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Memorandum

Date: 6 November 2025

To: D65 Citizen Data Analysts

From: Victor P. Filippini, Jr.

Re: Preliminary Analysis of Intergovernmental Opportunities: City of Evanston and D65

This memorandum follows our conference call last night discussing, *inter alia*, opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation between the City of Evanston (the “**City**”) and School District 65 (the “**District**”) that could result in cost-savings for the District and possible economizing for both the City and the District. Although none of these concepts have been evaluated for potential cost-savings, I do note that, on behalf of other clients, similar actions have yielded meaningful and (depending on the activity) ongoing reductions in cost.

Shared Activities

Although the District and the City have distinct governmental missions, they also have many overlapping activities. Those overlapping activities offer opportunity for cost-saving intergovernmental cooperation, including:

Low-Hanging Fruit

- **Shared maintenance programs for buildings and grounds.** Although there may be specialized needs for certain facilities of either the City or the District, many of the basic and ongoing maintenance activities relating to buildings and grounds can be undertaken mutually. This will avoid the need for duplicative equipment, and it may reduce the need and cost for both supervisory and other employees.
- **Commodity Purchasing.** The City and the District operate under different statutory frameworks, but there is considerable consilience between the School Code and the Municipal Code on matters relating to routine purchasing. Importantly, governmental units have much more demanding purchasing procedures and standards than are typically found in the private sector. Those safeguards, while important in order to protect public funds, have cost implications. To the extent that the City and District can cooperate in their purchasing activities, there are savings to be had. These savings may also arise from the greater purchasing power resulting from larger quantities.

A Higher Reach

- Shared Outsourced Services. Both the City and District may from time-to-time require professional and consulting services. To the extent that both bodies require the same services, coordinating the required selection processes could save personnel time and yield lower costs.¹ For example, Local Government Professional Services Selection Act, 50 ILCS 510 (the “**Professional Services Act**”),² requires a multi-stepped process for selecting architectural, engineering, surveying, and other services. If the City and District were to coordinate efforts, that painstaking process may consume fewer staff hours for the benefit of both governmental units.
- Capital Improvements. Capital improvements are regularly part of the activities of both the City and the District. Although the timing and nature of such improvements may be difficult to coordinate, when coordination can be achieved, so too can savings.

The Holy Grail

- Shared Administrative Services. Although for a variety of reasons combining administrative services between or among governmental bodies can be difficult, they are not impossible. On behalf of the City of Lake Forest, we assisted the local elementary and high school districts in merging many of their administrative functions. That may have been very much a confluence of circumstances and personalities, but it can happen, even on a smaller scale.³ There may or may not be opportunities for the City and District, but one never knows without a determined examination.

More Functional Financial Tools

Unlike the District, the City has a much broader range of financial tools at its disposal. Some of these can be utilized in targeted ways to address localized (as opposed to citywide) needs. Through intergovernmental agreements, we have helped municipal clients assist school districts in accessing moneys for local needs.

One immediate example comes to mind vis-à-vis the City and the District. The District cannot establish special service areas (“**SSA**”), but the City can. See 35 ILCS 200/27-5 *et seq.* With respect to Lincolnwood School, one drawback repeatedly identified is the lack of elevator access, especially in connection with accommodating students in the STEP program. If the City and District were to enter into an intergovernmental agreement to preserve Lincolnwood School as a neighborhood school, the cost associated with an elevator could be financed through a SSA and borne by property owners served by Lincolnwood School. There would be no cost to either the City or the District.

¹ At the turn of the century, we worked with several clients to coordinate shared services for Y2K consultants.

² Although the Professional Services Act does not necessarily bind the City as a home rule unit, many home rule units follow the protocols in the act when choosing professionals for various activities.

³ We have worked with various clients to provide shared staff assistance, including having one governmental unit contracting to provide all staffing for another (e.g., the City of Crystal Lake and the Crystal Lake Civic Center Authority).

Matching financial needs and financial tools requires a more thorough understanding of needs of the District and related costs than I currently have.⁴ Nevertheless, through various tools, including without limitation sales tax sharing agreements and special service areas, the City may be able to assist the District in ways that have little or no financial impact on the City itself.

Conclusion

If the City and District desire to identify areas where the Evanston community can benefit from intergovernmental cooperation, I am confident that they can do so. Unfortunately, I am also confident that the District's wooden adherence to a hurried timetable and a questionable "need" to close at least two schools will both make any meaningful intergovernmental achievement unlikely, and could make the District so untrusted that it would be an unwelcome partner for the City.

Please contact me with any questions.

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⁴ That said, I have conceived of and had a hand in many intergovernmental agreements that have yielded tens of millions of dollars for clients to address matters of community and regional concerns. I have found that such agreements often require much creativity and usually must be customized to fit the conditions giving rise to the agreement. Importantly, even when such arrangements are unique, they can still be effective and legal. See *Habdab LLC v. County of Lake*, 2024 IL 130323 (the Supreme Court upheld the Central Lake County Transportation Improvement Intergovernmental Agreement, for which I was the primary architect and drafter).