

**County of Granite  
Study Commission  
Granite County Courthouse Foyer  
August 27th, 2025, 6 p.m. Meeting Minutes**

Study commissioners present: Chair Bryan Senn, Vice Chair Elena Gagliano, Secretary Luke Ulatowski

Ex officio present: Blanche McLure

**CALL TO ORDER:** Senn called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance followed.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** No public comment on matters not on the agenda was received.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** The July 24th meeting minutes were presented with an amendment proposed by Gagliano noting during discussion of budget that Granite County Attorney Blaine Bradshaw had refused to represent the study commission. A draft of the Aug. 7th meeting minutes was also presented. Senn motioned to approve the minutes and Gagliano seconded. Senn and Ulatowski voted in favor while Gagliano abstained.

**CONTINUED BUSINESS**

**Workshop questions with Philipsburg study commission questionnaire - Luke Ulatowski:** Ulatowski opened a workshop going through each of the Philipsburg Study Commission's published questions sent out to all of the town's voters. They agreed to consolidate the first four questions on residency to ask if the survey recipient is a registered voter in Granite County. Gagliano stated the study commission should not exclude those unregistered to vote and instead provide those recipients the means to register if they ask for any change to government.

Questions 6 and 7 pertained to the level of the recipient's participation in local government meetings. While Ulatowski stated such participation leads to a difference in perspective, Senn stated the questions are extraneous when almost no one from the public attends the study commissions themselves. Gagliano stated there are plenty of reasons why locals might not participate in county government meetings, which Ulatowski concurred with.

Question 8 regarding people working in "city limits" was cut for being non-applicable. Question 9, recontextualized to ask if commissioners should be elected at-large, incurred debate. Addressing both that question and Question 10, recontextualized to ask if Granite should have partisan or non-partisan elections, Gagliano argued general questions like "Why did you vote for a local government review?" and "Why did you vote against a local government review?" should be asked before the study commission gets into concepts such as "at-large" or "non-partisan."

Ulatowski agreed that Gagliano's proposed questions would be good to add but argued that questions 9 and 10 are useful for their relevance to alternative forms of government - particularly, the commission form - without having to name the forms themselves. Senn concurred, while Gagliano stated such questions would be better for a later date.

Senn asked Gagliano how many sets of surveys the study commission would send out, and Gagliano responded that such questions could be discussed at future meetings once Zoom is implemented and the monthly column about the study commission in the paper is published. Senn argued that the study commission cannot expect people to attend or participate over Zoom, and Gagliano stated the study commission needs to get more people involved. Senn raised a point of order, stating the study commission does need to get more people involved, but that the notion was not pertinent to the topic at hand.

McLure raised the point that the entirety of the county votes for a commissioner in each of the three districts. She also stated her belief that if the county were to introduce at-large commissioners, it would require two additional commissioners on top of the existing three. A question about reducing government size was removed, since Granite's government is already at a near-minimum, according to McLure.

Gagliano presented the prior 2024 Granite County Study Commission's timeline for its study and compared it to Lincoln County's, stating the county is behind on milestones such as a June 18 public hearing. Senn stated, "So we need to get this survey out as quick as we can." McLure also stated an independent citizen compensation committee already exists for the county, meaning a related question could be removed. The question of "unincorporation" also proved irrelevant.

On the question of merging town and county government, Ulatowski stated the question should be asked since it is under the public eye due to the Philipsburg study commission's pushing of it. McLure and Ulatowski agreed that if the issue went to the ballot, Drummond would have to be part of a countywide vote despite not voting in its own study commission; however, the study commission would have to take into account whether or not Drummond was in favor or against through surveys first. The question will be included on the survey. Ulatowski proposed adding a question on what town the respondent is from. McLure stated precinct lists from the clerk & recorders list could accomplish this instead. Senn stated the draft survey "should err on the side of inclusion rather than exclusion."

