

Meeting of the Municipal Consolidation Subcommittee on 21 Apr '11

The subcommittee met to consider the possible use of Advisory Planning Districts (APDs) in the consolidated municipality. The role of Advisory Planning Boards in land use matters was discussed. It was concluded that APDs could provide a mechanism for neighborhoods to have a more formal voice in the land use decision process. If APDs are implemented, land use proposals in the APD could be heard first at the APD level and the municipal Planning Board would be required to reply in writing to questions and/or comments on land use issues in the APD when they progress to the Planning Board. The members of the subcommittee concluded that, as land use issues are often the most important issues from the perspective of neighborhoods, the APD could provide a greater opportunity for neighborhood voice in the process as well as a way for individuals or developers to resolve issue at the neighborhood level before they came to the Planning Board.

Discussion with the representatives of DCA led to the conclusion that under the present law governing consolidation, it would be possible to have only two APDs, conforming to the existing boundaries of the Borough and the Township. The members of the subcommittee conclude that neither the Borough nor the Township were sufficiently homogeneous to constitute an APD, and that the perpetuation of the old political boundaries in the form of APDs in the consolidated municipality would complicate the integration of the two into a single new community. For these reasons, the subcommittee decided that, if consolidation is passed the governing body of the consolidated municipality should implement APDs. Moreover, the consolidated municipality could choose to implement more than two APDs such that the APDs could more closely correspond to reasonably homogeneous neighborhoods. Along with the recommendation that the consolidated municipality implement APDs, the subcommittee concluded that the number of APDs, the mechanism for organizing an APD and the manner of selection of the Advisory Planning Board would be left to the governing body of the consolidate municipality.