

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

March 23, 2011

**Joint Consolidation/ Shared Services Study Commission of Princeton Borough and Princeton Township
Minutes of the Regular Meeting
Wednesday, March 23, 2011 7 pm
Municipal Complex, Conference Room A
400 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ**

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 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

3. Review and Approve Minutes from 3/09/11

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Small asks for clarification of the 3rd paragraph on page 8 regarding the cost of technology updates.

Metro provides clarification and minutes will be revised to more accurately reflect the conversation.

Golden asks for a revision on the Focus Group section of minutes to explain that she provided a summary of the information at the previous meeting.

Mayor Goerner makes a motion to approve minutes.

Golden seconds the motion.

All vote in favor.

Minutes are approved.

4. Preparation for Princeton Future Meeting

Chairperson Lahnston begins discussion on preparation for the Princeton Future meeting and turns to Stefko to share the PowerPoint presentation that will be shared at the meeting.

Stefko shares the PowerPoint slides that explain the format of the meeting and the optional discussion questions for each table.

Goldfarb suggests changing the wording on the Governance/Administration slide to sound more neutral and Stefko makes minor revision.

Commission members suggest additional edits to the slides.

Chairperson Lahnston goes through list of Commission members who will lead the various tables.

Simon asks if Commission members are willing to talk about data that is in draft form and the Chairperson answers yes.

Former Mayor Miller asks what kind of answers the Commission members are looking to find and what they are hoping to learn from the meeting.

Mayor Goerner explains that the Commission wants to learn what types of services are important to community members and what their concerns are.

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Lilienthal explains that it is a great time to get feedback from the community.

Chairperson Lahnston reiterates that the Commission is not at the meeting to make any decisions but get feedback on the options available.

Haynes states that she is hoping to get public feedback on Public Works, as there has been little public comment on the topic thus far.

Mayor Goerner asks if people will select or be assigned to tables.

Chairperson Lahnston explains that people will self-select their own tables. He adds that after table groups report back, Carol will talk about the work of the Community Engagement Subcommittee.

Members decide it is a good idea to shift table groups half way through the meeting.

Stefko suggests providing the public with the website address on a handout.

5. Municipal Consolidation Subcommittee – Bernie Miller
a. Update on Subcommittee’s Work on Governance

Former Mayor Miller states that the subcommittee will have a meeting on March 16th. They are also preparing minutes and will distribute when completed. In the minutes is a summary of the options.

i. Report on Departments that are Currently Being Discussed

March 29th there will be a meeting discussing department options. At the next meeting there will be discussion of special districts. Chairperson Lahnston asks where the subcommittee is looking for savings and Miller responds it is too early to know.

Mayor Goerner explains that the subcommittee will look at aggregate savings in the seven departments and report back to the Commission at the next meeting.

Goldfarb suggests that the subcommittee get feedback from administrators on the numbers before reporting back.

Mayor Goerner explains that at the next meeting they will discuss creating service districts and discuss specifics like including the township in service districts and the levels of service, etc.

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Chairperson Lahnston explains that he will share more on service districts once he looks at this in detail and discusses it further with the subcommittee since he has just received the information regarding service districts from Thomas Neff at DCA. They also need to talk to the Finance subcommittee to see how the numbers would work.

Mayor Goerner says that the issue will be discussed at Friday's Finance meeting.

6. Department of Public Works Subcommittee- Valerie Haynes

a. Update on Options

Haynes explains that after the last meeting with the Commission, she took away the idea that the Commission believes the major Public Works focus should be on staffing rather than facilities.

Haynes says that the subcommittee is discussing the different options that would work under consolidation and/or shared services. Superintendents have indicated they would prefer consolidation because there will be a clearer set of goals and a clearer line of command to one governing body.

The subcommittee also heard from Bob Hough that there may be an opportunity to save some funds now spent to contract for inspection services required by PSOC under a consolidated engineering department, which would have the expertise to do the inspections. There will an additional subcommittee meeting on April 1st.ⁱ

Goldfarb suggests keeping in mind people's preferences especially regarding how departments have been operated in the past. Also, he suggests that members of the Commission keep in mind the costs to improve Public Works Facilities, noting that while upgrades are needed for all the facilities, there may be a differential between Township and Borough.

Chairperson Lahnston states that the facilities have been on the Commission's radar and it is a tough issue.

Lilienthal states that sharing services with school district has been an issue that

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can be explored by Public Works.

Haynes explains that one of the options in a facilities analysis done in 2009 is a scenario that includes working with the school district.

