

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

*February 16, 2011*

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

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting**

**Wednesday, Feb. 16, 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 January 31, 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, Simon, Small, Goldfarb, Trotman, Pfeiffer

**Absent:** Miller

**3. REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES FROM 1/19/2011**

Mayor Trotman makes the motion to approve minutes from January.

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Golden seconds motion. All vote in favor of motion.

**4. BRIEF DISCUSSION OF LEARNINGS FROM PUBLIC MEETING ON FEBRUARY 15, 2011**

Chairperson Lahnston begins the discussion on the public meeting the previous night. He asks if there is anything that was brought up last night that the Commission is stepping over. He explains that a question that has been brought up several times is whether Nov. 2011 is the right time to vote on the consolidation question.

Mayor Goerner explains that it will depend on the work of this meeting and that the Commission will need to double up on upcoming meetings. He adds that it is irrelevant that Nov. 2011 is not a presidential election.

Metro asks by how much the referendum question needs to be approved by the public.

Stefko answers that it will be a dual referendum and that a simple majority in both communities is needed.

Bruschi adds that the Commission needs to check County deadlines for putting questions on the ballot. Also, he adds that many public hearings need to be added to the schedule.

Mayor Trotman explains that the Mayors will put the issue on the agenda in late June.

Goldfarb states that the timeline is still aggressive and that they are being optimistic that the final report and recommendations will be complete in time for the vote.

Lilienthal states that the vote is to put the issue on the ballot and that in the next couple of public meetings they will discuss the issue at hand.

Chairperson Lahnston says that the County deadline is the hardfast date as of right now.

Bruschi will look into the deadlines.

Chairperson Lahnston explains that he believes the previous nights public meeting went very well and he received from emails thanking the Commission and CGR especially for their clarity.

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Golden states that she as well thought Stefko's presentation was excellent.

**5. DISCUSSION AND CLARIFICATION OF LOCAL OPTION LAW –  
CHAD GOERNER AND JOE STEFKO**

Stefko presents this information on a PowerPoint presentation and explains the different debt options in some more detail.

Stefko begins explaining that certain provisions of the law were covered last night. Things like service districts and apportionment of debt need DCA approval. They received new debt figures and are currently looking at two options for the apportionment of debt.

Simon states that sewage functions as a utility but is not on the books and does not affect taxes.

Mayor Goerner states that it may be difficult to pull out all details. He reiterates the local option provision of continuing current ordinances and reviewing them over time.

Metro asks how the enforcement of old ordinances would work in regards to law enforcement.

Mayor Goerner explains that the one year of transition will be a time to prioritize ordinances for review.

Lilienthal states that it is a surmountable hurdle.

Metro adds that law enforcement and operations during the transition period is certainly something to keep in mind.

Chairperson Lahnston asks how difficult it is to get approval for a hybrid debt model.

McCarthy explains that there is still much to be worked out in detail by DCA and once he has more data and information on the possibility of certain debt models that he will share with the Commission.

Goldfarb adds that another element in the timeline is possibly needing DCA approval before voting.

Mayor Goerner says to McCarthy that we need to know whether or not service districts are possible before the Commission puts the work into estimates and planning.

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Chairperson Lahnston notes to McCarthy to look into whether DCA approval is needed for the expansion of service districts and whether permission for a hybrid debt process will be challenging.

Golden asks if it will be a legislative issue.

McCarthy states that he will ask Mark Pheiffer.

Chairperson Lahnston requests that McCarthy let him know the answer by the end of the week.

Mayor Goerner states that at some stakeholder meetings a phased in implementation option came up and that the Commission may recommend that.

Simon states that a suggestion that came up last night was that the Commission focus on shared services for one year then consolidation for 2012.

Mayor Goerner states that it would be a very different vote in 2012.

Lilienthal asks what the scope of authority is of service districts.

Chairperson Lahnston asks if Mayor Goerner was raising the phased in question for DCA.

Mayor Goerner responds it was a question more for the Commission.

McCarthy states that service district viability is an important issue and asks the Commission what services they are interested in. Leaf/Brush pick up and solid wasted are given as examples.

Goldfarb notes that the financial impact will have to be included in the DCA report.

## **6. REPORT ON PLANS FOR FOCUS GROUPS – PAT SIMON**

Simon hands out a worksheet (attached as handout 1) as well as a resume for a pro bono consultant for the focus groups. The subcommittee feels that the consultant is well qualified for the work. The focus group will be more of a qualitative project than a quantitative study. Simon cautions that focus groups are not survey and are much smaller samples.

Simon asks if Commission members are satisfied with the approach and if the subcommittee has approval to move forward.

