

**Clinton County Government Study Commission Meeting**  
**June 21, 2006**  
**Minutes**

**Call To Order:**

Chairman Dan Harger called the Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Clinton County Courthouse. 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. Deb Day, Mr. Mike Hanna, Mr. Daniel Harger, Ms. June Houser, Dr. Kathleen McQuaid, Mr. Richard Novosel, Mr. Terry O'Connor, Mr. Ernie Renninger, Mr. Les Robinson and Dr. Robert Wise.

Absent was Ms. Coreena Meyer.

Pennsylvania Economy League representatives present were Mr. Charles Watters, and Mr. Gerald Cross.

**Approve Agenda:**

***Mr. Hanna made a motion to approve the June 21, 2006 agenda as presented. Mr. Renninger seconded the motion. Ms. Gardner took a roll call vote whereby the motion to approve the June 21, 2006 Agenda as presented was approved unanimously.***

**Meeting Minutes of June 14, 2006:**

***Mr. Hanna made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of June 14, 2006 as presented. Dr. McQuaid seconded the motion. Ms. Gardner took roll call vote whereby the motion to approve the June 14, 2006 minutes was approved unanimously.***

**Reports:**

**Invoice Review:**

Mr. O'Connor reported the question on the \$29.53 invoice has been straightened out with the County's Accounts Payable Department. The Study Commission in actuality is only responsible for \$9.76 of that invoice and has previously approved that invoice.

There were no invoices presented for approval at this meeting.

#### Administrative Committee Report:

Ms. Day reported on the Administrative Committee Meeting held earlier on June 21.

#### **Survey:**

Ms. Day reviewed the history of the Study Commission wanting to survey County employees with three questions very similar to the questions proposed to the citizens of Clinton County. The responses were to be totally anonymous. The Commissioners refused to pass the survey out to the employees with their paychecks. The Study Commission then asked for names and addresses and was refused by the Commissioners. The Commissioners then countered with if the survey questions were exactly the same as in the paper, they would pass the survey out to the employees with their paychecks. The Commissioners were also going to include a memorandum from them with the survey. Some Study Commission members would like to know the opinions of the County employees and feel the only way to get truthful answers would be anonymously.

***Mr. Robinson made a motion to use the questions on the survey put forth to the citizens along with the memorandum from the Commissioners in the next paycheck of the County employees. Mr. Hanna seconded the motion. Gardner took a roll call vote whereby the motion to use the questions on the survey put forth to the citizens along with the memorandum from the Commissioners ended in a tie vote. The five yes votes were Mr. Hanna, Mr. Harger, Mr. Novosel, Mr. Robinson and Dr. Wise. The five no votes were Ms. Day, Ms. Houser, Dr. McQuaid, Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Renninger.***

#### **Press Release:**

Ms. Day read aloud a press release being put forth by the Administrative Committee which addresses comments made by the County Commissioners regarding the Study Commission as a whole and the county-wide property reassessment for tax purposes.

***Mr. O'Connor made a motion to accept the press release as presented and enter it into record. Mr. Robinson seconded the motion. Ms. Gardner took a roll call vote whereby the motion to accept the press release as presented and enter it into record was approved unanimously.***

Press Release:

At the Commissioners' work session on Monday, June 19, 2006 Commissioner Richard Kyle made reference to the Government Study Commission while discussing the county-wide reassessment for tax purposes. Let it be known that the Government Study Commission has not or will not take a position on a reassessment. The Study Commission was elected by the citizens to study the form of government and a current tax reassessment is not within the realm of the study. Individual opinions of Study Commission members are just that, individual opinions. It is the hope of the Study Commission that the County Commissioners have investigated and analyzed a reassessment in a responsible fiscal manner and are not making a decision based on emotions of the Study Commission voting to recommend a change to county government. The County Commissioners were voted in by the citizens and their concerns should be directed to them and not "several study commission members" as stated by Commissioner Kyle.

**Communication:**

Mr. O'Connor reported that Joy Grieco, who has experience with a home rule county and is opinated. might be a good candidate to interview. The PEL also suggested an Erie County Commissioner who is against home rule to interview.

**Old Business:**

Nothing to report.

**New and Continuing Business:**

Interview:

Chairman Harger introduced Dean Reynolds, County employee union representative.

Overview:

- Performing duties for 10 years.

- Union membership:
  - Bucktail Medical Center
  - Susque-View Nursing Home
  - Lock Haven City employees
  - Penn Dot
  - Forestry Department
  - County Officer Personnel: Magistrate, Probation, Prothonotary, Sheriff, Child & Youth, Register & Recorder, Prison, Court Stenographers
- Court related personnel-union is limited in what they can do only salaries and benefits. Cannot challenge these grievances; Judge can do what he wants to do.
- Typical grievances are for disciplinary issues usually involving prison employees.
- Higher than normal discharges in the County.
- A high percentage of grievances go to arbitration which is expensive.
- Commissioners are not being made aware of HR issues until it is already in the grievances stages.
- Feels strongly that a Human Resources Department or Personnel Director would be most beneficial to the efficient running of Clinton County.
- Commissioners usually do not have experience in labor law; need someone who does have this knowledge.
- Commissioners need to be overseeing fiscal issues not human relations problems.
- Wages for County employees were very low but have improved a lot.
- Averaged a 30% increase in wages.
- County employees covered by union membership have not decreased in number.
- Death penalty cases cost too much money for counties.
- Not in favor of self-insured medical coverage.
- In favor of a residency clause for County employees.
- Has not worked with a County Executive but has worked with a City Executive.
- Is not in favor of district representation by Commissioners.

Mr. Reynolds stated as a county resident and union representative he is happy with the current structure of government. He would like to see better continuity of offices but does not know what would fix that problem. Mr. Reynolds stated he will stay open-minded and wait for the final conclusion of the Study Commission.

The PEL asked if the Union would survey their union membership with the questions the Study Commission had proposed. Mr. Reynolds will take the request through his union offices.

**Public Comment:**

The public feels that the County employees will not fill out the survey unless it is mandatory. They questioned why the Commission is asking for the County employees' opinions after the Commission has already decided to put forth a change in the structure. The Commission feels the employees' opinions would be still be of benefit to them.

The public asked what the salaries were of the cabinet members for Lehigh County. The Commission noted that they did not have the salaries just the organizational structure. It was pointed out that Lehigh has a much larger budget than Clinton County has and their salaries would have no bearing on our structure or what Clinton County would be able to pay in salaries. Dr. McQuaid stated when reviewing Lehigh County's website, she found that they do indeed run 3 senior homes and are running on a \$7 M deficit.

It was noted that you will never be able to get rid of politics and personalities nor prevent tax increases. The percentage of the increase will depend on how well the County is managed. Management has nothing to do with the structure but the structure can influence how knowledgeable decisions are made regarding fiscal responsibility.

The public once again commented on the need for reassessment for fair property taxation.

The public felt the work coming from the Study Commission is not worth the expenditure. The Commission asked the public to come to future meetings with some positive criticism and suggestions.

The public noted that if the citizens do not pay attention to who they vote into office; the structure will not fix some of the problems.

**Adjournment:**

**Mr. O'Connor made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 p.m. Ms. Houser seconded the motion.**

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Deb Day, Secretary  
Clinton County Government Study Commission

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