

July 3, 2013

Task Force Members

Kelly Allen – Present
Marilyn Coffey – Present
Pastor Michael Cole – Present
Jim Marshall – Present
Jack Schrauth – Present
Tom Shaw – Present
Bill Wadsworth – Present

Also Present

Mayor Jim Burke
Commissioner Dave Blackburn
Commissioner Colleen Brechon
Commissioner Jeff Kuhn
Special Assistant to the City Council – Danny Langloss, Jr.

Call to Order by Marilyn Coffey

Approval of Minutes

Approval of 6/26/2013 Minutes: motion by Tom Shaw to accept minutes seconded by Bill Wadsworth. Unanimously approved.

Discussion with the City of Dixon Council

Q: What are your thoughts of how we have proceeded thus far?
(gave a synopsis of what the GTF has done thus far)

Mayor Jim Burke: The Task Force seems to be taking the assignment very conscientiously. We cannot comment on anything that has happened with Rita due to current litigation.

Review of Pro's and Con's of the Commission Form of government by Mayor Jim Burke.

Pro's

The Council is more involved in policy making and management.
The Council facilitates decision making with small body.
The citizens know their elected officials.
Mayor and Commissioners are more approachable.
Fast action time/reaction time among a smaller council.
The Council is closer to employees on a daily basis.

Con's

Diffuse leadership in regards to decision making
Can encourage fiefdom type thinking – my area is the best.
Can stifle communication
Commissioners can get involved in micromanaging departments

I (Mayor Jim Burke) propose that everybody should look at the bigger picture: How has Dixon fared with a Commission Form of government?

Snow Plowing
Quality Water with new state of the art Water Treatment Facility
State of the Art Wastewater Treatment Facility
Well Trained Police and Fire Department
New Public Safety Building that houses both the Police and Fire Department
Increased Industrial Development
Best Main Street Program
Riverfront Project
95% Occupancy downtown in regards to businesses
Massive plans for I-88 industrial project
Named a Tree City USA community
Public Transportation
Undergone streetscape project in our downtown area (more to come)
Tourism Board
One of the more progressive cities in northern Illinois

Urge the Task Force to look at what is the best thing for this community.

Q: Is there anything that we should be looking at specifically?

Mayor Jim Burke: You have really reached out and spoken with many communities, maybe speak with the former Mayor of Rock Falls.

Q: What does Rock Falls have?

A: Default form of government.

Comment: One of the negatives of the commission form that the whole city leadership can change at election time. We have to look at what will the next Mayor bring.

Mayor Jim Burke: That is correct. The mayor that is elected brings the expertise that he/she has. This form of government is not set-up as a strong mayor. Shawn Ortgiesen was a quasi-city administrator.

Q: Is there any desire to institute a PLEDGE that will support the City Administrator or culture in the city from a council member point of view?

Comment: ILCMA requires City Administrators and City Managers to operate under a strict code of ethics.

Comment: Looking at the East Peoria model where the City Administrator and officials together sign the Code of Ethics.

Comment: From most of the interviewees we've heard time again that it is all about the people – elected and hired.

Q: With an administrator, do you think the job description will direct you in your hiring process?

Mayor Jim Burke: Job description sets expectations. Every member of the city council is involved with hiring the City Administrator.

Q: Why would you want the GTF to come back with a rec of commission form of government?

Comm. David Blackburn: The voters had spoken that they wanted to stay with the commission form of government in 1991 instead of moving toward a City Manager. We do now have Department Head Meetings used to inform city leaders and coordinate efforts throughout the city. Shawn seemed to gravitate more toward the coordination of projects and departments in the city.

Q: Is it the council's intention that to hire for that position?

Comm. David Blackburn: It's about what the citizen's want.

Comment: SVM ran a poll asking, "Has the time arrived for the city to hire a Professional City Manager?" 77% have voted YES.

Comm. Jeff Kuhn: My question is for the public. Do they understand the difference between an administrator and a manager?

I believe the commission form of government is a good form. I see it working. People do not see what is happening on a daily basis. They see the headlines. They don't see that we have totally renovated the Finance Department.

The Commission Form of government is very responsive to the people. It's a way to be closer to the people. It's about what the people want.

I attend the Department Head Meetings anytime that I can. I see the departments are working together. This form of government allows us the possibility of working close together.

