	0.0159	NR	NR	\$ 46.34
Divernon	\$ 525,894	\$ 33,800	0.0032	NR	NR	\$ 21.28
Fancy Creek	\$ 217,200	\$ 31,000	0.0037	7	7	\$ 5.62
Gardner	\$ 234,650	\$ 30,000	0	NR	NR	\$ 6.17
Illioopolis	\$ 93,584	\$ 10,155	0	NR	NR	\$ 7.78
Island Grove	\$ 33,480	\$ 3,000	0	5	5	\$ 4.88
Lanesville	\$ 95,003	\$ 10,548	0.0817	NR	NR	\$ 51.20
Loami	\$ 97,499	\$ 3,000	0	10	9	\$ 2.73
Maxwell	\$ 21,924	\$ 6,740	0	0	0	\$ 35.10
Mechanicsburg	\$ 56,560	\$ 4,630	0.0126	6	0	\$ 2.00
New Berlin	\$ 59,500	\$ 19,981	0.0043	NR	NR	\$ 12.95
Pawnee	\$ 149,700	\$ 18,000	0.0484	11	8	\$ 5.79
Rochester	\$ 287,300	\$ 7,000	0	2	0	\$ 1.24
Springfield	\$ 291,874	\$ 73,525	0.0883	130***	NR	\$ 11.65
Talkington	\$ 102,600	\$ 13,000	0.0060	NR	NR	\$ 69.15
Williams	\$ 284,590	\$ 30,795	0	3	3	\$ 8.82
Woodside	\$ 350,700	\$ 83,000	0.0176	NR	NR	\$ 10.40
Total	\$ 8,066,683	\$2,173,523		11,147	5,326	

* Chatham Twp figures represent only one year's data because of recent changes in GA distribution, described below.

** Clear Lake Township has experienced changes in applications approved in the last year due to new eligibility criteria.

***Data provided for only one year's received applications.

The CEC experienced some difficulty in compiling comparative information across all of Sangamon County's townships. Although the figures in Table 1 give a basic indication of service levels in the various townships, budgeted expenditures alone do not

necessarily provide a full picture of spending. Furthermore, in both the budget documents examined and in survey responses provided, clear delineation of administrative costs proved difficult.

Fund Balance Uses

General assistance is a dedicated fund with levied revenues assigned for the specific use. In the event that townships receive minimal or no applications for assistance, they may accumulate fund surpluses through lack of use. However, as dedicated funds, these surpluses cannot be transferred to general township funds for use in services other than general assistance, the intended levy purpose (50 ILCS 325/1).

Without a provision in state statute, townships may not use GA fund balances for other expenses. Some townships have reduced their levies to control these fund balances **(See Table 2c)**.

Townships are provided best practice information on the accumulation of GA funds. Courts have determined that if a township is carrying a surplus that is two to three times their levied annual amount it is recommended that those levies be evaluated and reduced to accommodate the surplus (*Central Illinois Public Service Co. v. Miller*, 42 Ill. 2d 542, 248 N.E. 2d 89 (1969)). Furthermore, in 1989, the General Assembly amended the statute relevant to townships allowing them to make a one-time transfer during 1991 of pre-existing general assistance fund surpluses to township general funds (60 ILCS 5/13-14). This option has not been made available to Townships since 2001.

Administration and Personnel

Most Sangamon County townships have few or no GA staff members, and limited software for claims processing. Training levels vary across townships.

Personnel costs generally make up the bulk of local government expenditures. When calculated as a percentage of the Supervisors' salary, costs for time spent by the Supervisor and other staff members for general assistance can be taken from the dedicated GA levied fund as an administrative expense when the township sets the salaries for the term as provided by statute.

Aside from Capital Township, which has six full-time staff members and maintains full-time business day office hours, the vast majority of townships in Sangamon County administer general assistance with only the township supervisor as staff. Springfield Township also reported one full-time staff member for general assistance provision. Williams Township reported two part-time staff members, including the township supervisor's part-time hours dedicated to GA administration. Woodside Township also indicated that its full-time administrative staff person plays a role in the provision of GA, as did Clear Lake Township.

