

Clinton County Government Study Commission Meeting
January 18, 2006
Minutes

Call To Order:

Vice-Chairman Mike Hanna called the Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Learning Center Building of the Clinton County Resource and Education Center. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was participated in by all present.

Roll Call:

Ms. Gardner took roll call as follows:

Present were Ms. Debra Day, Mr. Mike Hanna, Jr., Ms. June Houser, Dr. Kathleen McQuaid, Ms. Coreena Meyer, Mr. Richard Novosel, Mr. Terry O'Connor, Mr. Ernie Renninger and Mr. Les Robinson. Mr. Daniel Harger arrived at 7:50 p.m.

Excused was Dr. Robert Wise.

Approve Agenda:

Ms. Houser made a motion to approve the agenda for the January 18, 2006 meeting. Mr. Renninger seconded the motion. Ms. Gardner took a roll call vote whereby the motion to approve the Agenda was approved unanimously.

Meeting Minutes of January 4, 2006:

Ms. Houser made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of January 4, 2006 as presented. Mr. Robinson seconded the motion. Ms. Gardner took roll call vote whereby the motion to approve the January 4, 2006 meeting minutes as presented was approved unanimously.

Reports:

Web Site Report:

Dr. McQuaid has asked for a student volunteer from the Computer Science Department at Lock Haven University to act as webmaster for the Commission. She has also requested Lock Haven University to house the Commission's web page. As of this date, Dr. McQuaid has not received any responses from either request.

Conference Call Capability:

Mr. Hanna requested Mary Ann Clark, Staff Assistant of the Office of the Vice President for Outreach, Penn State University to give her report on the possibility of conference call participation in the Learning Center Building. Ms. Clark stated the Learning Center Building does not have Pixel Video Conferencing capability nor does the current conference call phone capability meet the needs of the Commission. She stated the meeting rooms in the main building at the Clinton County Resource and Education Center did have the capability of conference calling and video conferencing. It was pointed out, however, that these meeting rooms are much smaller in size.

The idea behind utilizing a conference call phone is to have the capability for the consultants, if hired, to interact with the Commission during meetings instead of paying travel expenses for the consultants to physically attend each meeting. The Commission asked Ms. Clark to investigate further the possibility of using a different conference call phone and finding out if all the phone jacks in the Learning Center Building are capable of utilizing a conference call phone.

Mr. O'Connor thought that video conferencing could be used for participation in the meetings but that he believes it is illegal for anyone not actually present in the room to vote on any motion. This is a question for a solicitor to answer for the Commission.

Ms. Clark gave the Commission information on Pingo Calling Cards for their use to save money on long distance phone calls if the need arises.

Communications:

Dr. Robert Wise's Letters to the Commission:

Mr. Robinson presented two letters from Dr. Wise to the Commission in response to the Express articles regarding the meeting of January 4, 2006. Mr. Robinson asked Ms. Day as Secretary to read aloud Dr. Wise's letters. Ms. Day read the two letters from Dr. Wise dated January 9, 2006 and January 13, 2006. The letters are attached as part of the official minutes.

Old Business:

Nothing to report at this meeting.

New and Continuing Business:

Pennsylvania Economy League:

Vice-Chairman Hanna stated the Pennsylvania Economy League representatives were present once again to have follow-up discussions on their presentation at the January 4, 2006 meeting. Mr. Gerald Cross, Executive Director, Wilkes-Barre Office of the Pennsylvania Economy League and Mr. Charles Walters, Senior Research Analyst were present to answer any questions.

The Commission Members asked for review and clarification of the costs associated with hiring the consultants. The Pennsylvania Economy League charges are \$2,000.00 per month which includes all work required by the Study Commission to be performed up to and including writing the final report and attendance at all meetings. The only variable cost is the travel reimbursement of \$.45 per mile based on the IRS established mileage reimbursement. The consultants' contract with the Study Commission is for the life of the commission. If in August, the Commission decides the county government should not change, the consultants' contract would end. Mr. Renninger asked if the Commission would be able to fire the Pennsylvania Economy League, if the Commission felt the League was not performing to the best of their ability for the Commission. Mr. Walters stated there is a termination clause in the contract.

Discussion took place on hiring the Pennsylvania Economy League on an intermittent basis. Vice-Chairman Hanna asked the League if this would be an option for the Commission and if conference calls would also be an option. Both Mr. Cross and Mr. Walters stated that they would be very uncomfortable with either option. They stated the League cannot help the Commission to perform their duties to the best of their ability if the League is not present at the meetings. They stated a key part of their success is the true reading of interactions and dynamics between the Commission, the League and individuals present at the meetings.

Mr. Cross stated that a solicitor would be needed to write a home rule charter, if that is the decision the Commission arrives at after studying the county government. He also stated that a solicitor can be on an as needed basis.

Mr. Cross stated that the cost to the taxpayers for the consultants ultimately depends on the efficiency of the Study Commission. Mr. Walters stated that the Commission needs a credible basis to support and defend their final decision. The League will not let the Commission waste their time. The Pennsylvania Economy League reiterated that they are here to guide, support and give structure to the Commission on their charge of studying the government of Clinton County.

The Pennsylvania Economy League representatives left the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

The Commission Members discussed the pros and cons of hiring the Pennsylvania Economy League. Both Mr. Harger and Mr. Renninger stated they are not big believers in the use of consultants. Mr. Renninger does feel however, that consultants could be useful in certain as-needed situations. Mr. Renninger also stated he already feels the county government needs to be changed. Mr. Harger stated he feels the Commission is not confident with their own capabilities and if they decided to hire consultants he would back the other members.

