

**Kootenai County**  
**Optional Forms of Government**  
**Study Commission**

Meeting Minutes  
Monday, May 26, 2021  
5:30 p.m.

451 N. Government Way  
Administration Building, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Room 1A/B

**Commission Members Present:** Kristen Wing, Tamara Bateson, Bob Fish, Dave Botting, Brian Cleary, David Levine, Kurt Andersen, Bryant Bushling, Phil Ward, and alternates Joan Genter, Cheri Zao, and Bruce Mattare.

**I. Call Meeting to Order:**

Chair Dave Botting called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

**II. Approval of the Agenda / Changes to the Agenda**

There were no proposed changes to the agenda. Motion was made by Bryant Bushling to approve the agenda as submitted. The motion was seconded by Kurt Andersen. The motion was approved by a show of hands.

**III. Address From The Chair – Commission Purpose**

Chair Botting outlined the role of the study commission, the type of options that can be considered, and provided a list of fourteen questions that may be used to guide the discussions.

**IV. Announcements**

- a. **Roster Completion:** Communication Manager Nancy Jones noted that a roster was circulating to give all commission members. She asked everyone to provide an email address and phone number to be distributed to other commission members.
- b. **Microphone Usage:** Chair Botting indicated that he received feedback that the public could not hear the discussions that were being held during the last meeting. He explained that the microphones are directional and that it is important to hold the microphone close to the mouth and speak directly into it.
- c. **Time Crunch:** Chair Botting explained that the commission has a limited time to complete the study and provide recommendations. He suggested that, due to the statutory time limitations, it might be necessary to establish time limits for discussion of each agenda item. The objective was not to limit members' abilities to contribute to discussions but, rather, to make the most efficient use of time. Chair Botting provided time estimates for the remaining agenda items and agreed to include suggested time limits for future agenda items.

## V. **Approval of Minutes**

Chair Botting requested the minutes be revised to reflect the correct meeting start time of 5:02 p.m. No other changes to the minutes were requested. A motion to approve the amended meeting minutes of May 17, 2021, was made by Dave Levine and seconded by Bob Fish. All voted aye by a show of hands.

## VI. **Reports**

- a. **Brian Cleary – Preliminary Schedule:** Mr. Cleary explained the preliminary plan and timeframes were based on the need to finalize the recommendations within a one-year period. The first phase of the plan was for information gathering. The next phases included discussion, action, and writing/finalizing stages. He reviewed the weekly tasks within each phase and stressed the potential importance of including a public education phase. Highlights included a discussion of the allowed parameters of the Idaho Code related to the optional forms of government, a review of the duties and obligations of the various county officials (along with interviews with those currently serving in those roles), and potential interviews with the current county commissioners, academic professionals with knowledge of the topic, political leaders (such as from the Idaho Association of Counties or city leaders) and/or central committee leaders, and county leadership team members, such as Finance Director Dena Darrow. The group discussed the benefits of this plan and made several suggestions. Several members expressed concern with having the primary public input segment after the completion of the commission recommendations. The members, as a whole, were in favor of requesting public input throughout the process. Other suggestions included finding proactive ways to get information to the public, reviewing the list of potential people to interview (to potentially include prior commission members and elected officials from when the 1996 study was done), and the need to remain flexible as the commission moves forward. Tentative agreement was reached with regard to the timing for the first set of interviews. Mr. Cleary asked if research could be done into a possible financial analysis that was done as part of the 1996 study. Ms. Jones agreed to research this question.
- b. **Staff – Status of BOCC Administrative Meetings:** Ms. Jones provided a summary of the public meetings the county commissioners held in 2020. She noted that, in addition to the 348-public meetings, the commissioners also held meetings with county employees and outside groups (and that there were fewer meetings than usual in the Spring due to COVID closures). The report was requested as a tool for understanding the amount of administrative work being handled by the county commissioners (for future consideration of a county manager/county executive discussion). Tamara Bateson suggested that the group's primary objective should be to consider what, if any, changes would benefit the county, overall, not just the county commissioners. It was acknowledged that one available option to the group would be to recommend no change to the current county structure. Ms. Jones provided a list of the county department and program descriptions, division and department managers, elected officials, and collaborative department managers.

## **VII. Old Business**

Current County Structure (Tabled 5/17/21); Item was deferred to a future date (unspecified).

## **VIII. New Business**

A motion was made by Kurt Andersen to move agenda item 8C (Preliminary Schedule Discussion) for discussion prior to discussing item 8A (Bylaw Discussion) while waiting for copies of Mr. Cleary's proposed bylaws to be made. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bushling. All voted aye by a show of hands.

### **a. Preliminary Schedule and Plan of Attack:**

1. There was significant discussion regarding the importance of gathering public comment. There was consensus that public comment would become increasingly valuable after the study commission initiated public outreach to give the public better context about the purpose of the study commission and to encourage comments related to the available options detailed in statute as the commission, itself, gains better understanding of the benefits and drawbacks of those various options. Mr. Cleary recommended using public opinion polls as one tool for public feedback. Chair Botting, Ms. Bateson, and Mr. Andersen expressed concern regarding online polling not reaching a broad enough section of the community and stressing the importance of looking for public comment from as large a section of the community as possible.
2. It was determined that a review and discussion of the Idaho code regarding alternate forms of government should be on the June 2nd agenda. Mr. Cleary agreed to develop a document to consider as part of that discussion.
3. The commissioners agreed to schedule members of the 1996/97 Study Commission to attend the June 9<sup>th</sup> meeting. If that date is not convenient, the backup date would be June 23<sup>rd</sup>. The County Commissioners would be invited to attend the June 9<sup>th</sup> meeting should the 1996/97 Study Commission members be unavailable. Final decision will be made at the June 2nd meeting.

A recess was called at 7:05 p.m. The commission reconvened at 7:12 p.m.

### **b. Study Commission Bylaws**

1. **Template:** Chair Botting noted that the template document provided by Mr. Cleary was based on the state statute with minor exceptions.
2. **Proposed Changes:** Mr. Cleary drafted a proposal based on the template but expanded it to include other items. The following primary changes were proposed:
  - a) Article IV Membership Section 3- delete the sentence regarding the removal of a commissioner by a two-thirds vote.
  - b) Article VIII Meetings Section 2- remove once a week on Wednesday or as otherwise and replace with as scheduled.
  - c) Article X Amendments- no change. A majority of commissioners requested not to change the majority vote to seventy-five percent.

There was discussion about best practices for voting among commission members and the number of absences that should be allowed prior to approaching the Board of Commissioners regarding potential removal for non-attendance. Other minor changes and formatting of the document were tentatively approved for final consideration. Mr. Cleary stated he would make the changes and distribute a revised document prior to the next meeting.

- c. **List of Potential Candidates for Interviews:** The members discussed the list of potential candidates included in Mr. Cleary's document and other candidates (such as county leadership team and staff members). The group decided to remain flexible and to finalize interview plans several weeks out depending on what information is needed. Kristen Wing offered to do research on cities and counties with varied forms of government similar to those allowed by Idaho law and report back to the group on her findings. It was determined that everyone would create a list of potential interview candidates so a comprehensive list of possible individuals could be discussed in an upcoming meeting.

#### **IX. Items for Next Meeting Agenda**

- a. Approval of Bylaws
- b. Discussion of Communication Strategy
- c. Discussion of Idaho Code Regarding Optional Forms of Government

#### **X. Adjournment**

Mr. Levine moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Fish seconded the motion. The vote was taken. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Nancy Jones, Deputy Clerk