

Clinton County Government Study Commission Meeting
March 29, 2006
Minutes

Call To Order:

Chairman Dan Harger called the Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. on the 3rd floor of the Clinton County Courthouse. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was participated in by all present.

Roll Call:

Ms. Gardner took roll call as follows:

Present were Ms. Deb Day, Mr. Mike Hanna, Jr., Mr. Daniel Harger, Dr. Kathleen McQuaid, Mr. Richard Novosel, Mr. Terry O'Connor, Mr. Ernie Renninger, and Mr. Les Robinson.

Excused were Ms. June Houser, Ms. Coreena Meyer, and Dr. Robert Wise.

Pennsylvania Economy League representatives present were Mr. Gerald Cross, Mr. Charles Waters and Mr. Joe Boyle.

Approve Agenda:

Mr. Hanna made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Robinson seconded the motion. Mr. O'Connor stated he was opposed to having an executive session listed on each agenda. Ms. Gardner took a roll call vote whereby the motion to approve the March 29, 2006 Agenda was approved by a vote of 7 Yeas and 1 Nay. The nay being Mr. O'Connor.

Meeting Minutes of March 15, 2006:

Mr. Hanna made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of March 15, 2006 as presented. Mr. Robinson seconded the motion. Dr. McQuaid noted morale should be moral. Ms. Gardner took roll call vote whereby the motion to approve the March 15, 2006 meeting minutes was approved unanimously.

Reports:

Ms. Day reported that the Administrative Committee is working on the following schedule for interviews and meetings:

- April 5 - Clinton County Auditors, District Attorney and Jury Commissioners at Cooperative Extension
- April 12 - Clinton County Chief Clerk and Commissioner Harold Yost at Clinton County Courthouse
- April 19 - Clinton County Coroner, Sheriff and Prison Warden at Cooperative Extension
- May 15 - Public Hearing Details to be finalized.

Chairman Harger also stated that various Kiwanis and Rotary groups are asking for presentations at one of their weekly meetings. The Administrative Committee is also looking at holding meetings in Renovo and with COG.

Communications:

None to report at this time.

Old Business:

Chairman Harger thanked Ms. Pat Edwards, Clinton County Treasurer and Ms. Sherry Yarrison, Clinton County Prothonotary for their participation at the meeting on March 15, 2006.

New and Continuing Business:

Interviews:

Ms. Gail Kephart, Clinton County Register and Recorder and Mr. Dean Wetzler former Clinton County Coroner were present at the meeting to be interviewed on their job functions.

Register and Recorder:

Ms. Kephart stated that her office is the Recorder of Deeds, Register of Wills and Clerk of the Orphan Court. The duties of the office include the recording of:

- Land transfers
- Notary bonds
- Estate probates
- Maps

- Surveys for subdivisions
- Marriage licenses
- Military discharges
- Adoptions
- Inheritance tax
- Transfer tax
- Genealogy
- Deeds

Other duties:

- Maintain public copiers.
- Deposit transfer and inheritance taxes daily.
Maintain department's budget.
Meet with Commissioners for budget and personnel matters.

Ms. Gephart reported she has a good working relationship with the Commissioner and Court Administrator. Technology in her department is excellent due to the State mandating that her office can set aside monies for technology purchases. Monies collected in her office are deposited into the County's general fund. Her office does write checks out to various boroughs and townships.

Ms. Gephart stated she has three full time employees. She feels the row officers should be elected not appointed. She also stated there is no need for a fiscal type manager or any other change in how the county is run. She stated there is adequate geographical representation in the County. Ms. Gephart does not feel there is a need for the citizens to have the right of initiatives or referendums.

Coroner:

Mr. Wetzler stated the function of the Coroner is to investigate the cause and manner of a death such as:

- MVA
- Cave-ins
- Mine Collapse
- Suspicious
- Homicide
- Sudden deaths

The Coroner can initiate an inquest when the cause of death is not apparent. The Coroner can authorize an autopsy to be performed by either a clinical or a forensic pathologist. The County would pay for the autopsy if the Coroner requests one be performed. In Pennsylvania the Coroner must authorize any cremations.

Mr. Wetzler stated when he was Coroner his office had a chief deputy, several part-time deputies and a part-time secretary. The Coroner's office is required to be on duty 24 hours, seven days a week.

Mr. Wetzler feels the County government works well and that there should be no changes in the County Code. He also stated there is no need to hire a fiscal manager that the Auditors provide sufficient oversight. Mr. Wetzler does not feel there should be term limits on elected officials. He did feel that the citizens utilizing referendums was a good idea. He stated he had a good working relationship with all the Commissioners he dealt with. Mr. Wetzler stated the biggest challenge facing Clinton County is the need for more industry and jobs.

PEL Response:

The PEL reported that the Mr. Lipez, from the local radio station requested they be present at one of the daily Talk Back programs. The PEL asked the Commission for their suggestions or opinions. The Commissioner feels that the PEL giving an overview on the function of the Study Commission and educating the citizens on initiatives and referendums is an excellent idea. The PEL will schedule a time with Mr. Lipez.

The PEL stated they could give the same type of presentation to the local Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs. Dr. McQuaid stated that the local clubs should attend the Commission meetings to bring any questions, concerns or specific input before the Commission members. It was noted that it is the responsibility of the citizens to come to the meetings or send written questions to the Commission.

The PEL asked the Commission if they would like the PEL to schedule interviews for any of the organizations on the listed provided to the Commission members. The Commission would like to interview some representatives from a county that adopted a home rule charter for later in April. The Commission would also like to interview a representative from the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania for early in May. The PEL suggested the Commission chose another date for the public meeting due to the Pennsylvania primary election being May 16. Many people may be occupied with other election meetings on May 15.

Commissioner Bossert stated that Commissioner Yost is the only Commissioner to receive an invitation to be interviewed at this point in time. He stated that he did not know if all three were going to be invited or not but that it is the opinion of the three Commissioners that they be interviewed together. The Commissioners feel that they work as a team and should be interviewed as a team to avoid repetition.

The Commission will take this request under advisement but at this point in time they feel individual interviews with the Commissioners is the best option for the Commission members.

Invoice Review:

Mr. O'Connor, Treasurer presented the following invoices for payment:

\$20.00 - MIS Department for website
\$12.00 - clerical position adjustment
\$ 4.88 - Tapes
\$36.88 - Invoice Total

Mr. O'Connor made a motion to approve payment of the invoices totaling \$36.88. Mr. Robinson seconded the motion. Ms. Gardner took roll call vote whereby the motion to approve payment of the invoices was passed unanimously.

Public Comment:

It was suggested that the Commission also speak with counties that looked at a change to home rule but decided against it.

Comments from Members:

Mr. O'Connor asked the PEL if Executive Sessions of the Commission are required to be advertised. The PEL stated the Commission needed to propose this question to their solicitor.

Adjournment:

Ms. Day made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 p.m. Dr. McQuaid seconded the motion.]

Deb Day, Secretary
Clinton County Government Study Commission

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