

Joint Consolidation/ Shared Services Study Commission of Princeton Borough and Princeton Township

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Joint Consolidation/ Shared Services Study Commission of Princeton Borough and Princeton Township

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting
Wednesday, April 13, 2011 7 pm
Municipal Complex, Conference Room A
400 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm, with Ms. Shabnam Salih reading the Open Public Meetings Act Statement:

The following is an accurate statement concerning the providing of notice of this meeting and said statement shall be entered in the minutes of this meeting.

Notice of this meeting as required by sections 4a, 3d, 13 and 14 of the Open Public Meetings Act has been provided to the public in the form of the written notice attached hereto.

On March 8, 2011 at 2:00 p.m., said notice was posted in the official bulletin board, transmitted to the Princeton Packet, the Trenton Times, the Town Topics, filed with the Township Clerk and posted on the Princeton Borough and Princeton Township websites.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Golden, Haynes, Metro, Goerner, Lilienthal, Lahnston, Goldfarb, Trotman, McCarthy, Miller, Simon and Small

Absent: None

Additional Attendees: John Fry, Eugene McCarthy, Bob Bruschi, Jim Pascale and Joe Stefko via telephone

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3. REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES FROM 3/23/2011

Motion made to approve the minutes from 3.23.11.

Motion seconded.

All vote in favor

Motion approved.

4. TIMELINESS AND COMPLETENESS OF MINUTES

a. IMPROVING A LEVEL

Chairperson Lahnston begins discussion on improvement of minutes. He states that there must be an urgency to complete minutes and they should be posted to the websites earlier and in a more complete state. He urges the chairs of all subcommittees to carefully review both Commission and subcommittee minutes.

Mayor Goerner states that he has sent two sets of Finance subcommittee notes to Stefko, and Goerner is looking for subcommittee approval on the minutes before Stefko posts them.

Chairperson Lahnston suggests creating a standardized process for the review and approval of minutes.

Mayor Goerner suggests not delaying the process.

Former Mayor Miller explains that he has a conversation with a member of the public who expressed concerns over the lack of detail in minutes and he explained that minutes are summation of the proceedings and not transcripts.

Small states that minutes should however reflect why certain decisions were made (ie the Municipal Consolidation Subcommittee meeting on forms of governance.)

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Mayor Goerner explains that it is unrealistic to expect very detailed minutes for every topic of discussion at every meeting. He adds that at the Commission level reasoning for decisions should be better explained.

Lilienthal suggests digitally recording meetings.

Pascale comments that all that is required from minutes is a record of the action taken and that the Commission should not look for verbatim minutes because of various limitations.

5. REPORT FROM FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE – CHAD GOERNER

a. DISCUSSION OF DEBT OPTIONS

Mayor Goerner hands out a draft handout on debt options.

He explains that the subcommittee is working on the apportionment of debt and looking at the different options available, which are apportioning the debt or combining it. The subcommittee created a debt model spanning over a period of several years to give the Commission a better idea of the differences in debt, which are minimal between the Township and the Borough. He adds that most public opinion stood on combining the debt.

b. SUBCOMMITTEE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The subcommittee found that there is no major monetary different in the debt model over five years for the Township and Borough.

The subcommittee recommends combining the debt of the two municipalities.

Lilienthal asks for clarification of the numbers provided.

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Mayor Goerner explains that because the public has shown interest in the debt issue over time, the subcommittee took a look at the future of the debt over a span of 5 years.

Lilienthal asks why they didn't look at the debt over a span of 20 years.

Goerner responds that there would be no debt in 20 years since debt lasts for 10-20 year periods. He adds that Stefko explained to the subcommittee that most communities choose to apportion debt but in the Princetons case, the difference in debt is so little, it makes more sense to combine.

Small asks if net debt was used.

McCarthy answers that they only looked at refinanced debt and everything up until April 1st was included.

Lilienthal agrees since the numbers are so similar it is easier to combine.

Goerner explains that the hybrid debt option proved to be an impossible exercise.

McCarthy adds that sewer and parking debt will be fee based and therefore is not included.