Chairperson Lahnston explains that they have had several conversations about recreation and school districts sharing services.

Mayor Trotman asks if the subcommittee has looked at the facilities report by joint municipalities some years ago.

Haynes clarifies that she was referring to the joint report done in 2009. She noted that the two departments do cooperate on a number of levels already.

Golden explains that they have been hearing from the public about possible cooperation of different departments. She has contacted **Ben Stentz**, the new head of the recreation department, to schedule a future discussion and he expressed to Golden his concerns regarding a merger of the recreation maintenance functions with the public works department. John Fry from CGR has had discussions with Rec staff and the Public Works Superintendents and will continue to drill down on this possibility in conjunction with the subcommittee.

b. Preliminary Report on Equipment

Haynes reports that the subcommittee has received a list of public works equipment from both departments. However, the Superintendents have conveyed to Fry that there is no unnecessary duplication in the equipment inventory. The subcommittee has asked CGR to examine this issue further, but has been advised that the conditions and services provided are unique in each jurisdiction - consequently, there are unlikely to be "industry standards" from town to town that could be used to analyze the sufficiency of our equipment roster.

Fry explains that one methodology used is based on whether or not equipment is being used enough and if it is not then it is deemed duplicative. He will continue to research this issue.

7. Community Engagement Subcommittee - Carol Golden

a. Major Issues and Concerns from Residents

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The subcommittee met on March 14th and as they move forward they will continue to talk to the public and have neighborhood gatherings. They also had a meeting with Community Without Walls (about 60 people present) and have notes from that meeting.

The subcommittee has had various meetings of different sizes and variety in discussion. They have had a number of meetings with PTOs and parents of younger children in hopes of reaching out to that busy demographic.

Their meeting in the Witherspoon Jackson neighborhood is scheduled for April 2

The subcommittee will have a table at CommUniversity, set for April 30th, noon to 5, and they need help with the table. Carol circulated a sign up sheet.

Golden provides a handout that is an update of themes that have come up during community meetings. She asks Stefko to help make sure all of these issues are addressed at some point. Golden reviews the themes on the handout.

Lilienthal suggests some way of organizing or keeping track to make sure all issues are addressed.

Goldfarb explains that it will be very difficult to address all of these issues in the report.

Mayor Goerner explains that many issues translate for the Commission and will be addressed through the options.

Commission members agree they will need to address all the themes on the handout. Chairperson Lahnston shares that there is a lot in the queue for the subcommittee.

b. Meeting Schedule

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Chairperson Lahnston shares that there will be a meeting on April 29th in the Borough East Conference room at 3 pm on the issue of “Boroughness” with a contact who looks at the social/psychological issues associated with community. The meeting is open to Commission members. Because any meeting of a quorum* of the Commission must be publically noticed, Chairman Lahnston asks Commissioners to notify him at least a week in advance if they plan to attend. However, Commission members will not be making any decisions at the meeting. The meeting will be informational.

*A quorum is six commissioners, three from each municipality.

8. Police Subcommittee Report- Bill Metro

a. Update on Options

The meeting on Monday focused on organizational models and shared dispatch and technology. They asked the Police to provide their 5-8 years technology need estimates. \$1.2 million is the estimate for the Borough for technology updates for the next several years. The Township is in a little better shape in regards to technology needs and their cost estimate is \$400,000. They need these cost estimates to rationalize shared services versus the cost of merger.

Metro shares that no one thought shared dispatch cannot happen, but they are trying to get a handle on the details of costs.

During the other part of the meeting, they talked about organizational models, of which there are 9, and focused on a head count of 57-60 sworn officers. They will talk more about this at the next meeting. The model actually provides a higher level of service than before with less cost and could possibly include services cut in the past.

Metro said that if there is full consolidation, it could be head count neutral for some positions.

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There is clarification and finalization needed for the options and they will focus on the headcount and the recommended model.

It is recommended that we keep the head count high in the beginning, then through attrition it will be possible to go down to 57 sworn officers. Full consolidation models include full consolidation dispatch.

Stefko adds that Metro is talking about sworn officers and numbers do not include the civilian officials.

Metro explains that the community is very much interested in the police patrols and the number of officers on the streets.

Simon explains that the subcommittees are doing legwork with CGR and the Commission will be making final decisions on models etc. Simon asks to hear the option that keeps level of service the same and the cost for that.

Metro explains that another model is to disband one police department entirely and that it is far more controversial.

McCarthy adds that it is a disruptive model.

