

BLUAC Steering Committee
November 10, 2005 Minutes

In attendance: Sue Hanson, Shelley Gonzales, Doug Averill, Buz Meyer, Don Loranger, Elna Darrow, Janet Loranger, Paul Guerrant, Edd Blackler, Nat O'Farrell, Paul Mutascio, Russ Miller, Julie Cassetta, Clarice Ryan, Gil Coutts, Liz Coutts, David E. Reynolds, Relda Castles, Jerry Thornburg, Beth Morgenstern, Katie Brown, Pat Wagner, Craig Wagner, Brett Thuma, Tom Reynolds, Gary Ridderhoff, John Bourquin, Denise Lang, Mary Jo Naïve, Chuck Gough, Leslie Budewitz, George Darrow, Dennis Yarbrough, Dr Ken Weaver, Judy Mathre (MSU)

The meeting was held at Flathead Lake Lodge. Dr. Ken Weaver and Judy Mathre from Montana State University gave a workshop on governmental options for unincorporated communities. Dr. Weaver first asked each member in the group to identify their highest concern. From this list, he divided the concerns into categories:

1. Control of destiny/autonomy
2. Control of services – management of infrastructure
3. Local accountability – Security, responsiveness, \$ input/output, building permitting
4. Land Use Planning – preservation of environment, pro-active, uncontrolled development, slow down growth, control of zoning & density, maintain unique village atmosphere, ownership of growth plan, local planning board with authority.

He then asked the group to vote for the two categories most important to the individual. The most votes (33) went to #4, second majority (19) was #1.

Dr. Weaver explained to the group that to achieve control of destiny and land use planning the only avenue is establishing a municipal entity. The two other options available are a Zoning District (BLUAC) or Community Council (Lakeside) which are advisory only entities still governed by the county.

The question of establishing a separate county was discussed as an alternative. In order to form a new county in Montana, it takes legislative action in which 2/3 of the residents in the counties involved (in this case Lake and Flathead Counties) must agree. Dr. Weaver suggested that this was not likely to happen.

To the subject of incorporation, there are four classifications of incorporated entities:

1. Town – less than 1,000 population
2. Class 3 – 1,000 to 5,000 population
3. Class 2 – 5,000 to 10,000 population
4. Class 1 – over 10,000 population

Population is determined by totals in a square mile. In order to incorporate, the area (square mile) must contain 500 in population determined by either federal census or an actual house-to-house count of legal residents.

Dr. Weaver than estimated the cost of running a town (less than 1,000 population) to be approximately \$275,000 annually of general fund for public safety, administration, parks, streets, public works, city court, insurance and a consulting attorney. He estimated a net increase of 80 mills over what we pay Flathead county now, keeping in mind that residents in towns must still pay the county for certain services.

Revenue generating avenues for towns are funds raised by fines, gas tax (street maintenance only), and resort tax. At question was how liquor and gambling taxes would be apportioned since SB 124 set the formula for incorporated entities in existence at the time the bill was passed and does not define apportionment for subsequent incorporated bodies. It was noted that an area need not be incorporated to qualify for a resort tax.

The process for incorporation is as follows:

1. Petition – 300 signatures or 2/3 of registered voters to the Secretary of State.
2. Establish a map with boundaries with in the density requirements. This is established by federal census numbers or the county commissioners may choose to appoint a person to take an actual census.

3. Develop a self-governing charter that defines wards (with boundaries) and the number of council members, mayor, etc.
4. This must be accomplished at least 75 days before election dates, followed by an election of mayor and councilmen.

Buz Meyer expressed special thanks on behalf of the Steering Committee membership for the generosity of Elna Darrow, Katie Brown and Denise Lang for contributing \$600 toward defraying the expenses of the MSU Local Government Group.

Old Business:

The next meeting, November 17, 2005, will be held at Bethany Lutheran Church and will include establishing guidelines and sub-committees for continuing the process of updating the Bigfork Land Use Plan.

The committee expresses a heart felt Thanks!! to Doug Averill for providing the Flathead Lake Lodge as a meeting place and all of the members who brought the wonderful food to help sustain us.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:20 PM

Sue Hanson
Secretary