

Lincoln County Study Commission
Minutes of October 8, 2015

The Lincoln County Study Commission met for a regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, October 8, 2015 at 5:00 pm. The meeting was held in the County Commissioners office in Libby. Commissioner Greg Larson, Member Rita Windom and Secretary Shellie DeLeo, attended in Libby along with three visitors; Donna White, John Righter and Alvin Bentiz. Chairman Steve Curtiss and Vice-Chair Bobbie Stoken attended via satellite in Eureka.

Steve C. called the meeting to order at 5:07p.

Rita W. began with a discussion on members email accounts. Some members are not getting important emails, minutes and/or agendas. We need to make sure the email addresses are correct when sending information.

Steve C. asked the group if everyone had the opportunity to review the minutes from September 10th. Rita W. had two minor changes, which she emailed. Bobbie S. motioned to accept the minutes as corrected. Rita W. seconded the motion, all were in favor and the motion passed.

The group reviewed the minutes of September 16th when the group met with the commissioners in Eureka. Bobbie S. motioned to accept the minutes of the September 16th meeting with corrections noted. Rita W. seconded the motion, all were in favor and the motion passed.

The group reviewed the minutes from the September 30th "joint discussion" for informational purposes only as there was no quorum. It was noted to identify the guests and the reporters in these unofficial minutes.

Steve C. asked if the board has finalized a letter of support for Mike Cuffe. This has not been done and Greg L. reported that he can send a letter that they wrote for the group to use as a guide.

Steve C. reported on the meeting with Dan Clark. He stated that Dan is a fast presenter and very knowledgeable. Rita W. stated that her perspective was that he is very informative. They agreed that Dan's advice was not to jump from a General Form of Government to a Charter form, but to go to a Commission form.

It was also recommended that the study group take a winter hiatus for the months of November, December, January and February. It was suggested that the group begin meeting again in March or April and have a facilitator from MSU present to help the group through the process. It is noted that a facilitator could also assist the group in getting through public meetings and making a decision to move toward a Commission form of Government.

It is suggested that information not be put on the June ballot but wait until November. Greg L. added that whoever we recommend to replace Tracy needs to be made soon as the 30 day period is fast approaching.

Steve C. noted that these are suggestions and recommendations and must be a collective decision. He stated that his personal decision is made up but everyone needs to voice. An off period can be difficult to again gain momentum back and collect thoughts. Dan can be contacted with any questions.

Steve C. stated that he would like to have Josh L.'s input as well as any new member that may be appointed. He noted that we do have a quorum and could make that decision and that we don't want to drag it out. It was also noted that it won't be an economic strain on the budget.

Rita W. reported that she will be leaving the area October 23. The group discussed meeting October 22nd so that Rita W. can attend the meeting before she leaves. This will allow all members to be available for a decision regarding a hiatus. Bobbie S. clarified that if the vote is to have a hiatus, there will be no meeting in November. The October 22nd meeting will be the last meeting until spring if the group decides to hiatus for the winter.

Greg L. stated that he didn't hear this information in the meeting with Dan, but thought it to be a good idea. He added that it'd give the new member a chance to read and familiarize themselves with the policies and procedures of the study group.

The group discussed their surprise of the General Form of Government. The white book page 60 states that it is an inappropriate action by the county commissioners to go non-partisan. Steve C. stated the commissioners did not have the authority to put it on the ballot. Rita W. reported that John and Marianne had put it on the school ballot. Rita W. said if we want to change to commission form of government there could be up to three sub-options that could be listed on the ballot. For example, we could add recommendations such as to consolidate law enforcement. She also stated that people do not know who is up for election; they look at the 'R' or the 'D' ideology of the person. Bobbie S. agreed that people do not educate themselves. They want to know what party is associated to the person running for office. Rita W. added that people don't read the paper. They look at the ballot and decided who reflects their ideology. Whatever is decided to do with it, will be decided at a different time than tonight.

The group continued discussion on Constitutional form of Government versus Commission versus Elective. It was noted that Harold Blaty called it a General Form of Government. In addition, it is noted that Dan reported that among County Commissioners statewide, there is a lack of what we truly have.

Steve C. stated that they are trying to define exactly what it is. Dan Clark had gone to the attorney general at one point to get a handle of it.

It is noted that in the brown book on page 104, it is listed as a Commission Form of Government. The group has to become a Commission form in order to move to anything else. It is noted that Publications are incorrect to state that we are a Commission form of Government at that time. We are an Elected Official Form of Government.

Rita W. asked the group what can be done under the Charter that cannot be done under the Commission form of Government. It was stated that to figure out revenue, for example work with the BPA and Corps of Engineers receiving revenue from the installation of generators. This cannot be done under the existing form of government.

Steve C. stated that he feels that the Charter form of Government gives the commission too much authority. The pros and cons need to be weighed to figure out which will be beneficial.