Although townships provide some administrative cost data in their annual budgets, it is uncertain whether these figures represent comparable data. A limited number of personnel are assigned to GA administration, aside from partial time of Township Supervisors. Staff hour savings leading to large cost savings for most townships may be unlikely. However, there may be other administrative opportunities to pursue improved service provision. For instance, in conversations with Capital and Clear Lake Townships' staff members responsible for receiving and processing applications, it became evident that Capital Township's software for GA case administration provides more efficiencies,

such as application social security number verification and streamlined case management. However, for townships with fewer GA cases, such advanced software appears to be cost prohibitive.

Another important concern related to GA administration staffing is that of training. Currently, training is not mandatory. In an interview with SSCRPC staff, Williams Township Supervisor Lee Miller expressed concerns regarding training and GA administration. Since Williams Township reviews few cases annually, the part-time secretary in charge of processing GA cases must stay up-to-date on training with little practical application. Williams Township expressed concerns with quality of service in light of the small annual number of applications it receives.

Training is provided through various options with the Township Officials of Illinois, the Township Supervisors Division of Illinois (TSI), and the General Assistance Training Institute (GATI) through optional educational seminars. Additionally, the TSI publishes the GA manual that is recommended as a consistent model for the administration of GA. This manual has been adopted and is utilized by townships all over the state of Illinois. The GATI training is offered three times per year at a cost of approximately \$125 per person. TSI sells the GA manual for approximately \$100, depending on types of assistance provided.

The CEC concluded that the level of training received seems to be determined by the needs in each township. It appears that there is also an internal network of assistance from among township supervisors in the event they receive a GA application. In recent years, some townships have engaged in GATI training while others have not. For example, in 2009, Chatham, Clearlake, Gardner, Mechanicsburg, Pawnee and Williams townships in Sangamon County registered for training. The CEC finds that training should play a role in its present recommendation, as it is important to standardized delivery of services county-wide.

Existing Shared Services

Given this overview of general assistance administration in the county, the CEC also reviewed existing cooperation and coordination of services. The CEC found that Chatham Township and Capital Township have an intergovernmental agreement in which Capital Township has agreed to process general assistance claims for Chatham Township. Under this agreement (attached as Appendix A), the Chatham Township is responsible for both administrative and relief costs, reimburses Capital Township for all expenditures. In other words, Capital Township employees receive applications from Chatham Township residents, process the applications, and make decisions regarding eligibility and amount of reimbursement based on Chatham Township's adopted guidelines. Chatham Township continues to be responsible for levying and maintaining general assistance funding, and provides reimbursements to Capital Township for the assistance checks it provides to successful applicants or designated vendors.

A model of cooperation exists between Capital Township and Chatham Township. Supervisors can examine the data in Table 2 to begin determining if such an agreement might be cost-effective for them.

It is important to note that Capital Township provides a broader variety of assistance than most of the townships in Sangamon County based on the GA policies it has chosen to adopt. While townships can generally provide needs allowance, flat grant, or emergency assistance, Capital Township's policies include additional programs. By intergovernmental agreement, any two townships working in cooperation would be able to define the types of assistance approved by the township paying for administration services. The township board is responsible for determining types of assistance provided, as discussed previously.

In addition to Chatham Township, other townships have explored the possibility of intergovernmental agreement with Capital Township. In early 2012 Williams Township requested cost information from Capital Township for an intergovernmental agreement in which Capital Township would handle GA administration on Williams Township's behalf. However, at the time of writing, Williams Township has suggested that its small case volume and current budget may prevent such an agreement from being cost-effective as compared to its current part-time system. Cost prohibitive terms of the intergovernmental agreement with Capital Township, such as these upfront costs, are currently under review for possible elimination or reduction, especially as Capital Township's now-upgraded software would allow it to incorporate additional townships with minimal or no upfront costs. In a recent conversation with Clear Lake Township, which is also exploring possibilities for its GA administration, Capital Township suggested that these software adjustment costs would likely no longer be required from additional townships entering an agreement. In estimating cost savings from entering an intergovernmental agreement with Capital Township, the CEC found mixed evidence that cost savings would occur for various townships based on the townships' estimated current administrative costs.

