

Minutes of a meeting of the Term Limit Advisory Committee held on Tuesday, March 3, 2020 in the Legislative Conference Room, 5th Floor, Hazlett Building, Elmira, New York.

Members present: L. Thomas Sweet (Chairman), Joseph Brennan, Michael Smith, Peggy Woodard.

The Chairman of the Committee, L. Thomas Sweet, called the meeting to order at 3:45 p.m.

Motion by Mr. Brennan to approve the minutes of the February 25, 2020 Term Limit Advisory Committee meeting as submitted. Motion seconded by Mrs. Woodard. Motion Carried.

Mr. Smith shared information he gathered through a conversation with the Clerk of the Board of Legislators and County Administrator, Michael Zurlo regarding the effect that term limits have had on Clinton County. Mr. Smith noted that Clinton County is not a Charter County. In 1968, Clinton County changed from a Board of Supervisors to a Board of Legislators. At that time term limits were supposed to have been initiated, however, there was never a “push” to impose them. Term limits, with staggered, four-year terms were imposed in 1996. Mr. Zurlo stated that there are pros and cons to term limits. He noted that term limits reduce stagnation through the eventual elimination of Legislators who have served “too long” and are “no longer effective”. They provide the opportunity for new blood and fresh ideas. However, it can be difficult to find good people to run, and good people (minds) are forced to step down. Ultimately, the voters should be the ones who get to choose their representation.

Mr. Brennan contacted the Chairman of the Herkimer County Legislature. Chemung County and Herkimer County are relatively close in population and number of Legislators (Herkimer County has 17 Legislators), although Herkimer is not a Charter county. He noted that Herkimer County does not have term limits (except for the Chairman of the Legislature who serves a one-year term). He noted that years ago, there was a group that wanted to change to an Executive form of government but the general population has resisted changes to their county government. They are a conservative, upstate county and term limits run contrary to the principles of Conservatism.

Mr. Sweet stated that he is adamantly against term limits. He feels that term limits take away the rights (liberties) of the voters and move us one-step closer to Socialism. He would argue that term limits are not necessary to ensure “new blood” and “fresh ideas” as seven new Chemung County Legislators were elected in 2018, four of whom beat incumbents. Mr. Sweet also feels that term limits can lead to Lame Duck status and the loss of influence of an elected official.

Mrs. Woodard referred back to her statement from the February 25th meeting, stating that the Committee has done its due diligence and proper procedures were followed in bringing the Local Law before the Multi-Services Committee where it died for lack of a second. She also feels that term limits are not effective if people can be re-elected after sitting out for one term. She does not see the point.

Mr. Smith and Mr. Brennan have agreed to contact more counties to get an analysis of the impact of term limits.

The Committee has requested that the Legislative Attorney attend the next meeting to provide an overview of Parliamentary Procedure regarding the re-introduction of a Resolution that previously failed at the Committee level.

The meeting was adjourned on the motion by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Brennan. Motion Carried.

Next meeting: Tuesday, March 10, 2020 at 3:45 p.m.