

MINUTES

CHARTER ADVISORY COMMISSION

June 13, 1990

Chairman Seavers called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. The following members were present: Robert Adams, Tom Coolidge, Nancy George, Pierson Miller, and Gilmore Seavers. Also present were Fredrick Bean, Assistant Borough Manager; Earl Keller, Tax Collector; and a reporter from The Sentinel.

Chairman Seavers summarized the process of the Charter Advisory Commission from the first meeting until tonight's meeting. He then asked for a brief statement on the home rule issue from each Commission member.

Robert Adams stated that after hearing the pros and cons from experts on home rule, he feels Borough Council should give the people in the community the opportunity to decide whether or not home rule is appropriate for Carlisle. Therefore, he will be in favor of a recommendation to Council to put the issue before the voters of Carlisle.

Thomas Coolidge reminded everyone of the Commission's initial charge. He felt that government should be close to the people. Carlisle enjoys good local government that works well. Mr. Coolidge felt there are other forms of government Carlisle should consider. The question should be put before the people to decide what form of local government they want for Carlisle.

Nancy George stated she agrees in theory, but not in the pragmatism sense. She briefly reviewed the summary of testimony presented to the Commission. She felt there has been no compelling information to warrant a change in Carlisle's government structure. Ms. George felt that continuing with this issue would divert Borough staff from present important duties. She felt there is enough flexibility with Carlisle's current form of government. Ms. George would like Council to study its present form of government and work on weaknesses rather than going through a long, drawn out procedure on the home rule issue.

Pierson Miller stated he checked with other municipalities in the Commonwealth that are very similar to Carlisle's except for the ward voting system. He stated that Patton Township defeated the home rule question due to the tax issue. He stated that after studying various alternatives he could not approve a change in the present form of government which, he noted, is very effective for Carlisle.

Chairman Seavers provided the Commission with pros and cons of home rule. He listed the following as positive attributes of home rule:

1. The Borough can do anything expressly permitted under state enabling acts.
2. It has a high degree of citizen participation.

3. It is a healthy process.
4. It adds prestige to a community.
5. It provides more innovation for a community and its leaders.
6. It can do away with an outdated Civil Service system.
7. It can formalize the Council-Manager form of government.
8. It has more opportunity and promotes creativity for local government.

Chairman Seavers then listed some of his concerns about home rule.

1. There is a perception that an increase in taxes will occur if home rule is adopted.
2. It could impact labor negotiations with the Borough's Collective Bargaining Unit.
3. There is a concern with the availability of well-qualified candidates to serve on the study commission.
4. There is concern with whether or not Council is prepared to launch a concerted, well-informed informational campaign on home rule. Dr. Seavers pointed out that this is very important in order for voters to understand the process. He felt that it is not a very "sexy" issue and people may not turn out for a vote on home rule or understand it very clearly.

Thomas Coolidge stated he shares some of the feelings of Pierson Miller and Nancy George but is not prepared to say we should not look any further. Nancy George stated again she would like to take a look at weaknesses and problems with the Borough's present form of government and not try to re-invent the wheel.

Robert Adams expressed his feeling that the Borough has limitations that are hampering Carlisle's government at the present time; i.e., limitation on boundaries, tax-exempt properties, and development. He felt taxes will increase if Carlisle adopts home rule or not. Mr. Adams felt a better, more equitable method of taxation would be allowed under home rule. Constraints could be put on any tax system adopted under home rule.

Pierson Miller stated the last 100 years have worked well in the Borough of Carlisle under the present form of government. He felt Carlisle has a good form of government. Although Mr. Miller does not agree with everything that goes on in town, he is well satisfied with Carlisle's structure and organization.

Nancy George noted she is still concerned about the taxation issue and stated this will be a major issue under home rule.

Thomas Coolidge felt a different tax rate system could be of some benefit and add some flexibility for Borough Council.

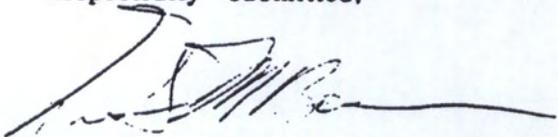
At this point Chairman Seavers asked for a motion on whether or not to recommend that Council proceed with the home rule issue.

Robert Adams moved the Commission recommend that Council hold a referendum to form a government study commission on the home rule issue. Thomas Coolidge seconded the motion. After a roll call vote was taken, the motion passed by a 3-2 margin with Messrs. Adams, Coolidge, and Seavers voting aye; and Mr. Miller and Ms. George voting nay.

Chairman Seavers stated he will prepare a report for Council prior to their July 12th meeting. The report will contain the opinions of the Commission, both pro and con, on the home rule issue. Chairman Seavers stated the report will be prepared and mailed out to Commission members prior to June 28th when the Commission will meet again at 7:30 p.m. to review the report prior to delivery to Council.

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Fredrick M. Bean
Assistant Borough Manager