

Clinton County Government Study Commission Meeting
June 7, 2006
Minutes

Call To Order:

Chairman Dan Harger called the Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. at 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. Deb Day, Mr. Mike Hanna, Mr. Daniel Harger, Ms. June Houser, Mr. Richard Novosel, Mr. Terry O'Connor, Mr. Ernie Renninger arrived at 7:06 p.m., Mr. Les Robinson and Dr. Robert Wise arrived at 7:11 p.m.

Excused were Dr. Kathleen McQuaid and Ms. Coreena Meyer.

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

Approve Agenda:

Ms. Houser made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Hanna seconded the motion. Ms. Gardner took a roll call vote whereby the motion to approve the June 7, 2006 Agenda was approved unanimously.

Meeting Minutes of May 31, 2006:

Mr. Robinson made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of May 31, 2006 with the correction of Chairman Harger calling the meeting to order not the Vice-Chairman Hanna. Ms. Houser seconded the motion. Ms. Gardner took roll call vote whereby the motion to approve the May 31, 2006 minutes with the correction was approved unanimously.

Reports:

Invoice Review:

Treasurer Mr. O'Connor presented two invoices for approval as follows:

\$236.25 for Secretarial duties
\$ 50.00 for
\$286.25 Total

Ms. Day made a motion to approve payment of the invoices totaling \$286.25. Mr. Hanna seconded the motion. Ms. Gardner took a roll call vote whereby the motion to approve payment of the invoices totaling \$286.25 was approved unanimously.

Public Comment:

Nothing at this point.

Communication:

Ms. Day reported that the request to have the Clinton County employee survey passed out with the next paychecks was denied by the Clinton County Commissioners. The Commissioners state that the Study Commission had ample time to interview anyone they wanted. Mr. Robinson requested the names and addresses of County employees so the Commission can send the survey to the employees. Ms. Houser stated that the media needs to note that the Commissioners denied the Study Commission the absolute easiest and cost effective way to give the County employees a very benign survey.

Ms. Day announced that Jerry Rosamilia, Director of Social Service Programs for Clinton County will be interviewed at the June 14 Commission Meeting. Dean Reynolds, union representative will be interviewed at the June 21 Commission Meeting.

Ms. Day reminded the Commission members that the meeting on June 14 will be held at the Clinton County Courthouse. At this point in time the meetings through August will be held at Clinton County Resource and Education Center.

Old Business:

Nothing to report.

New and Continuing Business:

Written Comments:

Ms. Day received two more written comments from the public which she read aloud to the Commission.

John Pursley
Hemlock Drive, Lock Haven

Mr. Pursley stated the primary question is--Is the available public service worth the cost. He commented on the average wage of County employees exceeding the average wage of the private employee who pays this tax-supported employment. He also commented on the Clinton County government wage scale exceeding the private sector wage scale as well as other county wage scales of similar size.

Jesse Genevish
County Resident

Mr. Genevish commented on the following:

- Clinton County citizens are not satisfied with the present system of government.
- County government needs to be treated as a business.
- Using past history, Commissioners do not bring the necessary knowledge to run the County as a business.
- Can only afford trained individuals to run the County if we eliminate the high salaries of elected officials.
- Commissioners setting their own salaries.

Mr. Genevish suggested the following changes:

- Hire competent County Manager who reports to a low-paid or non-paid Board of Commissioners.
- Board of Commissioners comprised of 3, 5 or 7 members.
- New method collecting taxes that is cheaper and efficient.
- Work hours of County employees to meet the needs of the citizens.
- Salaries of elected officials should be set by the votes of the citizens.

Mr. O'Connor stated that a county resident has asked for a copy of the written responses from the public. The Commission members stated that it would be appropriate for Mr. O'Connor to provide those copies.

Open Discussion:

The Commission discussed what the next step should be in the decision making process for the structure of County government. One suggestion was to take a straw vote to see what the Commission is thinking in terms of change or no change. Members felt that they needed to hear the report from the contingent visiting Lehigh County, a home rule county, on June 8 before they could make an informed vote.

It was noted the Commission needs to evaluate all things before making a decision, such as:

- Do we change government?
- Do we use referendum?
- Do we use initiative?
- Financial management assistance.
- The need for Auditors, Tax Collectors and Jury Commissioners.

Mr. Renninger stated the Commission needs to define the problem which he feels is "Commissioners have not been making good solid financial decisions." Secondly, how do we correct the problem?

PEL:

The PEL reviewed the choices under the optional plan. The choices are as follows:

- A. Council/Manager (Executive) - Both elected.
- B. Mayor (Executive)/Council - Both elected.
Department of Administration - appointed by Executive with consent of Council. All Department Heads report to the Executive.
- C. Executive/Council - Both elected.
Managing Director - appointed. All Department Heads report to the Managing Director and the Director reports to the Executive/Council.
- D. Council - elected/Manager - appointed
- E. Clinton County not eligible for.
- F. Current structure

Plans A, B, C and D all have strong executives and provide checks and balances and separation of powers. Under Plans A, B and C the Executive runs the administrative branch and the Council has veto override.

In Plans A, B, C and D the only row officers required to be elected is the District Attorney. The row officers of Treasurer and Sheriff are optional to be elected and you can choose to have a Controller.

Optional plans are already structured forms of government and they must follow the County Code. Optional plans do not give you the flexibility of home rule charters.

The PEL stated that the Commission needs to look at if there is only one problem with the current form of government do you want to change it all just because you can. The Commission will need to define what it is the problems are with the current form of government and which road has the tools to solve the problem. The cost of government probably will not change no matter what form you chose. The question to look at is what the cost will be in the future if Clinton County continues with the current form of government versus what the cost will be with a change in the form of government.

Public Comment:

Mr. Richard Morris stated the Commission does need to define the problem(s) and articulate the findings. He said at the end of the day people vote by their pocketbook. He asked the Commission to keep in mind what government is here for and can we get a better value for our money.

Adjournment:

Ms. Day made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:05p.m. Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion.

Deb Day, Secretary
Clinton County Government Study Commission

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