

Mount Penn & Lower Alsace  
Consolidation Committee  
Citizens Input Meeting

Hosted BY  
the

**Antietam Valley Community Partnership  
&**

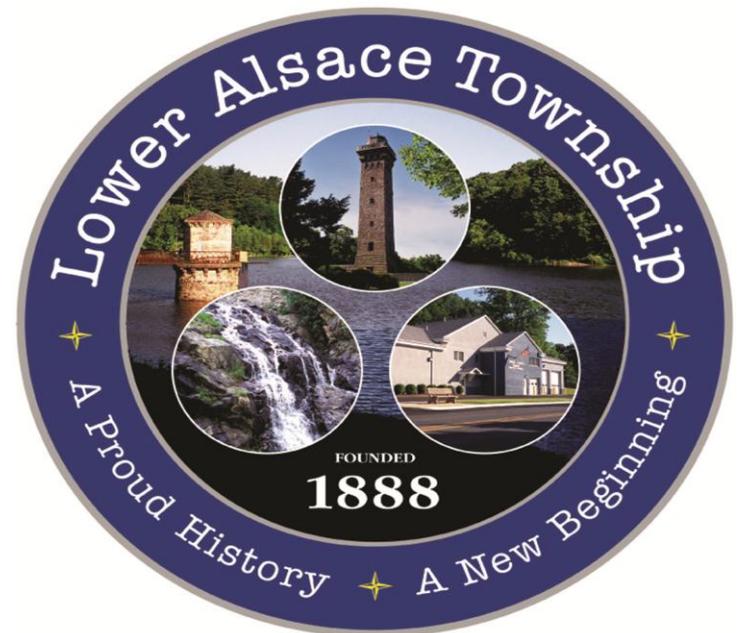
**Mount Penn Area Business Association**

**Wednesday, May 21, 2014**

**6:00 PM**

# Antietam School District High School Cafeteria

**May 21, 2014, 6:00 PM**





Why are we here?

Both Lower Alsace Township and Mt. Penn Borough have decided to explore the opportunity to merge both municipalities into a single municipal entity.



- Early in 2012 Lower Alsace and Mt. Penn expressed a desire to examine consolidation. The initial public meeting was held in early May 2012.
- Berks County Commissioners approve \$25,000 grant to Mt. Penn Borough and Lower Alsace Township to study a potential consolidation on May 31, 2012.
- The Pennsylvania Economy League (PEL) was retained to complete the study.
- Study suspended in the Fall of 2012
- Mount Penn Borough Council reorganized in 2013 with goal to restart the consolidation discussion which has been joined by the Board of Supervisors of Lower Alsace Township.
- Lower Alsace and Mt. Penn approached The Center for Excellence in Local Government to consider completing the study. The Berks County Grant is still available to reimburse the expenses generated by the completion of this study.



The Center for Excellence in Local Government (CELG), at Albright College has been retained to guide the process and facilitate the discussion. Staff assigned to the project are:

Paul Janssen, Director

and

John Kramer, Director Emeritus

CELG is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> year of supporting Berks County and its Municipalities and both Mt. Penn Borough and Lower Alsace Township have been long term sponsors of the Center.



This is not without previous experience as both municipalities share a number of joint services and programs:

The Central Berks Regional Police Department

A Joint Comprehensive Plan

A Joint Zoning Ordinance

A Joint Recreation Program

The Mt. Penn Water Authority

The Antietam Valley Municipal Authority

Among other programs!



Why are we here?

Tonight we will share the progress that the Consolidation Committee (made up of 3 members of the Mt. Penn and Lower Alsace governing boards independently appointed) has made to date in discussions regarding the form of government and the issues which need to be addressed for the consolidation if that is recommended by the Committee.



The first part of the presentation is review of the timeline to complete the work in advance of the 2014 General Election. The second part is a highlight of the issues for which the members of the consolidation committee are reaching consensus. The third part of the presentation are issues for which the members are requesting specific input from the attendees of this meeting!



