

Lewiston Auburn Charter Commission
August 28, 2014
Minutes

Attendance:

Commissioners: Mike Beaulieu, Gene Geiger, Lucien Gosselin, Holly Lasagna, Chip Morrison, and Chantel Pettengill.

Others: Ed Barrett, Marc Cayer, Tizz Crowley, Clint Deschene, Alfreda Fournier, Peter Geiger, Jim Howaniec, Jonathan LaBonte, Bob Macdonald, Mike Marcotte, Paul Robinson, Peggy Rotundo, Scott Taylor, Bette Swett Thibeault, and Alan Whitman.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM at Auburn City Hall.

1. Introductions

Charter Commission members introduced themselves to the audience

2. Public Hearing

Chair Geiger went over the requirements of state statute and told the audience that he would record on flip charts comments made during the public hearing

3. Summary of Public Comments

Bob Macdonald.

- Keep the name the same (Lewiston-Auburn.) Different name would be confusing.
- Keep the street names the same

Tizz Crowley.

- Hyphenating the name would be a problem. Need totally different name.

Paul Robinson.

-When he was collecting signatures to put the election on the ballot he ran into city employees who were concerned about the loss of jobs which they equated to a decrease in services.

Alfreda Fournier.

- Concern with local identity.
- Concerned that a consolidation would create a larger bureaucracy which is what happened in some of the school consolidations.
- Work existing employees into new jobs.

Marc Cayer.

- There is a passion for current identity. He likes Lewiston/Auburn or Auburn/Lewiston.
- Involve employee unions from both cities for their ideas. Maybe have a public hearing just for municipal employees. Also let them submit their ideas in writing – maybe anonymously.
- Could trim size of government by natural attrition.

Ed Barrett.

- Attrition is less than 5% per year.

Marc Cayer.

- Commission should look to what is best for taxpayers/citizens.

- Consolidation will make a stronger community and a better municipal employer.
- Don't hesitate to ask City of Lewiston for services/ support (legal/staff)

Bob Macdonald.

- He will sit down with unions and encourage them to assist the Commission.

Bette Thibeault.

-Served on the most recent consolidation commission. Thinks the charter commission should read the 2010 report carefully.

-Will the schools be included? Gene Geiger noted that he thought education was very important to include.

Pete Geiger.

-Great opportunity for one education system which would be much better than the current two. Both systems are making progress in very important areas: Lewiston on proficiency-based education; Auburn on customized learning for each student.

Tizz Crowley.

-Need to define what you are doing. She sees joint effort as a continuum from cooperation to collaboration to consolidation to merger to acquisition. She favors more work on cooperation and collaboration not merger.

-Doesn't want the City of Auburn to contribute funds to support the Commission's work.

-Need to define what our goals are: to save money; to be larger than Portland; to have more influence in the state.

Alan Whitman.

-Generally not in favor of merger. Looking for solid savings. Wants to know how many jobs will be cut – and fears that nothing will be saved. The key is how much each taxpayer will save.

Pete Geiger.

- If you are going to sell a merger, you will have to show how the new government will be more efficient and how it will be a stronger organization.

Alfreda Fournier.

-Merged government will need to spend wisely.

-Commission will need to identify positive outcomes from the merger and create a vision that the public will accept.

-Need to seek diversity of opinions.

-Look at school mergers – what worked, what didn't.

Ed Barrett.

-Need to look at what effect the merger would have on revenues from state and federal sources.

-Look at how the merger would affect current joint agencies. What savings would result? Would there be more accountability? Savings in municipal staff time?

Paul Robinson.

-Commission needs to keep the public up-to-date and needs to work to get more public participation.

Bette Thibeault.

-This should be on community access television

-Get people involved in small chunks

-Be daring

-Need to surface peoples' dissatisfaction and make them angry

Jonathan LaBonte.

-Rarely get to build a government from scratch. Need to look at how best to govern a city of 60,000 people living in a 100 square mile area.

-Don't pitch this on tax savings

-There are efficiencies to be found in areas such as transportation planning

-Organize government around major policy areas: transportation, public safety, environmental services, education, and economic & community development.

-Important to create an entity which has more citizen input

-Get local legislative delegation to get special funding for the effort.

Clint Deschene.

-Go to state government and ask "what will you do for us?"

-Talk to local legislators

-Naming the new entity will energize people. That should be done last.

Peggy Rotundo.

-Will need support from the Governor

Alan Whitman.

-Needs to be a way for citizens to voice their opinions – and be able to do it anonymously.

Tizz Crowley.

-Need to Innovate and invent.

Bob Macdonald.

-In Maine, issues many times pit small towns against larger cities.

Alan Whitman.

-You need to show me the savings.

Mark Cayer.

-Savings are important,

-Reinvention is also important,

Jim Howaniec.

-Opposed to consolidation. Loves the city of Lewiston. The city needs to keep its own identity.

4. Adjournment

There being no further comments or suggestions the meeting was adjourned.

The meeting ended at 8:52 PM.