

BUCKS COUNTY CONSORTIUM
Thursday, September 5, 2013
Warrington Township
Meeting Minutes

Call to Order:

A meeting of the Bucks County Consortium was held at the Warrington Township Municipal building on September 5, 2013 and called to order by Consortium President Carolyn McCreary.

Roll Call and Introductions:

The following Bucks County communities were represented at the meeting:

Carolyn McCreary, Plumstead Township	Eileen Bradley, New Britain Township
Bob Pellegrino, Northampton Township	Barry Luber, Warrington Township
Gail Weniger, Warwick Township	Andrea Coaxum, Perkasie Borough
Vivian Bell, Warrington Township	Richard Manfredi, Warminster Township
John McMenamin, Lower Southampton Township	Rick Schnaedter, Hilltown Township
John Boyle, Yardley Borough	Kyle Seckinger, Warwick Township
Randee Elton, Warminster Township	Kurt Ferguson, Newtown Township
Linda McNeill, Tincum Township	John Burke, New Hope Borough
Stephanie Teoli, Middletown Township	Sandra Zadell, Doylestown Township
Mike Solomon, Northampton Township	Ryan Martin, Middletown Township
	Jamie Gwynn, Northampton Township

Sponsors:

David Jones, Boucher & James
Chris Englebert, Morgan Stanley
Karen Duerholz, Boyle & Codemaster
Ted Dorand, PECO
Brian Jeter, Comcast

Approval of Minutes – July 11, 2013:

The meeting minutes from the July 11, 2013 meeting will be presented at the October meeting.

Treasurer's Report and Payment of Bills:

The Treasurer's report for the months of July and August 2013 were approved.

Presentation:

President Carolyn McCreary introduced Ryan Cassidy Esq. and Scott Blissman Esq. with Eckert Seamans to the group. Mr. Cassidy began by pointing out an important upcoming date – September 12th – which is the deadline for demanding binding arbitration. The municipality cannot ignore this letter and must respond within five days. If the police miss this deadline, the contract rolls over and things remain status quo for one year. The next time they would be able to request binding arbitration would be for January 1, 2015.

The letter back to the police must be specific on the items that you want to have considered. If you want to change carriers or plans, you must say something about a plan design change. Deductibles, higher premium contribution, and higher co-pays would fall under a request for healthcare changes.

Mr. Blissman stated that the starting point for wage increases for Officers has come down. He did warn that you cannot just go into negotiations saying that your municipality is “broke”. In this economy, that’s a given. You will need to show how the recession has impacted you – eliminated positions, tax increases, emergency funds have gone down, etc. Mr. Blissman then said that the arbitrators are motivated by repeat business and will want to make both sides happy. The arbitrator will have an easier time changing a healthcare plan in a way that passes the cost onto the people that use it (i.e. increase deductibles or copays) rather than increasing the premium share for everyone. He reminded the managers that premium increases generally provide the municipality with very little money.

Stephanie Teoli brought up an example from her municipality. The previous interim manager was able to get their police department to agree to a high deductible plan (\$6,000), with a 6-10% contribution towards the premium share (depending on salary), with the municipality putting up \$4,800 into an HRA debit card to offset the high deductible.

Mr. Cassidy continued the discussion, suggesting that managers find out at the first bargaining session what the police officers are really serious about. He also suggested that attorneys not attend, so that you can get a good response without attorneys trying to “posture”. If they ask for 4% increases for every year of the contract, ask them where they got the percentages from, if it was because of cost of living increases or if they think they are underpaid, or maybe neighboring municipalities? He went on to discuss more about healthcare. He said that managers should ask a lot of details about healthcare, and if they don’t have details, then you can assume that they are not serious.

They also suggested getting bigger changes for all new hires as a way to make some progress for the future. They also suggested bargaining for the removal of all language on Killed-In-Service benefits (Act 30) dropped because that burden is now the Commonwealth’s (Act 51). If it is not removed, they may end up getting benefits from both the local municipality and the Commonwealth.

Linda McNeill said that her officers want a DROP. Mr. Blissman explained that it is not cost neutral. The township will lose state pension aid for that person. He also thinks it produces a

lot of dead weight, but reminded managers that the ability to terminate does not change while in DROP.

Other Business:

Carolyn McCreary began the discussion on safety in meetings. Stephanie Teoli's safety committee started eight months to a year ago on an active shooter training program and created a policy. The police officers ran it. She stated that there is a good video from the City of Houston that recommends everyone flee the scene when there is an active shooter. If you are not able to flee the scene, you should hide or fight back. Their program helped employees understand what they should do if they are ever in the situation. Members can contact her assistant manager, Ryan Martin, to get a copy of their policy.

Carolyn McCreary added that her Board of Supervisors had training before their last meeting. Panic buttons had been previously installed and they have patrol officers to go through the parking lot and come into the building at random times on meeting nights. They also have signs in the parking lot notifying visitors that they are on camera.

Ted Dorand, with PECO, reminded managers to think about their field employees and the risks they may face.

Stephanie Teoli added that you should always follow your gut instinct. If you think you should call the police, follow through with it. Also, another good tip was to tell your Board President to call a recess if the crowd gets out of hand.

Sandra Zadell told managers about an app called HootSuite that can help your municipality keep track of comments on social media sites.

Community Updates:

Eileen Bradley gave an update on the TCC. She stated that they filed with the Supreme Court on the Philadelphia Super Credit and a decision should be out this month.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 am.

Respectfully Submitted,
Andrea L. Coaxum
Consortium Coordinator