

Crestview: Qualitative Assessment of City Government & Recommendations



Presentation Objectives

- Engagement: Crestview, Studer Community Institute & Mason-Dixon Research
- Report Findings of Primary & Qualitative & Research
- Recommendations/Next Steps for Success

Engagement



● Current Engagement:

- CRA Director invited Quint Studer to speak to leadership and community.
- Quint is a North Florida businessman, author, philanthropist and founder of the **Studer Community Institute (SCI)** that focuses on community & early childhood development.
- Helped initiate and drive economic & community development progress and successful efforts to change antiquated city charter in Pensacola
- Performance measurements are key to the philosophy & success of Quint's business & philanthropic successes.
- As in Pensacola/Escambia effort, Quint & Rishy Studer funded Mason-Dixon's qualitative (leadership interviews) & quantitative research (survey of residents).

Primary Research & Consultations: Findings

- First, conducted review of statutory, legislative, political & electoral history of form of governance nationally, in Florida & Crestview.
- Consulted throughout this process with leading experts and leaders on subject matter, nationally & in Florida.
- All literature & authorities support the finding that Crestview is at great risk & should transition to 'council/manager' form of government.

Crestview Leadership Interviews: Who

- Each Elected City Officials
- Each City Department Head
- Regional Economic Development, Real Estate & Investment Professionals
- Local business leaders & groups

Summary of Findings & High Level Recommendations:

- The City of Crestview's current form of government and existing organizational structure and operations present a **substantial risk to the ethical, effective, and efficient** provision of public services and the stewardship of taxpayer funds.
- Based on a review of authoritative literature and best practices outlined by organization listed below, Crestview should adopt a 'council/manager' form of government.
 - Florida League of Cities
 - Center for Florida Local Government Excellence
 - Florida City and County Management Association
 - International City/County Management Association

Leadership Interviews: Elected City Officials

- Strong consensus as to the real and present threats and risks to the city due to the current structure and operations of the city government.
- A majority of council members endorse a change in charter to council/manager.
- Mayor endorses change in charter to council/manager.
- Substantial frustration and weariness in managing city under current structure.
- Several stated embarrassment when attending conferences and meeting with colleagues from other cities who wonder “why can’t Crestview get it’s act together.”

Leadership Interviews: Department Heads

- Each department head expressed appreciation for the current council and mayor and their belief that dedicated to doing what's best for the city, but generally, the **council is hampered by the structure and form of government**.
- Police & Fire Chief have a direct report. They are generally pleased and satisfied with their situation.
- CoP understands that having a CEO in charge is necessary for the general welfare of the city and to address issues that contribute to risks to health, safety & crime. He would prefer a strong mayor form.
- Other department heads express **anxiety and concern** about the current structure.

