

Lower Alsace Township and Mount Penn Borough Consolidation
Monday, April 28, 2014
6:00 p.m. Antietam High School Cafeteria

The meeting of the Lower Alsace Township and Mount Penn Borough Consolidation Committee was held on Monday, April 28, 2014 at the Antietam High School Cafeteria. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by the Chairman James D. Oswald.

Members of the Committee present were: James D. Oswald, Supervisor, Chair, John Theodossiou, Supervisor, Todd M. Weikel, Supervisor, Kurt Miller, Council Member, Vice President, Roger Reto, Council Member and Michael Worrall, Council Member.

Members from the Public who spoke were: Rosie Skomitz, Mike Frankhouser, and Eddie Wiswesser.

Also present was Paul Janssen, Director of the Center for Excellence in Local Government and John Kramer, Director Emeritus, Center for Excellence in Local Government, Terry Styer, Manager for Lower Alsace Township, Christeena Hauck, Mount Penn Borough Secretary, and Carol R. Lewis, Recording Secretary.

Citizen Comment – R. Skomitz commented.

Minutes – Motion by T. Weikel second by K. Miller and unanimously carried to approve the minutes as presented.

Review of Issues to be Discussed – At previous meetings, P. Janssen and J. Kramer had given the members options for the different forms of government. It is important that they identify the direction they want to go. M. Worrall pointed out that any decisions will have to go back to his Council for approval. The members discussed the differences between the Borough Code and the Second Class Township Code. The members felt that Home Rule based on the Second Class Township Code was the way to go because of the Civil Service in regards to the police force. It would give them more flexibility. They discussed the fact that Supervisors should only be allowed to be employed in emergencies. They talked over the definition of an emergency. They also discussed the role of Civil Service Commission and the pros and cons of having them.

Next the members discussed how often the Charter should be reviewed and how revisions to the Charter are made. It was suggested it be done every 5 years by citizens at large. They talked about having districts and a member from each district on the Charter Review Committee. It was suggested putting in the word may instead of must to give some flexibility to how often the Charter would be reviewed. So instead of “the Charter must be reviewed every 5 years” it could read “the Charter may be reviewed every 5 to 10 years”.

The members discussed what services must be provided which include police, fire and emergency services. J. Kramer pointed out that they do not have to define the Departments in the Charter but they may if they want. These Departments may include Public Buildings, Fire, Police, Street Lights, Parks and Recreation, Roads and Bridges, Water and Sewer, etc.

How members of the Boards are appointed will need to go into the Charter. The members discussed the providing of water to the public and protecting the water rights of the municipality.

Next they discussed the name of the new municipality. They discussed keeping both names but would have to decide who goes first. It was pointed out that this could be an opportunity to rebrand the area. They could always have villages so that neighborhoods would not lose their identity. The members discussed the different types of taxes allowed and what is in place. A breakdown of different taxing scenarios was requested so the members could see the implications of the different scenarios. There are also fees that can be assessed that are not taxes but would be a revenue stream for the municipality. They will also need to look at the current personnel and the impact on them. It was suggested bring the tax collection into the municipality to possibly save money. They talked about putting the hiring process in the Charter. In regards to services to be offered, they will need to have recycling. It was suggested they could set up zones for services. More input from the residents on this topic will be needed.

P. Janssen advised them that they need to be sure their Codes are consistent, many residents are concerned with properties and neighbors. This needs to have a significant amount of public comment. He also pointed out that after consolidation only one check would be received for Fire Relief Association so they would need to decide how this would be allocated. This process is an opportunity to consolidate operations and uses. The members discussed the various facilities, their locations and their conditions.

It will need to be decided how the transition team will be composed. This is strictly an advisory position. They will study issues and bring back recommendations to the governing body. Some members would like public input as to how this team will be made up.

Citizen Input – Mike Frankhouser asked if the referendum did not go through this year, when would it. It would be in five years. The municipalities vote separately so if one of them votes it down, it would fail. Eddie Wiswesser complimented the members on their talking back and forth.

The next meeting will be held May 12, 2014 at the Antietam High School Auditorium. P. Janssen announced that he will have the date and time for the first public meeting by then.

Motion by M. Worrall second by K. Miller and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol R. Lewis