Ms. Day made a motion to hire the Pennsylvania Economy League on their terms of \$2,000.00 per month plus mileage reimbursement. Mr. Novosel seconded the motion. Ms. Meyer pointed out that the Commission should not hire the Pennsylvania Economy League without reviewing the contract and asked Ms. Day to rescind her motion. Ms. Day rescinded the motion to hire the Pennsylvania Economy League on their terms of \$2,000.00 per month plus mileage reimbursement. Mr. Novosel rescinded his seconding the motion.

Ms. Day made the motion to hold a special meeting of the Clinton County Government Study Commission for Wednesday, January 25, 2006 at 7:00 p.m. at the Learning Center Building to discuss and review the contract proposed by the Pennsylvania Economy League. Mr. Novosel seconded the motion. Ms. Gardner took roll call vote whereby the motion to hold a special meeting on January 25, 2006 was approved unanimously.

Information Requested and received from the County Commissioners:

Ms. Day reported the following information has been received from the Commissioners' Office as requested:

- Listing of Departments including Position Titles per department and how many employees per department.
- Listing of properties owned and/or operated by Clinton County.
- Working budget.
- County Comprehensive Plan.
- Mandates to Clinton County partially funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
- Mandates to Clinton County not funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Ms. Day stated the Commissioners' Office is working on the Organizational Structure Chart and will forward to the Commission when available.

The Commissioners sent a letter to the Commission stating that they are covered under Clinton County's Errors and Omissions Insurance at no charge to the Commission.

The letter also stated that a copier will not be made available for the Study Commission's use. The Commissioners have instructed all County Departments to make copies of any information requested by the Commission. A charge of \$.05 per copy will be charged to the Commission on a monthly basis.

Ms. Day stated that at this point in time we only have one copy of the information requested from the Commissioners due to the cost involved with copying. Mr. Renninger stated that both Willits and Reese will make copies for the Commission at \$.02 per copy. Mr. Renninger will look further into obtaining these copier services.

The suggestion was made that each Commission Member takes one of the copies of information for review. The Member would then make a report to the Commission of his/her findings at future meetings. The Commission Members did decide that additional information does not need to be requested from the Commissioners at this point in time.

Request for Proposal for Solicitor:

Ms. Houser expressed her concern over not having a solicitor on-call for any legal questions that may arise. She stated the Commission should send a request-for-proposal to the local attorneys asking them of their interest and hourly costs associated with being the solicitor on-call for the Study Commission.

Ms. Meyer made a motion for the Commission Secretary to send a letter to the local attorneys for a request-for-proposal as an on-call solicitor to the Study Commission. Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion. Ms. Gardner took roll call vote whereby the motion to send a request-for-proposal to the local attorneys was approved unanimously.

Invoice Review:

Treasurer O'Connor reviewed the following invoices:

Supplies and Postage totaling **\$27.73.**

Recording Secretary Hours for one month totaling **\$166.50.**

Total of **\$194.23**

Mr. O'Connor will be reimbursing the Commission a total of **\$7.69** for his request of copies from the December 21, 2005 Commission Meeting.

This leaves a grand total of **\$186.54** charged to the Commission's account.

Mr. Harger made a motion to approve the payment of the invoices totaling \$194.23. Mr. Renninger seconded the motion. Ms. Gardner took roll call vote whereby the motion to pay the invoices was approved unanimously.

Dr. Wise's Absence:

Dr. McQuaid asked if a letter was sent to Dr. Wise as requested at the January 4, 2006 meeting asking him to resign and/or clarify his intentions. She stated that his letters indicate he was responding to the Express articles. Ms. Day stated a letter was sent to Dr. Wise as requested.

Dr. McQuaid feels that Dr. Wise does not have a grasp on the Commission's charge and that his tone in the letters is hostile.

Dr. McQuaid made a motion to ask Dr. Wise to submit his resignation from the Study Commission. Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion. Ms. Gardner took roll call vote on the motion to ask Dr. Wise to submit his resignation with the following outcome of: 2 Yeas, 6 Nays and 2 abstentions. Yeas were Dr. McQuaid and Mr. O'Connor. Nays were Ms. Day, Mr. Hanna, Mr. Harger, Ms. Houser, Mr. Novosel, and Mr. Robinson. Abstentions were Ms. Meyer who feels the legal ramifications have not been looked into sufficiently and Mr. Renninger who asked Dr. Wise to run initially. The final roll call vote tally is 2 Yeas and 8 Nays.

Vice-Chairman Hanna stated he would like this motion and vote to have put the Dr. Wise absence situation to rest once and for all so the Commission can move forward.

Public Comment:

Mr. Richard Morris feels the Commission should use the Handbook for County Commissioners that there is no need for consultants.

Mr. Scot Johnson asked Mr. Renninger how he plans on participating in the process when he already has a biased opinion. Mr. Renninger stated he wants to see what the government study brings out and if the information can change his opinion.

Ms. Mary Ann Clark sent the Commission a letter stating that she would be willing to attend Township Meetings not to represent the Commission, but to gather verbatim opinion on what the Townships and citizens of Clinton County feel is important to the future of the county.

Comments of Members:

Mr. O'Connor expressed concern over Mr. Renninger's statements concerning already forming an opinion on the need for the structure of County government to change.

Ms. Houser requested that the Commission take 15 to 20 minutes at the beginning of each meeting to allow a free flow of information and topics so that the meetings are actual business.

Dr. McQuaid pointed out the Commission decided at the onset to follow Roberts Rules of Order.

Adjournment:

Mr. Renninger made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 p.m. Dr. McQuaid seconded the motion.

Deb Day, Secretary
Clinton County Government Study Commission

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