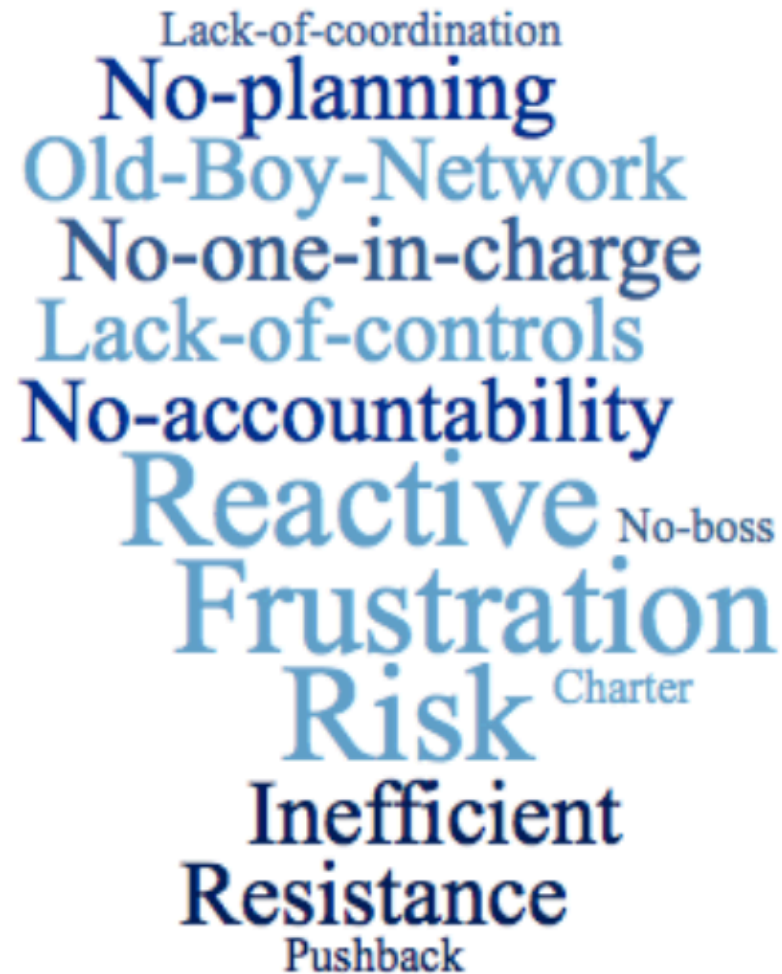
Local business leaders & groups

- Many expressed frustration with the many attempts at progress, only only to be let down, time after time.
- They see the opportunity in, and strongly endorse the CRA plans.
- They see the city governance & structure as the greatest threat to progress, their businesses long-term future and bottom-line.

Regional & State Economic Development Professionals

- When asked about the Crestview's strengths as compared to other regional jurisdictions, the **only positive thing mentioned was its location at the intersection of 2 highways.**
- There was a strong consensus that **Crestview was a "tough sell".**
- "Has a lot of potential", a euphemism for things aren't going well.

Word Cloud From Interviews



A word cloud visualization of interview data. The words are arranged in a vertical, slightly overlapping manner. The largest words are 'Reactive', 'Frustration', 'Risk', 'Resistance', 'Inefficient', 'No-planning', 'Old-Boy-Network', 'No-one-in-charge', 'Lack-of-controls', 'No-accountability', and 'Lack-of-coordination'. Smaller words include 'No-boss', 'Charter', and 'Pushback'. The colors range from dark blue to light blue.

Lack-of-coordination
No-planning
Old-Boy-Network
No-one-in-charge
Lack-of-controls
No-accountability
Reactive
Frustration
Risk
Inefficient
Resistance
No-boss
Charter
Pushback

Recommendations:

The following recommendations are made after consultations between SCI, Mason-Dixon Research and numerous professionals from organizations that include:

- Florida League of Cities
- Florida City and County Management Association
- International City and County Management Association
- Center for Florida Local Government Excellence

Recommendations:

- Ordinance: creating a 3 member Administrative Board
 - 1) Mayor, 2) Council Member, 3) Consultant, Certified City Manger by ICMA

(the authorities consulted felt that the charter change should occur immediately. Absent immediate action, establishing an administrative board with a certified city manger may be advantageous because Crestview is adopting major revisions to building code ordinances and reacting to other major issues without the benefit of staff with pertinent skill sets, education and experience.)
- Ordinance: establishing Charter Review Commission
- Adoption of “Crestview: Life, Well Run” campaign to perform outreach and educate voters & residents. (ICMA)
- Ordinance: Subsequent to the launch, implementation, penetration and increased awareness of the “Crestview: Life, Well Run” campaign, an ordinance calling for a Charter Change referendum, conducted by mail & administered by the Okaloosa County Supervisor of Elections.

Administrative Board:

- Current Crestview City Charter: *The council may by ordinance establish from time to time any boards in its discretion, which may be necessary to carry out the administrative or ministerial purposes of the council and the tenure, duties and compensation of such board or boards shall be fixed by the council and such board or boards may be abolished by the council.*

From proposed ordinance:

ADMINISTRATIVE ADVISORY BOARD Sec. X.X. - Intent.

It is the intent of the city council to create, empower, staff, and fund an administrative advisory board to **advise and make recommendations to the city council** regarding all aspects of the governance, administration and management of the city and each of its various departments. This action is taken in support the transition of an anticipated change of the current form of municipal governance to that of a city administrator/council form of governance.

