

Municipal Consolidation Case Study

An Evaluation of the Princeton, NJ Borough-
Township Consolidation Transition Process



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background on the Princeton Consolidation Effort

On November 8, 2011, after nearly 60 years of failed attempts, the residents of Princeton Borough and Princeton Township voted to consolidate their municipalities. It was the first significant merger of New Jersey municipalities in more than a half century.¹ With 566 cities, townships, boroughs, towns, and villages and the densest population in the country, the state found it difficult to financially support all of the governments, especially during the economic downturn of recent years. Beginning in 2008, the state encouraged municipalities to consolidate to reduce administrative costs and the state's significant budget deficit.² Princeton Borough and Princeton Township blazed the trail for this process under the watchful eye of many governments across the state and throughout the nation.

This report is an analysis of the transition process that took place during the first nine months of 2012, the year after the consolidation vote. While there is a wealth of literature available regarding the process of getting to the vote, little has been written about what to do once consolidation has been approved. This report therefore attempts to distill general lessons from Princeton's experience in implementing a major municipal consolidation for other municipalities considering a similar undertaking. The Center for Governmental Research (CGR) produced an objective report recounting the details of the consolidation implementation process specific to the Princeton case. Our report is intended to complement the CGR's work and provide assistance mainly to administrators and residents of other municipalities in New Jersey and elsewhere in the country.

A complete recounting of the activities involved in implementing the Princeton consolidation is beyond the scope of this report. For details on specific activities of the government and community leaders involved, we refer the reader to the CGR's final report and its Princeton consolidation process website (www.cgr.org/princeton), which includes an online repository of meeting minutes, outcome documents, and links to online news coverage of the events.

Study Methodology

This report was created by five students from Princeton University. Four were graduate students at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, and one was an undergraduate. Two of the students had non-academic ties to the Princeton area. This project was supported by the Woodrow Wilson School's Graduate Consulting Group in service to the Princeton community and in the spirit of the school's commitment to applying scholarship to local public policy issues. Each student closely followed the activities of one of the Transition Task Force (TTF) subcommittees that community and

¹ Pahaquarry Township, a municipality with a total population of six residents, merged with neighboring Hardwick in 1997.

² <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=90090911>

municipal leaders agreed were most critical to the consolidation process.³ The students collectively covered the activities of the following subcommittees:

1. Facilities and Other Assets
2. Finance
3. Infrastructure and Operations
4. Personnel
5. Public Safety

The students tracked the work of their assigned subcommittees by attending meetings, conducting individual interviews with subcommittee members, reviewing documents (i.e., meeting minutes, local media coverage, and reports located primarily on the CGR website), and submitting a survey to members of the Transition Task Force. The research began in March 2012 and ended in September.

Report Contents

The report is organized as follows:

Section I provides background on consolidation efforts in Princeton, factors affecting consolidation in the plethora of municipalities in New Jersey, and a brief description of the formal bodies involved in the transition to consolidation in Princeton.

Section II explains the Transition Task Force's scope of authority, and details the purpose and composition of each of the five subcommittees monitored.

Section III outlines lessons learned from Princeton's transitional implementation process, specifically those that may be applicable to other municipalities. A summary of our recommendations for transition authorities is as follows:

1. To oversee the consolidation process, we recommend convening a transition authority composed primarily of members of the consolidation study commission, including administrators, and other interested residents as needed. Ensure that the group has a clear mandate, specific goals, and deadlines for deliverables.
2. Provide the public with continued and easily accessible sources of information while maintaining privacy over sensitive matters such as personnel decisions.
3. When budgeting for transition costs, secure a clear cost-reimbursement agreement from the state, and be sure to take into account challenges in harmonizing budgetary systems and differential employee redundancy rates across levels of seniority.
4. Because the benefits to the community can often get lost in the details and amid the clamor of consolidation opponents, seek to maintain enthusiasm by elevating the discourse toward the overarching advantages of consolidation.

³ The three subcommittees whose activities were not tracked were Boards, Committees and Commissions, Communications and Outreach, and Information Technology.

5. Because the drawbacks of consolidation are likely to be concentrated and the benefits diffuse, engage citizen groups benefiting from consolidation in order to maintain political support for tough decisions.

The report conclusion, **Section IV**, addresses the potential limitations of our analysis, focusing on areas that may make the outcomes of this case study more or less applicable to other municipalities, and offers final recommendations.

