

**WHITEFISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER CONFERENCE ROOM
THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 2015**

CALL TO ORDER

Ken Williams called the meeting to order at 4:20 p.m. Members present were Turner Askew, Rebecca Norton and Vanice Woodbeck, recording secretary. City Manager Chuck Stearns and in the audience Nan Askew.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Nan Askew said she is happy that they are doing this process.

NEW BUSINESS

- a. **City Manager Chuck Stearns-Housekeeping Issues in Charter:** City Manager Chuck Stearns handed out a list of possible changes to the Charter:

1. One option is to consider proposing to modify Section 2.02 in the following or similar manner:

Section 2.02; Powers and Duties of the Council:

11. ~~The council shall appoint a citizen's standing committee or board of three (3) to five (5) members who shall serve at the will of the council for the purpose whereby c~~Citizens or other interested parties may ~~first~~ submit or present their proposals for action of the city council for study, review and recommendations ~~by the committee or board~~ to the council as a whole. This provision shall not prohibit the appointment of the ad hoc committees by the mayor or council.

Discussion: The City Council as a whole hears complaints, suggestions, and requests on any topic from citizens or other parties at every Regular City Council meeting under the Montana Constitution's requirements for open meetings and public comments. This Communications from the Public section of the agenda is where we direct citizens and other parties to bring their concern to the City Council. Alternatively, they can write a letter or email to the Mayor and City Council and that is put on the next agenda. Prior City Councils instructed staff that they all wanted to hear of citizen requests, not just a few City Councilors.

The Mayor and City Council all like to hear citizen and others' concerns so they can address them or choose not to address the concerns. Having another layer of a citizen committee between the citizens and the City Council would be frustrating to citizens and the City Council and would delay possible action. It also distances the Mayor and City Council from their constituents which is not good for a representative democracy such as we have. This citizen's committee would be another layer of government and delay that I don't think either the citizens or their elected representatives would appreciate.

2. Another housekeeping change would be to change all references in the Charter of the City Administrator to the City Manager. Even though the City Council has essentially done this in Section 1-7-1 of the Whitefish City Code (attached), it could also be done in the Charter. It is not a big issue, more of a clean-up type of change.
3. One option would be to propose changing Section 3.03: Duties of the City Administrator in the following manner or something similar:

2. The city administrator shall:
 - i. Attend or have a designated Department Director attend meetings of planning boards on which the city is represented;
 - j. Submit recommended changes in the administrative code or the personnel system to the council.
3. Unless as otherwise provided herein, ¶the city administrator shall not delegate any of the duties and responsibilities in this section without consent of the council. (January 5, 1981)

Discussion: Even though the City Manager can and presumably has obtained the consent of the City Council so that the City Manager doesn't attend the Planning Board meetings, rather the Planning Director does, this section of the Charter is somewhat obsolete and unnecessarily restrictive. However, if you would prefer not to change it, Section 3 as currently written does provide an option for the City Manager to pursue.

City Manager Stearns also talked about wards and said they usually work better in larger cities or in places where you would have different section of town like across the tracks, low income or any different kind of groups. The Council now represents the whole city not just sections of their area. City Manager Stearns also talked about Townhall form of government. He said these are usually held back east and they vote once a year on property taxes maybe changes to the Charter. Whoever is at the meeting would cast their votes at that time. City Manager Stearns also reminded the committee that if they want to put anything on the ballot for the November election they need to have the information in by August.

b. Commission Members:

COMMENTS

a. Public Comments: none.

b. Commission Comments: Rebecca said she talked to the Police Chief and he said no on the Ethics Committee. She will try and talk to the unions. She said she will bring a flyer to the next meeting. Turner said the Police and Fire Chiefs will not change their minds on the Ethics Policy. Ken said he has talked to the Director of the Chamber and the President of the Bank and they said they would get back to him if they had any suggestions and he will share any information he receives with the committee.

Ken said he talked to City Attorney Mary VanBuskirk about if they had a vacancy on the board he would like to have the Council make a replacement. Also because of the statue 7-3-177 they cannot at this time make the Local Government Study Commission bigger. He suggested in the future to have the council do a resolution making the Local Government Study Commission larger.

The next meeting is set up for April 1, 2015 at 4:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT: Meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.