Simon explains that sewer and parking were taken out of the equation because it would improperly affect people's taxes.

Goerner adds that they will not apportion assets.

Goldfarb states that everyone should share extraneous assets.

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Mayor Goerner makes a motion to formally recommend the combing of debt.

Miller seconds the motion.

All vote yea.

Motion is approved.

6. POLICE SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT – BILL METRO

a. UPDATE ON OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

** Head count neutral means that there will be no officer and staff reductions on day one, and most likely through the initial transition phase, of the police consolidation.

Metro explains that the subcommittee has gotten good input throughout the process and there may be 9 or 10 models. They are also very cognizant of the Day 1 approach and a consolidated police department would have to be done very carefully. They also realize they would need significant help during the transitional period.

Currently, the subcommittee is settling on the discussion about the approach to transition and the work that needs to be done with both police departments in creating a head count neutral police force on Day 1.

The subcommittee is not ready at this time to make a formal recommendation.

They are however focusing on where a single police department should be in the future, identifying a transitional plan, and having a discussion on settling on a headcount of 55 (where it is currently 60.)

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Goldfarb asks if their recommendation is dependent on consolidation or could their recommendation also be for a shared service.

Metro responds it could also be a shared service however there is a problem with 2 governing bodies and having a single police chief.

Goldfarb adds that the Commission needs a clearer idea of the transitional period.

Miller reads from the Local Option Law about the creation of a task force for the transitional period of consolidation.

Goldfarb states that the Commission needs an idea of what the department will look like.

Metro explains that the subcommittee will show what Day 1 will look like and what the goal model is.

Simon asks if Stefko's report will give a lens on the transitional period or just the end model.

Stefko and Metro both responded and explained that there may be two or three consolidated models (lenses) described in the CGR report which will address both of these areas. We believe a transitional approach is needed that will present a Day 1 structure that will be headcount neutral (60 officers) to ensure that an adequate level of supervisory control will be maintained to manage through a transitional period involving significant change. Then the Commission's "goal" model will be described that will present a more cost-effective and efficient police department to be attained a few years out. We believe the forecasted rate of attrition over the next few years will enable the "goal" model to be achieved in a reasonable manner.

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Metro discusses technology updates. The original estimate is around \$750-900 thousand. The subcommittee looked at dispatch -- specifically the technology and call volume. They analyzed call volume based on charts provided by CGR. CGR came up with peak volumes and the average calls per hour. Right now it is estimated that about 2 positions in the communications center are needed and that they will look at the technology needs based on that estimate.

There is also a need for some technology updates in the police cars.

The technology cost estimate for Day 1 can be brought down to about \$300 thousand.

Miller notes that it is important to keep in mind that in addition to cost savings on Day 1 there will be additional savings throughout the transition period and in the future. He also asks Metro to explain why head count neutral is important.

Metro answers that adequate supervision due to changes and coordinating facilities and physical moves makes it necessary for a neutral headcount. Also, additional input is needed for other issues, which need to be sorted out, all make neutral head count necessary.

Goldfarb asks if there was any effort put into providing services cut in the past in lieu of cutting staff members.

Metro responds yes, that is in some of the models they are discussing however most likely their recommendation will ultimately include a smaller police department.

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Goldfarb asks that if the subcommittee's line of thinking is that cost savings are the most important.

Metro responds that it is not true. In the past, due to incremental reduction of the police department certain services needed to be cut.

Miller states that they also discussed a model that would provide only the services provided today.

Mayor Trotman suggests starting off Day 1 with headcount neutral. She further states that we should not start off with less of a force on Day 1 but that over a period of time they could better serve the public with a smaller force and possibly add services such as "Safe Community" and community policing.

Simon asks if there are any models that provide the same level of service as today.

Simon asks to see such a model and Chairperson Lahnston asks the subcommittee to work on that.

Goldfarb says that if we will make recommendations on reducing the staff then we will need to see a schedule that anticipates reductions.

Goerner states that he is worried that so many models are being discussed.

Metro responds that the subcommittee has already narrowed down their choices. He adds that they are looking at a dispatch centric model also.