Social Service Provision Best Practices

Finally, the CEC attempted to examine best practices for GA provision and for needs assistance provision more broadly. The literature on social service provision seldom deals directly with township general assistance. Much of the social service or needs-based assistance administration literature, however, finds that centralization, particularly in rural areas, could cause service delivery difficulties to residents without transportation.¹ This is an important consideration that the CEC would need to address in recommending any change in service delivery. Capital Township has addressed this concern in its intergovernmental agreement with Chatham Township by making a staff member available at an hourly rate to travel to Chatham Township for applicant interviews. This service, which is available on an as-needed basis, has not yet been utilized. Researchers of township government also point out that smaller units of government can be more effective in providing services because they are closer to the citizens. This research also suggests that townships have experienced smaller percentage increases in government expenditures in the period since 1990.² However, the majority of the literature deals with federal welfare programs, and may not be applicable in scope to the questions currently under examination.

Social service literature suggests that the CEC should consider both transportation and direct service when dealing with changes in GA administration. Capital Township's current intergovernmental agreement addresses this issue.

Township Comparisons

Given the variance in existing service provision, the CEC endeavored to compare indicators for the Sangamon County townships, which may assist townships in understanding their likelihood of entering into a cost-effective intergovernmental agreement. Table 2, below, compares townships by ranking them in ascending order related to the following metrics:

- 5-Year Average of Annual Number of Applications Received (Mean: 20)
- Total GA Appropriations and Administrative Cost Per Application Approved (based on 5-Year Totals) (Means: \$4,951; \$610)
- Percentage of Township with Household Income less than \$15,000 (Mean: 8%)
- GA Budgeted Per Capita in FY2010 (Mean: \$18)
- GA Budget as a Percentage of Total Township Budget (Mean: 14%)
- General Assistance Tax Rate FY2010 (per \$100 of EAV) (Mean: 0.0218)
- 5-Year Average GA Fund Balances (Mean: \$24,864)

Means for these rankings have been identified as a point of comparison. Capital Township has been excluded in instances where it is an outlier and may skew data. Median figures are indicated in bold. These rankings suggest comparisons among counties, but have some limitations. Detailed demographic data at the township level was limited, as discussed above. The comparisons of applications received and approved do not differentiate based on townships' chosen eligibility criteria. Finally, administrative and overall cost comparisons must be considered within the context of townships' statutory requirement to have funds available for aid if need arises.

Table 2a: General Assistance Comparisons- Township Rankings

Comparisons list townships in ascending order for each indicator; median figures bolded.

Five-Year Average Annual Number of Applications Received (Mean: 20, Capital excluded) (survey respondents only)		Reported Total GA Appropriations (5-Year Total) per Applications Received (5-Year Total) (Mean: \$4,951)		Reported Administrative Appropriations (5-Year Total) per Applications Received (5-Year Total) (Mean: \$610)	
Buffalo Hart	0	Buffalo Hart		Clear Lake	Unknown
Maxwell	0	Maxwell		Buffalo Hart	
Cooper	1	Capital	\$ 142	Maxwell	
Rochester	2	Loami	\$ 499	Ball	0
Williams	3	Ball	\$ 624	Cartwright	0
Cartwright	4	Island Grove	\$ 630	Island Grove	0
Island Grove	5	Clear Lake	\$ 632	Pawnee	0
Mechanicsburg	6	Auburn	\$ 645	Rochester	0
Ball	7	Mechanicsburg	\$ 1,320	Loami	\$ 28
Fancy Creek	7	Pawnee	\$ 2,788	Auburn	\$ 43
Loami	10	Springfield	\$ 2,746	Capital	\$ 43
Pawnee	11	Rochester	\$ 3,889	Fancy Creek	\$ 139
Auburn	19	Fancy Creek	\$ 4,347	Mechanicsburg	\$ 692
Clear Lake	90	Cartwright	\$ 4,942	Springfield	\$ 2,157
Springfield	130	Williams	\$ 8,875	Williams	\$ 2,187
Capital	10,977	Cooper	\$ 37,230	Cooper	\$ 2,640

To develop a preliminary sense of whether general assistance currently meets citizen needs, the CEC compared basic demographic data for the townships by examining townships' percentages of households with incomes below \$15,000. Because of differences in eligibility criteria, it is important to note that these demographic comparisons do not directly address GA needs in a township. However, no data that dealt with income and eligibility in townships more specifically were available. Townships with higher overall household incomes may be less likely to receive numerous general assistance applications, but applications also depend upon types of assistance and eligibility criteria.

