

ALTOONA GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 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

INTERVIEWS – Councilman Dave Butterbaugh stated the City cannot continue to operate under the current state rules and that he is in favor of home rule in order for the City to get out of Act 47 and into a decent fiscal situation; Councilman Butterbaugh stated 84% of the City's budget is personnel and they have cut services over the years and the departments are understaffed; the Planning Department's funds have also been cut over the last few years and this is having an adverse effect on the City; Councilman Butterbaugh is in favor of keeping a strong manager form of government because this position gives stability to the City as they are the CEO of the City and you aren't changing positions every time there is an election, in a regular business people do not want to change bosses every four years and companies do not want to change bosses every four years; the manager is full time, non-political, non-elected and subject to Mayor and Council; Councilman Butterbaugh stated now taxes are capped and the City has to have a balanced budget so the City either can cut services or raise taxes; Councilman Butterbaugh believes people will be more informed and in charge if under home rule rather than this is what you get and you can go to court for the rest; Councilman Butterbaugh believes if we have a normal Pennsylvania winter then people will realize the cuts that have already been made in services; Councilman Butterbaugh posed the question of whether taxation will increase flexibility - if the workings between departments could possibly be reorganized – fire with codes, planning with public works

Mayor Bill Schirf stated under Act 47 a budget surplus is projected for 2016 and police, fire and public works will be intact; the EIT non-resident tax increase was used to keep a balanced budget; Mayor Schirf stated he has studied the optional plan and of the 6 who have it they nearly went bankrupt and had a decrease in services; Mayor Schirf is in favor of home rule without an optional plan with a strong mayor and also a city manager and believes a manager manages and a mayor leads and that there is too much power in

the hands of one person with a strong manager; Mayor Schirf stated the City needs a Mayor out there to meet with people and attend meetings; Mayor Schirf stated under the current form of government he is not allowed to speak with department heads, has no office or car or phone and cannot question the departments or the manager; Mayor Schirf stated the manager should manage the department directors which should remain and the City's finances and that there should be seven elected councilmen with one serving as president; Mayor Schirf stated currently the manager negotiates contracts that he benefits from; Mayor Schirf believes a strong mayor with a decent salary will attract stronger candidates to run for office

Mike Hofer, Executive Director - Central Blair Recreation Commission (CBRC) distributed the CBRC Comprehensive Plan which was adopted May of 2012; Mr. Hofer stated the his board is made up of two members from the City, Logan Township and the Altoona Area School District with total funding of \$305,000 with \$241,688 of that coming from the City of Altoona; CBRC has seven full time staff and two year round part time staff; CBRC maintains 23 City parks, 3 Logan Township parks and the school district maintains their parks and CBRC does the programs for them; participants range in age from toddlers to seniors; CBRC did a survey and changed their brand and image through a marketing plan and now look at CBRC as a business; CBRC now has Max Sportacus as their mascot; CBRC fundraisers include the community dinner where they honor a city resident and bring in a guest speaker and have a silent auction; Mr. Hofer stated this is a good event to raise money as well as to inform people about CBRC and all that they have to offer; CBRC raised \$60,000 in scholarship money for those who can't afford their programs as well as for the Booker T. Washington Project; Mr. Hofer stated it is important for the City to bring more people in and that the City should be marketing parks and recreation and that the city needs to reinvest in the parks by raising taxes, developing a capital fund, forming special interest groups in neighborhoods; Mr. Hofer stated that raising money and securing grants is ongoing for him and CBRC and that it is important for the City to reinvest in the City and not cut; Mr. Hofer stated the current City Council recently supplied a one million dollar recreation bond which has helped to make major improvements to Prospect Pool and the pool house and grounds as well as a new gym floor at the Eat Juniata Community Center, a floor for 6th ward and dugouts our Geesey Park; the next project is the spray park at the former location of Juniata Memorial Pool and a playground and an ADA bath house; Mr. Hofer stated that all of the parks are owned by the City and more money allocated toward recreation would be helpful; Mr. Hofer stated some of the parks such as Highland have lease agreements and the City maintains the smaller ones by cutting grass and 23 are maintained by CBRC; Mr. Hofer stated without the funding of the municipalities CBRC would shut down; Mr. Hofer stated all of the parks are

functioning but a few are unsafe and they may lose their playgrounds; Mr. Hofer stated the funding received from the City is from recreation millage although out of 6.72 mills - 1.2 or 1.3 actually goes to CBRC and funding is not based on population or children; Mr. Hofer stated he is in favor of home rule if it will increase funding to recreation

John Frederick, Executive Director - Intermunicipal Relations Committee (IRC) stated attracting people and business to the City has to do with making it a livable City which some parts are not; Mr. Frederick stated intermunicipal cooperation is the key for all communities whether they are struggling or not and that success would not have happened without professional managers; Mr. Frederick stated CBRC and the IRC are the most examples of positive cooperation between the City of Altoona and Logan Township and the take-over of the compost facilities has helped the municipalities with equipment and office space; intermunicipal cooperation also provides more grant opportunities; Mr. Frederick stated the City of Altoona, Logan Township, Hollidaysburg Borough and Tyrone Borough make up the Intermunicipal Relations Committee and each municipality has one vote; the IRC is funded through performance grant money – Act 101 – as well as compost, mulch and tip fees; the City does not provide funding to the IRC; the IRC has facilities in Duncansville and the Buckhorn and their office space is at City Hall; Mr. Frederick stated there are 2,000 homes in the City of Altoona or 10% without trash collection; there is illegal dumping taking place in the City and 2/3 of the codes complaints are related to trash and codes resources would go further if they weren't spending 2/3 of their time chasing trash; Mr. Frederick stated he proposed changes when he was interviewed by the Act 47 Team but nothing he recommended made it into the plan; Mr. Frederick stated if the City should go to a single trash hauler with the City doing the billing the money will supplement yard waste collection and support the compost facility; Mr. Frederick stated home rule could simplify the process if incorporated into the bylaws; Mr. Frederick stated the current trash collection system has serious challenges and one of those is the data on who does and does not have a trash collection as there are thousands of homes that are unaccounted for; Mr. Frederick stated there are 24 trash haulers

Media present included Bill Kibler, *Altoona Mirror*, Ben Manning, WRTA

ADJOURNMENT by Chairman Hippo at 8:59 p.m.

Linda Rickens Schellhammer, City Clerk/Recording Secretary