Goerner suggests that if the subcommittee has numbers on facilities, transitional period estimates, etc that they should provide it to the finance subcommittee.

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McCarthy states that there is a difference in cost for consolidation versus shared service.

b. NEXT STEPS

Metro explains that the reports and recommendations will be on Day 1 and the end model and the transition period still needs to be worked upon.

7. MUNICIPAL CONSOLIDATION SUBCOMMITTEE – BERNIE MILLER

a. RECOMMENDATIONS

Miller explains that in this update he will discuss wards, the affordable housing and engineering/public works departments and the advisory planning districts.

Miller explains that before he discusses the above mentioned he wants to go back to how the subcommittee decided on the Borough form of government. From the seven forms of governance structures presented to the subcommittee by CGR (Borough, Township, Council-Manager, Mayor-Council, Mayor- Council Administrator, Commission, Municipal Manager, and Special Charter), the subcommittee chose to recommend the Borough form based on the following reasons: it is important to the subcommittee that the mayor be directly elected, an effective and feasible government body with staff interactions. The public is familiar with the Borough form of government.

Miller states that he has heard questions from the public on the issue of wards and would like to address why the subcommittee recommended against wards. Miller had a meeting with Dominick Magnolo, from the Mercer County Board of Elections, who shared information on how wards would be decided.

Miller shares the process of ward creation as told to him by Magnolo. These notes

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are from the minutes of the subcommittee meeting.

Miller outlines the main disadvantages of a ward system as the following: wards would be drawn by the ward commission, the voters would be approving wards without knowing what the wards would actually be, and finally the form of government could restrict access of elected officials to the professional staff.

Mayor Goerner explains that another potential limitation is that there is no flexibility in the number of wards, since 4 wards are needed and there would be a council of 7. He explains that a Borough form of government is not a weak mayor form but the mayor is a leader of equals. In the wards system, the mayor does not vote but only has veto power. The subcommittee felt this was a significant difference.

Lilienthal adds that in the mayor council form there is enormous power for the executive, which the council does not have and this would have severe consequences for council members.

Goldfarb states that the Borough form of government has its benefits, one of which is also that since the public is familiar with it, the Commission would not be adding an additional new element to the consolidation discussion. He adds that the Borough form is not set in stone and should the public choose to have something different in the future then it is possible to change it.

Lilienthal asks why the subcommittee was not interested in a special charter.

Goldfarb responds that a special charter would not be considered by the state legislature before the referendum.

b. SERVICE DISTRICTS AND SERVICE DIFFERENTIATION

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The subcommittee began a discussion of these districts. At the April 26th meeting, the subcommittee will explore “advisory planning districts” with the staff.

Golden adds that zoning and the master plan have come up a lot as a concern for the public.

c. UPDATE ON SUBCOMMITTEE’S WORK ON DEPARTMENTS CURRENTLY BEING REVIEWED

The subcommittee will make recommendations for each department from the CGR recommendation models. The subcommittee is waiting for the public works recommendations.

Commission members added that affordable housing is also an important issue and Miller will address this issue in the subcommittee’s upcoming work.

Commission members agree that public access to affordable housing information must become more accessible.

Miller states that we will meet the affordable housing obligations and will work on access to affordable housing.

8. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS SUBCOMMITTEE – VALERIE HAYNES

a. RECOMMENDATION ON STAFFING MODEL

Haynes explains that the subcommittee has narrowed down the options provided to them by CGR, and is focused on options 3 and 4. Both options combine Public Works under a single superintendent, and create the new role of an Assistant Superintendent for the Business Downtown who will oversee parking operations and also manage services to the business downtown and the municipal buildings.

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A second Assistant Superintendent for Operations and Administration will manage grounds and open space and roads. These options also combine all asset maintenance functions under public works, and include the maintenance (not the programmatic) functions of the recreation department under the public works umbrella as well as the sewer maintenance operations of the joint Sewer Operation Committee (PSOC). A Foreman of Grounds and Open Space under the Assistant Superintendent of Operations will supervise all recreation maintenance tasks in coordination with the recreation department staff. Haynes advised that the recreation department has expressed some concerns about the proposed changes. Golden and Haynes have met with the Management Committee of the Department of Recreation, and next week a meeting is scheduled with joint DPW and Recreation staff to address these concerns.

