

BUCKS COUNTY CONSORTIUM

Thursday, April 2, 2015

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order:

A meeting of the Bucks County Consortium was held at 9:00 a.m. at Northampton Township, on April 2, 2015, and called to order by Consortium President Eileen M. Bradley.

Roll Call and Introductions:

The following Bucks County communities were represented at the meeting:

Eileen M. Bradley, New Britain Township
Angela P. Benner, New Britian Township
Stephanie Teoli Kuhls, Middletown Township
John McMenamin, Lower Southampton Township
John Boyle, Yardley Borough
Herb Schoell, Upper Southampton Municipal Authority
Ann Alker, Upper Southampton Township
Jamie Gwynn, Northampton Township
Linda McNeill, Tinicum Township
Caroline Brinker, Doylestown Borough
Bob Pellegrino, Northampton Township
Stephanie Mason, Doylestown Township
Sam Bryant, Doylestown Township
Tim Tieperman, Warrington Township
Kyle Seckinger, Warwick Township
Ranee Elton, Warminster Township
Steve Wiesner, Warminster Township
Terry Fedorchak, Lower Makefield
Mike Brown, Springfield Township
Bill Wert, Dublin Borough
Bill Cmorey, Bensalem Township
Christian Jones, Warrington Township
Tim Hagey, Warminster Municipal Authority
Mike Salomon, Northampton Township
John Davis, Doylestown Borough
Greg Lippincott, West Rockhill Township
Scott Sadowsky, Northampton Township / Middletown Township
Tim Hennessey, Northampton Township / Middletown Township

Sponsors:

Brian Jeter, Comcast
Janet Steiner, Comcast
Chris Englebert, Beirne Wealth Consulting

Approval of Minutes – February 5, 2015:

Upon motion by Bob Pellegrino, seconded by Linda McNeill, the Minutes of February 5, 2015 were approved as presented.

Treasurer's Report and Payment of Bills:

Eileen Bradley reviewed the details of the Treasurer's Reports. Upon motion by Caroline Brinker, seconded by Bill Wert, the Treasurer's Report for February 2015 and March 2015 were approved as presented.

Presentation: Senator Charles McIlhinney

Ms. Bradley introduced State Senator Charles T. McIlhinney, Jr., Chair of the Senate Law and Justice Committee.

PA Budget: Senator McIlhinney discussed the Governor's proposed budget situation in Harrisburg, stating that there is a \$2 Billion deficit and the Governor proposes a \$3.5/\$4 Billion spending increase by reducing property taxes and increasing sales tax.

Liquor Reform: Senator McIlhinney stated that last session's liquor reform bill was an all-or-nothing proposal that would have allowed unlimited liquor licenses that did not pass. The proposed liquor reform bill would have only generated a one-time fee of \$650 million. However, the State has permitted e-licenses, allowing convenience stores, like Wawa and Sheetz, to obtain a partial liquor license.

Medical Marijuana: Senator McIlhinney discussed the possible legalization of medical marijuana that would allow for doctors to give prescriptions to treat certain diagnoses like epileptic seizures. The Senator believes that with states passing laws allowing medical marijuana, the Federal Government will allow research to be conducted on the benefits of medical marijuana.

Senator McIlhinney stated that there is a bill before the Senate that will make local governments exempt from Transfer Tax when purchasing a conservation easement.

PennDOT Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): Senator McIlhinney recommends that the Bucks County Consortium Executive Committee meet with Bucks County to discuss why Bucks municipalities are not being asked for projects that they would like to go on the TIP wish list. Senator McIlhinney stated he would participate in the meeting as an advocate for the municipalities.

Presentation: State Representative Kate M. Harper, Esq.

Ms. Bradley introduced State Representative Kate M. Harper, Esq., Chair of the House Local Government Committee.

Pension Reform: Representative Harper stated that part of current Pension Reform thinking is looking at raising the retirement age from 50 to 55. At age 50, defined benefits are paid out over a longer period of time. Rep. Harper also stated that urban municipalities like Wilkes Barre are in worse condition with their pensions. Rep. Harper also noted that when police officers retire from local municipalities they are eligible for social security, whereas State Police Officers cannot collect Social Security.

