

ALTOONA GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
MONDAY, AUGUST 5, 2013 – 7:00 P.M.  
CITY OF ALTOONA TRAINING FACILITY & COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
1320 WASHINGTON AVENUE, ALTOONA, PA

CALL TO ORDER by Chairman Wayne Hippo at 6:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL - taken by City Clerk Linda Rickens Schellhammer-Present were Study Commission members: David Duncan; Heather Eckels; Richard Flarend; Beverly Green; Robert Kutz, Vice-Chairman Richard Fiore Jr. and Chairman Wayne Hippo

ALL PUBLIC COMMENT - offered and none given

OLD BUSINESS - A list of stakeholders for the public hearing was read by the City Clerk; the questions for the stakeholders who would be speaking at the public hearing and the set up and a sign in sheet was discussed

ADOPTION OF THE JULY 16, 2013 MEETING MINUTES - Upon motion of David Duncan seconded by Beverly Green with all in favor to adopt the July 16<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes and no further discussion was held

DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR INTERVIEWS – Altoona Police Chief Janice Freehling reviewed the make up of the department and provided the organizational chart stating there were 74 officer two years ago, the Act 47 Plan calls for 66; the FBI recommends higher than 74 or 1.7 to 2 for every 1000; the Act 47 Plan compared the City of Altoona to 3 cities with 90 plus officers and 3 townships with 66 officers; the department used grants for equipment and has no capital budget at this time; Act 47 came up with a 2 year capital plan with vehicles; the department spends the majority of their time being reactive rather than proactive due to low numbers and the number in training; part 2 lesser crimes increased; pension guidelines are set by the 3<sup>rd</sup> class city code; purchasing is done through the state; home rule will not have much effect; the Chief spoke to Johnstown who said the change to home rule did not affect their department; the Chief favors the manager form of government stating she has worked for the City under the old form of government and the current form is more professional and less political and has an administrative code in place

Altoona Fire Chief Tim Hileman reviewed the make up of the department stating there are 62 total with 2 in management, the Chief and Deputy Chief and one non uniformed administrative assistant who are exempt from

overtime rules; there are five stations and they respond to all structure fires; the department uses rapid intervention teams with 2 in and 2 out and can't fight fires with this approach with less than what they currently have; the department is proactive with vehicle maintenance which saved \$15,000; Chief Hileman stated the 3<sup>rd</sup> class city code is very specific for the fire department and the court ruled that they cannot bargain outside of the 3<sup>rd</sup> class city code; there are 4 platoons, 2 -10 hour daylight and 2-14 hour nights then off 4 days then it rotates and shifts are 12 hours in the 3<sup>rd</sup> class city code; out of 40 career departments 20 are under some form of home rule; pension rules are also spelled out in the 3<sup>rd</sup> class city code; the department could gain by having more flexibility; also Chief Hileman is in favor of a city manager form of government who works for the the departments in public safety and is not involved in politics; the Chief states that under home rule there would be little change from an operational standpoint; the department uses grants for many things to include gear, radios, hazmat equipment, wellness programs, air monitoring equipment and back up generators; the department recently added false alarm fees and inspections fees and are in the process of third party billing for fire fee recovery; the department has tried QRS billing but it is not legal for the department to collect this; the department has computer software for reports in place; the Chief can't recommend personnel cuts due to safety and the Pennsylvania Economy League study recommends an increase in personnel; the department is currently experiencing a loss of experienced firefighters who are retiring

IT Director Victor Curfman stated his goal is a 4 year turn over for computers but there are no computers in the 2 year capital budget and the only IT item is the replacement of cameras in the police cars; he manages 125 computers, 100 email addresses, servers, network, website and this includes city hall, highway yard, police, fire and reports to the City Manager; the budget is \$150,000 including the IT Director's salary; Act 47 is questioning the wi fi system and recommending air cards; the wi fi system was 1.2 million for infrastructure and installation and was driven by Mayor and City Council; the wi-fi system and cameras have eliminated vandalism and graffiti at Prospect Pool over the last 3 years and it has helped in undercover work and the evidence has been used in court; the Act 47 IT consultant asked for an IT audit and the state provided a grant; a request for proposal was done and 3 responses were received; a full time police officer assisted IT and the Act 47 plan eliminated that position; the wi-fi high sites and maintenance and high level monitoring is done by BIG and the money runs out at the end of the year; the tower maintenance is \$17-\$18,000 per year and other maintenance is \$60,000

Victor Curfman is also on the non uniform pension board and stated that the 3<sup>rd</sup> class city code requires employees to stay and pay or leave early and still pay until they reach age 60; the city can be creative with this if under home rule

ESTABLISH AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING - the Public Hearing agenda will consist of a list of speakers and an opportunity for the commission to ask questions if appropriate and a public comment section.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT (TIME PERMITTING)- there was none given

Chairman Hippo acknowledged Bill Kibler of the *Altoona Mirror* who asked several questions

ADJOURNMENT - by Chairman Hippo at 8:00 p.m.

---

Linda Rickens Schellhammer, City Clerk/Recording  
Secretary