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**Chairperson Lahnston asks if the focus groups will be focused on the options.**

Goldfarb explains that although he is not against having the focus groups, that in 1996 those who were against consolidation did not publicly express their feelings.

Simon explains that the consultant has discussed several different techniques which will help elicit people's true opinions on the issues.

Simon also asks when they should begin the process.

Chairperson Lahnston explains that members of the public have been freely expressing their opinions in groups.

Goldfarb reiterates that during the 1996 consolidation, he was genuinely surprised at the outcome, even after he was working closely with the group against consolidation.

Golden asks for what evidence there is that people did not express their opinions freely in 1996.

Goldfarb responds that the group did not get much positive reinforcement then the vote outcome showed there was clear support against consolidation.

Golden explains that they began community engagement early on and people know the Commission wants to know their opinions.

Mayor Trotman states that the groups she met with in 1996 had no problem expressing their opinions on the issue.

Haynes notes that the people who show up to larger public meetings are a different population than the people who show up to smaller groups and that they are getting diverse responses.

Chairperson Lahnston moves on to explain that it will be vital to run the focus groups at a time when there is significant information from the four subcommittees to best utilize the focus groups. The Commission must decide at this meeting whether or not to move forward with the focus groups.

Lilienthal states that the focus groups will be most helpful once the options are listed by CGR.

Simon says that once the Commission has the options in draft form then they can move forward with the focus groups.

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Golden says that early March may be too early.

Mayor Trotman makes a motion to move forward with focus groups.

Lilienthan seconds the motion.

All vote in favor. Motion passes.

## **7. GOVERNANCE OPTIONS – JOE STEFKO AND JOHN FRY**

Fry presents using PowerPoint to explain 7 different forms of governance structure or a charter form. A chart with the characteristics of each form of governance is included in the municipal consolidation subcommittee minutes and also on the PowerPoint. Fry discusses the following: weak mayor form, committee form, mayor council, council manager, mayor council administrator, municipal manager, and commission form.

Goldfarb says he will not recommend a special charter form because it would have to be approved by the legislature after the referendum. He explains that the direct election of the mayor and the relationship between the governing bodies and the staff are important. He recommends the borough form because it is a delicate balance and many people are familiar with it.

Chairperson Lahnston states that they should avoid having to go to the legislature for approval because if something is not approved it would cause a huge problem. He mentions that something citizens bring up in meetings time and time again is that citizens want a system that is simple and understandable.

Small asks what the subcommittee's opinions were against the mayor council administrator form.

There is discussion as to why wards are undesirable.

Golden asks how the manager or administrator is hired.

Goldfarb answers by the board.

Small asks how the County develops wards.

Goldfarb answers by election districts.

Chairperson Lahnston explains that this Former Mayor Miller is absent from this meeting and is the Chair of the Municipal Consolidation Subcommittee he would

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like to hold off on the vote until the next meeting so that others not in the subcommittee have some more time to think about it.

## **8. STATUS REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES WITH DISCUSSION**

### **a. MUNICIPAL CONSOLIDATION -- GOVERNANCE – DAVID GOLDFARB**

Former Mayor Miller, Chair of the subcommittee is absent.

### **b. FINANCE – CHAD GOERNER**

Mayor Goerner explains that the subcommittee has been discussing the apportionment of debt and will make a recommendation at the next meeting. They will also present an estimate of transition costs to DCA. Mayor Goerner states that a recent conversation with Lori Grifa, Commissioner of DCA, has led him to believe that there will not be aid for transitional costs.

Haynes asks McCarthy to please explain the hierarchy of approval in DCA.

McCarthy explains that once a movement is made from the Commission he puts in a formal request to the Deputy Director who then takes it to the Director. The attorney general may also weigh in and that all formal requests go through the Director's office.

Mayor Goerner states that there are local option provisions to help offset the costs associated with the transition period.

### **c. POLICE – BILL METRO**

Metro explains that the subcommittee has a meeting yesterday (2/15/11) and they put together a task force of both police departments. There has been great discussion and a real feeling of cooperation and interest in the agenda. The previous day's meeting was to go through the draft report on consolidation (the police section). The group also focused on some analysis of facility space.

CGR has presented the police subcommittee with two consolidation models; one as a shared service and the second as a true consolidated police department. The task force prefers consolidation especially since the shared service model presents an issue for command. In a true consolidated department there will be a clear line of command. 2/28/11 is the next scheduled meeting for this subcommittee.

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There is discussion as to what the forecasted costs of the police departments would be without consolidation to which Stefko responds it is difficult to estimate. He adds that the capital plan does not take into account a new police building.