Act 111: Representative Harper stated that a hearing was held in Lancaster addressing concerns with arbitration, such as why an arbitrator does not have to provide a reason behind their decision. Stephanie Teoli Kuhls testified at the hearing, and gave a speech on behalf of townships and their issues with the Act 111 process. In addition, an FOP spokesperson gave testimony against reform.

Tax Collectors: Representative Harper stated that Tax Collectors were a topic during the week at the Local Government Committee. There is a bill that passed the House that makes it mandatory for Tax Collectors to have tax payment checks written out to the Tax Collector Office instead of the individual Tax Collector, regulates mandatory training for tax collectors. The bill has also provided a process for returning overpayments to the tax payers. The Local Government Committee is working on a bill that will extend the deadline for trainings, who offers the trainings, and the cost to complete training. Rep. Harper also indicated that there is a bill being

worked on that gives local municipalities the option to get rid of elected Tax Collectors and replace them with private tax collection companies.

Conservation Easement Bill: Representative Harper stated that she is hoping that the House receives the Senate Bill eliminating the transfer tax that municipalities have to pay for conservation easements.

Budget: Representative Harper stated that the public does not realize that what the Governor proposes would add sales tax to nursing homes and in-home nursing care. All the public hears is that there will be a decrease in property taxes and more education money.

Mike Brown asked why municipalities cannot use accounting firms instead of elected auditors. Bob Pellegrino stated that in many municipalities which have hired CPA firms, the elected auditors have no real duties. Rep. Harper stated that the elected auditors are to be civil watchdogs.

Presentation: State Representative Scott Petri, Esq.:

Ms. Bradley introduced State Representative Scott Petri, Chair of the House Urban Affairs Committee.

Pension Reform: Representative Petri stated that he hopes to see some of the pension reform bills make their way successfully through the General Assembly, and plans to create a task force to come up with legislation that can assist in Pension Reform. Rep. Petri stated that it is possible that there could be a mandate of who manages Pension Plans. There are three main parties that should see the pension bills: Sustainable Communities, PSATS, and Police and Fire unions. Rep. Petri concluded his pension reform discussion by stating that the state cannot have underfunded pensions. His proposed bill would be policed by the Auditor General, managed by PERC, give municipalities ten years to make their pensions solvent, require them to come up with a plan with annual benchmarks. Although this bill is not a solution, it is a way to help the problem.

Budget: Representative Petri stated that the Governor's Budget proposal would increase sales tax in Bucks County from 6% to 6.6%. Rep. Petri stated that there is a lot of public relations to do for PA residents to realize what the new budget proposals will actually do.

Presentation: State Representative Frank Farry, Esq.:

Ms. Bradley introduced State Representative Frank Farry, Chair of both the House Local Government Subcommittee on Townships and the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee on Security and Emergency Response, and serves on the House Fire Service Caucus.

Transportation Funding: Representative Farry stated that he agrees with Senator McIlhinney that limiting projects on the TIP hurts Bucks County and he would be happy to participate in the meeting with the County Commissioners.

Fire Service: Representative Farry stated that two of the main issues that the Fire Service Caucus focuses on are recruitment retention and funding. Volunteer service is going away and trending toward daytime paid firefighters. Rep. Farry wants to promote volunteer firefighters through legislation and funding. Tim Hennessey asked if the State has looked into giving tax credits to volunteer fire fighters to increase the number of volunteers. Rep. Farry stated that in 2004 the State had researched fire companies and came up with a list of possible fixes, known as SR60. One of the large problems for volunteers is they need to complete 150+ hours of training. The training is time consuming and most volunteers do not have that time available to attend trainings. The State is currently looking into having some of the training classes available online to help make training more convenient.

Megan's Law: Representative Farry is working on having Megan's Law expand to counseling centers. Currently, counseling centers for Megan's Law offenders are not required to notify municipalities that they are located in

the area. There is a bill before the Senate that will require counseling centers to notify municipalities that they are in their town, counselling Megan's Law offenders.

