

BUCKS COUNTY CONSORTIUM

Thursday, June 5, 2014

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order:

A meeting of the Bucks County Consortium was held at 9:00 a.m. at the Newtown Township Municipal Building, on June 5, 2014, and called to order by Consortium President Eileen M. Bradley.

Roll Call and Instructions:

The following Bucks County communities were represented at the meeting:

Eileen M. Bradley, New Britain Township
Angela P. Benner, New Britian Township
Dave Grady, New Britain Township
Bob Pellegrino, Northampton Township
Jamie Gwynn, Northampton Township
Caroline Brinker, Doylestown Borough
Joseph Golden, Upper Southampton Township
Herb Schoell Jr., Upper Southampton Municipal Authority
John McMenamin, Lower Southampton Township
Gail Weniger, Warwick Township
Jim Dillon, Bristol Borough
Kurt Ferguson, Newtown Township
Carolyn McCreary, Plumstead Township
Linda McNeill, Tinicum Township
Stephanie Teoli Kuhls, Middletown Township
Greg Lippincott, West Rockhill Township
Ranee Elton, Warminster Township
Marianne Morano, East Rockhill Township
Bill Wert, Dublin Borough
John Boyles, Yardley Borough
Tom Scott, Bristol Township
Rich Schnaedter, Hilltown Township

Sponsors:

Chris Englebert, Beirne Wealth
Brian Jeter, Comcast
Ted Dorand, PECO
Jim Gray, RBCCM
Karen Duerholz, Boyle Construction/Code Master

Approval of Minutes – May 1, 2014:

Upon motion by Carolyn McCreary, seconded by Robert Pellegrino, the Minutes of May 1, 2014 were approved as presented.

Treasurer's Report and Payment of Bills:

Eileen Bradley reviewed the details of the Treasurer's Report. Upon motion by Carolyn McCreary, seconded by Bob Pellegrino, the Treasurer's Report for May 2014 was approved as presented.

Presentation:

Eileen Bradley introduced Congressman Michael Fitzpatrick. Congressman Fitzpatrick shared his mutual concern to provide great services to constituents from all levels of government and to see all levels working together. Congressman Fitzpatrick spoke out the importance of Land Preservation and Historic Preservation. He spoke about his recent visit to Morrisville Borough where he spoke with the council and residents about why it was important to preserve a piece of land that held significant value in our Country's history, in hopes of it not being developed. Congressman Fitzpatrick spoke about how he brings school students to the Capital and discuss important topics with them there. He also offered to do the same with the Managers of Bucks County. Congressman Fitzpatrick spoke briefly about the Affordable Health Care Act and how the Cadillac Tax will be taking place in 2018.

Congressman Fitzpatrick spoke about how the Highway Transportation Fund will run out of money in July 2014. Projects that have been awarded funding will still move forward, but no additional funding will be available for Transportation projects. He informed the group about how he is part of a committee called No Labels that has approximately 90 members from Congress. No Labels is helping to create solutions to the Transportation funding problem. One of the solutions that Congressman Fitzpatrick is working on with Congressman John Delany from Delaware is called "Partnership to Build America". "Partnership to Build America" focuses on bringing businesses and work back to America that were moved overseas, by investing in infrastructure bonds. These infrastructure bonds could only be spent on infrastructure.

Kurt Ferguson asked how Veterans Affairs (VA) is going to be moving forward with the Affordable Health Care Act in effect. Congressman Fitzpatrick stated that the VA has three different parts of health care: Health Administration, Benefits Administration, and Cemetery Administration. Congressman Fitzpatrick shared his concerns about claims that the VA is taking too long to process claims and too many Veterans are dying while waiting for the VA to give them their benefits. It is not due to lack of funds, but failure of management. There are 1,000 vacant positions. If a Veteran is unable to get an appointment within 30 days, then they should be able to go to a private doctor's office and have the government pay for it. John Boyle stated that since he is retired Navy, he is able to receive benefits through Tri-Care and does not understand why the government does not make that available to all Veterans, instead of making them wait to get into the VA. Congressman Fitzpatrick stated that is one of things he is working on, so that Veterans get the care they deserve. The whole VA system needs an overhaul from top to bottom, with individuals who know how to fix and operate the administrative side of the VA.

Ms. Bradley thanked Congressman Fitzpatrick for taking the time to join the Consortium and then introduced Lynn Bush, Executive Director of the Bucks County Planning Commission and Chief County Clerk. Lynn Bush talked about economic development in Bucks County and how economic development can mean something different in each community. The County's 2012 Initiative offers services of their staff to work on municipalities' economic development to provide mapping and economic information for a population within a 5-mile radius.

