

ALTOONA GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2013 – 7:00 P.M.
CITY OF ALTOONA TRAINING FACILITY & COUNCIL CHAMBERS
1320 WASHINGTON AVENUE, ALTOONA, PA

CALL TO ORDER call to order at 7:00 p.m. Chairman Wayne Hippo
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

ALL PUBLIC COMMENT – Steve Willet of WRTA asked where the idea of a Government Study Commission came from; Wayne Hippo answered the people and the Act 47 plan

Mayor Bill Schirf thanked the Government Study Commission for their hard work

ADOPTION OF THE NOVEMBER 19, 2013 MEETING MINUTES - Upon motion of Richard Flarend seconded by Beverly Green all were in favor to adopt the November 19, 2013 meeting minutes and no further discussion was held;

INTERVIEWS – Mayor Pawlowski of the City of Allentown stated he is a strong Mayor and he has been Mayor for eight years and he recently won his third term in office; Allentown is a home rule community and their Study Commission was established in May of 1994, their Home Rule Charter was adopted in 1996 and it became effective in 1997; Mayor Pawlowski stated home rule gives you the flexibility to address issues and you can still continue to refer to the Third Class City Code where the charter is silent; Mayor Pawlowski encouraged the creation of a charter and re-inventing the City; Mayor Pawlowski recommended a hybrid model with a City Manager selected by the Mayor with the approval of Council; Allentown has a City Manager hired by the Mayor and approved by Council and the Department Directors are selected by the Mayor and approved by Council; Mayor Pawlowski believes this is the way to get the best individuals for positions; Allentown also has a lease concession for water and sewer and they wrote the lease and protected all workers and salaries, rate increases, benefits and pensions; Allentown leases water and sewer to the county who paid 220 million dollars; Allentown created a zone to capture all taxes for public and private development over the next 30 years; this created over 4000 jobs and over 1000 trade jobs and Mayor Pawlowski said he spent 90% of his time on this; Mayor Pawlowski recommended the City not write everything into a charter in order to give flexibility stating the charter does not need to address every aspect; if a

charter is too rigid it may not help the City; Mayor Pawlowski suggested looking at other charters and how they work and build on the best and choose items that would work for Altoona; Allentown combined departments and gave things to their county and created a leaner government; Mayor Pawlowski recommended Altoona not require residency which would create flexibility; Mayor Pawloski suggested Altoona think about the implementation and implications of enacting certain things or of writing them into a charter as constraints may hurt more than help; Mayor Pawloski gave examples of constraints in Allentown to include residency, new taxes outside of real estate require a vote referendum on the ballot; Mayor Pawlowski suggested Altoona look at the City of Easton as a model

VOTE ON HOW THE GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION SHOULD PROCEED

- A. Should the Study Commission recommend that the electors of the City adopt a Home Rule Charter as written by the Study Commission?

OR

- B. Should the City's form of government remain unchanged from its present form?

Bob Kutz motioned for the commission to proceed with a vote for A – that the electors of the City adopt a Home Rule Charter as written by the Study Commission - and Richard Fiore seconded the motion; a roll call vote was taken by City Clerk Linda Rickens Schellhammer and passed 7 to 0; all were present for the vote; Dave Duncan voted by phone

OTHER DISCUSSION ITEMS

Wayne Hippo would like to see a timeline and have this in front of the voters by November 2014; there is a County deadline and voters will also need to give their feedback on a draft of the charter; education is important as well; Richard Flarend believes there will be a better turnout at the November 2014 election rather than at the 2015 primary election; Wayne Hippo would like to see it in front of the voters sooner rather than later and use this to help the City get out of Act 47; Richard Fiore stated the Commission must disband in 18 months and at that time the home rule charter won't have the momentum as it once did or will not be in the media as much; Wayne Hippo

Government Study Commission Meeting Minutes 12/2/13

stated the commission needs guidance from Larry Clapper on County requirements

Bob Kutz motioned to cancel the December 17th meeting and meet in 2014 on January 13th and Richard Fiore seconded the vote with no further debate and all were in favor

Linda Rickens Schellhammer will circulate the City of Easton's Home Rule Charter

The January agenda should include discussion of a public hearing and adoption of a schedule

2014 schedule – the Commission will meet January 13th at 6 pm and on the second and fourth Monday for January and February and then on the first and third Monday for March through June or longer if needed

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT – Bob Gutshall asked about the adoption of a home rule charter with the current Mayor being part-time and how that would work as the part time Mayor would still be in office when this charter takes place; Bob Kutz stated he becomes a Councilman at that point and his salary remains the same

MEDIA QUESTIONS - Media present included Bill Kibler, *Altoona Mirror*, Steve Willett, WRTA

ADJOURNMENT - by Chairman Hippo at 8:40 p.m.

Linda Rickens Schellhammer, City Clerk/Recording Secretary