Metro explains that when merging two police departments, it is necessary to keep an eye on number of staff, ranks, command and seniority.

b. Decisions Needed to Move Forward

Next Monday the Police subcommittee will focus on one recommendation – one model.

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The subcommittee is pleased to see the possibility of reduced cost with a higher level of service.

c. Next Steps

McCarthy explains the Rice Bill and will refer Metro to a gentleman who knows the subject well.

Goldfarb adds that the Borough is talking to several local municipalities about countywide dispatch and that the Township is also interested in these talks.

Lilienthal explains that the Borough has said they would be more interested in shared dispatch with the Township than some of the other options.

Goldfarb states that many of these issues must be evaluated carefully for cost versus benefit.

McCarthy asks Metro for a cost for the shared dispatch. Metro responds that he does not yet have the number.

Chairperson Lahnston asks if the subcommittee has looked at more proactive policing and Metro says that community policing is in one of the models.

9. Finance Subcommittee- Chad Goerner

a. Review of Feedback from DCA

Mayor Goerner explains that this was covered during the Municipal Consolidation Subcommittee section.

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b. Commission Input on Debt Options

Stefko has a slide on the different debt options (combining, segregating, equalizing, or allocating by use.)

Mayor Goerner explains that the subcommittee has discussed these options at length.

McCarthy is working with the CFO's from both municipalities. If Golden had any feedback from the public regarding debt, the subcommittee would be interested in hearing that feedback.

Mayor Goerner explains that the subcommittee has been doing philosophical discussion on debt models and would be interested in hearing the Commission members' thoughts.

Goldfarb reminds the Commission that Pascale pointed out that the Township has not finished paying for the Township Hall, which would be used by a joint municipality if there were consolidation, so those possible issues need to be addressed.

Stefko adds what debt models he has seen in other places.

Former Mayor Miller explains that if the communities are looking at debts, they should also consider assets.

Stefko explains that some municipalities have found a balance by using money in reserves to equalize debt. He notes that assets are usually not seen as an offset to debt in the discussion on debt options.

Former Mayor Miller states that debt is related to assets especially since the assets will be used and necessary for a consolidated town.

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Mayor Goerner explains that the subcommittee has moved away from the allocation by use debt model.

Miller explains he would be more comfortable if there were consideration of the assets.

Lilienthal asks what would be done with property that is unneeded and sold. He also asks what these debt numbers would mean for taxpayers and property taxes.

Mayor Goerner states that looking at the debt / tax impact is an isolated snapshot in time and they are looking at total debt service and how it will effect the public overall and the communities in time.

Stefko says that there are also differences in debt services.

Chairperson Lahnston notes it is important to get feedback from the public on this.

McCarthy is collecting all relevant debt numbers from both CFOs.

Metro asks if there is a balance sheet for each municipality.

Pascale shares his thoughts that all should share debt and that the debt ratio is the same as ratables and assets are ratable. It is reasonable to consolidate both assets and debt and municipalities are lucky that debt and assets are equal. He sees no reason to segregate debt.

Haynes notes that the public feedback on the process has been to keep it simple; if the debt levels are equivalent, sharing the debt seems both equitable and easy for voters to understand.

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Mayor Goerner explains they are between option 1 and 2, shared debt and segregated debt.

Simon says that the slides do not show equalized debt.

Metro adds that both municipalities at the point of consolidation will use all assets.

Golden says it is fair to share debt.

Small explains it is hard to face the public and give them a philosophical answer about debt without numbers and dollars attached to it.

Chairperson Lahnston adds that when talking about debt at a neighborhood gathering, the main point residents made was that consolidation or other options must save money or else not be done.

Mayor Goerner says that the difference in cost for the different models may be negligible.

Goldfarb explains that there will be a bottom line and the debt option must be fair and shown to the public.

c. Next Steps

Mayor Goerner says the committee will come back with numbers.

10. Focus Group Report- Update on Plans- Pat Simon

The subcommittee is working on a discussion guide for focus group participants. There is a meeting on April 5th to finalize the guide. They will also begin recruiting for groups tomorrow night (3.24.2011).

Focus groups are scheduled for April 9th and April 14th.

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Simon requests that Commission representatives at focus groups be well aware of recent subcommittee work.

11. Comments and Questions From the Audience

Marvin Reed states that he attended the last public meeting. He asks that the Commission include possible changes to the planning and school boards as a result of consolidation in its public presentations. These are complicated issues and the public must be aware of possible changes.

