

# LINCOLN COUNTY STUDY COMMISSION

## SUMMARY REPORT of the LINCOLN COUNTY STUDY COMMISSION

In June of 1984 you, the voting public, determined that you would have a government review study commission.

The purpose of the government review commission is to review the current form and structure of county government and evaluate whether that form or one of five other forms provided by state law will best and most economically provide necessary governmental services at the county level. This review process required analysis of the current form of government, of optional forms, of social and economic trends, and county government cost, to mention a few.

Since January 1985 we have, with occasional exceptions, held a weekly Tuesday night meeting. During these meetings we have familiarized ourselves with and debated over the possible forms of county government, the general economic trends of Lincoln County, the interaction of state, federal, and local government, and numerous actions and policies of our county officials and departments. We have also conducted interviews with informed state officials, elected and appointed county government officials, and numerous citizens.

From the review process we determined the current form of government:

1. is conservatively effective
2. is financially sound and relatively inexpensive to taxpayers
3. appears to have inefficiencies within role offices and courthouse operations
4. shows excessive growth in some departments
5. is overly dependent on state legislation
6. is unlikely to adjust adequately to political or economic crisis

Other findings include:

1. The citizens of Lincoln County are concerned about their economic future and many look toward county government to take an active role in economic development.
2. Partisan elections within Lincoln County are decided at the primary rather than the general election, thus reducing political debates and general public awareness of candidates and issues.
3. The general citizenry is unfamiliar with county government and seldom becomes involved in county issues.

4. The local media does not cover county issues as well as possible.

5. There is currently a lack of understood community direction.

Because of the above listed findings the Lincoln County Study Commission is recommending a change to a commission-manager type of government, as defined within the charter form. We feel that this commission-manager type of government will provide separation of powers. The charter form will enable government to be more responsive to local issues and more flexible in handling today's rapidly changing social and economic situations.

The commission will be the legislative branch of county government. They will set county policies. The commissioners will set county budget and elected officials salaries. The commission will consist of 3 members who will serve part-time.

The commission, which currently suffers interdepartmental pressures of administration, will as a legislative branch be less affected by internal policies which are both more responsive to the needs of the people of Lincoln County and are less costly to administer.

The manager shall administer county government. He will coordinate elected offices, directly oversee appointed departments, prepare budgets in conjunction with elected department heads and present these budgets to the commission for approval. He will see that the mandates of this charter and the policies of the commission are carried out by all departments of government. The manager shall be a professional representative to interact with state, federal, and private entities. The manager will in general, supervise all entities administered by the current county commission and perform all other duties required of the new commission. (See the chart for comparisons of the current form of county government and the proposed form.)

Other significant changes:

The charter provides for a law enforcement review committee. This committee will provide a citizen group to review policies, personnel, and expenditures of county law enforcement.

There will also be an economic advisory board. This group shall make the commission aware of economic needs and desires within the county. They will also recommend economic policies to the county commissioners.

The charter provides for non-partisan elections, because we feel that candidates running for office on issues, rather than

party ties would create greater public involvement.

Reapportionment, which was addressed in the preliminary report, is provided for within the charter, as required by state law.

The transition from the present form of county government to the charter form of government, shall take place over a 2 year period beginning January 1987 to January 1989. During this transition the full-time commission, with its vast experience, shall remain in control of county government; define duties of each office or department of county government; propose for amendment by resolution any changes required of the charter; and generally establish the new form of government to a fully functional and operational entity. In November of 1988, new part-time commissioners will be elected and the charter form of county government will be fully implemented for Lincoln County.

The principal costs of changing from the existing form of county government to this charter form will be incurred in the transition period.

Hiring a manager and retaining the present full-time commissioners will be the main concern. The charter states that the manager shall not take office until July 1987, thus preventing any addition to the present budget and allowing time to include the manager expense in the preparation of the 87/88 budget.

The new part-time commissioners will be elected in November 1988, thus eliminating the full-time commissioners salaries, which will compensate for the hiring of a manager.

A copy of the completed Final Report will be published with the next edition of this paper. Also copies will be available at the Lincoln County Courthouse and Annex Building.

We encourage your review of this report, as the question of adopting this alternative form of government will be placed on the ballot November 4, 1986.

Respectfully submitted,

*Robert B. Spiker*

*Ronald L. Bunell*

*Ray E. Hedahl*

Lincoln County Study Commissioners

CHARACTERISTIC	PRESENT FORM	PROPOSED FORM	COMMENTS
Form of Government	Commission form Merges legislative, administrative and executive functions in commission.	Charter form with commission-manager structure. Elected commission determines policy. Manager hired to administrate policy.	Separation of legislative and administrative responsibilities. Manager appointed on basis of experience and training.
Powers	General government powers State law defines what government may do and specifically how it shall do it. Little power to pass ordinances.	Self-government powers County government shall exercise any power which the state does not deny. Legislative power vested in the commission.	Self-government powers bring to the county the right to act in its own best interest, and great flexibility in shaping government structure.
Governing Body Size Election Term  Presiding Officer  Duties	3 commissioners nominated by district, elected at large. Full-time  Partisan 6 year overlapping terms  Chairman-elected from own members Commission is responsible for executive and many administrative functions. Administrative powers are shared with other elected officials.	3 commissioners nominated by district, elected at large. Part-time.  Non-partisan 4 year overlapping terms  Chairman-elected from own members Commission is the legislative policy making body. Hires a professional manager to administer all non-elected departments and coordinate elected departments.	District representation assures the commission viewpoints from all sections of the county. At-large commission will offer county-wide perspective.  Shorter terms would make commission more responsive to voters.  Frees commission from administration responsibilities to concentrate on policy-making role.
Other Elected Officials	9 elected officials: Clerk & Recorder County Attorney Sheriff Treasurer  Public Admin. Assessor Clerk of Court Coroner Super of Schools	7 elected officials: Clerk & Recorder County Attorney Sheriff Treasurer  Assessor Super. of Schools Clerk of Court	Manager would coordinate various functions with the elected officials creating a more uniform and efficient direction to all county functions.
Chief Administrative Officer	None Administrative responsibility shared by commissioners, elected officials, and various boards	County Manager Directs and supervises the administration of all non-elected departments. Coordinates functions with elected officials.	Clear lines of authority and responsibility. Oversees budget preparation for all county offices. Better overall direction is possible.
Appointment Powers	Commission appoints non-elected department heads, members of boards, commissions, and special districts.	Commission appoints and removes county manager, members of boards and commissions. County Manager appoints and removes all non-elected department heads and employees. Temporary advisory committees.	Department heads appointed on basis of qualifications. Responsible to county manager.
Budget Preparation	Clerk & Recorder prepares budget with officials and departments. Modified and/or approved by the commission.	Manager prepares budget. Commission modifies and/or approves	Manager can balance priorities set by commission with available county-wide resources, also balance needs of individual departments with overall needs and resources of county.
Service Delivery Structure	Performed by elected offices and appointed boards, commissions, and special districts.	County activities could be grouped into a few departments on basis of function. Services under supervision of county manager.	Many functions now performed by independently elected offices or substantially independent boards would be under supervision of a professional manager and commission control.