

# Government Study Commission

## August 27, 2013

Committee members in attendance: William Berwick, Bert Lennon, Philip Shevlin, David Sheridan, Robert Winston, Kenneth Womack, Stephen Hughes, Alternate, John Sacrison. Absent from the meeting were Blake Wilson and James Flower.

Ken Womack called the meeting to order.

The minutes from the 8-20-2013 Government Study Commission meeting were approved.

Mr. Womack opened the meeting by explaining that each current Borough Council member was invited to attend a commission meeting. The council members were sent a list of questions to review and provide their view point on these issues.

Present at the meeting were Councilor Ceconello, Grell, Guido and Mayor Kronenberg.

Councilor Ceconello provided her views on election of council members by ward and the number of council members. If the Borough were to be divided by precincts this would change the number of council members to 5. Her preference would be to elect by ward and have two at large council members. She would like to see a representation from each ward, which would include the views if the entire community.

Councilor Guido would like to see representation from the entire community, but would rather have an interested person that understands the commitment of being on council opposed to having a person elected because of the street they live on.

Councilor Grell mentioned that if wards were to be put in place the boundary lines would need to be redrawn every 10 years to keep the wards equal in size in accordance with state election laws.

Councilor Grell and Guido both stated they have lived in different parts of the Carlisle community over the years. By keeping in touch with persons in the different areas of the community they are aware of what is happening in the Borough.

Mr. Winston asked if the councilors thought term limits should be addressed when considering a Home Rule change by having election more frequently or set term limits of two, four year terms.

Councilor Grell responded that continuity is a good for the council to have an understanding of the process. If the term was changed to 2 years he would be concerned about a whole new board coming in at one time. Traditionally there is a combination of a core group of council and new members. He would also be concerned with having to run for election every two years, which would take away from doing real work. Councilor Ceconello and Guido agreed that running every two years would make it harder to learn the process of local government.

Ken Womack moved on the question regarding the Tax Collector being elected or appointed.

Councilor Grell recommended giving the council the option to eliminate the elected a tax collector and allow them to determine how taxes will be collected.

Councilor Cecconello stated she would like to see an appointed tax collector and not collect taxes in house. This is because the Borough does not break even in cost verses expenses when collecting taxes.

Councilor Grell mentioned the option of collecting taxes in house would give the Borough the chance to purchase the computer software that would increase profits.

Bob Winston asked if it is important to have peace of mind to have an in house check and balances.

Councilor Grell stated it is hard to find good people to run for tax collector due to the decrease in compensation for collecting taxes. There could be an option written for Council to abolish the office tax collector or a citizen petition could also be submitted to remove the office of tax collector.

Ken Womack questioned the Councilors what their thoughts were on the Borough collecting the taxes.

Councilor Cecconello noted when the borough collected taxes the auditors did not audit the tax collections. She feels this is an important step that is missed.

Councilor Guido would support the borough collecting the taxes to take the guess work out of the tax collecting. This would provide the opportunity to purchase the proper software and give the comfort to the people of know who is collecting their taxes.

Councilor Cecconello noted the County Treasurer could collect taxes for the borough but they would have to agree to do so.

The meeting was recess at 7:45 and reconvened at 7:55.

Mr. Womack presented council members their opinion on the proper relationship for oversight of the police department (operationally and administratively) between the council, the mayor and the borough manager?

Councilor Guido stated the Chief of Police should report to the Borough Manager. This move would then have all the department heads reporting the Borough Manager to create consistency and accountability.

Councilor Grell in his charter research in previous years created a charter that brought all the department heads together. He does feel right now that Council is at a highpoint in communications between council and police. He went on to say when Mayor Kronenberg was appointed he recommended monthly meetings of the Public Safety Committee. These meetings of all the emergency operation entities, citizens, neighborhood groups and the police have improved the communications.

Councilor Ceconello stated she feels the present form of the Mayor overseeing the Police Chief is working well. She noted that council does have control of the budget as authority to hire and fire the police chief. She feels the Borough Manager would need police managerial skills and an understanding in Pennsylvania policing to oversee the police chief.

Councilor Guido noted the mayor is elected and does not have the requirement to have police skills. We are talking about managing the aspect of the police department from a borough standpoint.