Table 2b: General Assistance Comparisons- Township Rankings

Comparisons list townships in ascending order for each indicator; median figures bolded.

Percentage of Township with Household Income less than \$15,000 (Mean: 8%)*		GA Budgeted Per Capita FY2010 (Mean: \$18)		GA Budget as a Percentage of Total Township Budget (Mean: 14%, Capital excluded)	
Fancy Creek	3.1%	Ball	\$ 0.63	Rochester	2%
Rochester	3.6%	Rochester	\$ 1.24	Loami	3%
Loami	4.5%	Auburn	\$ 1.98	Cartwright	4%
Curran	4.7%	Mechanicsburg	\$ 2.00	Ball	4%
Lanesville	5.2%	Loami	\$ 2.73	Divernon	6%
Williams	5.6%	Chatham	\$ 2.95	Mechanicsburg	8%
Cartwright	6.0%	Island Grove	\$ 4.88	Clear Lake	9%
Illiopolis	6.6%	Fancy Creek	\$ 5.62	Island Grove	9%
Ball	6.7%	Pawnee	\$ 5.79	Chatham	9%
Chatham	6.7%	Gardner	\$ 6.17	Auburn	10%
Gardner	7.3%	Illiopolis	\$ 7.78	Williams	11%
Cotton Hill	7.5%	Clear Lake	\$ 8.32	Illiopolis	11%
Auburn	7.6%	Williams	\$ 8.82	Lanesville	11%
Clear Lake	8.2%	Cartwright	\$ 9.49	Pawnee	12%
Divernon	8.2%	Woodside	\$ 10.40	Buffalo Hart	12%
Cooper	8.3%	Springfield	\$ 11.65	Talkington	13%
Pawnee	9.2%	New Berlin	\$ 12.95	Gardner	13%
Woodside	10.0%	Capital	\$ 13.24	Fancy Creek	14%
Mechanicsburg	10.3%	Cooper	\$ 15.69	Cotton Hill	17%
Island Grove	10.6%	Divernon	\$ 21.28	Cooper	23%
New Berlin	11.2%	Maxwell	\$ 35.10	Curran	24%
Buffalo Hart	12.0%	Buffalo Hart	\$ 39.52	Woodside	24%
Capital	12.8%	Curran	\$ 46.34	Springfield	25%
Talkington	13.2%	Lanesville	\$ 51.20	Maxwell	31%
Maxwell	13.4%	Talkington	\$ 69.15	New Berlin	34%
Springfield	13.9%	Cotton Hill	\$ 70.62	Capital	56%

* Although demographic data have been presented, it is important to note that low-income households do not directly correlate with eligibility in a township. Because of differing eligibility criteria, township demographic data at best represent a loose proxy for potentially eligible applicants.

Table 2c: General Assistance Comparisons- Township Rankings

Comparisons list townships in ascending order for each indicator; median figures bolded.

		5-Year Average Fund Balance (with high and low figures)			
GA Tax Rate FY 2010 (Mean: 0.0218)		Average (Mean: \$24, 864, Capital and Ball excluded)	Low (Year)	High (Year)	
Buffalo Hart	0	Ball	\$ -	\$ -	
Gardner	0	Auburn	\$ 3,449	\$ 1,459 (2011)	
Illiopolis	0	Springfield	\$ 4,683	\$ 2,000 (2007)	
Island Grove	0	Island Grove	\$ 5,540	\$ 3,302 (2011)	
Loami	0	Chatham	\$ 5,583	\$ 3,621 (2007)	
Maxwell	0	Pawnee	\$ 6,620	\$ 3,150 (2010)	
Rochester	0	Maxwell	\$ 6,698	\$ 6,619 (2007)	
Williams	0	Buffalo Hart	\$ 8,005	\$ 7,775 (2008)	
Ball	0.0021	Lanesville	\$ 12,464*	\$ 12,464 (2009)	
Divernon	0.0032	Talkington	\$ 11,752	\$ 9,475 (2007)	
Fancy Creek	0.0037	Mechanicsburg	\$ 12,053	\$ 6,617 (2011)	
New Berlin	0.0043	Cooper	\$ 14,160	\$ 13,000 (2008)	
Talkington	0.0060	Cartwright	\$ 15,948	\$ 8,327 (2007)	
Cooper	0.0075	Loami	\$ 21,658**	\$ 21,019 (2007)	
Mechanicsburg	0.0126	Illiopolis	\$ 21,738	\$ 20,300 (2007)	
Auburn	0.0143	New Berlin	\$ 24,930	\$ 21,785 (2011)	
Curran	0.0159	Divernon	\$ 32,192	\$ 29,792 (2007)	
Woodside	0.0176	Williams	\$ 34,524	\$ 29,000 (2007)	
Cartwright	0.0206	Gardner	\$ 42,250	\$ 41,200 (2007)	
Cotton Hill	0.0409	Woodside	\$ 43,671	\$ 32,701 (2007)	
Pawnee	0.0484	Curran	\$ 52,142	\$ 48,680 (2007)	
Clear Lake	0.0504	Cotton Hill	\$ 58,587	\$ 39,482 (2007)	
Capital	0.0669	Rochester	\$ 61,162	\$ 35,100 (2008)	
Chatham	0.0816	Fancy Creek	\$ 72,060	\$ 68,200 (2007)	
Lanesville	0.0817	Capital	\$ 1,297,795	\$ 1,193,124 (2011)	
Springfield	0.0883	Clear Lake	Unknown	unknown	