The recommendations contained in this report reflect the views of the student authors, not necessarily the individuals tasked with overseeing the consolidation. Although the findings were compiled from direct observation of the transition authorities' activities and from personal conversations with those involved in the deliberations, respondents occasionally disagreed as to the conclusions to be drawn from their experiences. In such cases, the authors relied on their own public policy training and judgment to extrapolate the generalizable lessons contained therein.

I: BACKGROUND ON THE PRINCETON CONSOLIDATION EFFORT

The effort to consolidate the two Princeton municipalities was a long haul, with consolidation put to voters three separate times before a ballot measure finally passed with an overwhelming majority on November 8, 2011. Although the battle over consolidation is now history for the two Princetons, it is important to look back at how consolidation came about. The first time the consolidation question appeared on Princeton ballots was in 1953, when the proposal was soundly rejected in both the borough and township. At that time, the result was no surprise; the borough and township were worlds apart despite their geographic proximity. The borough was relatively developed and economically stable, while the township was still very rural. An important step came in 1966, when the two municipalities formed a single Board of Education after agreeing to share the same high school. Another consolidation referendum in 1979 passed in the township and was narrowly defeated in the borough. And in 1996, one more consolidation proposal failed by a thin margin in the borough while winning strong support in the township.

The prospect of potentially significant cost savings in merging the two Princetons brought the push for consolidation to the table once again in 2011. Foremost in the debate over consolidation, aside from cost savings, was the highly charged issue of how to preserve the unique cultural identities of the borough and township and how to mitigate the perceived homogenizing effects of merging the two municipalities.



Figure 1: The Princetons, pre- and post-consolidation

Voters in both the borough and the township approved the consolidation effort in 2011 despite lingering concerns about cultural differences. The effort’s success was due to various factors, but in large part, to New Jersey’s 2007 adoption of the Local Option Municipal Consolidation law (N.J.S.A. 40A:65-25 et seq.), which allowed for more flexibility in advancing the consolidation question. Previously, those who wanted to begin the municipal consolidation process had been required to create a study commission by resolution or ordinance from the municipalities themselves. The 2007 law loosened timelines and eliminated the need for an elected consolidation commission or a voter referendum to open a study commission into the possibility of consolidation. A municipal

consolidation study commission could instead be created by a voter petition or municipal resolution. Then, if the commission endorses consolidation, the merging municipalities can approve the consolidation via voter referendum or municipal resolution.

Prior to the vote in the Princetons, there was much work done to secure voter approval of consolidation. This preparatory process was spearheaded by the two municipalities' governing bodies, who first submitted the consolidation study proposal to the state's Department of Community Affairs. When the study was approved, both local bodies provided funding for an outside consulting firm to guide the way through the complicated study process. In assembling the Commission leadership, interested residents submitted their credentials and their views on consolidation and were interviewed at a public meeting. The final decision on personnel appointments lay with the governing bodies, and with that, a Consolidation Study Commission was finally formed. The borough and township government formally established the Consolidation Study Commission in December 2009.

To assist with the effort, Commission members enlisted the support of the Center for Governmental Research (CGR) because of the firm's emphasis on transparency and documentation. The firm maintained a repository of meeting agendas, minutes, reports, and other relevant materials on a new website created specifically for the process of Princeton consolidation. The Consolidation Study Commission was primarily concerned with constructing a budget and assessing the feasibility of consolidation. The commission's final report included several general recommendations but stopped short of discussing the details of implementing the consolidation if the communities ultimately approved it. In April 2011, the commission officially endorsed consolidation, and the next month commission members voted to recommend that a referendum on consolidation be placed on the November 2011 ballot.⁴

After voters approved the proposal via referendum, the process of actually implementing the consolidation still lay ahead. The Consolidation Study Commission's work had brought about approval for consolidation and set a roadmap for the merger. But it wasn't until the formation of the Transition Task Force in January 2012, that the implementation began in earnest. The Task Force worked diligently throughout the spring and summer and completed their deliberations on time and under budget. Required to learn the institutions, weigh complex policy alternatives, and negotiate practical solutions to some very sensitive issues—all in a matter of months—the efforts of this volunteer body should be commended. Princeton residents came together on their own initiative, consulted with each other, and cooperated toward a bipartisan solution to a challenge for which there was no precedent. With a public ceremony on New Year's Day 2013, the two Princetons officially consolidated. Although process of resolving some nuanced details of consolidation is still ongoing, the effort was widely considered a success.

