

LUZERNE COUNTY HOME RULE TRANSITION COMMITTEE

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September 28, 2011

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE

The twenty-fourth meeting of the HRTC convened in the Commissioners Meeting Room at the Luzerne County Courthouse, 200 River Street, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. It was called to order by Chair, Jim Bobeck at 6:32 pm.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Jim Bobeck, Chair
Rob Bakewell, Vice Chair
Ronna Ciaruffoli, Secretary
Tom Cooney
Jim Haggerty
Kick Heffron
CJ Kersey
Rick Morelli
Maryanne Petrilla
Steve Urban (arrived late)

ABSENT

Susan Shoval, Treasurer

ALSO PRESENT

Gloria Kijek, Clerk
Ken Mohr, Consultant
Attorney Jeff Malak

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion to approve August 24, 2011 minutes (Motion 1).
Motion Maryanne Petrilla.
Second CJ Kersey.
Unanimous vote.
Motion carried.

Motion to approve September 14, 2011 minutes (Motion 2).
Motion Ronna Ciaruffoli.
Second Kick Heffron.
Rob Bakewell, Tom Cooney and Maryanne Petrilla abstained.
Motion carried.

CITIZEN COMMENT (agenda items)

Richard Sorokas, Hunlock Creek – Commented on the agenda for HRTC meetings being put out sooner.
Jim Bobeck responded yes, however sometimes there are last minute changes to agenda.

CONSULTANT REPORT

Ken Mohr reported he has been working on the following items: 1) Prepared transition division, budget and personnel worksheet, comparing it with other Home Rule counties, and meeting with County Manager, Budget Director and Controller to discuss budget and staffing, 2) Coordinated County Manager and Clerk to County Council recruiting efforts and prospect tracking with Luzerne County

Human Resources, reviewed and ranked County Manager applicants and reviewed job descriptions for Division Heads with Personnel and Recruiting subcommittee for revision, 3) Developed draft of AB&C legal ad and interacted with County Manager and AB&C subcommittee chair regarding sending & receiving applications, and 4) Attended meetings.

SOLICITOR REPORT

Attorney Malak reported he is continuing his research and work on temporary codes and ordinances per Charter section 12.11.

TREASURER REPORT/APPROVAL OF EXPENSES

No report.

SECRETARY REPORT

No report.

SUBCOMMITTEE/WORKGROUP REPORTS

a. APPROVAL OF JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Rick Morelli reported that the six division head job descriptions have been reviewed and are ready for approval. HRTC discussed changing ‘Department’ of Corrections to ‘Division’ of Corrections and using the title ‘Law Department’ for Judicial Services.

Motion to accept the job descriptions of the six division heads with the word change ‘department’ to ‘division’ (Motion 3).

Motion Rob Bakewell.

Second Rick Morelli.

Unanimous vote.

Motion carried.

b. BUDGET WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Rob Bakewell reported the budget working group is reviewing comparison documents from consultant. They will be looking at some of the decisions and recommendations that have to be made as well as potential ways to save money. He commented that they need to have this information by Thanksgiving. Rick Morelli asked Commissioner Maryanne Petrilla how the HR budget working group information will be incorporated into the county budget. Maryanne Petrilla responded that when they get the budget close to finalized they will conform it to the new government structure by setting up a new Chart of Accounts.

Maryanne Petrilla asked about solicitor staffing and solicitor budget considerations under Home Rule, specifically referencing the controller. Discussion followed clarifying that all department solicitor functions will be covered under the Law Division with the exception of Children and Youth, which should maintain itself as is, and only experience a change potentially in the ultimate supervisory authority. Jim Haggerty read from section 6.04 of Charter relating to The Office of Law/County Solicitor clarifying this transition. Jim Bobeck stated this was similar to how Lehigh County was structured, with the controller having the option of retaining a solicitor on an as-needed basis, within budgetary constraints. He further stated that Lehigh County’s senior Deputy Counsel, Kathryn Roseberry, informed him that this option has, to her recollection, never been exercised by the Controller in Lehigh County.

AUTHORITIES, BOARDS, AND COMMISSIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

CJ Kersey reported that the application to serve on the AB&C has been advertised and the HRTC agreed that the best place for applications to be sent and applications to be requested from would be the commissioner's office.

ETHICS CODE SUBCOMMITTEE

No report.

PERSONNEL CODE SUBCOMMITTEE

No report.

