

**WHITEFISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER CONFERENCE ROOM
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2015**

CALL TO ORDER

Rebecca Norton called the meeting to order at 6:27 p.m. Members present were Turner Askew, Ken Williams arriving at 6:50 p.m. Vanice Woodbeck, recording Secretary and City Attorney Mary VanBuskirk. In the audience were Charlie Abell and Nan Askew.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 22, 2015 MINUTES

Turner made a motion, seconded by Rebecca to approve the January 22, 2015 minutes. The motion passed by acclamation.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Charlie Abell said he would like to see wards come back with 2 people of each ward being on the Council. He said he never knows who to contact and if they had wards again then you would know who was representing your area. He also said that each ward had their own department to watch over now it is done by bureaucracy. Charlie does not know if the City Manager form of government is right. Charlie said the City spends way too much money and they need to operate more efficiency. Charlie also said with a 46 million dollar budget why no dog catcher? He feels we should receive the services for the money that is received.

Ken passed out information sheets on the Revenues and mill value and tax levy history for everyone to look over. These will be attached to the minutes.

OLD BUSINESS

- a. **Read the Municipal Charter for discussion. Identify areas for consideration:** The committee finished going through the Charter. The committee thought maybe they could remove Section 3:03; i. Attend meetings of planning boards on which the city is represented.
- b. **Updates on Public outreach**

NEW BUSINESS

- a. **City Attorney Mary VanBuskirk-questions on the possible changes on the Charter:** City Attorney VanBuskirk suggested being mean & lean in the Charter but doesn't tie your hands. If you detail it too much it might out live its purpose as this will be for the next 10 years. Rebecca would like to see in Section 2,02: Powers and Duties of the Council, paragraph 11 if they could add an Ethics Committee. City Attorney suggested keeping the ethics with the Council and leave paragraph 11 alone. Rebecca feels with an Ethics Committee people would have a place to go instead of the Council and she would like to see something put into either paragraph 8 or 11.
- b. **List of question for the mailings:** Turner said maybe they could ask **"Do you have any suggestion on how City Government should be appropriate?", "Would you like to see wards replaced in Whitefish City Government?"**

Rebecca had made up an information sheet that they could also use:

Every 10 years the Montana Constitution allows cities to evaluate their form of government through a formal process called "The Local Government Review". Citizens are elected to serve on

this committee, public outreach is done, and though the form of the local government is the primary item to be analyzed, recommendations for services being provided to the public can also be evaluated with recommendations for improvements to the City Council for possible action. Citizen input is a key part of this process.

Currently our form of government is a “Chartered” government, which means that the people of Whitefish can develop their own laws that are more specific to our own needs. All state laws must also be upheld, but the municipalities that have Charters, (like our own Constitution), have the legal right to draft your charter.

We also have a Mayor, who is elected for 4 years. The mayor does not vote, except to break ties at a City Council meeting.

We elect 6 City Councilors, at large, for 4 year terms.

We have a City Manager, who reports to the City Council but manages all of the administrative aspects of the city.

We also have Department Heads, a City Attorney, City Clerks and an HR Manager. We have three unions (police, fire, and public works) that the city works with.

Please help us plan the next 10 years.

What are your ideas? Notable problems that you see? Everything OK?

These would be a couple of examples that could go into the Utility Billing Statements that are sent out. Vanice said the cost would be .10 cents per page and there is around 4,000 sent out monthly.

COMMENTS

- a. **Public Comments:** Nan Askew said likes that the public is able to come and talk to the committee and they are very open.
- b. **Commission Comments:** The next meeting will be March 12th at 4 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.