⁴ A copy of the Consolidation Study Commission's final report can be accessed at: http://www.princetontwp.org/consolidation_docs/Consolidation_Comm_Final%20Report.pdf

II: FORMAL AND INFORMAL PLAYERS IN THE TRANSITION PROCESS

The Transition Task Force (TTF)

According to the municipal resolution that established it, the Transition Task Force (TTF) was created “for the purposes of recommending and facilitating appropriate actions and decisions concerning the legal consolidation...using the Consolidation Study Commission Final Report dated June 2011 as a guide.”⁵ The TTF initially analyzed recommendations presented by the commission for estimated impact, feasibility, and community acceptability. Next, the TTF was responsible for establishing transition processes and timelines, delegating responsibilities to each subcommittee, devising and enforcing accountability measures, and communicating with the public on all consolidation activities.⁶ It is important to note that a volunteer Transition Task Force was not envisioned from the outset of the consolidation effort. The TTF came to be only after the role of overseeing the consolidation transition was effectively relinquished by the Consolidation Study Commission, which was unable to perform this role after the vote due to constraints on members’ time.

TTF Membership

Although the township’s population was about thirty percent larger than that of the borough, representation on the TTF was split equally (as on the Consolidation Study Commission), with a chair from the borough and vice chair from the township. The two municipalities each had five voting members on the TTF, plus one alternate in case of an absence. Membership included the current borough and township mayors, municipal council and committee representatives, and residents with public and private sector experience. Several TTF members aspired to elected positions in the consolidated municipality’s new governing body; three actively campaigned in the consolidated municipality primary elections while serving on the TTF.⁷

The Subcommittees

Primary Role of Subcommittees: Review Municipal Area-Specific Options

The TTF established eight subcommittees to formulate consolidation policy recommendations across designated municipal areas of administration. The subcommittees then presented their policy options to the full TTF for recommendation to the future governing body. The subcommittees’ main objectives, as recommended by the CGR, were to outline and prioritize their respective tasks, establish timelines for task completion, delegate responsibility for each task to specific members to engender intra-subcommittee accountability, monitor task progress, and develop proposed solutions.⁸

⁵ Township of Princeton Joint Resolution of the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Princeton and the Mayor and Committee of the Township of Princeton Establishing a Transition Task Force. 1/23/12. See Annex for full text of Resolution.

⁶ <http://www.cgr.org/princeton/transition/docs/CGR-Princeton031212.pdf> Slides 3 & 11

⁷ <http://www.cgr.org/princeton/transition/docs/Members.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.cgr.org/princeton/transition/docs/CGR-Princeton031212.pdf> Slide 14

Subcommittee Membership

One of the first responsibilities of the subcommittee chairs was to recruit members for subcommittees via a public call for resumes. Fortunately, supply exceeded demand, and subcommittee leadership was able to select volunteers with relevant expertise.⁹ Subcommittee membership included 1) TTF members, 2) residents appointed by the TTF, 3) non-voting municipal staff workers in relevant departments, and 4) non-voting liaisons from the Consolidation Study Commission, Princeton University, or the community. Membership spanned the borough and township and provided a mix of public and private sector experience; however, in selecting members, balanced municipal representation on subcommittees was considered secondary to subject-matter expertise. All subcommittees were chaired by a member of the TTF. Consolidation Study Commission liaison participation varied by subcommittee, as it was not mandatory. Because commission and community liaisons were not essential for voting activities, many became less involved in the recommendation process over time.¹⁰

Subcommittee Scopes of Work

Facilities and Other Assets Subcommittee

The Facilities and Other Assets Subcommittee had the task of analyzing and studying the facilities needs of the merging departments of the consolidated municipality in order to make recommendations to the TTF, as well as to the borough and the township. Mainly, this subcommittee dealt with the two separate municipal buildings and how each could be used or renovated to promote efficient allocation of space in the process of merging departments. Originally, the subcommittee also oversaw the recommendations on merging of other capital assets. However, early in the process, it was determined that the new administrator for the consolidated municipality could handle such matters.

There were eight official members of the facilities subcommittee: four TTF members and four volunteer community members. The chair of the subcommittee, a TTF member, was a former mayor of the township and long-time local resident who had been involved in previous consolidation efforts between the borough and the township. There were two liaisons, one from Princeton University and one from the state Department of Community Affairs. Also attending meetings were outside hired consultants from an architectural and planning firm, as well as administrators from both the borough and township.