LIAISON SUBCOMMITTEE

No report.

ADMINISTRATIVE CODE SUBCOMMITTEE

Administrative Code subcommittee will meet on October 5 at 6pm, tentatively at the EMA building.

LETTERS OF INTEREST FOR INTERIM POSITIONS

HRTC discussed the 'letter of interest' for interested applicants for possible interim positions. Comments were made on what interim positions would be needed and if interim positions were going to be necessary. Some members felt because of the uncertainty of whether or not interims will be necessary, it would be irresponsible not to be prepared. Some members felt this was not necessary for any department except Judicial Services. Concern was expressed because of possible duplications of applicants for interim and permanent. Jim Haggerty read from section 12.12 of the Charter referring to Administrative Organization and Operations which says the County Manager will have the authority to issue directives as he/she deems necessary. Jim Bobeck reiterated it was the Transition Committee's responsibility to provide manager with the information; it was the manager's decision as to what to do with the information.

Motion to seek applicants for interims for Judicial Services only (Motion 4).

Motion Maryanne Petrilla.

Second Steve Urban

4 in favor, 6 opposing votes of Rob Bakewell, Jim Bobeck, Ronna Ciaruffoli, Jim Haggerty, CJ Kersey, and Kick Heffron.

Motion failed.

Motion to approve the seeking of interim positions as deemed necessary with the letter of interest (Motion 5).

Motion Jim Haggerty.

Second Kick Heffron.

6 in favor, 4 opposing votes of Tom Cooney, Rick Morelli, Maryanne Petrilla, and Steve Urban.

Motion carried.

HRTC discussed how to go about getting the word out to anyone interested in a possible interim position. Some members felt to post letter of interest on website and post in courthouse was all that would be necessary. Some felt letter of interest should be advertised more publicly.

Motion to advertise letter of interest to seek interim positions more publicly (Motion 6).
Motion Rick Morelli.
No second.
Motion failed.

Motion to advertise for interim positions by posting on website and in courthouse (Motion 6).
Motion Jim Haggerty.
Second CJ Kersey.
6 in favor, 4 opposing votes of Tom Cooney, Rick Morelli, Maryanne Petrilla, and Steve Urban.
Motion carried.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Jim Bobeck spoke on the potential for holding an “information session” regarding the changes under home rule as well as for an update on the transition’s activities. HRTC discussed if they should proceed with this and where and when to have it. The Majority of members felt that it was a good idea to hold such a meeting at some point soon. Discussion then ensued regarding who should take part in this session. Jim Bobeck agreed that because he is currently running for a county council position, he should not chair the session because much of it would be directed toward providing information to other council candidates and county employees. In order to not create any appearance of a conflict of interest, Jim Bobeck stated he would recuse himself entirely from the session, and consequently, Vice-Chair Rob Bakewell would preside.

Rob Bakewell will draft agenda for information session and suggest a date at next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Bill James, Exeter – Commented the time for HRTC members to make comments is before a vote not after, and in particular, he criticized Mr. Morelli for delaying the proceedings.

Rick Morelli responded that he will always ask questions.

Kathy Dobash, Hazelton – Commented on the lack of press coverage at the meetings.

Jim Bobeck responded that the press calls him after every meeting and the reason they are not coming to HRTC meetings is because meetings are going so smooth.

Richard Sorokas, Hunlock Creek – Commented that the HRTC is doing a good job and asked if there has been a study done on ‘day 1’ of Home Rule.

Jim Bobeck responded that the HRTC has been discussing what should be on the first agenda.

Eileen Sorokas, Wilkes-Barre Township – Asked when the information session would be.

Rob Bakewell responded not sure and will have a suggested date at next meeting.

Ed Chesnovitch, Jackson Township – Agreed with Bill James regarding too much committee time being wasted on issues that were already voted on, and in particular that Mr. Morelli was bringing up issues that were resolved in the past.

Rick Williams, Kingston – Asked when the advertisement for the AB&C applicants would begin and suggested using the full names on the titles of AB&Cs.

Ken Mohr responded advertisement will be by the end of the month.

Rick Williams, Kingston – Asked about two boards that were added to the AB&C list.

Ken Mohr said he added a few because they were listed on other Counties' Home Rule AB&Cs.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion Jim Haggerty.

Second Jim Bobeck.

Unanimous vote.

Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 8:17 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Chairman Jim Bobeck