

MINUTES PUBLIC WORKS SUBCOMMITTEE

MARCH 18, 2011

Present: Valerie Haynes, Anton Lahnston, Carol Golden, Alice K. Small. CGR: John Fry, Joe Stefko (on phone).

1. **Commission Feedback.** The Committee discussed the feedback received from the full Commission to the preliminary staffing options and facility options presented on March 9. Direction is that this commission should focus on staffing options first. Interest was expressed in Option 3. Facilities options are also being discussed because the current facilities in the Township and the Borough are inadequate for the long term. However, since new facilities and/or renovated facilities would be a major expense, the committee anticipates making initial recommendations that will then need to be specifically dealt with by governing bodies – or a consolidated governing body -- over several years, beyond the anticipated term of the current commission. The current DPW sites under discussion include Valley Road, John Street, Harrison Ave. and River Road.
2. **Staffing Options.** John Fry reported on his meeting with Recreation Department staff and his follow up meeting with the two DPW Superintendents. Due to the retirement of Executive Director Roberts, administrative staff in the Recreation Department are assuming new responsibilities, though both new Ex. Dir. Stentz and Dir. of Fin and Maintenance Ernst are continuing employees. The maintenance staff has also experienced some changes, with one of the current workers being promoted to Foreman and total staff reduced from six to five (including the foreman).

Initial reaction from Stentz and Ernst toward merging recreation maintenance under the Public Works department was negative - they expressed concern that recreation needs might suffer if Recreation had to schedule its maintenance activities through Public Works. Recreation might become a "step child" to larger public works priorities. They recognize that there is a risk that continued tight budgets could cause further shrinkage of the Recreation staff in future years, but expressed confidence that they would be able to provide prior service levels this year despite the loss of one staff member.

Both Superintendents, on the other hand, felt that allocating recreation maintenance staff under Public Works would be an asset to the community. They believe that the ability to schedule a larger workforce flexibly will lead to increased productivity and efficiency of the overall organization. They acknowledged, however, that they have no current responsibility for the work Recreation does, so do not have a detailed understanding of what is involved.

It was agreed that this issue requires further investigation. Carol will reach out to Stentz and see if we can meet with the Recreation management committee.

3. **Equipment List.** John Fry distributed a list of equipment currently owned by the Borough and Township Public Works Departments, and reported that the Superintendents do not believe that there is any duplication or overlap of equipment. Each item is necessary. The committee queried John and Joe regarding the existence of any standards that might exist (which they will try to do), but were cautioned that each community provides its own specific set of services under its own unique conditions, so such standards, if any exist, would be unlikely to inform the discussion.
4. **Consolidation vs. Shared Services.** Some time was spent discussing whether the same options are available under either a consolidated or shared service scenario. Staff have uniformly expressed confidence that the Public Works functions could be successfully merged, and would be more efficient as a result. At the same time, staff have uniformly expressed a strong preference that this occur under a consolidation scenario, and have expressed reservations that a merger in a shared service context would succeed. The principal concern is the issue of having two governing bodies with differing priorities.

Nevertheless, CGR advised that the options under discussion could work as shared services. Committee members agreed that the final report of the Commission must provide a full discussion of the options under either a consolidated or shared service scenario.

5. **Option Refinements.** Joe reported on the work the Consolidation Subcommittee has done in looking at merger of other departments, and the potential opportunity, should there be one merged Engineering Department, to allocate one clerical position from Engineering to Public Works. Total number of FTE would not change, but Public Works could benefit from having a dedicated clerical staffer.

Bob Hough (PSOC) has suggested that a merged Engineering Department could allow PSOC to dispense with some inspection services it currently contracts for, since the expertise to do the task exists within the Engineering Department. Last year the contract cost was approximately \$200,000.

6. **Next Meeting:** The Subcommittee agreed to schedule an additional meeting for April 4 at 10 am at 223 Mt. Lucas Rd.