In order to properly make a full presentation of the issues and allow for discussion and input, we ask that you restrict your question in the first and second part of the presentation to technical or clarification questions rather than opinions. Formal comment or question sheets have been distributed to assist in the question or statement process if you prefer to register your thoughts in writing. As you complete your form a member of the AVCP or the MPABA will collect them for John or I to read and answer them. In addition, while there may be members of either current elected body, this is not a legally advertised meeting and members of the elected bodies may not engage in dialogue as it could be interpreted as deliberation leading to decision which can only occur at publicly advertised meetings. Please do not place any of the elected officials in a position where they can not answer a direct question.

**This is you meeting for formal public input!**



- What is the process to actually consider a Municipal consolidation?



Both Lower Alsace Township and Mount Penn Borough are required to separately adopt an ordinance which includes a “Consolidation Agreement” for both municipalities to merge and language for a municipal referendum. Ordinance must be adopted by both the Township and Borough prior to August 4, 2014. The Ordinance must reference the complete Form of Government the merged municipalities will follow and may not be amended prior to the 2014 General Election. That form of government will be available for review from August 6, 2014 (90 Days prior to the election).



If the Ordinance is adopted by both Municipalities prior to August 4, 2014, the referendum language must be delivered to the Berks County Election Services on or before August 6, 2014. The referendum language will be placed on the November 4, 2014, ballot for the citizens of Mount Penn Borough and Lower Alsace Township to determine if the recommended “Consolidation Agreement” is in the best interest of both municipalities. Both Municipalities must receive citizen approval of the referendum prior to the consolidation to be initiative. If either community fails to approve the referendum at the election the consolidation will not occur. If the referendum fails it can not be reconsidered for five years.

- The following areas are topics which the Consolidation Committee has agreement in principal. While no final decision has been made on any of these issues, they will begin to be added to the preliminary version of the Form of Government Document.



The Consolidation Committee is committed to the August 4, 2014 delivery of executed ordinances to the Board of Elections, ***provided that the work on the Committee is thorough and complete.*** This will result in a November 2014 ballot question and 2015 Municipal Elections for the new Government organized for January 2016 implementation.

- The Consolidation Committee is committed to considering a Home Rule Charter Form of Government based on the Second Class Township Code. The current Borough Code for Mt. Penn and the Second Class Township Code for Lower Alsace will be abandoned.

- The Consolidation Committee is committed to considering a Five Person Elected Body four year terms. In 2015 either 2 or 3 persons would run for both 2 or 4 year terms. Each would serve 4 year terms upon thier next election cycle.

- The Consolidation Committee is committed to a professional Municipal Manager who will function as a CEO of the Municipality. The Municipal Manager is accountable to the Elected Officials for the effective and efficient operation of all municipal departments and the Elected Officials set or approve all policies by which the manager executes the operation of the Municipality, and for which the Municipal Manager is accountable to the elected officials.

- The Consolidation Committee is committed to annually appointing a CPA Firm with municipal experience to complete an annual CPA Audit. Elected Auditors will no longer be in the Municipal Code of the new municipality.

- The Consolidation Committee is committed to delineating the following municipal departments in the Form of Government Code:
- Administration, finance, Police, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Emergency Management Services, Codes and Property Maintenance, and Planning.

- The Consolidation Committee is committed to maintaining the current staffing level for both municipalities. Any increase or reduction of staffing levels will be considered by the elected body of the new municipality. The current staffs may receive reallocated responsibilities in areas of expertise either close or identical to their current responsibilities.

- The Consolidation Committee is committed to a standardized benefit package. With the police department joining the consolidated staff, the purchasing power for the benefits for the consolidated municipality will reduce the cost of benefits for the current municipal employees. Existing staff will continue their current retirement plan for the existing employees. New hires will be brought onto either one of the existing plans or a new plan approved by the elected body of the new municipality.