Travis Linderman asks who is in complete control of the Princeton Future meeting.

Chairperson Lahnston answers the Commission.

Linderman follows up by asking what the positives of possible feedback will be for the Commission on issues for example such as the different forms of governance if it may contradict discussion held by the Commission earlier.

Mayor Goerner responds that the Commission has already voted on a Borough form of government.

Linderman follows up asking why then will there be discussion on form of governance.

Chairperson Lahnston explains the discussion will be on governance, which includes administration and not only the form of governance.

Sippelle states that he has read the recommended forms of government and wants to know how set the Commission is on the Borough form of government and if the public can still have an impact on the form of government.

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Lahnston explains that the Commission voted on the Borough form of government unanimously and the final recommendations will come with the final report. There is always a possibility of change but at the moment the topic is closed.

Lilienthal states that the Commission will explain the Borough form in its discussion and recommendations.

Goldfarb states that the municipalities cannot do what they want with the Commissions recommendations.

Comment [VH1]: Not sure this is what was said, and not sure what it means. David?

Mayor Goerner explains that the subcommittee completely analyzed different forms of governance, presented it to all members of the Commission, the subcommittee studied it thoroughly, took a vote that was unanimous. Subcommittee meetings were open to the public; wards were discussed at length and decided against. The final decision was for a Borough form of government.

Sipprell follows up that the first statement in the slide should be less misleading regarding open discussion on the form of governance since the Borough form was already decided upon.

Linderman states that Mayor Trotman discussed part time vs full time mayors at the Merchants meeting.

Mayor Trotman answers that she never discussed such a topic at the meeting.

Former Mayor Miller states that that topic was discussed at a subcommittee meeting.

Mayor Trotman explains that she was not privileged to that discussion and never commented on that.

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Linderman states that he must have misheard her at the Merchants meeting.

Haynes reminds the public that the chart on governance options available to a consolidated Princeton is available on the CGR site.

Sipprell questions again what will be discussed at the Princeton Future meeting regarding governance.

Chairperson Lahnston states that the Borough form had not been decided at the time the Princeton Future meeting flyer was created.

Stefko said he would change slide accordingly.

Allen Hegedus, referencing the Feb. 16th minutes, states that there is not substantial discussion on the forms of governance at that meeting.

Lilienthal states that Hegedus has the minutes from the wrong meeting.

Chairperson Lahnston states that the discussion took place at length in the municipal consolidation subcommittee meetings and the discussion was a process that had distinct comprehensive steps and analysis; it may not be reflected in the minutes as such.

Former Mayor Miller shares that the minutes from this discussion will be available.

Mark Schneider asks why the Faulkner Act was not considered.

Comment [ATL2]: I don't know if this is the correct spelling. Check with Ryan.

Mayor Goerner states that it was considered but there is an issue with government and staff interaction and the wards issue.

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Schneider responds that surrounding towns use some form of government from the Faulkner Act.

Mayor Goerner responds that the Princetons currently do not have a Faulkner Act form of government.

Sippelle states that the subcommittee minutes are not actually 11 pages of discussion but includes charts etc.

Hegedus states that there is a predisposed bias of the Commission for consolidation rather than an objective discussion on the issue. He says he sees the Commission mounting a case pro consolidation.

Chairperson Lahnston explains that the Commission was invited to the Princeton Future meeting to discuss consolidation vs shared services.

Hegedus responds there is a predisposition for selling consolidation.

Simon responds that the Commission has been working very carefully to be as objective as possible and is looking to find the best options available.

Mayor Trotman states that at the Mayors meeting she was asked about pros and cons to consolidation and she responded that the jury is still out. She explains that she does not want to have a predisposed opinion and believes the Commission provides a balance.

Linderman states that he believes that at the Princeton Future meeting, the Commission will not get a narrowed down focus on the public's issues of concerns but it will widen the spectrum of ideas.

Suppelle states that the issue of consolidation will hinge on the question of cost savings.

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Hegedus asks what if the Borough floated bonds to equalize the debt/asset ratio.

Lahnston said the subcommittee would take that under consideration.

12. Commission Budget Status Report

Chairperson Lahnston hands out the budget form as an update. He will email a revised copy as there is an error – an extra column -- and a revised budget is needed.

13. New Business

None

13. Adjournment

Motion made to adjourn by Simon.

Motion seconded by Lilienthal

All vote in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Shabnam Salih, Study Commission Secretary

Approved: April 9, 2011

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Princeton Township*

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ⁱ This meeting was subsequently rescheduled to April 4.