I'm in favor of an administrator coming into to help. This person is going to be key to going forward. We have to really make sure that the process of getting an administrator is done right.

The question was asked, "Why did the council create the GTF?" We need to get something done. The Commission form of government is working...we just need to fine tune.

I would like to address one of the negative sides of a commission form of government, which is that you can get a new council every four years. I would like to remind people that a changing government happens every four years on a national level.

My feeling is that a manager running the city would take the commissioners from fully knowing what is happening in the department they are charged with overseeing.

Q: How long did it take for you to come up to speed?

A: Several months. There was not a training program to acclimate us to the positions take we took. An orientation is needed.

Q: You said that hearing from citizens and being responsive is a positive aspect of the Commission Form of government. This could lead to the squeaky wheel being heard first and foremost. Does that serve all citizens?

Mayor Jim Burke: As Mayor and Commissioners we have to do what is the best thing for the city? An example of this is the Tree Commission. We have received many requests from people to cut down perfectly healthy trees and we deny their requests. You can't always please people.

Comment: Is there anything that is like the City of Dixon's as far as form of government? Dixon School District Board (public) and KSB (private), both have invested in managers and both are working very well.

Comment: It has been addressed in a previous meeting that we should not call the person the city hires a facilitator – a professional wants the acclamation. The city may not get the type of professional it is looking for.

Mayor Jim Burke: To bring us back to a question that was previously asked, "Why was the GTF created?" It was essential for the city that it was created. It was imperative that an independent board was taking a look at the different forms of government and making a recommendation.

Comment: We want to make sure that we know what your expectations are and what you see is your recommendation, and to know your thoughts about the current form.

Comm. Colleen Brechon: I totally agree with Jeff. We have been very involved in the business of the city. Training is critical. In the future we need to make sure that candidates are more informed. Education and background make a better council.

I think that the citizens need to be more informed about the candidates that they are voting on. The City of Dixon doesn't realize the exceptional council that it has currently.

Comment: Our decision isn't going to be made in regards to our current situation. It will not be based on the people that are currently sitting in the council positions.

Comment: We haven't heard much about the expertise a professional brings to the table.

Q: Do you want the City Administrator to wear multiple hats?

Mayor Jim Burke: No.

Q: What's the process in creating the City Budget?

Comm. Jeff Kuhn: I work closely with Michael Stichter, the Street Superintendent, to put a dollar amount to the items that the street department needs and the projects that need to be completed. The items and projects are then submitted to Paula, and the process of balancing the budget begins.

Comm. Colleen Brechon: I have about the same process with the Superintendents in the department that I oversee. I sat with them and discussed priorities. Everyone was looking at a 5 year plan – we looked at seeing what could be put-off and the department's needs were immediately. It's a very involved process. Not a pleasurable project but one that has to be taken care of.

Q: Does the Commission Form of government make budget process easier?

A: An administrator would help this process along.

Q: At the end of the process that you are involved (hiring an interim City Administrator), will the decision of the GTF impact the decision of a current CA?

Mayor Jim Burke: The City Administrator that we will be recruiting will know what the opportunity entails.

Public Comment:

Li Arellano: 518 E. 2nd Street

Would like for the GTF to focus on finding a government that represents the citizens as much as possible.

The city does need professionalism in the city government, it's a matter of how much power do they have.

My recommendation would be to have a City Administrator by ordinance with a Mayor/Council form of government. The department heads should be running their departments.

Jill Polivka: 186 Grand Oaks Ln.

Code of Ethics is good, however policies are where we need to focus along with a system of checks and balances.

This is the time for change. There needs to be accountability within the city.

We need to get it out to the community. Many citizens are uninformed about the city's government.

John Colada 733 S. Chesnut, Kewanee, IL.

Gave difference between a City Administrator and a City Manager.

The problem with the commission form of government is that commissioners get too involved with the day-to-day activities.

Comment: Is it fair to ask, "If we had a different form, would we have done better?"
In regards to what Dixon has accomplished under the Commission Form of government.

Q: Is there another question that we should be asking?

A: No. I think that the TF is doing a great job so far.

Plans for next meeting:

Speak with Attorney Rob Lesage – July 10 at 9am.

Adjournment:

Bill Wadsworth moved to adjourn with a second from Jack Schrauth. Unanimously approved.