- The Consolidation Committee is committed to a Charter Review Commission to regularly review the Municipal Home Rule Charter for revisions. Any revisions would require separate municipal referendums. The Charter reviews currently are being considered for every 5 to 10 years.

- The Consolidation Committee is committed to considering creating an appointed Citizen Advisory Emergency Services Board to advise the new elected body on Police, Fire, Ambulance, and Emergency Management Services of the Municipality. The responsibility, makeup, and terms of the members is yet to be determined.



- Questions about the areas of consensus reached by the Consolidation Committee!



- The Consolidation Committee is desirous of hearing your input on the following issues prior to their further consideration.



- The Consolidation Committee is committed to continuing the Trash and Recycling services currently offered to Mt. Penn Borough residents. Once consolidated the municipality will eventually be required to provide curbside recycling (approx. 2022). The consolidation committee is desirous of hearing your thoughts about expanding the service to parts or all of the areas of Lower Alsace Township. Tonight, Jane Meeks is present to ensure a concise and thorough response to your thoughts and opinions.



- Jane Meeks is the Executive Director of the Berks County Solid Waste Authority and is the Recycling Coordinator for Berks County.
- Options include expanding the current Mt. Penn collection service to all or part of Lower Alsace, creating separate collection districts in the current Lower Alsace area to provide different levels of service, or changing nothing, until mandatory recycling is required and only requiring that service in the Lower Alsace area of the new municipality.

- The Consolidation Committee is desirous of hearing your opinions about the option of newly elected officials being eligible to work for the Municipality in Emergency Situations as requested by the Municipal Manager. Currently Supervisors in a Second Class Township may work full or part time as approved by the supervisors. Their salary is set by the elected auditors.

The Consolidation Committee desires to eliminate the opportunity to work full time, however, preserve the opportunity to work on an as needed basis during emergencies at a set hourly rate and total annual compensation would be capped at an additional amount equal to one half of their annual compensation as an elected official.

The Consolidation Committee is desirous of hearing your opinions about Tax Collection. They favor the most cost effective method, however, would like your opinion.

- Do you favor an single elected tax collector as what currently exists in both municipalities,
- Do you favor switching tax collection to the County of Berks, or
- Do you favor bring tax collection directly into the new municipality and having a finance staff person responsible for the billing and collection.



- The Consolidation Committee is desirous of hearing your opinions about the current municipally owned buildings. There is the Central Berks Regional Police Building, the Mt. Penn and Lower Alsace buildings and the Mt. Penn Public Works Building.

- The Consolidation Committee is desirous of hearing your opinions about the option in the Home Rule Charter for providing more flexibility in taxing options. Home Rule provides for increased taxing in the Earned Income Tax and Real Property Transfer Tax thus reducing the reliance on property taxes for all additional spending needs.

- The Consolidation Committee is desirous of hearing your opinions about applying the Mt. Penn Mercantile Tax to businesses in Lower Alsace at a reduced rate equal to the current collection of the tax in Mt. Penn. If the tax is not applied to the Lower Alsace business's than it would have to be eliminated and would result in increased property or EIT tax rates.

- The Consolidation Committee is desirous of hearing your opinions about the composition of the transition team to assist the current elected bodies in making the transition to the new municipality. The team would be appointed and have recommending authority only, however, they would independently review issues in advance of the newly elected officials taking office. Should the team be made up of citizens, elected officials, or both and where should the make up of the committee come from?

- The Consolidation Committee is desirous of hearing your opinions about the name of the new municipality. Should the name of the new municipality incorporate parts of the current municipalities or be a totally different name?



Any other question or issue is now in play, ask or state your position when called upon. If you have a written question or statement and would rather have it read pass it up now!



The next meeting of the  
Consolidation Committee is  
Monday, June 2, 2014 at 6:00  
PM in this room!