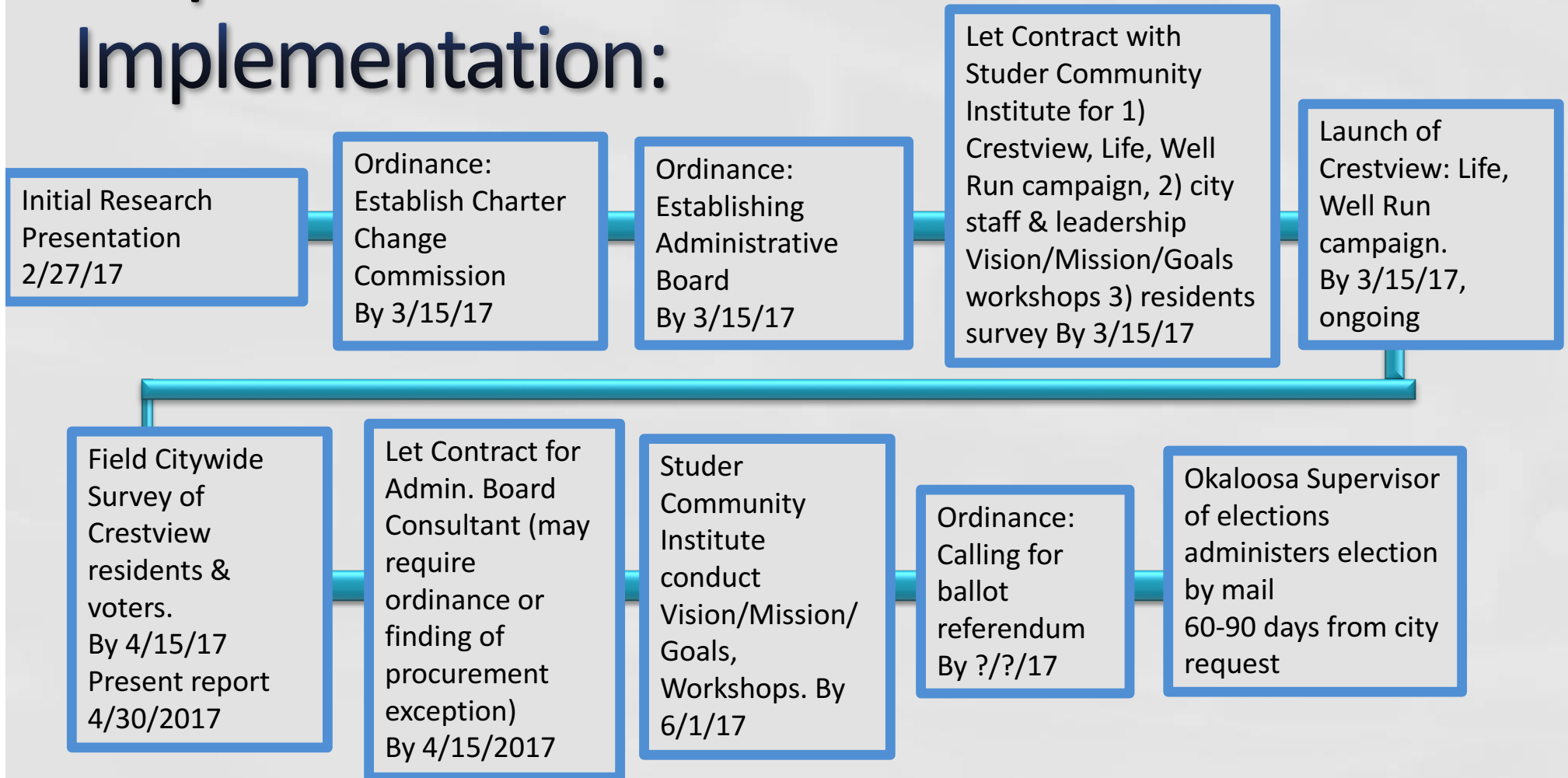
Administrative Board:

Planning for transition as a best practice:

Adoption of the council-manager form of government by ordinance generally should be considered as a temporary arrangement pending adoption by referendum of a home rule charter or the provisions of an optional state law. Some provisions of this suggested ordinance may need to be changed to accord with local custom, state law, or city charter.

Pennsylvania Municipal League

Sequence of Recommendations Implementation:



Note on scope of interviews & consultations:

In the City of Crestview, scores of interviews and meetings were held, including:

- Each city elected official
- Each city department head
- County elected officials & staff
- City business leaders & owners
- Civic activists
- Economic development professionals
- Real estate professionals and investors
- Administration & student representatives of higher education located in Crestview

Note on scope of interviews & consultations:

Outside the City of Crestview, consultations & research assistance were provided by:

- Professionals from the leading and authoritative national and state institutions whose mission and focus is the form and function of local government and the effective, efficient and ethical provision of government services.
- Regional and state economic development professionals
- Government & political academicians within and outside of Florida

About the researcher:

- **Larry Harris** is a founding (1985) principal with Mason-Dixon Polling & Research managing strategic engagements concerning a wide variety of political and public policy areas. He is a frequent commentator in the media and guest lecturers at several universities. Mr. Harris served as a senior staff member in the United States Senate for 14 years in a variety of legislative, policy, communications, and administrative positions. His staff work included committee investigations of government management, finance and reengineering. Mr. Harris served as chief of staff to the US Senate Sergeant at Arms, a \$200 million budget organization providing law enforcement, protocol, technology and infrastructure support. He is a Government & Politics graduate of the University of Maryland.

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