Finance Subcommittee

The Finance Subcommittee was charged with evaluating the financial implications of consolidation, specifically the costs of other subcommittees' recommendations. The finance group's main objectives were to develop and maintain a detailed analysis of the financial impact of consolidation based on the TTF's recommendations and to project and track transition costs. The primary issues that the subcommittee dealt with were the Open Space Fund, the cost of shared services, personnel separation packages, and state reimbursement of eligible transition costs.

⁹ Phone conversation with I&O Subcommittee Chair, October 5, 2012

¹⁰ <http://www.cgr.org/princeton/transition/docs/SUBCOMMITTEES.pdf>

The Joint Study Commission had estimated that after three years of full consolidation the new municipality could expect to save \$3.1 million annually. In 2011 the commission also estimated that the upfront transition cost would be \$1.7 million, to cover salary harmonization, equipment, physical relocation costs, legal fees, and other expenses.

The Finance Subcommittee had eleven members. Three were part of the Borough Council, and two served on the Township Committee as incumbent mayor and deputy mayor. The subcommittee was chaired by a volunteer with extensive private sector finance experience. The township and borough chief financial officers and a representative from the state Department of Community Affairs were also members of the subcommittee. There were additionally two community volunteers.

Infrastructure and Operations Subcommittee (I&O)

The Infrastructure and Operations Subcommittee (I&O) was responsible for making recommendations on brush and leaf collection; garbage, sewer, and composting service levels; and bid processes. The team also reconciled policies and procedures on the maintenance of municipal parks, recreation areas, and open space. In its efforts to help realize the cost-minimization goals touted by the consolidation campaign, I&O was specifically charged with redesigning organizational charts for public works, the Princeton Sewer Operating Committee (PSOC), recreation, and engineering. The subcommittee's responsibilities included collaboration with other subcommittees (i.e., Communications and Outreach, Facilities and Other Assets, and Personnel) at different points in the recommendation process.¹¹

I&O formally included eleven members: three from the TTF, two residents with relevant professional expertise, and six staff members who were engineers, public works, recreation, and municipal administrators from the borough and township. A TTF member with private sector expertise led the team. Voting membership on I&O included one elected official, who was running for a position on the consolidated municipality's council, and was otherwise mainly composed of borough residents.

A Consolidation Study Commission representative and community liaisons were highly engaged in the I&O recommendation process. They often sat at the discussion table with formal members and offered substantive input.¹² To a greater extent than other subcommittees, I&O made an effort to regularly benchmark its recommendation options with those proposed in the Consolidation Study Commission's official report. I&O may have more consistently used the study commission's report as a point of reference during discussions because a commission representative actively participated in meetings.¹³

Personnel Subcommittee

The Personnel Subcommittee mainly had the job of addressing human resources issues related to consolidation. In practice, the subcommittee focused on five main activities: (1) determining the optimum personnel redundancy strategy and associated

¹¹ <http://www.cgr.org/princeton/transition/docs/PrincetonFuture-5May2012.pdf>

¹² <http://www.cgr.org/princeton/transition/docs/PrincetonFuture-5May2012.pdf>

¹³ TTF member survey response, Timestamp: 9/11/2012 11:38am

severance packages, (2) designing an objective and transparent mechanism for selecting which municipal administrative employees occupying redundant positions would be retained, (3) recommending rules for harmonizing human resources policies and compensation and benefits packages between the consolidating municipalities, (4) recommending a new overall organizational structure for the municipal administrative office of the consolidated municipality, (5) and encouraging cross-fertilization of ideas and collaboration between the two municipalities in anticipation of the consolidation date.

Transition Task Force members on the Personnel Subcommittee brought a diversity of human resources-related professional experience to the consolidation effort. Two of the four TTF members of the subcommittee had spent their professional careers working in human resources for Fortune 500 companies. Other members held high-level management positions in academia and business. Several members concurrently ran for Princeton public office while on the subcommittee.

Public Safety Subcommittee

The Public Safety Subcommittee was tasked with developing recommendations for the consolidated police department's organizational structure, staffing size, the timing of staffing changes, the operation and location of a merged dispatch center, and the acquisition of new technology systems and equipment. The group also was responsible for acquiring cost quotes for consolidating the existing police departments' rules and regulations and standard operating procedures, as well as recommending the structure, staffing, and role of emergency management.

