

**Town of Ennis
Local Government Study Commission
January 2, 2025 2pm
Madison Valley Public Library**

1. **Meeting opened** at 2:04pm by Brittney Hirsch
2. **Roll call:** Brittney Hirsch (serving as interim chair), Lisa Roberts (interim secretary), Kelly Elser. Others present: Karen Ketchu, Cory Hardy (Town of Ennis Commissioner), Bayley Gibson
3. **Public Comment on Non-agenda items:** NONE
4. **Public Comment on Agenda items:** NONE
5. **Meeting minutes 12/19/2024:** Elser motion to approve. Roberts seconded. Discussion: correct spelling of Bayley Gibson. Motion approved.
6. **New Business:**
 - a. **Ex-Officio recommendation.** Montana Statute requires an Ex-Officio (non-voting member) be appointed to the Ennis Local Gov't Study Commission by the Town of Ennis Commission. Karen Ketchu has volunteered for the position. Motion to approve the recommendation of Karen Ketchu as Ex-Officio to the Town of Ennis Commission made by Elser, seconded by Roberts. Motion approved.
 - b. **Appointment of Presiding Officer.** Motion made by Roberts to Approve Elser as presiding officer. Hirsch seconded. Discussion: Elser made the point that Hirsch and Roberts were elected and he only appointed. Being that the presiding officer only votes in special circumstances he thought that Hirsch and Roberts should be the regular voting members. That paired with his experience with parliamentary procedure he would make a good presiding officer, Hirsch and Roberts agreed. Motion approved.
 - c. **Appointment of Secretary:** Hirsch made the motion to approve Lisa Roberts as secretary. Elser seconded. Discussion: Roberts asked if the format of the minutes from the first meeting were satisfactory and if they were she would be willing to be the secretary. Everyone agreed the minutes were sufficient. Motion approved.
 - d. **Timeline for Ennis local government study commission:** Statute requires a timeline of the Study Commission to be published within 90 days of the first meeting. Any recommendations would need to be to Madison County Election Clerk 85 days before election. The Town of Ennis Commissioners also have to approve any recommended ballot measure. With this in mind the study commissioners determined that the Final Report should be adopted by June 30, 2025. At the last meeting the study commissioners determined a tentative schedule of meetings. Using that as a guideline the commissioners with the help of the public suggested that the following timeline be taken under consideration at the January 13, 2025 meeting.

February 20, 2025 1st Public Hearing-information gathering
June 5, 2025 Draft/tentative report compiled
June 18, 2025 2nd Public hearing on final report. Meeting to consider adoption of final report.

More discussion was had regarding the correct timing of advertising public hearings. Karen Ketchu will update Town of Ennis google calendar with Study Commission meetings and important dates. *Roberts made the motion to continue this agenda item at the 1/13/2025 meeting. Elser seconded. Motion approved.*

- e. **Public Engagement Strategy:** Much discussion was had on how to efficiently and effectively reach the public of all demographics to gather information and engage them in the process. Ideas presented were: asking the Town for an information tab on the town's official website, mailing a postcard to all Town of Ennis residents, having a FAQ about the local government review study commission, serving refreshments at open house-style public hearings, surveys, ask the town to post information and meetings on the town's facebook page, create a flyer to take to local businesses and community organizations, newspaper ads/articles/post in events section, brochure, and ask to be apart of the Town of Ennis notification system.

The question was asked what is the scope of the study commission and if interviewing past /present employees and elected officials would be appropriate. It was determined that the question should be asked of Dan Clark of the Local Government Center. Ketchu will contact the Madisonian in regards to advertising. It was also mentioned that some of the advertising budget should be retained to educate voters on the ballot measures, if any are proposed. Roberts and Ketchu to work on designs for mailer, flyer, etc to be presented at the 1/13/2025 meeting. *Roberts made the motion to continue the agenda item at the next meeting. Hirsch seconded. Motion approved.*

7. Old Business

- a. **Rules and Procedures:** Bylaws were approved and adopted at the 12/19/2024 meeting. A copy was emailed to the mayor asking for legal review as recommended by MSU Local Government Center. There has been no correspondence from the Town regarding legal review.
- b. **Budget for Study Commission** was approved on 12/19/2024 and electronically submitted to the Town of Ennis on 12/20/2024. Official budget form needs to be signed by Elser and Roberts.
- c. **Request for information from the Town of Ennis:** A request for audits and a list of elected/appointed officials since 2016 was made to the Town of Ennis. Deputy Clerk Brennah Bench has been very helpful in supplying this information. The list of elected/appointed officials was determined from the budget submission

forms and may not be complete. A request to Paula Mackenzie County Clerk and Recorder has been made to confirm the list.

From the audits supplied Roberts made a table of the audit findings for each year 2016-2023. The table clearly shows that audit findings over that timeframe have increased and the Audit finding of Segregation of Duties is present every year with no attempt at resolution. The question raised with these findings is: are there gaps in continuity, transparency, effectiveness, efficiency and accountability in the current form of government and if so, can that be corrected with a different form of government?

The different forms of government were discussed. And examples of each given:
Commission-Executive (Ennis current form)
Commission-Manager (School boards form of government)
Commission-Presiding Officer (Town of Virginia City and Broadus only 2 with this form)
Commission (Madison County)
Town Meeting
Charter

It is the study commissions charge to determine if our current form is the best option for our community or if another form would serve the residents of Ennis.

8. **Commission Correspondence:** Roberts will contact Dan Clark to clarify the scope of work available to the study commission. It was then brought up that scheduling the community forum with the Local Government Center would be a good choice too. Discussion was had as to when in the process it would be most advantageous to have Dan Clark and Ashley Kent facilitate the community forum. The study commissioners with the help of others present came to a consensus that having MSU-Local government center come for the second public hearing would be the best use of their expertise.
9. **Next meeting is January 13, 2025 @ 6pm** at the Madison Valley Public Library Community room. Agenda items proposed: Timeline of Ennis Local Government Commission Study, Public Engagement Strategy, Scope and depth of work, Survey and Interview questions.
10. **Meeting adjourned:** Roberts moved to adjourn. Elser seconded. Motion approved and meeting adjourned at 4:06pm

Approved

Date: 1/15/25

Signed: Kelly Elser