



City of Columbia Falls
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Columbia Falls, MT 59912
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Columbia Falls Study Commission Workshop Minutes June 18, 2025

Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 5:10 pm by Chairman Piper.

Roll Call: Present: Study Commissioners Hopkins, Konopatzke, Nicosia and Piper. Also present: City Manager Hanks.

Visitors/Public Comment: None

Approval of Minutes: Konopatzke made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, second by Hopkins, motion carried with all members voting in favor.

Discussion:

Self Governance/Call for a Public Hearing

The Commission thoroughly discussed the self-governance issue as reviewed in the workshop with Dan Clark in May. Hopkins wished to pursue self-governing powers to provide the city council with another tool in their toolbox if needed in the future. Konopatzke reported on other cities with self-governing powers. Nicosia reported that she too had researched the question and did not find anything that stood out at this time, such as adding the Juneteenth holiday, something the legislature has not done.

Konopatzke and Hopkins were in favor of recommending to the Council to submit to the voters the question of adopting self-governing powers. Nicosia noted the difficulty that Havre had in passing self-governing powers, finally passing on the 5th election submitting the question to the voters; elections are expensive, and Nicosia was not in favor of holding an election just for the sake of holding an election without an apparent need for the self-governing powers. Nicosia also noted that the last few legislative sessions have seen considerable additions limiting self-governing powers. Piper noted that pursuant to state law, 7-3-149, MCA, the council calls for the election.

After additional discussion, Konopatzke made a motion to draft the tentative report recommending to the city council a future election on the matter and formally amending the Study Commission's original timeline to accommodate the additional study on self-governing powers by calling for the public hearing in September, 2025, adopting final report in October and holding the final meeting in November and publishing the final report, motion seconded by Hopkins, motion carried with all members voting in favor. Nicosia volunteered to draft the final report for review by the Commission at the regular July meeting.

City Manager Hanks reported on receiving an invoice for \$1,240 for Local Government Center Dan Clark's participation in the May workshop. The invoice was surprising as the Commission originally understood from Commissioner Hopkins that Mr. Clark stated that he would already be in the area for full workshops in other cities and that he could just stop in for a shortened Columbia Falls Study Commission discussion. During event coordination with the City Manager and Hopkins, Mr. Clark did not disclose any fees or any expectation that Columbia Falls would incur equal cost-sharing of expenses with the cities hosting full workshops.

Adjourn: Meeting Duly adjourned at 6:42 pm.

Chair