Ten members sat on the Public Safety Subcommittee, six of whom were voting members. The subcommittee was chaired by a private-sector management professional and former Borough Council president and police commissioner. He also chaired the TTF. The voting members included the chair, a Borough Council member, a former borough police commissioner, a former township mayor, a Township Committee member, and a long-time Township resident. Non-voting members included the borough police chief, a township police lieutenant, and high-ranking officials from both the borough and township. There were also two liaisons from Princeton University, the fire department, and the local first aid and rescue services.

Contractors and Collaborators

The Center for Governmental Research (CGR)

The Center for Governmental Research (CGR) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit research firm based in Rochester, N.Y. The firm was contracted to assist the Consolidation Study Commission in evaluating feasibility and cost issues, managing a website that housed documents related to the transition, and creating a final summary report outlining the actions taken during consolidation. Although the CGR initially was hired to assist with the commission's efforts, municipal leaders decided to retain the firm throughout the transition process to ensure continuity.

The Governing Bodies

The borough mayor and Borough Council and township mayor and Township Committee, referred to collectively as the governing bodies, conducted oversight of the consolidation process. Some members of the Borough Council and the Township Committee were heavily involved in the deliberations of several subcommittees and the full Transition Task Force. As the only elected officials involved in the process, their participation was helpful. Because the authority of the TTF was limited, all of its policy recommendations were referred to the joint governing body, which ultimately voted on whether to make them binding. Many of these elected officials were active supporters of consolidation.

The Administrators

As in most local government systems, the day-to-day management of the borough and township was entrusted to professional municipal administrators (often called city managers) and their related staff. Both administrators were given non-voting spots on the TTF and were invited to participate in its subcommittee meetings as well. In March 2012, shortly after the borough and township voted to consolidate, the township's administrator resigned. The township CFO served as acting administrator in his stead for the duration of the transition period.

The Department of Community Affairs (DCA)

The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) was the official state government agency designated to assist and oversee the Princeton consolidation process. The DCA supports local governments, community development organizations, and individuals by providing administrative assistance, financial support, and technical assistance. Representatives from the DCA regularly attended meetings of the TTF and full subcommittees, and one DCA representative served as a non-voting member of the TTF.

Legal Counsel

It was important to the Transition Task Force that they have legal counsel independent of the legal counsels for the Borough and Township. So they enlisted the services of a local expert in New Jersey municipal law, William John Kearns, Jr., of the Kearns, Reale, & Kearns law firm, to provide legal counsel on various components of the Task Force's work. Mr. Kearns also serves as General Counsel for the New Jersey League of Municipalities.

III: LESSONS LEARNED DURING THE TRANSITION TO CONSOLIDATION

3.1 Leadership Structure and Transition Activity Sequencing

While New Jersey law provided some guidance as to how the two municipalities should pursue a vote toward consolidation, there was little to no statutory guidance or legal precedent for how the town should proceed in actually *implementing* the consolidation. The two communities had 45 days in which to determine new voting districts for a consolidated Princeton. With assistance from the Mercer County Board of Elections, new voting districts were developed and then approved by the county. Beyond that, members of the Princeton community had given little thought to the process of actually transitioning to a consolidated municipality. Consumed by the process of mobilizing the vote itself, few involved had the time or energy to consider the details of what would happen after Election Day if the electorate voted “yes.” Consequently, for the first few weeks after the vote, it was not certain who would be in charge of the transition process.¹⁴ In retrospect, many of those involved expressed frustration at the ensuing post-vote disarray and conceded that the sequence of transition events and the transition leadership structure could have been designed better.

Throughout our interviews and surveys of Task Force members and other key players in the consolidation implementation process several alternatives were proposed, including:

1. Appoint a volunteer Transition Task Force but postpone all deliberations until after the election of a consolidated municipal council, or the actual date of consolidation.
2. Forgo the creation of a volunteer Transition Task Force and instead require members of the Consolidation Study Commission to implement consolidation.
3. Delegate all consolidation implementation-related activities to municipal administrators and their staff.

3.1.1 Option 1: Postpone TTF Deliberations Until After Elections

The first option was proposed largely as a reaction against what several respondents described as excessive political posturing by Transition Task Force members. These respondents claimed that on several occasions, members of the group insisted on rehashing long-since settled debates in order to further their own political ambitions. This led to delays at critical points throughout the deliberations. Although putting off the hard decisions until after the consolidation date would certainly prevent this kind of political grandstanding, this modification suffered several critical drawbacks.