Recovery and Sober Homes: Representative Farry stated that currently recovery and sober homes are federally exempt from zoning and there is nothing that can be done about it. Anyone can turn their house into one of these facilities without approval from the municipality. The Secretary of Drug and Alcohol has started a task force that would allow municipalities to request certification from these facilities. These certifications would allow for annual fire inspections to help ensure the safety of the facilities.

Public Adjusters and Restoration Contractors: Representative Farry discussed how unscrupulous public adjusters and restoration contractors are defrauding homeowners affected by fire. They are showing up to fires and convincing homeowners to commit to their service, then when they receive the insurance check they run off and do not complete any of the work. The State is trying to crack down and make Fire Marshals and Police Chiefs aware of these scam artists.

John McMenamin asked if anything was being done in regard to the regulations for recycling televisions since the County no longer collects them and vendors will not take them anymore. Rep. Kate Harper stated that some of the contracted haulers are required to pick up televisions and recycle them per EPA regulations. Rep. Frank Farry suggested that municipalities look into their recycling grants to see if they can be used to cover the cost of recycling TVs.

Discussion:

DVRPC LED Light Proposal: Ms. Bradley reminded the group that information was emailed out to them in regards to a pilot program that DVRPC is working on that will provide funding for LED streetlight upgrades. If anyone is interested in the program, they are to contact Angela Benner.

Salary Survey: Ms. Bradley stated that the Salary Survey has limited value because entries are incomplete, and asked if there were any concerns with the format from the group. Bill Wert stated that he finds it cumbersome to input all initial data. Randee Elton stated that when inputting the initial data for 2014 it will take some time, but going forward it should be a lot easier. Stephanie Teoli Kuhls suggested reaching out to DVIT to see if they could host a hands-on training session so that the employees responsible for inputting the data can sit down and receive direction while actually inputting their data.

BCATO: Jamie Gwynn stated that BCATO is going to be appointing a membership outreach committee that will contact municipalities to see how BCATO can help them and find out what trainings would be beneficial to offer.

Morton Salt: Eileen Bradley stated that New Britain Township's Solicitor had drafted a letter to Morton Salt stating that they could be found in default of their contract due to delivery delays. After the letter was received by Morton, deliveries were on time for a brief period of time. It is New Britain Township's hope that this letter provides leverage for future year contract negotiations.

Bob Pellegrino stated that Morton Salt wants to meet with a small group to discuss everyone's concerns with Morton. John Davis stated that they have tried changing the bid specs for 25 years, but with winters like this year and the past year, there is going to be problems. One of those problems is PennDOT is sitting on a year's worth of salt. John suggested that municipalities look into building more storage and order additional salt in the summer months. Members in attendance agreed that it would be a good idea for Bob Pellegrino to arrange a meeting with Morton Salt and some members of the Consortium.

Training Opportunities:

APMM Update: Stephanie Teoli Kuhls reminded everyone that APMM's Annual Conference will be held in New Jersey this year from May 19th – May 21st and that anyone interested in joining APMM should contact her.

ICMA Training: Eileen Bradley stated that the Montgomery County Consortium would be hosting the ICMA training this year, to be held on Thursday, September 10th at Horsham Township's Community Room. Angela will be forwarding information on the training as it becomes available.

Community Updates:

Eileen Bradley stated that in New Britain Township's Police Contract Award there is reopener language in regard to the Affordable Care Act and Cadillac Tax. New Britain Township's contract is available for review on the Consortium's website.

Chris Englebert stated that there are some municipal managers in Lehigh County looking to start a consortium modelled after the Bucks County Consortium. In addition, Chris asked if any managers have had a major Park and Recreation upgrade to see him.

Other Business:

There was no other business at this time.

Adjournment:

Upon motion by Bob Pellegrino, seconded by Stephanie Teoli Kuhls, the meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

The next meeting was scheduled for 9:00 a.m. on May 7, 2015 at Middletown Township.

Respectfully Submitted,

Angela P. Benner
Consortium Coordinator