Rita W. stated that since there is apprehension, she suggested that when we meet again, after the possible hiatus, we have a facilitator meet with the group and talk about Charter form of Government. She suggested that Harold Blattie could come and give an in-depth review. It was noted that Blattie originally said the form of government to be Constitutional and then changed it to General.

Steve C. stated that Ken Weaver was instrumental in starting a government review process. He has offered to come or call in for more discussion. Rita W. added that Judith Mathre, who works with Ken, is equally as knowledgeable.

Alvin B. reported that Grant County PUD owns the dam and in LA the Corp of Engineers has gone in with federal dollars to rebuild the town, obtaining money needed to help communities.

Steve C. agreed that working hard to try to bring solution on some of the issues is important. He states that we'll never give up – local government needs to be more involved.

Steve C. stated that we have two weeks to think about whether or not to hiatus for the winter months. He added that he does not personally think that it'll be a bad thing to take a break, provided we get back on track. This would allow for Tracy's replacement to get up to speed and would allow for some possible phone conversations in the meantime. He reminds the group that it's important to not lose focus.

Rita W. stated that it is hard to get people to meetings when the weather is bad. She added that it's difficult to get a good outcome at a meeting in the winter months and feels the hiatus is a good move.

Steve C. reminded the group that it's important to have everyone at the next meeting, which has been changed to October 22, for input on a decision made regarding the hiatus. Bobbie S. added that we need to make sure we have a quorum for that meeting. Greg L. reported that he likes the idea as the next two months will be busy with a lot of other things going on. Rita W. commented that traditionally the commissioners take Thanksgiving week off as well as the last two weeks of December.

The group had a discussion on the letter of support for Mike Cuffe. Greg L. reported that he will have a letter to Steve C. by tomorrow morning. Steve C. asked if Mike C. was going back on October 16th. The group was unsure but agreed that regardless, a letter needs to be given to Mike Cuffe in support of his actions.

Steve C. introduced John Righter and asked him to tell the group why he is interested in filling a seat on the board of the study commission.

John R. stated that he thinks the county struggles because society changes but organizations do not. He stated that we have to move with the changes. He acknowledged that the water is murky as to what type of government to go to and that we must know the ins and outs of each form to make a decision. John R. stated that he has federal agency budget experience and added that the Commissioners will have to make hard decisions and we need to give them all the tools we can. He also acknowledged that the Commissioners do not have much control over elected officials and that needs to change.

Steve C. agreed with John R. and stated that the position of certain elected officials versus hired officials does not have much say so over some folks and that some appointments can be made without a radical change in

the current form of government. Steve C. stated that even with the MCA there is still a lot of confusion without clarification. John R. stated that it is imperative that we understand all forms of government.

It was stated that County Commissioners need to respond to various EIS or other things on the federal sector. The commission needs to be able to respond intelligently and in depth on these topics.

Rita W. stated that the public does not like open houses and it is hard to hear the questions of all who attend. John R. agreed stating that people do not want to ask questions in public.

The group discusses the process of recommendation for appointing to the study commission. The applications have been reviewed and the applicants have been notified. The group can now make a vote. Rita W. made a motion to accept John Righter as the newly appointed participant on the Lincoln County Study Commission board. Bobbie S. seconded motion; all were in favor and motion passed.

Greg L. reminded the group that the recommendation needs to come from the commission to the commissioners for the final decision and to be sworn in. He stated that he will get it on the agenda for the October 14th meeting. Greg L. will also check on the process of swearing in.

The group discussed the delivery of the minutes and agenda for upcoming meetings. All are reminded that it was decided prior that all information pertaining a meeting should be sent out by the Friday of the week before the meeting day.

Steve C. asked the group if there were any other topics that needed to be discussed this evening.

Rita W. stated that she thinks we should be thinking about how many public meetings we will have in the Spring and where these will be held. Greg L. asked if the group will be prepared to talk about the different forms of government at that time. Rita W. stated that the people have to tell us what they want, they didn't like the survey, so we have to tell them what they're choices are.

Steve C. reported that he is not sure that we understand anything more about the different forms of government from the beginning of the meeting with Dan to the end. He said that he will talk to Dan over the next few days and ask him about the cost for his services so we can finalize some of these ideas.

John R. stated that we need to be very clear about exactly what the agenda is as we need a working idea of all the different forms of government. Bobbie S. advised that the definitions are in the books and she offered to show John R.

Greg L. reported that he will have a copy of the draft letter for Mike Cuffe as well as a draft agenda out in email tomorrow morning.

Steve C. asked the group for any other discussion.

Rita W. motioned to adjourn the meeting. Bobbie S. seconded the motion; all were in favor and meeting adjourned at 6:36pm.

- Agenda items for October 22nd meeting (ideas)
- Swear in new member

- Need update on budget from Clerk and Recorder
- Discussion and vote of winter furlough idea
- Discussion on facilitator cost (Dan Clark) Charter form of Government presentation/discussion Ken Weaver (MSU) Judith Mathew
- Set date for future meetings

Minutes recorded/typed by Shellie DeLeo
seashellieann@gmail.com