

Lincoln County Study Commission
Minutes of October 22, 2015

The Lincoln County Study Commission met for a regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, October 22, 2015 at 5:00 pm. The meeting was held in the County Commissioners office in Libby. Commissioner Greg Larson, Member Rita Windom and newly sworn in member John Righter and Secretary Shellie DeLeo attended in Libby along with visitor Dr. Donna White. Chairman Steve Curtiss and Vice-Chair Bobbie Stoken attended via satellite in Eureka.

Steve C. called the meeting to order at 5:10p.

Clerk and Recorder Robin Benson attended the meeting briefly to swear in new member John Righter.

Steve C. asked for the status of the letter of support for Representative Mike Cuffe. Greg L. reported that the letter has been written. Rita W. moved to approve the letter in support of Mike Cuffe. John R. seconded the motion; all were in favor and the motion passed.

Rita W. reported on the draft budget. At the present time, the commission has spent 3% of the budget and is 33% into the budget year. \$34,128.15 remains. It is noted that a bill from Dan Clark has not been received. There was an expenditure for \$121.69 processed today and Clerk and Recorder Robin Benson confirmed that this expenditure was for printing the survey.

The minutes of the October 8th meeting were discussed. Minor corrections were noted. The minutes will be corrected and emailed to members. Bobbie S. made a motion to accept the minutes of October 8th with the corrections noted. John R. seconded the motion; all were in favor and motion passed.

The group discussed the idea of a hiatus through the winter months. Steve C. reported that he spoke to Dan Clark who stated that it would probably do the group good. It was decided by the group at the October 8th meeting that the October 22nd meeting would be the last for the year. The group discussed when to reconvene; March 10th, 24th or April 14th or 28th. The group agreed to be in contact via email. Bobbie S. made a motion for the group to take a hiatus until March 10th 2016. Rita W. seconded the motion; all were in favor and motion passed.

The group discussed the different forms of government. Dan Clark's recommendation was for the group to form a Commission Form of Government. This form would allow the group to make changes as needed. Steve C. stated that he discussed the Charter Form of Government with Dan Clark. He noted that creating wages/salaries is a process and detailed event but in a Charter Form an executive decision can be made avoiding the process. Rita W. noted that this will be hard to explain to the public in a way that they will understand.

Steve C. reported that a ball park figure on expenses to hire Dan Clark would be \$5000-6000 all inclusive. This would bring the group to the point where we had something to present to the public and something to put on the ballot. It is estimated that four visits with travel would be \$3000. It was stated that the group needs to come up with a timeline. Greg L. suggested that the group figure out when we need to get something on the

ballot and back up from there. Rita W. asked for clarification between the Primary or General Elections. Steve C. replied that it would be too rushed for the Primary.

The group discussed the different forms of government. It was noted and although the group thought of themselves as a Commission Form of Government, they are actually an Elected Official Form of Government. In order to put things on the ballot, the group must be a Commission Form. John R. noted that it is important to get the language correct for the ballot. He asked the group if the next step would be a Charter Form and the answer was no. Rita W. stated that Charter is only allowable every 10 years if that is the goal. Bobbie S. reported that the public wouldn't go for it as it's too much change. Rita W. stated the group has been under the impression that it is a Commission Form for years now and feels it important to let the public know that the group was misinformed a long time ago.

Rita W. and Bobbie S. agreed that Dan Clark be scheduled to meet with the group as soon as possible when reconvened.

Rita W. asked what the ramifications might be of a group that has been acting as a Commission Form of Government for the past 50-60 years mistakenly. She added that she has never heard of an Elected Official Form of Government. Steve C. reported that this has been a misconception by county commissioners all over the state.

Greg L. stated that the group needs to make a decision on whether or not Dan Clark will be hired. Rita W. noted that Arnold Blattie from MACO would consult for free.

Rita W. asked if Dan Clark would be attending public meetings with the group. Steve C. replied that he may be able to but it may increase the cost. Steve C. suggested that the group present to the public instead of Dan Clark. Rita W. added that our job is to take money and use it in the best way possible. The public needs to be able to ask questions and get the answers from knowledgeable persons. John R. commented that with Charter not on the table, people will not understand if it's not relevant.

Rita W. made a motion that the group budget up to and not more than \$6000 for the use of MSU as we proceed with deliberations, presentations to the public and in the final drafting of the reports that have to be made. She added that it doesn't mean we have to spend that money but it is available in our budget if we decide we need that additional help. Bobbie S. seconded the motion; all were in favor and the motion passed.

The group agreed to utilize technology as much as possible to communicate with Dan Clark as he has the time, as the travel expenses will be significant.

Steve C. discussed a timeline example that is shown in the white book on page 36, it refers to 7-3-186. He requested that the group read through this in the near future and make notice of the change we are doing right now with the hiatus. He reported that this change needed to be posted on the website and the date of reconvening needs to be posted as well. Rita W. asked if Dallas was still posting the minutes to the website. Greg L. stated that he thought she was. Rita W. reminded the group that we also have a FaceBook page. Bobbie S. responded that it is outdated and neither know the password to access the page. Greg L. stated that he will check with Tracy on passwords. Steve C. stated that at the least we could post the date of the hiatus and when we will meet again. He added that Josh L. uses FaceBook and maybe can help.

John R. suggested that if the group is contacting Dan Clark to assist in the Spring, we need to put together a focused agenda, something specific to be able to move ahead in the Spring.

Rita W. asked the group which communities will be visited and when. She stated that she will schedule her surgery around the public meetings, if possible, so she can still be involved. The group discussed timelines for communities. Rita W. states that she could have her surgery in August if the group wanted to hold public meetings earlier in the summer. The group discussed and decided that May 5th and May 12th 2016 would be good dates for public meetings. Steve C. stated that he would like to spend some time with Dan Clark over the phone and come up with some ideas. He added that the group can send emails back and forth to come up with additional potential dates and timelines.

Steve C. asked if emailing back and forth with ideas, would it be considered a public meeting. It is stated that if a decision is made, it would be. Rita W. responded that that is a good question for Dan Clark.

Rita W. stated that we need to remember, so we can articulate to the public, our present form of government and a Commission Form of Government. County Commissioners can only do what the legislature allows them to do in the form of law. In a Charter Form of Government, the County Commissioners can do anything except what the legislature strictly explicitly prohibits. Greg L. commented that the Charter is a moot point, but Rita W. reminded the group that the Charter is what the public thinks we are considering as it's been talked about. She added that she feels we need to be able to answer the question. Bobbie S. stated that she feels like this would be more confusing to those people who knew nothing about a Charter. She added that sometimes more info is not helpful. Steve C. stated that Rita W's comments will be taken into consideration.

Dr. Donna White stated that over the last couple of meetings there have been references to naming the activities that need to be accomplished and placed on the time line. She asked if the group has discussed what these activities are. Rita W. responded that they are written out on page 36; 7-3-186. Dr. White asked for a copy; Greg L. offered to make a copy for her. This Study Commission Time Table is available online at Montana MCA.

Steve C. asked the group for any additional discussion, none are noted.

John R. made a motion to adjourn. Bobbie S. seconded the motion; all were in favor and motion passed.

Meeting adjourned 643p.

TANGIBLES

- Reconvene March 10th 2016 5p
- Add dates of meeting hiatus to website and/or FaceBook