*Average of two years' available budget data.
**Average of three years' available budget data.

The CEC suggests that these comparisons may be of use in a number of respects. First, they indicate the various townships' position in relation to peers, information which may be useful to townships in determining their own efficiency in service provision. Second, since Chatham Township has found it cost-effective to enter into an intergovernmental agreement with Capital Township, townships with costs comparable or greater to Chatham's may want to consider a similar agreement. To the best of the CEC's knowledge, such comparison efforts have not occurred historically. Finally, townships can identify other peers, which may be of benefit for cooperative efforts that differ from existing models.

Alternatives

Upon developing this overview of existing services in the townships of Sangamon County, the CEC proceeded to consider the existing alternatives for general assistance provision. To the best of the Commission's knowledge, a comprehensive list of alternatives might include:

1. Leave the townships' system for GA administration as it currently is.
2. Combine or share GA administration among townships.
3. Encourage increased use of GA funding for other township functions (currently precluded by state statute).
4. Combine or share GA administration and monetary assistance provision, thereby pooling risk and costs (currently precluded by state statute).
5. Eliminate general assistance as a function of townships (currently precluded by state statute).

Alternative 1 – continue the *status quo*— addresses the question of whether or not there is a need to explore more efficient and effective GA administration in Sangamon County. The CEC feels that this question, particularly in the current economic climate, should be answered in the affirmative in almost every situation. At minimum, the fact that the question of general assistance has been specifically raised by certain citizens and officials indicates that it merits exploration. Furthermore, the disparities in level and type of service being provided across different townships were a matter of interest to the CEC. If more standardized GA services could be provided, it would provide a more transparent process to Sangamon County's citizens.

Alternative 2 – combine or share administration— would extend the model provided by Capital and Chatham Townships to other townships in Sangamon County. The CEC feels that this may be an opportunity for reductions in administrative costs or increased service quality through county-wide standardization. Townships could share administrative burdens with any other township. Shared administration would include allowing by intergovernmental agreement for a peer township to receive, process, and determine eligibility and payment for other townships' residents. Townships would maintain their own funding lines and provide payment to applications, but experience reductions in supervisor and staff time dedicated to GA administration, and in the necessity to undergo GA training. In the event that other townships choose to use the pre-existing model, Capital Township suggests that it has ample capacity to handle all other townships' case-loads without requiring additional staff. Since a model for such an agreement already exists, townships have a clear starting point for considering this option. Townships could also extend this model and increase cooperation with other peers with the model provided by township does not meet individual townships' needs.

Alternative 3 – shift GA funding to other uses— examines shifting of expenditures from GA purposes to other township needs. Opportunities for such transfers have been provided on occasion historically (60 ILCS 5/13-14 [repealed]; Illinois Revised States 1989, ch. 139, par. 4). However, further opportunities for fund transfers are currently contingent upon legislative action.

