

WHITEFISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION  
WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 30, 2015

**CALL TO ORDER**

Ken called the meeting to order at 3:37 p.m. Members present were Rebecca Norton. Vanice Woodbeck-secretary. In the audience were City Manager Chuck Stearns and Mitchell Drachman.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mitch said he was happy to be here as he wanted to see what the board was doing and he has no comment at this time.

City Manager Stearns asked if the Study Commission was expecting to pay the ombudsperson and Ken said they were. City Manager Stearns said the public needs to be made aware that their taxes will be going up do help pay for this position. Rebecca said they were going to wait until the elections were done to see how the vote came out. Chuck said the citizens need to made aware of the possible raise in their taxes prior to the election and the sooner the better as the ballots will be mailed out on October 14, 2015. He thinks maybe the person would be paid around \$80,000 which would mean raising the taxes by 4 to 5 mills. He said each mill is around \$20,000.

Rebecca asked when the timeline might be for an ombudsperson to get on board. Chuck said the earliest would be July 1, 2016 as that is when the new budget would start. Rebecca said a lot of people do not feel they can approach the council and the commission felt that an ombudsperson would be the best option. They see this person tracking the complaints and how long it is taking them to get resolved. Chuck said he will be writing a letter to the editor explaining the cost that would be associated with an ombudsman so the citizens are aware of everything.

Mitch said that he thanks that a lot of people would be sent to the right department heads if not they need to be informed on the how the process works.

Ken also said that sometimes there are developments that go in front of the planning board and by the time it gets to the council a lot has changed. They feel this needs to stop because if there are changes it should go back to the planning board so that both the planning board and council see the same development. Ken also mentioned that arguing for a point via fiscal misinformation is irresponsible.

**APPROVE MINUTES FROM JULY 8<sup>TH</sup>, 22<sup>ND</sup>, AUGUST 12<sup>TH</sup>, 14<sup>TH</sup>, 17<sup>TH</sup>, 19<sup>TH</sup> AND SEPTEMBER 16, 2015**

Rebecca said that on the September 16, 2015 minutes it says Charlie Abell said the council or political run and she thinks it should just say political.

**Ken moved to approve the July 22, 2015, August 14, 2015, August 17, 2015, August 19, 2015 and the September 15, 2015 as amended. The minutes were approved by acclamation.**

The minutes from July 8, 2015 and August 12, 2015 were not approved because Rebecca is rewriting the minutes for July 8, 2015 and she wanted more to time to go over the August 12, 2015 minutes.

**WORK ON FINAL REPORT OF THE COMMISSION**-Tabled to next meeting.

**WORK ON RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL**-Tabled to next meeting.

Ken said they talked about maybe having the ombudsperson being part-time to start then go to full time or Rebecca said maybe somebody would volunteer their time.

**Ken made a motion to have a meeting on October 7, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. for a 30 minute meeting. The motion passed by acclamation.**

Ken would like to have together an article they could get into the papers explaining the concept of an ombudsperson and what the cost would be to the tax payers.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mitch wanted to thank them for letting him join the meeting and for all the hard work they have done.

#### **COMMISSION COMMENT**

Rebecca said she is excited about the next stage. People are excited about living in Whitefish and she feels really blessed to live here. She is worried about climate change, water, fires, BNSF and housing.

Ken said we all love Whitefish and we have so many people that come through. He said everybody does a good job running the City. They need to come up with how to finance the greater expansion and the people are paying for everybody that comes through.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.