

# GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION NEWSLETTER BOROUGH OF CARLISLE

December 2013

Issue No. 2

Welcome to the Borough of Carlisle Government Study Commission Newsletter. The commission will use this monthly newsletter to keep citizens informed about the progress of the commission as well as the schedule for key dates and events. More detailed information on the government study commission process can be found [here](#) on the Borough of Carlisle Web Site.

Please e-mail [CarlislePaHR@gmail.com](mailto:CarlislePaHR@gmail.com) to be added to the e-mail distribution list.

## **Current Status**

At a public hearing on October 29, 2013, the commission voted unanimously to proceed with drafting a home rule charter. The commission has organized itself into committees focused on general areas identified during the commission's research phase to fully examine and consider key issues. The commission will, to the extent possible, make key committee meeting times and locations available to the public on the Borough's web site.

Committees and members are:

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Committee</b>	<b>Members</b>
Charter Development and Compliance	John Sacrison David Sheridan Blake Wilson	Citizen Participation	Bill Berwick Stephen Hughes Blake Wilson
Government Structure	David Sheridan Bob Winston Ken Womack	Tax Collection	Bert Lennon Phil Shevlin Bob Winston
Elections	Stephen Hughes Bert Lennon Phil Shevlin	Miscellaneous	Bill Berwick John Sacrison Ken Womack

The commission's next meeting is scheduled for December 17<sup>th</sup>. At this meeting the commission will discuss the report of the tax collection committee (see the tax collection committee report below). The commission will not meet again until January 7<sup>th</sup> and is expected to meet every two weeks for the foreseeable future. Other committees will begin presenting their reports after the first of the year.

## **Tax Collection Committee Report**

The study commission tax collection committee is tasked with conducting a more in-depth study of the borough tax collection issue and developing viable options to recommend to the electorate. Recommended options must meet the key criteria of providing an efficient, accountable tax collection system in which Borough tax payers can have confidence.

Early on, the sub-committee determined that continuing with an elected local tax collector is not a viable option as current Pennsylvania laws make qualification and certification of local tax collectors voluntary and even allows candidates to run for this office before proving they can attain a surety bond. Therefore, the sub-committee plans to recommend that the charter abolish the office of elected tax collector and direct the council to enact such ordinances to require that taxes thereafter be collected by:

- Designated Borough of Carlisle department or bureau.
- Under agreement with another governmental unit, political subdivision or municipality for consolidated collection of local taxes.
- Appointed qualified individual or private firm.

All of these options should continue to be available to the Borough so long as the charter remains in force. This would allow Council the flexibility to take advantage of the opportunity if proposed legislation consolidating tax collection at the county level is enacted in the future.

The sub-committee also examined the issue of tax limits for the borough. Although the Home Rule Charter and Optional Plans Law reserves the fixing of subjects of taxation to the General Assembly, it does allow home rule municipalities freedom in setting the rates of property taxes and personal taxes levied on residents. The sub-committee feels that the current laws established for borough tax rates and a politically sensitive council are sufficient to prevent excessive taxes. The sub-committee, therefore, plans to recommend to the commission that language in the charter about tax rates or ceilings be similar to the following:

“In fixing the rate of any municipal tax which may be now or hereafter authorized by law, Council shall abide by the limits established by the General Assembly for Boroughs.”

The sub-committee solicits public feedback on the pros and cons of these options as it develops recommended courses of action for the study commission as it writes the draft home rule charter.

### **Public Involvement**

The government study commission is seeking public input and comments on the government study commission process. Please contact the commission via e-mail at [CarlislePaHR@gmail.com](mailto:CarlislePaHR@gmail.com) with your comments and suggestions. You can also find the commission on Facebook at Carlisle Home Rule Study Commission. The commission strongly encourages the public to attend its meetings.

### **Commission Member Spotlight: John Sacrison**

John Sacrison was born and raised in Connecticut and he and his wife’s family have lived in the Carlisle area for over 50 years and in Carlisle Borough for most of the last 12 years. As a business systems and security analyst and trainer, he has worked and lived throughout the United States, as well as in Northern Mexico and Western Europe. When John retired from Pennsylvania Homeland Security (PEMA) in Harrisburg in 2012, he and his wife made a deliberate decision to stay in the borough because of the quality of local living conditions and attractions. He is a past Consumer Representative on the Board of Directors of the Sadler Health Center in Carlisle. In his free time he and his wife enjoy walking and biking to local events.