Alternative 4 – allow for pooled risk and/or cost— would extend the shared GA functions beyond the realm of administration to a system where townships pool funding provided for general assistance relief. Due to statutory requirements, Alternative 4 would require further exploration and is beyond what the CEC considered its scope for this recommendation. However, it felt that the alternative should be presented as an option for further consideration by relevant officials and lawmakers at a later time.

Alternative 5 – allow elimination of the general assistance function—would also require major changes in state legislation. However, general assistance as currently statutorily mandated was developed as a response to needs during the Great Depression, and substantial changes in social service institutions since that era may provide cause to examine the restructuring or removal of this function. The CEC suggests that such extensive institutional restructuring is currently beyond its scope and would require further research.

Several alternatives exist for efficiencies in GA administration. State statute precludes many, but may be outdated.

Recommendation

In light of this analysis of the various available alternatives, the CEC recommends that township supervisors examine available opportunities to share GA administration responsibilities and give serious consideration to the possibility of entering into an agreement such as the one currently held by Chatham and Capital Townships.

Sharing administrative responsibilities would include agreements under which one township received GA applications, processes these applications, and determines eligibility according to standards determined by the township entering the agreement. Shared administration, does not, however, suggest that townships engaging in such agreements will be responsible for other townships' relief funds, or that one township will assume costs for another beyond implicit cost associated with staff time used for GA administration.

In keeping with its mission of pursuing better services and/or lower costs for Sangamon County residents, the CEC desires to recommend those actions that seem to accomplish increased efficiency or effectiveness to standardize the delivery of services. Because of the difficulties in implementing some of the alternatives listed above, and because of the distinct nature of GA administration in each township, the CEC finds

that its recommendation is the alternative with the highest likelihood of receiving public support and being implemented by local officials.

The CEC recommends consideration of shared administration through intergovernmental agreement. It also suggests further legislative review in the future.

No single solution for GA administration may exist county-wide because of current disparities in service needs among townships. However, for those townships that process a moderate number of cases but spend a great deal on administrative costs, as indicated in the tables provided by the

CEC, an intergovernmental agreement such as the one by Chatham and Capital Township could be beneficial.

Benefits of this recommendation include the following:

- More consistent service levels across the Sangamon County;
- With an increased caseload processed by Capital Township, full-time staff could increase experience and professionalism in application processing;
- Increases in applications processed may also allow and incent Capital Township staff to explore further efficiency opportunities, including automation opportunities; and
- Increased coordination among townships could lead to further consideration of a county-wide GA training seminar, or additional townships' adoption of the manual recommended by the Townships Supervisors Division of Illinois and the General Assistance Training Institute.

Steps Toward Implementation

In order to implement its recommendation, the CEC recommends the following course of action:

- Distribute information on intergovernmental agreement possibilities to all Township Supervisors in Sangamon County.
- Provide informational or brainstorming sessions in which township supervisors could discuss possibilities for GA administration sharing.
- Collect any needed additional budgetary data for the determination of shared administration benefits in individual townships.
- Inform citizens as to the possibility for this shared service, and attempt to determine the existing level of citizen support for the shifted administration.
- Develop individual intergovernmental agreements for interested townships.
- Execute the transition from individual outlying townships to Capital Township for GA application processing.
- Review the change in services annually for the initial years of the shift in administration, to ensure that general assistance is still being provided at high quality levels of service and in keeping with statutory requirement.
- For townships where intergovernmental agreements with Capital Township are not desired, pursue possibilities for cooperation with other townships.

Finally, the CEC finds that several other important considerations may develop as a result of the implementation of its recommendation. As discussed above, Township Supervisors who establish intergovernmental agreements with Capital Township should take additional steps to ensure that no citizen is prevented from applying as a result of the change in administration. This would include, but is not limited to, exploring with Capital Township the possibility of developing an automated application process,



whereby applications could be submitted online to Capital Township from outlying locations in the County, through a web-based tool or stations set up in public locations.

Additional consideration for legislative changes should be given as part of a future discussion of the limitations caused by state statute related to the CEC's work.