Lilienthal asks what the municipalities and captains are expecting or planning for the next couple of years.

Chairperson Lahnston asks if a model is needed for that and to extend it over a 5 or 6 year period.

Bruschi explains that the Borough has a 6 year plan and there are no significant changes in there. The single biggest challenge is rebuilding a new police dispatch center. The public works department he adds is a different case and may need some major overhaul.

Lilienthal adds that **Chief Ductect** talked about accreditation and what needs to be done beforehand.

Bruschi responds that for example an evidence room, if expansion is needed, the Borough could provide.

Pascale explains that consolidation question will not be greatly impacted by significant changes or projects. In 1996, the study on the building of the new Township building was paused during the consolidation study.

Golden asks if there is anxiety over the possible loss of police jobs.

Metro responds that it has not been mentioned and the subcommittee has not sensed it as a major issue. Most important, the subcommittee notes that the task force does not want to see the command structure changed.

Mayor Trotman adds that the police wants to be a part of coming up with a command structure. She believes the two departments are willing to work together and have discussed the issues before.

Simon asks if the Commission is ruling out police as a shared service.

Metro responds that shared service as a splitting of specialized services will not work but possibly a contracted share service may work.

**d. PUBLIC WORKS – VALERIE HAYNES**



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Haynes explains that the subcommittee toured facilities on 1/20/11, met with staff and was impressed with how cooperative the staff was. The facilities need much work and are currently inadequate. Much of the staff of the Public Works Dept. has been cross trained. The subcommittee also met with the heads and engineers of both PW Depts.

Next meetings are scheduled for March 8<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> and the group is looking forward to input from CGR.

Chairperson Lahnston asks Mayor Goerner is the Township has yet done anything with the facilities report. Goerner explains that the cost estimates were astronomically high and that DPW will research cold storage costs.

Goldfarb adds that they will want to move forward with the cold storage option soon.

Chairperson Lahnston states that the facilities of both municipalities will be a huge issue in the consolidation question.

Goldfarb explains that new facilities are needed even if consolidation does not happen.

**e. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – CAROL GOLDEN**

Golden used handout 2 to explain certain themes elicited from the public through continued engagement.

Golden explains that the subcommittee has been to a lot of meetings and the next big step is the neighborhood gathering meetings. She states that many constituents want to know how consolidation will affect them personally and their pocketbooks and services especially.

Goldfarb explains that people are also worried about their role in a larger entity and see their role possibly being less important in a larger entity. He adds that the past library debate is still an issue for some people.

Golden states that it is important to remember that in this scenario the Princetons would be one consolidated municipality.

Mayor Goerner adds that people in the Township still think of the downtown as their downtown also and that the Princetons demographic is different from the time of consolidation in the past.

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Mayor Trotman asks Chairperson Lahnston for his comments that Golden has referred to several times.

Chairperson Lahnston explains that the Commission has to make decisions on the state of one community and that they need to help people think about the possibility of the Princetons as one united community. He adds that two issues that came up with discussions with the seniors are that one people turn their opinions and anecdotes into facts and it is important to keep them separated and also that the library issue keeps coming up.

Mayor Trotman believes the library issue must still be dealt with carefully.

Lilienthal says that the library issue is more than just a story and that there are many lessons that can be learned from it. The library issue showcases legitimate concerns and presents real issue for the people of the Borough.

Mayor Goerner states that he agrees with Lilienthal and that it is the Commission's job to explain why the Commission's work is important and may be better for the communities. They also need to address the fear and anxiety of both communities.

Haynes discusses the leash law story a member of the public explained the other night to show how far back people's experiences of consolidation are in the two communities.

Golden discusses the story of a woman who has lived in Princeton for more than 60 years.

Mayor Trotman shares that she has lived in Princeton for more than 40 years and explains that people have long histories in these communities.

Goldfarb explains that the Commission must make the case for the communities that consolidation is much better.

## **9. COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE**

None.

## **10. SCHEDULES**

### **a. PRINCETON FUTURE MEETING MARCH 26, 2011**

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Chairperson Lahnston explains that the subcommittee needs all Commission members at the Princeton Future meeting from 9 am to 12 pm in the library community room. He explains the set up for the meeting which entails each subcommittee at its on table to discuss their work, options, strengths and weaknesses. Golden will do presentation on additional ways to engage the community at this meeting.

**b. SCHEDULING ADDITIONAL MEETING DATES IN APRIL AND MAY**

New schedule of meetings listed below:

**March 9**  
**March 23**  
**April 13**  
**April 27**  
**May 11- Public Meeting**  
**May 25**  
**June 8**  
**June 22**

**11. NEW BUSINESS**

Chairperson Lahnston shares budget information as requested by Commission members at last meeting. Current budget spent is \$36,200 and budget is okay.

