

City of Lewistown Study Commission

February 23, 2015

Council on Aging

Members present included Dick Krillenberger, Dick Ellestad, and Alexandria Dunnington. A copy of the public attendance roster is available at the city office.

Melody Scott performed the duties of recording secretary.

Call to Order: Krillenberger called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call of Members Present

Disposition of Previous Meeting Minutes:

Ellestad moved to approve the February 13, 2015 minutes as presented. Dunnington seconded the motion.

Budget – Paid Expenses and Current Balance

Scott shared the current balance from the city finance office. After paying the recording secretary for the month of January, the account balance now stands at \$2,933.80 Doney asked about the difference between the amount approved to pay the secretary versus what was actually paid. Krillenberger explained the \$25 difference will be added to the February paycheck.

Interview of City Manager Kevin Myhre

Myhre explained a description of his job and how the city government form works. The seven city commissioners are responsible for hiring the city manager. The city budget is approved by the city commissioners and administered by Myhre. He also explained the process for preparing the agenda for the city commission meetings and how those meetings operate. Each commissioner is involved with various boards and gives updates from each board at the city commission meeting. Myhre is involved with the department heads and various groups, including the Lewistown Downtown Association, Friends of the Library and Friends of the Pool. Myhre is under contract with the city commission. At any time, they can put Myhre's employment on the meeting agenda for review and vote to keep him or cancel his contract. Myhre is evaluated twice a year by the commissioners.

Committee Member Comments:

Krillenberger asked if Myhre delegates some of the tasks given to him. Myhre said that the commissioners each have specific areas of interest that they are involved with and subcommittees may be appointed to deal with some issues. Myhre does delegate to the department heads some of what is delegated to him by the city commissioners. Myhre allows the department heads to be responsible for the hiring and discipline within their department. But he is available to help with those aspects when assistance is needed or requested. Dunnington asked if Myhre thought the manager system runs smoother than the mayor form. Myhre responded that the mayor is a full time continuous person who is familiar with the city operations. A mayor position changes every four years and may not have the knowledge of the ongoing operations of the city, thus slowing down the city process. The city has fifty permanent employees, with an additional fifty temporary additional jobs in the city. The governing official must also be familiar with the city water and sewer utility issues. There is a longer process in replacing a mayor. Due to the political process, a mayor cannot just be let go.

Open Public Participation:

Hans Rotunda asked if not being able to change the form of government is beneficial for the city offices regardless of whether the public wants a change. Myhre said that there could be a loss of efficiency with constant change. The option to change the city commission and in turn the city manager is available by electing new city commissioners. Myhre mentioned that it is difficult to get the public interested in running for positions and boards. City commissioners are nonpartisan and elected by the wards where they live.

Karen Khulman came on behalf of Myhre to express her opinion of what an asset he is to the community. She mentioned that Myhre helps give perspective, develop strategy and brings information to various city organizations.

A public attendee asked when the last mayor was. Ellestad replied that the last mayor was seventeen years ago. Doney pointed out that Ellestad was the last city mayor. Ellestad was asked what his preference was on the manager versus mayor issue. Ellestad said that this was the point of the study commission of to find out what the best form is for the city of Lewistown. Krillenberger mentioned that the study commission is not here to have an opinion but to hear what the public wants for a city government form.

Hans Rotunda asked if there will be a public survey by the study commission and if so, how will the public know about it. Ellestad said that the study commission will be publishing a survey in the Lewistown News Argus in the near future. The study commission will use the local media to make the public aware of the survey.

A public attendee asked if the mayor position is a part time position. Ellestad explained that would be dependent on how the government and the charter were set up. There are several options including a strong council and weak mayor; weak council and strong mayor or a mayor and manager.

Johnathon Moore asked who is responsible for the building codes. Myhre explained that due to state regulations, Lewistown follows international building codes. Moore also mentioned that the study commission should include all forms of city government form options on the survey.

Diana Hewitt asked the study commission to clarify the difference between a weak and strong position. Ellestad said that the traditionally in the past, the city has had a weak mayor. A weak mayor defers to the city council on decisions and does not have the power to hire. Doney mentioned that the charter would have to be changed in order to define the specifics of the position.

Hans Rotunda asked when the study commission will be releasing their survey. Krillenberger said they are unsure as the study commission needs to meet as a whole to review the survey.

Diana Hewitt mentioned that one of the questions she hears a lot is why Myhre is not required to live within city limits. Monte Boettger explained that it is not prohibited by the city charter or ordinances. Myhre mentioned that the city commissioners could at any time add this issue to their meeting agenda and vote to change it.

Krillenberger addressed the rumor of the study commission having secret meetings. There never has been and never will be secret meetings. All meetings are open to the public.

Beth Putnam, a current city commissioner, gave her opinion that a city of this size would not run as effectively with a mayor. A manager of a town of this size must be able to deal with many issues including fire fighters, EPA, floods and more.

Hans Rotunda asked if a city manager and a mayor form was a possibility. Beth Putnam said that it would be but that it would mean a payroll increase. Changing to that form would not be a simple matter.

Announcements: The next meeting will be March 9, 2015 at the Council on Aging at 7:00 PM.

Adjournment: Meeting dismissed by Krillenberger at 8:02 PM.

Melody A. Scott, Recording Secretary

Dick Krillenberger, Chairman