First, it would impose a likely unrealistic time frame on the newly elected officials and administrators to implement the necessary changes. Decisions on harmonizing service levels, municipal employee benefits and separation procedures, among many other issues, would have to be made practically overnight in order to secure efficiency gains promised

¹⁴ TTF member survey response, 9/11/2012 11:38 AM

from the outset of consolidation.¹⁵ Second, it would eliminate one of the major incentives qualified members of the community might have for volunteering their time and energy toward the consolidation cause. Transition Task Force respondents felt that many of its members interested in running for office viewed their participation as a way to prove their competency before the electorate and make a case for their candidacy. Recruiting a TTF after the elections could have the effect of severely diminishing the talent pool from which the community could select TTF representatives. Lastly, it would eliminate an opportunity for aspiring candidates to educate themselves on the community's most important issues and gain critical experience in municipal management prior to assuming more official leadership capacities after the vote.

Respondents also expressed doubt that imposing a shorter time frame for decision-making would have resolved other significant sources of contention. For example, while this option might limit filibustering by task force members, there was no guarantee that it would limit obstruction from members of the community adversely affected by proposed reforms. Much of the community push-back the TTF experienced developed from difficulties municipal leaders had in communicating their reforms to affected parties rather than from shortcomings in the overall management of the consolidation process.¹⁶

3.1.2 Option 2: Task the Consolidation Study Commission with Implementation

Initially, requiring all Consolidation Study Commission members to remain actively involved in implementing the consolidation, was—unbeknownst to the members themselves—the default option. It wasn't until more than a week after Election Day that representatives at the state DCA informed them that the vote to approve consolidation had effectively extended their terms of service until 180 days after consolidation on January 1, 2013.¹⁷ Although some members were amendable to this scenario, some rejected it outright, having, in their minds, already fulfilled their obligation to the community through their considerable efforts up to that point. Commission members had devoted little thought to what would happen after the vote and had assumed that another body would be assembled to implement consolidation. Ultimately community leaders conceded the commission had served its intended purpose and decided to recruit a new body of volunteers—the Transition Task Force—to spearhead the consolidation implementation.

Nevertheless, when considering future consolidation efforts, municipalities should consider preserving the Consolidation Study Commission and extending its authority through the ultimate date of consolidation. The obvious advantage to this option is that it retains all the institutional knowledge built up over the process of researching the

¹⁵ The proposal could be modified to limit pre-consolidation date deliberations only to what is legally necessary, but unless it were possible to move up the election day for a month (as was suggested by one survey respondent), that would likely still leave the newly elected leaders of the consolidated municipality with a very steep learning curve.

¹⁶ For a discussion of these communication issues, see section 3.5.

¹⁷ The Department of Community Affairs indicated that its semi-binding regulations required the Consolidation Study Commission to stay on for 180 days following the consolidation, which, after allowing 12 months to implement the consolidation (as in the case of Princeton), would equate to another 18 months after the vote.

consolidation, estimating its costs, soliciting feedback from the community, and preparing the commission's final report. Alternative configurations of transition leadership would be hard-pressed to match the level of ownership and commitment held by many members of the commission. The Princeton consolidation process, for example, incurred an unnecessary delay by effectively relegating its Consolidation Study Commission to an advisory role and having to recruit and—more significantly—educate a new group of volunteers in the rules and nuances of municipal government.

Moreover, retaining the Consolidation Study Commission intact throughout the implementation process would minimize the confusion over issues that arose in the case of Princeton regarding delegation and accountability between the various consolidation bodies. Many TTF respondents felt that, at its inception, the TTF wasted valuable time trying to agree on a scope of work because members of the task force disagreed over the extent to which they were bound by the parameters of the Consolidation Study Commission's report. The debate continued and constrained productivity throughout the TTF's tenure. There was no statutory guidance on how closely a group charged with implementing a consolidation must follow the pre-vote commission report.

Despite all the previously listed advantages, this option falls victim to two critical constraints. First, as was mentioned, is the constraint on the time of Consolidation Study Commission members, who invested an extraordinary amount of time trying to advance the process to the stage of a referendum vote.¹⁸ As such, requiring an upfront commitment to stay on after the vote through the date of consolidation would likely deter otherwise willing and capable volunteers from lending their talents to the cause. Second, Consolidation Study Commission members may be limited in their expertise. Their skills in mobilizing the consolidation vote may not transfer to the detail-oriented technocratic process of crafting policies necessary for implementing the consolidation. For these reasons—despite its apparent advantages—the option of requiring an upfront commitment from all Consolidation Study Commission members to serve on the transition team does not seem viable.

