

GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

March 13, 2007

7:00 p.m.

In Attendance: Woody VanSciver, Jim Vike, Bill Macaleer, Sandra Kelley

Several voice mail messages were left for a representative of the Department of Community and Economic Development to request that someone attend one of our meetings to answer questions on Home Rule. To date, we have received no response. It was suggested that Ken Johnson, who was the original contact at DCED, but who has since retired, be contacted to see if he would be available to come and talk to the Commission.

It was suggested by one of the members of the Commission that the Commission members review the Borough Council Handbook and the Mayor's Handbook. These publications are available by accessing www.newPA.com and clicking on DCED, then Publications. The publications can be downloaded.

Portage Borough was contacted regarding their Home Rule Charter. Portage is a little smaller than Malvern and they adopted a Home Rule Charter in 1996. The reason they did it was because they had a strong Mayor form of government and no Manager. They had no single party who served as the liaison or the administrator to the various Departments within the Borough. They now have a Manager and a three Ward election system where they elect two residents from each Ward and a Mayor who votes and is elected at-large. They have a seven-member Council that includes the Mayor. The big advantage for them was to have a Manager. They didn't talk about taxes being the reason they considered Home Rule.

It was felt the Commission should identify their direction and identify what questions they are going to have along the way; i.e., what form of government; taxation; what do we like and what don't we like about the existing Borough Code. It was felt that we need to identify the questions and then develop the tasks to get the answers.

The Home Rule Charter law requires that a budget be prepared and submitted to Borough Council for approval. The Commission prepared the following budget:

Secretarial Expenses	\$ 3,000.00
Legal Assistance	5,000.00
Consultant Fees	1,000.00
Travel Expenses	200.00
Operational Expenses	200.00
Advertising & Printing	<u>5,000.00</u>
	\$14,400.00
+20% Contingency	
TOTAL	\$17,300.00

The Commission unanimously agreed that the Proposed Budget be submitted to Council for approval and to keep in mind that this budget would fall within two budget years.

A DCED representative will be invited to the April 10th meeting. By that time, the Commission should have specific questions to ask.

The Commission discussed the following:

- Ward System – it was suggested that a Ward system of voting would permit a closer relationship between Council and citizens. On the down side, because of the small size of our community, it may be difficult to find volunteers if we are looking for volunteers in a specific Ward, rather than throughout the Borough. Further discussion is needed.
- Term Limits – the Commission discussed specific term limits for members of Council and the Mayor. They considered two, four-year term limits with two years off and then back on again. Another thought was to have term limits for the presiding officers of Council. Further discussion is needed.
- Recall Provision – the Commission felt that the Borough Code provision is ineffective and that a recall provision should be considered. Further discussion is needed.
- Minority Party Representation – the Commission discussed the idea of a provision that there would have to be a minority party representation on Council. It was felt that you could not guarantee vibrancy, but at least you could try. Another idea was that you can say that no more than “x” number of candidates from one party can serve; i.e., if you have ten candidates with seven openings, you can only choose five from one party and the other two openings would be filled from the candidates receiving the most votes in the minority party. This question should be on the list of questions to ask a consultant.

The Commission will begin discussion on the following items:

Tax Structure
Recall Provision for members of Borough Council and Mayor
Term Limits for members of Borough Council and Mayor
Minority Party Representation
Wards for Elections
Contract Limits for Bidding Requirements
Row Offices
Tax Collector – elected vs appointed vs in-house
Police & Police Chief

Government Study Commission
March 13, 2007
Page 3

Civil Service Commission
Number of Council Members – 7 vs 5

At the March 27th meeting, a timeline should be established for completion of various steps in the process.

The meeting dates of the Commission will be posted on the Reader Board and the website.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra L. Kelley