Ms. Bush touched on Transportation Funding, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and Act 89 that passed in November. TIP has money that has been set aside for local bridges. She also mentioned that out of the 115 county bridges, 50 bridges are deficient. In addition, there is \$10 million dollars available through TIP for trails.

Ms. Bush also spoke about the County's Open Space Program and informed everyone that on June 4, 2014 the County Commissioners decided to extend the Open Space Program until the end of 2016, giving municipalities more time to take advantage of the funds available to them. Kurt Ferguson asked if the Commissioners have considered allowing municipalities to use open space money to help the funding of trails. Ms. Bush responded that trails have been moved towards the top of list and the initial installation of a trail would be considered, however, the Commissioners do not want to see applications to repave existing trails. Kurt suggested that the Commissioners provide guidelines for the Open Space Funds in order to help streamline planning and funding

for municipalities. Carolyn McCreary stated that State-funded grants provide guidelines to help municipalities apply and thinks that would be a great idea for the County to do that as well. She also asked if funds not used would be placed in a pool and become competitive. Ms. Bush responded that the Commissioners have not made any decision on that at this time.

Another project the County has been working on is the Neshaminy Greenway Trail. The plan will be adopted by the Commissioners in the next two weeks and will consist of a walking / bike trail that will run along the Neshaminy Creek from Bensalem to Chalfont. She asked if there was anything that the County can do to help with trail programs in the municipalities. Ms. McCreary stated that if the County could provide technical assistance to help with mapping and feasibility studies, that it would be very helpful to the municipalities that do not have staff to do those things. Bill Wert added that the County should be in front of a County Trail because it will help bring tourism and money to the County, just like the trail in Montgomery County does.

The final topic that Ms. Bush addressed was the federally funded Community Development Block Grants. The County receives money from the HUD that can be used for low to moderate-income communities. The County will be reaching out to municipalities to participate in the program and if they do they will be able submit projects for HUD funding. Bob Pellegrino asked what the downside to not participating would be and Ms. Bush responded that if a municipality does not participate then they would not be eligible for funds from the HUD. John Boyle asked if historic projects would be eligible for HUD funds. Ms. Bush stated that generally no, but if they are part of a larger revitalization project, it might be possible. Ms. McCreary asked if the funds would only be for public projects or they could be used for private issues, for example, a trailer park with water problems. Randy Elton stated that a trailer park in Warminster Township had to apply to DCED to receive funding.

Discussion:

There was no Discussion at this time.

Training Opportunities:

Ms. Bradley reminded everyone of a Next Generation training being held on June 11, 2014.

Ms. Bradley announced that the ICMA Training will be held on August 26, 2014 at Hatfield Township and that Angela would be sending out more details in the near future.

Community Updates:

Joseph Golden shared with the group details of Upper Southampton Townships' Police Arbitration Award. Joe stated that binding arbitration is not a level playing field and that municipalities should be going to State Representatives to request support of Act 111 reform bills. The way Act 111 is set up, there is no disadvantage for a Police Department to go to arbitration. Kurt Ferguson stated that an arbitrator should be a random selection, this way they do not need to worry about being blackballed by a Police Department. Stephanie Teoli Kuhls stated that APMM hired an advertising company to do a campaign to help start fighting against Act 111. Stephanie also stated that there is an APMM / Municipal League Act 111 reform bill out there that would open arbitration up to the public. This way an arbitrator would have to justify their award to the taxpayers. Ms. Teoli Kuhls suggested that municipalities pass resolutions in support of the Act 111 reform bill.

Other Business:

Randy Elton reminded everyone to complete the 2014 Consortium Salary Survey information and return to Jamie Gwynn by June 9. In addition, she mentioned that everyone should make sure to participate in a training webinar so they can input their salary information online.

Ms. Bradley informed the members that the Bucks/Montco Joint Holiday Party would be on December 5 at The Bucks Club.

Chris Englebert offered to be a speaker at an upcoming meeting and provide unbiased information on how to interview.

Ms. Teoli Kuhls suggested that the group set up a day to go with Congressman Fitzpatrick to the Capital. Ms. McCreary said she would get available dates and provide them to Angela to coordinate everyone.

Adjournment:

Upon motion by Bob Pellegrino, seconded by Gail Weniger, the meeting was adjourned at 11:15 a.m. The next meeting was scheduled for 9:00 a.m. on September 4, 2014 Warrington Township.

Respectfully Submitted,

Angela P. Benner
Consortium Coordinator