

**WHITEFISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER CONFERENCE ROOM
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 2015**

CALL TO ORDER

Ken Williams called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Members present were Rebecca Norton and Vanice Woodbeck, secretary. Turner Askew arrived at 5:55 p.m. Steve Thompson and Richard Hildner were also present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FEBRUARY 26, 2015 AND MARCH 12, 2015

Rebecca made a motion, seconded by Ken to approve the February 26, 2015 minutes. The motion passed by acclamation.

Ken said the minutes for the March 12, 2015 minutes did not have his comments which he wanted added. Ken said he talked to City Attorney Mary VanBuskirk about if they had a vacancy on the board that he would like to have the Council make a replacement. Also because of the statute 7-3-177 they cannot at this time make the Local Government Study Commission larger. He suggested in the future to suggest the council do a resolution making the Local Government Study Commission larger.

Ken made a motion, seconded by Rebecca, to approve the March 12, 2015 minutes as amended. The motion passed by acclamation.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Types of Government: Townhall, Precinct/Assembly and Council:** Ken wanted to talk about some of the different types of governments. The first would be Townhall form of Government with having a strong Mayor. They meet once a year to go through the expenses and taxes and who ever attends the meetings are the ones allowed to vote. Richard Hildner said that there are very few Townhall forms of Governments left, mostly on the east coast, one in Pinesdale, MT. Richard said this form of government is leaving rapidly as it does not work well anymore.

Ken said with the Precinct/Assembly the community is broken up into large areas or wards with each area bringing their own agenda. Richard said if they were to go this route they would have to change the Charter as we have a strong City Manager not Mayor. We would have a paid Mayor and the Mayor would be making the decisions. Ken also said if one section had a strong representative then that area would get more done then the rest. Richard said there were having trouble in the past getting people interested in running in the wards so they decided to go out city wide and have councilors elected "at large" to represent all city residents in their own wards interests.

Ken said with our Council and a strong Mayor and City Manager and there is a balance between the two. Richard clarified that we have a strong City Manager as the Mayor and Council are 100% volunteer. He feels the public is well served with getting answers from City Hall than through the Mayor and Council. The City Manager brings in history and keeps politics out of it. Ken feels we are stable in this form of local government.

Steve Thompson said we are a civil society and the City plays a very instrumental role with the private sectors.

Ken made a motion, seconded by Rebecca to postpone this conversation to a future meeting. The motion passed by acclamation.

b. Presentation from Steve Thompson on Climate Change: Steve Thompson handed out a paper which he went through for the presentation.

- 1) Why is this relevant to the Government Review Commission?
- 2) A few comments on what Whitefish is already doing right and logical next steps.
- 3) Overview of Climate Action Plans in 4 other MT communities.
- 4) What are the issues Whitefish should be considering through 2050?
- 5) Recommendations.

1) Why is this relevant to the Government Review Commission?

7-3-12 Purpose of study commission. The purpose of a study commission is to study the existing form and powers of a local government and **procedures for delivery of local government services** and compare them with other forms available under the laws of the state.

2) A few comments on what Whitefish already is doing right and logical next steps

In terms of the way Whitefish city government works and accomplishes things: Looking at what is working for climate action planning in other cities. Steve said we're ahead of the curve. Whitefish has already established workable models for strong and effective public-private partnerships.

- Whitefish Trail and maintaining working forest
- Haskill Basin land and water conservation
- Whitefish Face partnership with USFS, Stoltze, conservation groups and city

In terms of actual projects. Some projects are examples of Whitefish taking the steps needed to minimize community risks to climate change impacts: Protecting water, reducing fire risk, avoid residential development into high-risk forested areas in the WUI.

3) Overview of Climate Action Plans in 4 other MT communities

Bozeman plan-Focused on reducing carbon footprint, encouraging energy conservation and renewable energy. However, the Bozeman Climate Partnership is now expanding to climate readiness. For example, they're developing an Integrated Water Resource Plan to deal with water availability issues.

<http://bozemanclimatepartners.net/>

Missoula plan-Focused initially on reducing municipal carbon footprint but plan also identifies adaptation as the next step to address climate risks and impacts. A very robust community initiative is now underway under the new name of "Climate Smart Missoula." It's a partnership under the umbrella of the Missoula Community Foundation. <http://www.missoulaclimate.org/>

Helena plan- Also focused primarily on reducing municipal carbon footprint but water also emerged as a major issue of concern. So the plan also deals with water supply, treatment, delivery and watershed protection.

Red Lodge-Mayor's Climate Protection Committee-Focused on reducing carbon pollution.