3.1.3 Option 3: Task Municipal Administrators with Consolidation Implementation

Another option, considered soon after the municipalities voted to consolidate, was to delegate all implementation decisions to the acting municipal governments. Princeton municipal administrators welcomed this responsibility. The respective administrators, in particular, possessed a superior level of institutional knowledge that would have rendered them qualified to decide matters related to personnel, benefits harmonization, and other politically sensitive issues.¹⁹ The administrators were, by some estimation, the most qualified of all Transition Task Force members to make decisions on TTF proposals.

¹⁸ Consolidation Study Commission volunteers logged countless hours in meetings, preparation for meetings, preparing minutes and meeting notes, and organizing other community outreach activities. More than seventy formal public meetings were held in soliciting community input in the commission's work.

¹⁹ In the case of Princeton's consolidation, the administrators were included in the TTF subcommittee deliberations but were not granted voting positions, which created tensions between them and the voting TTF and citizen members.

The benefits to this option were made apparent when TTF members and staff of the Personnel Subcommittee clashed over the degree of detail required in personnel selection procedures. In designing a system for determining eligibility for consolidated positions, most opted for a fairly straightforward method that involved extending invitations to apply for consolidated positions to all individuals whose jobs had been made redundant. The plan was judged sufficiently objective by all municipal staff serving on the subcommittee. However, one TTF member of the subcommittee wanted to make the plan more robust in order to account for seemingly every possible contingency. Although well intentioned, this member’s proposal included measures to protect the town against hypothetical scenarios, likely drawn from the member’s corporate experience, that had little relevance to the current situation.

Had the administrators been granted control of the consolidation implementation, they probably could have prevented deliberations from meandering too much into the weeds. However, the option of ceding authority to the administrators was ultimately rejected by the commission, which was reluctant to relegate important decisions to unelected officials. Princeton community leaders decided they would rather abide the efforts of citizen volunteers than abdicate the responsibility to those who were considered “inside the tent.”

In theory, one could have proposed a similar alternative, wherein the elected governing body received authority to make all critical implementation-related decisions. However, given the constraints on their time (most elected officials serve in addition to holding full-time jobs outside of government), most respondents agreed that this would have been unrealistic as well.

Recommendation on Leadership Structure and Transition Activity Sequencing

Having considered the strengths and weaknesses of the previously listed alternatives, we recommend considering another option that combines the advantages of each, as summarized in **Table 1**. In consultation with several knowledgeable members of Princeton’s consolidation effort, it became apparent that the optimal strategy would involve creating a Transition Task Force composed mostly of willing members of the Consolidation Study Commission, one governing body member from each one of the consolidating municipalities, and the administrators from each.

Table 1: Consideration of Transition Management Options

| Transition Management Option | Description | Advantage | Disadvantage |
|------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Option 1 | Appoint TTF, postpone until after consolidated municipal elections/ consolidation date | Avoid political posturing | Decisions rushed, may limit talent pool of volunteers, less “on-the-job training” for potential future leaders |
| Option 2 | No TTF, instead have members of the Study Commission implement consolidation. | Retain CSC institutional knowledge; minimize leadership transition, inter-group accountability issues | Constraints on CSC members’ time and expertise |

| Transition Management Option | Description | Advantage | Disadvantage |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Option 3 | No TTF, instead have professional municipal admins. implement consolidation. | Take advantage of administrators' institutional knowledge, expertise | Loss of some democratic control over consolidation decisions |
| Recommendation | Hybrid solution; have Study Commission, administrators and select Governing Body members implement consolidation | Retain institutional knowledge while avoiding political posturing | CSC member retention |

In pursuing this solution it will be necessary to overcome the problem of burnout among members of the Consolidation Study Commission. From the outset, transition leaders should communicate to all commission candidates that they may be needed to continue their work through the implementation phase. Although some commission members will likely opt out of participation, as was evidenced by the Princeton experience, many will likely volunteer to stay on. The CSC should be recruit individuals with a variety of expertise, relevant not only to the process of studying the feasibility of consolidation, but also implementing a municipal consolidation or organizational merger, in order to ensure the Commission possesses all the required skill sets.

Despite these challenges, this option remains the most viable recommendation. Ensuring continuity among transition leadership will not only retain the most institutional memory and reduce the learning curve for new transition team members but will ensure the team stays focused on its primary mission. Including members of the Consolidation Study Commission on the transition team will naturally minimize the team's deviation from the commission's official recommendations and ensure it keeps to its mandate.