The next questions on Philipsburg's final survey included explanations on each form of government plus an explanation of general-governing vs. self-governing powers. Ulatowski noted a number of the forms were irrelevant at the county level and that the survey ignored a nuance between elected county official form and a plain commission form that only applies to counties. He recommended drafting truncated "yes or no" questions simply explaining the defining factors of each form without having to name the form itself - for example, "Do you want a hired county manager?" or "Do you want an elected county executive like Anaconda-Deer Lodge?" Meanwhile, Senn and McLure agreed general-governing and self-governing powers

would require deeper explanation. Ulatowski recommended placing that overencompassing question first before providing the other truncated questions, and the study commission agreed.

The next page entailed questions not explicitly related to form or structure of government, instead relating to government funded services. While Ulatowski argued utilities such as roads could be impacted by whether the county commission is “weak” or “strong” and that lawsuits were active in regard to such utilities, the study commission cut the majority of the questions before deciding to hold the entire page for review by MSU Local Government Center Director Dan Clark. The commission also agreed to have Ulatowski submit his draft survey to Clark for comment.

**Review Daniels County Study Commission training procedures - Elena Gagliano:**

Gagliano stated the Granite study commission needs to catch up and that Daniels County’s Study Commission has resources available that Granite could add to its webpage, which she suggested should be improved. She stated the materials should be for public use instead of just by the study commission.

Gagliano also suggested the Granite study commission needed “more time” and an extension. When Senn pushed back, Gagliano said, “But the public should know what the hell happened before?” Senn responded, “Apparently nothing...so yes, we are starting.”

Discussion moved to the sub-item of discussing training with Clark. Senn and Gagliano both clarified they still had not been able to take the MSU study commission course due to communication and survey issues. The study commission resolved to have Senn reach out to Clark with questions, including whether Clark could potentially stop in for another in-person training session.

**Decide regular meeting location:** Ulatowski updated that a move from the courtroom to the Philipsburg library did not work out as the study commission had been forced to meet in the library’s backroom instead of its center. While the study commission had passed a motion to meet at the courtroom next time with the options of the commissions’ office or the elections office, the meeting was moved to the courthouse foyer by the clerk and recorder without further decision from the study commission.

Ulatowski and McLure agreed it would be a pointless fight going forward, while McLure noted an elevator to the third floor would soon address accessibility issues at the courtroom. The study commission resolved to meet again Sept. 24 at the courthouse, whether at the foyer or at the courtroom. Senn made the motion and Ulatowski seconded, and it passed 3-0.

**Decide preferred Zoom/livestream option and allocation within courthouse:** Ulatowski notified the study commission a year of use of Zoom would cost \$159.90 of its budget. He stated the Granite commission refused to allow the study commission use of any county account, leading him to recommend paying. Senn seconded, and the motion passed 2-0. Senn

also expressed hope the Zoom link could be placed in his monthly columns for the newspaper, and Gagliano suggested it could be posted online.

**Decide on advertising methods and allocations:** Senn asked if his monthly columns would need official votes for approval each time. Gagliano stated this would not be required unless there were a “major issue.” Ulatowski noted he and Gagliano had discussed at the prior meeting the possibility of running public notices twice prior to each meeting, which would cost \$13 for every 100 words in the first public notice and then \$11 per 100 words for any additional run. The study commission agreed to implement this with Senn in charge of communication with the paper.

Set agenda items, location, date and time for next meeting: The study commission reiterated the next meeting would take place at 6 p.m. on Sept. 24 at the Granite County Courthouse. McLure confirmed she would be absent.

Ulatowski stated for a new agenda item, he would bring back his draft of the new survey and potentially comments received from Clark. Ulatowski also recommended an agenda item on setting dates for public outreach. Senn stated this would be an issue because he has not had any training. Senn and Gagliano went on to discuss their issues with accessing the MSUE online course. Asked by Gagliano if the six-hour course was sufficient, Ulatowski stated it was. Senn suggested measures for getting both himself and Gagliano on the course.

The meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.