The Citizens' Efficiency Commission offers its support for these implementation efforts. If the CEC can provide any further assistance in facilitating efforts toward cooperation, it would be pleased to do so.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Karen Hasara, Chair
on behalf of the
Citizens' Efficiency Commission
for Sangamon County

1. Criden, Madelaine (2008). The Stranded Poor: Recognizing the Importance of Public Transportation for Low-Income Households. Issue brief for the National Association for State Community Services Programs.;
- Friedman, Pamela (2003). Meeting the Challenge of Social Service Delivery in Rural Areas. *Welfare Information Network* 7(2).;
- Pindus, Nancy M. (2001). Implementing Welfare Reform in Rural Communities. The Urban Institute.
2. Cox, Wendell (2011). Local Democracy and the Townships of Illinois: A Report to the People. *Demographia*. Prepared for the Township Officials of Illinois.

Appendix A: Model Intergovernmental Agreement with Capital Township

CHATHAM AND CAPITAL TOWNSHIPS' INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT FOR ADMINISTRATION OF GENERAL ASSISTANCE

This Agreement is entered into as an Intergovernmental Agreement between Chatham and Capital Townships, and specifically by and through the Capital and Chatham Township Supervisors, for the shared use of General Assistance caseworkers and for Capital Township to aid in the administration of General Assistance for Chatham Township.

Purposes and Objectives. The purpose and objectives of this Agreement are as follows:

1. to assist each Township in the cost-efficient administration of General Assistance (GA) benefits, and specifically that this Agreement will result in reduced costs for Chatham Township to administer its General Assistance program and increase customer service to its residents.
2. to assist Chatham Township in its administration of General Assistance through the use of Capital Township General Assistance caseworkers to provide uniform General Assistance casework file management.

Each Township acknowledges its individual and mutual benefits and rights through this Intergovernmental Agreement and as further reflected in the Resolution to Authorize and Ratify the Execution of Chatham and Capital Township's Intergovernmental Agreement for Administration of General Assistance.

Powers. The parties acknowledge that this Agreement is entered into pursuant to the power and Authority in section 3 of the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, 5 ILCS 220/3 and the Illinois Township Act, 60 ILCS 1/70-50 and 60 ILCS 1/85-10 (d).

Pursuant to 60 ILCS 1/70-50, the Chatham Township Supervisor and Capital Township Supervisor each are charged with the statutory obligation and rights to administer General Assistance. This agreement is subject to the approval of each respective Township supervisor. Each respective Township board may also ratify this agreement.

Rights and Responsibilities.

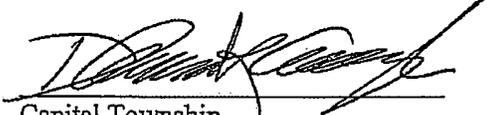
1. Chatham Township agrees to reimburse Capital Township \$1,125 for set up costs associated with initially setting up General Assistance Software to accept another Township.
2. Chatham Township will pay Capital Township \$40 per hour for a Capital Township GA caseworker to travel to and from the Chatham Township office and to administer Chatham Township's GA, including applicant intake processing services, at the Chatham Township office.

3. Capital Township agrees to provide office hours for Chatham Township applicant intake at 901 S. 11th Street Springfield, IL 62701 from 8:30 to 4:30 Monday thru Friday except on Holidays.
4. Chatham Township agrees to pay Capital Township a fee of \$20 per applicant seen by the Capital Township GA caseworker for processing of vouchers and payments to vendors on cases seen at the Chatham Township office.
5. Chatham Township will pay Capital Township an applicant fee of \$15 and a processing fee of \$20 for each Chatham Township applicant processed at the Capital Township office, for a total fee of \$35 per application.
6. Capital Township shall receive, review, and process Chatham Township GA applications in compliance with the applicable GA statutory procedures and the Emergency Assistance Manual as adopted by Chatham Township and consistent with the Rodriguez Consent Decree to the extent required.
7. Chatham Township agrees their assistance categories for which Capital Township will provide GA will be: Rent, Utility and Food Assistance.
8. Chatham Township will set a budget for each category of Assistance on a per month basis that Capital Township will be subject to while carrying out duties under this Agreement.
9. Chatham Township authorizes Capital Township GA caseworkers to make GA expenditures in a manner and in amounts consistent with the terms and responsibilities created by this Agreement, and based upon the information provided by the applicant, Chatham Township, and otherwise available to the Capital Township GA caseworker at the time the application is received and approved.
10. Capital Township will notify Chatham Township applicants for assistance as to whether they qualify for assistance with either a written denial or a voucher that benefits have been given, within 10 business days from receipt of the application.
11. Chatham Township applicants will be subject to the same appeals process as Capital Township for reviewing appeals for denied or suspended benefits.
12. Capital Township agrees to notify the Chatham Township Supervisor via e-mail of any complaints or appeals received from Chatham Township applicants by the end of business the following business day.
13. If Chatham Township disagrees with any GA expenditure approved or provided by a Capital Township GA caseworker on behalf of Chatham Township for an applicant on the basis of the amount or qualification of the recipient, the Chatham Township Supervisor may dispute such matter by presenting the nature and details of such disagreement in writing to the Capital Township Supervisor. The Township Supervisors and GA Supervisors of both townships will meet and review the documentation to determine the appropriateness of the benefits approved or provided within 7 calendar days or on such date as is mutually agreed upon. Liability of the Capital Township GA caseworker's actions on behalf of Chatham Township shall be the same as if the caseworker was an employee of Chatham Township.
14. Chatham Township will reimburse Capital Township on a monthly basis the amount of assistance and fees charged by the end of the following calendar month.
15. Capital Township will retain ownership of all financial documents and other records gathered or collected by Capital Township GA caseworkers from Chatham Township or Chatham Township's general assistance applicants while carrying out duties under this Agreement and retain those items in accordance with the requirements of the Local Records Commission.

