

## Community Engagement Report

The Community Engagement sub-committee has been reaching out to the community since December 2010 in an effort to keep the various constituencies abreast of the work of the Commission as well as to elicit from them their thoughts and concerns about the consolidation of Princeton Borough and Princeton Township, or the possibility of sharing Police and Departments of Public Works.

(See listing below)

By meeting with institutions, organizations, and small groups of residents the sub-committee was able to learn a great deal about what interests and concerns residents have about Consolidation or shared services.

Here is a summary of the major themes that have emerged.

### Financial Issues

People want to see savings overall, but more importantly **in their tax bill**.

Tax savings should be **fair** for residents from both municipalities.

People see the value in combining as a way to control costs going forward in an uncertain economy with reductions in state funding a new reality.

Some have expressed concern that \$3.3 million is not a big enough savings.

### Efficiencies

Many people see an opportunity to increase efficiencies, streamline services, and reduce redundancies in a consolidated Princeton. The notion that things will just “go more smoothly” and that time, money, and people power will not be wasted is very popular.

The confusions and absurdities resulting from the existence of two towns could be eliminated. E.g. no more plowing half a street, calling the wrong police department, getting two permits to build on land that straddles both municipalities.

The possibility of enhanced services, e.g trash removal in the Township, and expansion of the Free B.

There is zero tolerance for degradation of services.

Some see the potential for more leverage with other entities (for example, with NJDOT) as a larger town.

### **Sense of Community**

Many people have expressed the idea of community spirit that a consolidated Princeton could foster.

A key finding from the Focus Groups was that both Township and Borough residents value the density and vibrancy of the downtown as well as the open spaces of the outer areas, i.e. we have a lot in common.

Some see the opportunity for more thoughtful and coordinated planning/zoning for the whole town as a possible result of consolidation.

### **Dilution of Representation/Loss of Control**

There is a concern for some Borough residents that in a consolidated Princeton the voters in the former Township will always outvote those in the former Borough (due to the 2:1 voter ratio) and will vote in ways that disregard the priorities and concerns of Borough residents. \*

Some residents have expressed the view that wards would help preserve adequate neighborhood representation and are disappointed that the chosen form of governance does not allow for wards.

The possibility of zoning districts – or Advisory Planning Districts -- is attractive to some as a way to preserve some control over the development in their neighborhood.

### **Loss of “Borough-ness”**

\* This concern presupposes to some extent that the priorities and concerns of Borough residents are substantially different enough from those of Township. This has been expressed as the Borough-ness issue:

The concern that the small-town, personal feel and the walkable nature of the Borough will be compromised by consolidation.

## **Transition Costs**

Many people have expressed concern and curiosity about the costs of Consolidation.

### **Meetings held since December 2010**

#### **Meetings with established institutions/organizations**

January 5, Princeton High School PTO

January 14, 2:00 pm, Seminary

January 18, 8:00 am, Princeton Merchants' Association at Nassau Inn

January 20, 9:30 am, Johnson Park School PTO

January 21, 8:45 am, John Witherspoon School PTO

January 25, 2:00 pm, Institute for Advanced Studies

February 8, 7:00 pm, LALDEF, Wallace Hall, Room 290, Princeton University

February 9, 9:20 am, Community Park School PTO

February 15, 10:30 am, Princeton Senior Resource Center at Suzanne Patterson  
Center

March 1, 3:00 pm, Westminster Choir College

March 1, evening, Princeton Regional Schools School Board meeting

March 2, 8:30 am, Littlebrook PTO

March 2, 12:00 pm, Princeton Clergy, location TBD

March 7, 7:30-9:00 pm, Eastern Campus Neighborhood meeting, Township Hall  
(Meeting Room A)

March 20, 2:00 pm, Community Without Walls, Friends Center, Princeton University

March 26, 9:00 am, Princeton Future

April 2, 9:30 am, Witherspoon/Jackson Neighborhood at First Baptist Church

April 13, 8:30 am, Riverside PTO

### **Other Meetings**

December 21 – Meeting with Bob Durkee and Kristin Appelget of Princeton University

December 22 – Meeting with Judy Wilson and Members of the Board of Ed.

February 17 -- Meeting with Dudley Sippelle

April 25 – Meeting with Princeton Republicans

May 10 – Meeting with employees of Church and Dwight

### **Focus Groups**

Focus groups were conducted on April 9 and 14 in order to openly discuss the concerns and opportunities that Princeton Borough and Princeton Township residents face as they consider whether to consolidate and/or share the services of police and public works. The focus groups were conducted by a professional facilitator and participants were randomly selected from voter registration lists. Participants included both Township and Borough residents.

### **Neighborhood Gatherings**

February 12 – Home of Daniela Bonafede-Chhabra, Riverside

February 17 -- Home of Carol Blum, Riverside

February 23 – Home of Teri McIntire –Culyer/Dempsey

March 25 – Home of Liz Erickson, Riverside

April 5 – Home of Terri Walker, Littlebrook

April 6 –Home of Erin Metro, Washington Oaks

April 8 – Home of John and Gloria Borden, Madison Street

April 10 – Home of Sandra Persichetti, Fieldwood Estates

April 11 – Home of David Wetherill, Governor’s Lane

April 20 -- Home of Ann McGoldrick, Vandeventer

April 30 –Potluck Cuyler/Dempsey neighborhood

May 1 – Home of Per and Adrienne Kreipke, Maple Street

May 3 – Home of Phyllis Teitelbaum, Hawthorne

May 4 – Home of Ross Wishnick, Edgerstoune

May 16 –Home of Herb and Carol Horowitz, Snowden

Coming soon:

June 7 – Home of Rita Ash, Old Orchard Lane

June 9 – Home of Florence Kahn, off Rosedale

June 16 – Home of Jonathan Frieder, Ettl Farm

**The following have offered to host large neighborhood gatherings in their respective areas of town:**

Westminster Choir College

Princeton Seminary

Riverside Association (Pam Machold)

The League of Women Voters

**GOING FORWARD (In the event of a recommendation for Consolidation)**

The Community Engagement sub-committee (and possibly the whole Commission) will need to focus some attention on the two existing governing bodies, which will be voting on the Commission’s recommendations. We will need to educate them about the work of the Commission, its recommendations, and transition issues. By working with Borough Council and Township Committee, the Commission can help these bodies fully understand the issues and opportunities that Consolidation presents.

The Community Engagement sub-committee will also be embarking on a campaign to build support for Consolidation in the community. By continuing to meet with organizations/institutions and with smaller gatherings of neighbors, members of the Commission will be out in the community explaining the recommendations, demystifying findings, and advocating the benefits of Consolidation. Concerns about Consolidation, such as dilution of representation, etc. will need to be addressed. As has been expressed by several members of the community, it will be important to keep the message clean and straightforward, clarifying any areas of possible confusion about the consequences of Consolidation. In addition, the Commission will be called upon to help assuage the potential contention that could emerge as the discussions continue prior to the vote in November.

### **On Docket for the Fall**

Old Guard – October 26 (Joe Stefko)

Nassau Club – September 14 (Anton Lahnston and one other member of the Commission)