Ken Womack asked if stronger language regarding the Mayor and Police Chief could be written into a charter.

Councilor Grell cautioned on employee protections in the borough code that would prevent such language.

Councilor Guido stated the Manager should have general oversight, budgetary and direction over the police department but not daily operations.

Burt Lennon noted in his previous military experience he was given administrative control of a 100 man police force and the police chief was in charge of daily operations. This caused problems in the unity of command. Mr. Lennon recognizes that problems could occur if the administrative personnel do not have control over the police chief.

Ken Womack asked if the language could be written into a Home Rule Charter to ensure that the Police Chief would report to the manager for specific business matters. This would avoid conflicts if the Mayor and Manager do not agree.

There was a discussion as to who should have control of the Police Chief if disciplinary action is necessary.

Councilor Ceconello recalled a time when council questioned the Police Chief on a deadline that was not met and requested resolution without going to the Mayor. She noted the Mayor is in charge of the daily operations of the police department which puts him in charge of the Police Chief.

Bob Winston recognized the fact that if every department head reports to the Manager, council directly supervises the Manager and that is clear chain of command. The council would be able to intervene if a problem exists.

Councilor Guido agreed that by bringing all department heads under one manager, council has direct control over the manager.

Ken Womack asked the councilors if they see any problems with our present Council/Manager form of government.

Don Grell noted that other than the tax collector he cannot come up with a point the council was not able to handle with the present form of government. Some of the items council would like to change are not permitted under home rule. Suggested writing the option for procurement codes that gives the council the option to write their own procurement

document. He suggested a better use of electronic advertising options that would capture a larger audience for items that go out to bid. He recommended only creating a frame work without over regulating.

Councilor Guido stated she is comfortable with present form of government if you have a good Borough Manager that will bring a level of consistency. This allows one person to steer the ship.

Councilor Cecconello commented she does not see anything wrong with the form of Councilor/Manager. One downside is the staff feels like they have seven bosses and are unsure of what they can say an elected official. Council should not be interfering with creating policy just voting on policy.

Ken Womack asked if there are items this commission should consider if they choose to write a charter.

Councilor Cecconello and Grell recommended not making the government bigger or more expensive.

Councilor Grell suggested looking at the other charters that have already been written.

Councilor Guido recommended the option to pay elected officials or that officials should not be required to take the pay.

There was a discussion on writing into a charter the ability to remove an elected official. Councilor Grell noted is in the state constitution the removal of an elected official is not allowed.

Councilor Guido asked if changing to Home Rule would prevent the fire or police departments from merging or regionalizing.

Councilor Grell recommended not getting to specific when writing the charter that would prevent changes from occurring in the future. He stated the commission is doing a thorough job at looking in the all the options.

#### **Old Business:**

Stephen Hughes will be in touch with Glenn White to promote the commission's Facebook.

The commission discussed the option of using twitter as a media outlet. The commission agreed not to pursue using twitter at this time. John Sacrison was asked to prepare a press release to spread the word about the commission's Facebook page.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Attachment: Question for Current Council Members

Respectfully Submitted  
Joyce Stone, Secretary

## **GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION**

### **QUESTIONS FOR CURRENT COUNCIL MEMBERS**

- Q1) In your position as a Carlisle Borough Council Member, what do you believe are the key advantages of the current council-manager form of municipal government in Carlisle?
- Q2) In your position as a Carlisle Borough Council Member, are there aspects of the current council- manager form of municipal government that you think could be improved?
- Q3) What is your opinion on electing council members by ward, by a combination of ward and at-large, or solely at-large?
- Q4) Do you believe the current council of seven members is the best structure for the Carlisle Borough Council?
- Q5) Do you believe the tax collector for Carlisle Borough should be elected or appointed? If appointed, by whom?
- Q6) What do you believe is the proper relationship for oversight of the police department (operationally and administratively) between the council, the mayor and the borough manager?
- Q7) Are there any other issues you believe the government study commission should consider in its study of the existing form of government and its consideration on the advisability of adoption of an optional form of government or home rule charter?
- Q8) Are you aware of any best practices that should be adopted to fix any structural or operational weaknesses in the current local government so that it could serve the citizens more efficiently and