16. Capital Township will be responsible for sending 1099's to vendors utilized by Capital Township and other applicable employment documents for any Capital Township GA caseworker who performs services for Chatham Township pursuant to this Agreement as required by applicable state and federal laws.
17. Capital Township will provide access to records retained on Capital Township premises that were gathered or collected by Capital Township GA caseworkers from Chatham Township or Chatham Township's general assistance applicants while carrying out duties under this Agreement for inspection during normal business hours to Chatham's Township Supervisor, employees, officials and authorized agents. Cost of copies of documents and records will be reimbursed by Chatham Township should they be requested.
18. All Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests for information regarding Chatham Township GA received by Capital Township will be directed to the Chatham Township Supervisor. Subject to approval from the Chatham Township Supervisor or as otherwise required by law, Capital Township will provide the information at a rate of cost the same as in #2 above and the cost of copies in order to comply with the request. The Chatham Township Supervisor is required to notify Capital Township of FOIA requests received by Chatham Township that require a response from Capital Township, by the end of the business day on which the applicable FOIA request is received.
19. Capital Township will provide statistical reports, of a form and type as mutually agreed upon, via e-mail on a periodic basis to support information to be provided to the Board of Trustees of Chatham Township at their regular meetings.
20. For notification purposes, the Township Supervisor or each township, or his designee, is the accepted person to which any formal or required notices must be provided.
21. Chatham Township will provide and pay for its own audit of any of the services provided pursuant to this Agreement.
22. All amounts to be paid by Chatham Township to Capital Township pursuant to this Agreement shall automatically increase each December 1 by the amount of the applicable inflationary rate as calculated pursuant to Illinois's Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL).
23. To the extent allowable by law, Chatham Township shall defend and hold harmless Capital Township against any and all claims, demands, and causes of action arising out of or connected with this Agreement and shall indemnify Capital Township for any costs, expenses, fees, fines, or damages resulting there from (including all court costs, fees, and reasonable attorneys' fees).
24. Either township may terminate this Agreement at any time without cause upon 30 days' written notice to the other party.
25. Each township acknowledges that this Agreement may be amended only in writing during the term of this Agreement as deemed necessary and mutually agreeable by the parties, subject to notice to each of the townships and the right of each Township Supervisor to review, recommend, and approve any future amendments.

Duration of Agreement. This Agreement shall take effect upon written approval by the respective Township officials who executed this Agreement for the term of 12-01, 2010 through 02-28, 2011. This Agreement may be renewed to coincide with the next fiscal year, beginning March 1, 2011, or as otherwise mutually agreed upon in writing by the parties.

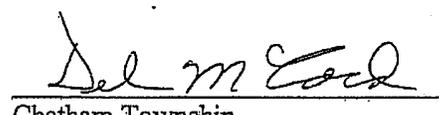
Executed, adopted, and approved by Capital Township and Chatham Township by the undersigned supervisors of General Assistance.



Capital Township
Supervisor

11-30-10

Date



Chatham Township
Supervisor

11-30-10

Date