

Citizens' Guide to the Government Study Commission

Hazleton City Government Study Commission



**PENNSYLVANIA
ECONOMY LEAGUE**
Information, Insight, Integrity.

October/November 2025

Duties of a Government Study Commission



- Review, analyze & evaluate city government *structure*– (not an inquisition on current or past)
 - Learn about government structure and operations
 - Interview officials to determine strengths & weaknesses of current structure
- Study other governments’ structures
- Evaluate whether current government structure works in best interest of Hazleton residents
- Decide whether to recommend changes to government structure

Planned Hazleton City Government Study Commission Work



- Reviewing City's current form of government-Optional Plan B
 - Comparing City's form to other types of government structure (cities, boroughs, townships, home rule municipalities)
 - Reviewing facts and figures for the city and other towns
- Interviewing Hazleton appointed & elected officials to understand current government's strengths & weaknesses
- Interviewing appointed & elected officials of other comparable Home Rule municipalities
- Interviewing state elected officials
- Meet twice-monthly (1st & 3rd Tuesday) to review findings
 - Agendas & minutes available on-line

Planned Hazleton City Government Study Commission Work



“Municipalities shall have the right and power to frame and adopt home rule charters.” – PA Constitution, Art. IX, Section 2

- ✓ Voters created Govt Study Commission (GSC) by referendum
- ✓ Voters elected members of GSC
- GSC conducts study (9 months) – *current step*
- GSC decides whether to keep current form of government or to draft home rule charter (additional 9 months)
- Home Rule charter goes to referendum
- Voters accept or reject charter
- Transition period/ Implementation

Hazleton City Government Study Commission Interviews



Hazleton Officials

Mayor (past & present)

Council President

Council Members

Department Heads

Comparison Municipalities

HR Charters:

Altoona

Carlisle

Easton

Lancaster

Nanticoke

New Castle

Pittston

Wilkes-Barre

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Third Class Plan/Optional Plan:

Home Rule Basics



- Citizens are involved every step of the way:
 - Whether to begin the study (voted in May 2025)
 - Understanding the work of the Government Study Commission
 - Public Meetings held regularly in-person
 - Whether to approve the Commission's proposed Charter at a City-wide election
- A local Home Rule Charter shifts the authority to act on Citizens' needs from state law to a local charter
 - Without home rule – City can do only what state law permits
 - With home rule – City can do anything not prohibited

Hazleton City Government Study Commission Next Step



- At the completion of study phase, the GSC will vote on whether or not to draft a home rule charter

If YES

- Commission continues
- Has nine months to draft charter

If NO

- Commission discharged after filing a final report
- City continues to operate under current form
- No change in government form unless new election for a new Government Study Commission ⁷

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