

ALTOONA GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MARCH 3, 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, Bev Green, Robert Kutz, Vice-Chairman Richard Fiore Jr. and Chairman Wayne Hippo

ALL PUBLIC COMMENT – offered by Chairman Hippo and none given

ADOPTION OF THE FEBRUARY 24, 2014 MEETING MINUTES - Upon motion of Dave Duncan seconded by Bob Kutz all were in favor to adopt the February 24, 2014 meeting minutes; Mr. Duncan questioned page three where it was crossed out ..who shall be the executive officer of the city government; the remaining members of the Commission stated they remembered the discussion and them crossing it out; Mr. Duncan stated on page four the Commission stated the Manager would be the COO without a CEO; the Commission decided to add back in ...who shall be the CEO of the City Government as written in Easton's Charter on page 11; Chairman Hippo stated they would address adopting the minutes and then revisit some of the decisions that were made at the last meeting

OUTLINE – ARTICLE III – MAYOR –

Chairman Hippo continued the discussion as follows: 3.01 A will be struck

The Commission discussed if the Manager should be chief administrator and chief operating officer; Solicitor Clapper stated under the current Council-Manager form of government that the City of Altoona follows the Manager currently is both; Chairman Hippo stated by creating the Mayor's position as an executive position the position switches over; Dave Duncan stated he was looking for continuity; Chairman Hippo suggested they put the language back in

2.04 Compensation – the Commission discussed how compensation should be made; the Commission discussed placing base salary in the Charter only to change every four years with the election and doing a cost of living percentage annually; Dave Duncan asked what the motivation was for establishing it in the Charter versus based on the economy; Richard Flarend stated there is a disincentive for any politician to essentially vote themselves a pay raise even when technically it is not it will be construed; Bev Green asked how long it has

been what it is; Bob Kutz stated it has never been changed since the new form of government was voted on twenty plus years ago; Chairman Hippo recommended they look at it as a budgetary matter as over the years, prior to Act 47, the Manager and the department heads typically got raises which were consistent with AFSCME raises; Richard Flarend stated raises in the Charter will keep it from looking like those elected are voting themselves a raise and sees this as a way to fix this issue; Dave Duncan stated he would support it because it is creative and a good idea but he still believes the Commission should say as little as possible in the Charter; Richard Flarend stated if related to the cpi it would really inflate the numbers; Dave Duncan asked why the Mayor's salary can't be built into the human resources system like all other city employees; Richard Fiore stated it would have to be a four year amount tied to their term of office; Wayne Hippo stated it could be consistent with increases given to the City Manager and department heads; Richard Fiore likes the idea of tying the Mayor's salary and increases to the Directors; Richard Flarend recommended tying it to a median wage because it does not increase from year to year like cpi; Richard Flarend stated tying it to full time workers may not be good because they have benefits and their wage may not go up but their benefits may and Council does not receive benefits; Richard Fiore stated median is only by census every ten years; Wayne Hippo stated he would rather tie the Mayor's salary to the department heads; two examples given by Richard Fiore where they mayor 's salaries were placed in the Charter were Lebanon and McKeesport; Lebanon's Mayor made \$30,000 on 2000 and it was later amended to \$56,000; McKeesport's Mayor made \$22,000 in 1998 and it was later amended to \$70,000; Richard Flarend stated if they do a poor job setting the base it will have to be fixed; Richard Fiore stated Easton didn't say anything about salary and it may have happened during the transition committee and the current Council had to vote on it; Wayne Hippo stated if it is set low it will have to be fixed; Scranton voted a raise for Mayor and Council by ordinance in January of 2014; Reading was \$55,000 and now it is \$72,000; Heather Eckels asked if the Mayor or any of Council of Scranton voting their own raises were up for re-election; Heather Eckels posed the question about how can the Commission ask somebody to give up their full time job to become the Mayor of Altoona for one or two terms and then they will be done and how are they supposed to re-enter the workforce; Richard Fiore recommended looking at some of the Charters with full time executive mayors; Wayne Hippo said term limits will remedy the discussion about retirement and retirement benefits; Richard Fiore stated there should be no benefit package and salary should be attractive enough going in; Wayne Hippo suggested they do what Easton did and do not include salary in the Charter; Wayne Hippo stated the Mayor 's salary can have a cap which states at no time can it be higher than the City Manager's salary; Dave Duncan likes the Mayor being a part of the Human Resources package and the Commission is writing an outline for future decision making; Wayne Hippo stated the Commission should put together a mechanism for Mayor and Council to operate under; City Solicitor Larry Clapper suggested

an either/or where Council can set the salary wherever they want to set it and if they don't it is increased by the department heads average increase prior to the municipal election; Council can change the base by ordinance and this language would be in the Charter; the Commission asked Larry Clapper to draft language for this; Richard Fiore questioned how they will set Council salaries and suggested a percentage of the Mayor's salary; Richard Flarend used the example if the Mayor's salary is set at \$60,000 and you wanted to increase Council to \$500 per month that is slightly 10%

Solicitor Clapper asked if the Mayor's salary and Council's salary will be set by the transition committee; Heather Eckels asked that the minutes reflect she is against allowing the transition committee to set Mayor and Council salaries; Wayne Hippo stated Mayor and Council should set the salaries and they will have to make the tough vote; Dave Duncan stated the Charter should remain silent on the base salary; Richard Fiore stated the Mayor should not be tied to how Council is handled; Solicitor Clapper reminded the Commission of the automatic increases they decided on every municipal election; Richard Fiore stated the Commission could get salaries of Mayors and Councils around the City of Altoona from DCED; Bob Kutz stated the Commission came together as a whole to create a stronger Mayor who would perform for the City and the group needs to set the parameters for what this person does and what they need to be paid;

Wayne Hippo stated the Commission should look at the five cities above Altoona in population that are in home rule and the five cities below Altoona in population that are home rule and look how they define their Mayor's position and their salaries; Richard Flarend stated the Commission is giving a substantial amount of authority to the Mayor and it has to be full time with a full time salary

Bob Kutz referred to the Act 62 of the Home Rule Law regarding the transition committee which defines the members of the committee

Dave Duncan stated expenses should follow city employee policy for Mayor and Council

Wayne Hippo proposed the Commission utilize the language in 2.04 of Easton's Charter; the Commission stated they were still in favor of doing either/or meaning Council can set the salary wherever they want to set it and if they don't, every municipal election it is increased based on the department heads average increase; Council can change the base by ordinance and this language would be in the Charter; Wayne Hippo asked for a consensus for a base salary or no base salary; Dave Duncan does not want a base salary, Heather Eckels wants a base for Council and Mayor, Richard Flarend asked for a base salary for Council and not for Mayor, Bob Kutz wants a base salary for both and Mayor

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and Council, Wayne Hippo does not want a base salary for either Mayor or Council, Richard Fiore would like to see a base salary for both Mayor and Council, Beverly Green would like to see at least a starting point for both

Wayne Hippo asked the Commission that were in favor what would be the base salary they would suggest; Richard Fiore asked for more information for both; Richard Flarend suggested \$500 per month for Council

2.05 Prohibitions

A and B remain the same

C. add the language or paid consultant

D. and the language subject to the direction of the City Manager

E. remove the Mayor

F. remain the same

G. covered by the PA Ethics Act

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT – none

MEDIA QUESTIONS - Media present included Bill Kibler, *Altoona Mirror*, Steve Willett, WRTA who chose to ask questions following the meeting

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

Linda Rickens Schellhammer, City Clerk/Recording Secretary