Common themes:

- **Conserving energy and adapting for climate change impacts is smart economics-** energy costs will increase. It's very likely that major polluters like coal power plants won't be able to continue dumping their pollution into the atmosphere for free. Water will become more valuable than oil. Questionable whether federal government will continue to spend billion of dollars protecting homes from fire where they never should have been built in the first place. Fixing problems is more expensive than preventing problems.
- **City leadership can be catalyst for broader community engagement** in climate risk assessment and local solutions.
- Initial focus on reducing carbon pollution expands into preparations for climate change already "baked into the system".

What are the climate trends and issues Whitefish should be considering through 2050?

Increasing temperatures, especially in summer followed by winter and fall. Spring temps will increase the least among the seasons.

Precipitation will probably increase slightly in fall, winter and spring and decrease in the summer.

There will be more winter rain with higher risk of "rain on snow" flooding.

Probably less winter snowpack and earlier spring snowmelt.

10-20 percent in the number of consecutive dry days, especially in the summer.

Overall, NW Montana rates low on the water supply sustainability risk index-that's good!

Fire danger-Acreage burned will more than double by 2050, we estimate 2.5-3 months average of heavy smoke pollution in the Flathead Valley.

More extreme weather events-already happening but is likely to increase.

More climate refugees moving into the Flathead Valley? It will depend upon what happens in other places.

Is Whitefish a Climate Smart Place?

Steve Thompson's company Climate.Place, is 17 major categories of risk and readiness to score climate-smart communities, neighborhoods and households across the U.S.

14 measures of risk and readiness where you live

Community-level indicators:

- Regional climate projections through 2050
- Extreme weather trends and forecasts
- Infrastructure vulnerability
- Public health factors
- Community preparedness and adaptive capacity

- Social vulnerability
- Water, food and energy security
- Ecological integrity
- Economic diversity and resilience

Neighborhood-level indicators

- Walkability, transportation options and dependence upon private vehicle
- Exposure to natural hazards (e.g. storm and wind path, flood, wildfire, surging seas, heat)

Household-level indicators

- Energy efficiency
- Degree of energy, water, food self-reliance or potential self-reliance
- Carbon footprint

Steve estimated that Whitefish is in the top 30 percentile of U.S. communities in terms of preparedness. Not at the top but better than most, primarily because we have water and intact ecosystems that will help buffer impacts. If California and the Southwest if droughts start to look like the big mega-drought that is forecasted, then there could be a big exodus from those places. Also in with Florida and Gulf Coast states if they get a couple more massive hurricanes on top of surging sea levels.

My recommendations:

- City should establish a community process and public-private partnership
- Assessment should focus on both reducing carbon pollution and increasing readiness
- Conduct economic analysis that looks at cost savings from reducing carbon pollution, conserving energy and/or increasing renewable energy production.
- Conduct economic analysis of the costs and benefits of addressing climate risks such as infrastructure vulnerability, increasing fire danger, watershed protection, increasing landslide risk, and land-use planning that assumes an increasing population.

Steve said that Partnership is very important and would really like to see the City Council adopt this concept for the future.

- c. **How best to get people to communicate:** Ken said they should talk to the City Council at a work session- also talk to City Administration (City Manager & Heads of Departments) to get their thoughts on how everything is working with the current Charter. They should then have a “State of the City” Public meeting with organization, commercial business/banks.

He sees it sets up in this order:

- **Preliminary work session**
- **Meetings Charter Review**
- **Meetings Council /Staff**
- **State of the “Fish”**
- **Public Meeting**
- **Preliminary Recomm/Resolution**
- **Final & Findings= Maj Opinion and Minority Opinion**
- **Council**
- **Ballot**

From commission incorporating the review of the Charter through the final findings, the commission will be studying various topics.

Vanice will check with the City Manager to see when the committee would be able to meet with the Council for a work session.

OLD BUSINESS

- a. **What questions for inserts into the water bills:** This is being moved to the next meeting so the committee has time to come up with the questions.

COMMENTS

- a. **Public Comments:** None
- b. **Commission Comments:** Rebecca would like to have the results of the elections put into the minutes: Rebecca Norton 1,270 votes, Turner Askew 1,138 votes, write in votes were Ken Williams with 18 votes, Greg Gunderson 2 votes, Michael Jenson 2 votes, Scott Wurster 2 votes, Charles Abel 2 votes and Gary Stephens 2 votes.

The committee set up their meetings for April 22, 2015, May 13th and 27th, June 10th and 24th, July 8th and 22nd and August 12th and 26th at 4:00 p.m.

Ken would like at the next meeting to have any questions or comments that could be put into the water bills, questions for staff and questions for Council.

ADJOURNMENT

Rebecca made a motion, seconded by Turner, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed by acclamation. Meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.