

ALTOONA GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
MONDAY, JANUARY 13, 2014 – 6:00 P.M.  
CITY OF ALTOONA TRAINING FACILITY & COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
1320 WASHINGTON AVENUE, ALTOONA, PA

CALL TO ORDER call to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairman Wayne Hippo  
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL taken by City Clerk Linda Rickens Schellhammer; Present were Study Commission members: Dave Duncan, Heather Eckels, Richard Flarend (at 6:15pm), Bev Green, Robert Kutz, Vice-Chairman Richard Fiore Jr. and Chairman Wayne Hippo

ALL PUBLIC COMMENT – offered and none given

ADOPTION OF THE DECEMBER 2, 2013 MEETING MINUTES - Upon motion of Beverly Green seconded by Dave Duncan all were in favor to adopt the December 2, 2013 meeting minutes; no further discussion was held

ADOPTION OF THE 2014 MEETING SCHEDULE - Upon motion of Heather Eckels seconded by Bob Kutz all were in favor to adopt the 2014 meeting schedule; no further discussion was held

DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED PROCESS FOR CREATING CHARTER – Wayne Hippo stated he had spoken with City Solicitor Larry Clapper and the law firm of Goldstein, Heslop, Steele, Clapper & Oswalt is willing and able to write the Charter and it was agreed upon by the Commission that Larry Clapper would be asked to attend all future meetings of the Commission; Chairman Hippo provided the Commission members with a handout which consisted of a Preamble and Articles entitled powers of the City, City Council, Mayor and City Administrator, Officers- Departments- Agencies, financial management, elections, conflicts of interest; prohibitions; Board of Ethics, Charter amendment, transition & severability; Wayne Hippo and Dave Duncan stated they liked the Charter of the City of Easton, PA; Wayne Hippo stated Easton is a hybrid and the newest and Easton's Government Study Commission had the benefit of looking at all of the other Charters before creating it; Dave Duncan stated in an email response from Larry Clapper on his questions about Charters Larry Clapper stated there is no pre formed legal outline or no right or wrong way to right a Charter; Dave Duncan stated each Commission member should review all of the Charters they have been given and see the variances; Richard Fiore would like to interview the City of Easton; Chairman Hippo asked for a motion to adopt the outline provided as the preliminary Charter outline and Dave Duncan offered the motion and Richard Flarend seconded the motion which passed unanimously with all seven members present

Richard Fiore stated a discussion may need to take place as a framework; therefore a lengthy discussion was held as to the powers of Mayor and Council and whether the Mayor should be full or part time and whether there should be a separate branch or whether the City Manager should be the chief executive with only the Mayor over that position or not or the Mayor as a part of Council but the head of Council out to promote the City with a little more power and the authority to speak on behalf of the City; Heather Eckels questioned involvement from the public and listening to the residents; Bob Kutz stated he thinks we need less Councilmembers and is not sure what type of Mayor; Richard Flarend mentioned Mayor as a part of Council and that the Commission needs to resolve the powers of Council and the Mayor; Richard Flarend also stated the department heads should be immune to politics Dave Duncan stated he is not in favor of a strong Mayor but is in favor of a full time Mayor that is paid more and has a defined job description; Heather Eckels stated she does not feel comfortable at this point in making a decision regarding the Mayor; Wayne Hippo stated the Commission may want to look at the role of the Mayor and one or two other roles; Chairman Hippo suggested each Commission member educate themselves and if they have any information to share during the next meeting to provide it to Linda Rickens Schellhammer in advance and be prepared to discuss Article III Mayor at the next meeting; there were also questions for Larry Clapper as to when the Commission needs to have the Charter complete, the last date the ballot question needs to be in place and when a final report is due to DCED

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT – Bob Guttshall stated the City should hire a Business Manager to bring in money and if the City makes money the manager makes money

Dave English stated he lived in other cities before moving back to Altoona in the seventies and there was no insulation between the Mayor and Police and there was corruption which we do not want to go back to; states he agrees with strong Mayor but the Mayor should not tinker with personnel problems on his/her own

Jan Mills stated he first met the former City Manager under the old form of government when he was in charge of Planning; stated the professionals should be running the departments and the Manager should be there to hold them accountable and give them direction; Mr. Mills suggested a modified Easton template and added language to modify rather than re-inventing the wheel; Mr. Mills said it is not a strong Mayor but a defined Mayor with defined duties and a defined role; the City Manager should be there to hold

Government Study Commission Meeting Minutes 1/13/14

the departments accountable and duplication of service by getting the Mayor involved is not necessary; Mr. Mills stated there should be Police and Fire with high ranking personnel in each and Public Works who help the other departments do their jobs and recreation should be funded by the public sector

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

ADJOURNMENT - by Chairman Hippo at 8:10 p.m.

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Linda Rickens Schellhammer, City Clerk/Recording Secretary