In the event of full consolidation, option 4 adds a joint engineering department to the features listed above, and this would allow assignment of one clerical position to public works and would allow some inspection services required by PSOC to be done with in house engineers, rather than contracting for this service, at an estimated saving of \$160,000 annually. No Day 1 staff reductions are proposed, though it is possible that in the future the combined departments may find that current service levels can be maintained with slightly fewer personnel.

b. PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF FACILITIES OPTIONS

Haynes explains that the issues of facilities and equipment are still under discussion. Preliminarily, the subcommittee expects that on Day 1 operations will continue from the current four locations (Valley Road, John Street, River Road and Harrison Street). The current facilities suffer from a number of deficiencies, and it is clear that the communities will need to make some upgrades over the next few years. Since both Harrison Road and John Street are located in residential areas, the subcommittee will recommend against any intensification of

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use at those sites.. A meeting with DPW and engineering staff focused on facilities and equipment issues is scheduled for next week.

c. NEXT STEPS

Haynes will provide recommendations regarding facilities and equipment at the next Commission meeting.

9. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE – CAROL GOLDEN

a. UPDATE ON MAJOR ISSUES AND CONCERNS FROM RESIDENTS

i. FIRST FOCUS GROUP

Simon discusses the first focus group that recently occurred. There were 12 people present from both the Borough and Township. Coming into the focus group, people were either neutral or in favor of consolidation. They discussed many issues regarding consolidation. Those who were neutral were concerned with the numbers and keeping the same level of services. On the issue of police, people preferred consolidation versus a shared service.

Reasons discussed against consolidation were the Borough “walkability” issue and concerns about affordable housing obligations. In regards to public works, keeping the level of service the same was important to participants.

Simon publicly thanks **Deborah Macmillan**, the focus group consultant.

Haynes adds one resident who commutes to NYC mentioned his appreciation for a Saturday event because it allowed him to participate in community affairs.

A second focus group will be held on Thursday evening, April 14. The subcommittee is expecting a full report from Deborah on April 22nd.

b. MEETING SCHEDULE

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There will continue to be neighborhood gatherings.

April 25th Lilienthal and Goerner will meet with the Princeton Republicans.

April 30th is CommUniversity and Golden is looking for more Commission members to volunteer at the Commission's table.

c. MAY 11 PUBLIC MEETING

Location of the meeting is yet to be decided. It will be 7:30 p.m. either in the JW Cafeteria or the Township Committee Room. An AV person is needed for the event.

10. COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

None

11. REVIEW OF DATES AND MILESTONES DOCUMENT

Chairperson Lahnston passed out a handout on important dates and milestones.

a. AGREEMENT ON DATES, ACTIONS, ACCOUNTABILITIES

At the next meeting on April 27th, subcommittees will present their recommendations even if they are in still in draft form.

The finance subcommittee will have initial tax estimates and figures for transitional funding.

On June 22nd, the final wording for the ballot will be discussed and finalized.

Mayor Trotman asks to discuss the final wording at an earlier meeting.

Chairperson Lahnston notes that CGR will help with the wording.

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Miller asks Pascale and Bruschi to find a joint meeting time for a public meeting in July or August.

Goldfarb explains that the Commission has yet to discuss the qualitative issues of consolidation.

Simon suggests putting time on the agenda for the meeting on the 27th to discuss qualitative issues of consolidation.

Mayor Goerner states that the discussion on the 27th should be more of survey than a full debate.

Lahnston says that there is still major work to be done in subcommittees before the meeting on the 27th.

12. NEW BUSINESS

None

13. ADJOURNMENT

Motion made to adjourn by Golden.

Seconded by Lilienthal.

All vote in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Shabnam Salih, Study Commission Secretary

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Princeton Township*

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Approved: April 27, 2011