Goldfarb asks how much the Commission has paid CGR thus far.

Chairperson Lahnston responds that CGR has received approximately half of the full payment at this point.

Simon states that with respect to the school district that any change in governance should be talked about in subcommittee.

Goldfarb explains that the school board is still independent and only effects elected officials on the school board. Discussion of this topic is the responsibility of the municipal consolidation subcommittee.

**12. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion is made to adjourn meeting by Simon.**

**Motion is seconded by Golden.**

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**All vote in favor.**

**Meeting is adjourned at 9:31 pm.**

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Shabnam Salih, Study Commission Secretary**

Approved: March 9, 2011

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## **Handout 1**

### **Princeton Commission: notes on focus groups**

February 4 CE subcommittee meeting: Carol, Anton, Valerie, Ryan, Patrick, Deborah Macmillan

The goals for focus groups will be qualitative, including:

- identify issues not brought up in other community meetings
- go into more depth of discussion than may be possible in other public meetings

We are not trying for a representative quantitative assessment of issues, we would need a survey for that.

Topics for discussion in the focus groups:

- municipal government
- police
- public works
- taxes and debts

For each topic, discuss:

- background information on the issue – to inform the group
- the available options being discussed by the commission
- how each participant feels any change will affect him or her personally
- time frame of 5 - 7 years into the future

Specific questions regarding the options will include:

- for each of the major options, perceived advantages and concerns
- compare and contrast the options

*Protocol to be developed second half of this month.*

Focus group how to and logistics:

- target about 10 participants per group
- plan for 2 groups to start with (may opt to run 1 – 2 more)
  - plan first focus group for first week of March
    - *to do: verify timeframe with subcommittee chairs*
  - first two ideally would include one in the evening during the week, and one on a weekend, possibly a Saturday morning or afternoon
- participant selection
  - community engagement team would dial for potential participants, randomly selected from voter rolls
    - *to do: decide what questions to ask during the phone inquiry*
  - mix of borough and township
  - one per district

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- explicitly decided not to filter on other criteria, including political affiliation, student/not, gender
- focus group logistics, preparation, and follow-ups:
  - Deborah Macmillan would moderate
  - commission member to attend each group as well
  - audio recording desired
  - record notes on flip charts or on a white board
  - afterward: written report from moderator for the Commission

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## **Handout 2**

### **Themes that have emerged from engagement with the community on consolidation/additional shared services.**

#### **Efficiencies in general**

- Redundancies need to be reduced, and money needs to be saved.
- People want things to “go more smoothly” e.g. decisions like the pool renovation.
- There is the potential to re-engineer systems not just put two together.
- We should capitalize on the potential to effectively add some needed services, e.g. public transportation and use of the FreeB during the day.
- It is desirable to have joint emergency response simplified

#### **Concerns about degradation in services**

- Don’t allow longer wait times for municipal services
- The loss of personal touch in both the Borough and Township would be awful.
- Keep the trash, leaf pickup, and street cleaning at present levels or better

#### **Tax Implications**

- Create one tax rate for schools – no more differential
- If the taxes don’t stay the same, -- or preferably decrease modestly – the vote will not pass.
- Be very clear about the tax impact on residents from the Township and the Borough as well as the impact of the local options.

#### **Loss of the “Boroughness” of the Borough.**

- Walkability e.g. the location of the library debate has resurfaced in the context of consolidation
- There are great social and emotional concerns/needs for a personal touch, small town feel in the Borough.
- There is a concern that a consolidated Princeton would not provide the same level of commitment to the downtown that the Borough currently provides.

NOTE: Reason to believe that recent development in downtown including municipal parking deck has mitigated this concern.

#### **The Police**

- Residents experience many differences with the way the two police departments interact with the public; institutions and individuals. Residents would benefit from dealing with one department with one set of protocols and expectations.
- There are some concerns that the Township will lose the attention of the police – and therefore some services -- because the Borough requires more policing
- There are issues with the incompatibility of IT systems. (This same concern is expressed about the incompatibility at the government level.)

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- The current situation with police in the Township makes this a good time to combine departments.

**Dilution of representation**

- What will the form of government be? Will I lose my voice in electing the new government?
- Similarly, how will school board be elected? Will I lose my voice?

**Affordable Housing**

- There is a lot of confusion about the future of affordable housing in the Borough and the Township if consolidation moves forward. Furthermore, there is a lot of confusion presently in dealing with various housing departments.