3.2 Defining Transition Leadership Scope of Work

3.2.1 Reconciling Competing Visions of the TTF and Subcommittee Mandates

The uncertainty surrounding the TTF mandate meant that subcommittee members often had conflicting visions regarding the scope of their work. The resolution establishing the Transition Task Force provided few specifics about the extent of reform it could enact to existing policies not immediately related to consolidation and the degree to which it was bound by the Consolidation Study Commission's recommendations (see Annex for full text of Resolution). In navigating these uncertain terms of authority, some TTF members adopted the guiding principle of "do no harm." They took a literal interpretation of the commission's recommendations and were reluctant to examine any issues not specifically laid out in the official report. Others took a more expansive view of the TTF's scope of work, delving into the details of municipal government operations in search of opportunities to create systemic efficiency gains through long-term reforms. These TTF members also often

clashed with commission liaisons, who wanted to ensure their work—which they viewed as most closely representing the will of the electorate—was given its due.²⁰

3.2.1.1 Exercising Policy Reform Restraint

In some cases, TTF members disagreed on the extent to which they should use their mandate to address long-term problems that existed independent of consolidation. This disagreement was made particularly manifest while the TTF Personnel Subcommittee was working on harmonizing differences between the borough and township municipal employee benefits plans. Certain members saw the TTF deliberations as an opportunity to reform policies they viewed as unsustainable. Consequently, when proposing alternative benefit plans, they looked not only to reconcile borough-township discrepancies but to make Princeton government benefit packages competitive with comparable organizations in the public and private sectors.

The subcommittee similarly faced competing interpretations of its mandate when creating an updated organizational chart for the administrative offices in the newly consolidated municipality. Some involved in the discussions, including the administrators, wanted to take advantage of the opportunity for reform and overhaul the entire organizational structure. Others viewed this as overstepping their mandate as set by the Consolidation Study Commission. Mindful of the charge to secure the projected \$3.1 million in consolidation savings, the TTF ultimately favored a more modest, cost-conscious reform effort.²¹

Although they were well intentioned, these proposed reforms disrupted and slowed the TTF's progress. By proposing reductions in personnel benefits beyond those that would be necessary to implement consolidation, the subcommittee drew excessive attention to an already sensitive issue and stirred unnecessary dissent within the community surrounding the benefits harmonization process. To many, these efforts for long-term reform seemed to undermine the authority of the more limited Consolidation Study Commission report, making the parameters of TTF authority appear arbitrary.²²

3.2.1.2 Avoiding Subcommittee Minutiae

In other circumstances subcommittee leaders were apt to defer management decisions to professional municipal staff. During early meetings of the Public Safety Subcommittee, the members contracted with WCPS International Inc., a local technology consulting firm, to procure the necessary hardware and equipment required for a

²⁰ One particularly ambitious Personnel Subcommittee respondent highlighted this tension: “There was some feeling on the part of the Consolidation Commission that any departure from their report was mission creep, but there were points when it became clear that there would be an opportunity lost not to take a more detailed look at some of the policies, procedures, and personnel decisions”

²¹ June 26, 2012. Notes from interview with Thea Berkhout. Personnel Subcommittee Chair, Transition Task Force.

²² One anonymous Transition Task Force survey respondent claimed that, “it was always unclear the extent to which we were following the Consolidation Commission report and the extent to which we had latitude to make changes. I think people used it when they wanted to, and disregarded it when that was more convenient. It should have been made clear exactly what was voted on and what was left to the TTF [to decide]”.

streamlined and consolidated dispatch center.²³ Upon receiving the company's recommendations, the subcommittee agreed not to delve too deeply into minutiae concerning the procurement of other equipment, such as uniforms and firearms, that also needed to be purchased prior to the consolidation date. Rather, it left these and similar issues for the police departments to decide together and report to the subcommittee for informational purposes only.

Ultimately, the subcommittee made a wise decision to step back and allow the police departments to use their expertise to collaboratively make informed decisions. This granted the police departments a greater stake in the outcome of the impending consolidation and freed time for subcommittee members to address the full scope of their work. The guiding principle here, it seems, was to defer to professional staff on decisions that either required more intimate subject-matter familiarity or were not directly related to consolidation.

In another instance, the Public Safety Subcommittee became too involved in minutiae when township professional staff seemingly abdicated their decision-making authority to the TTF. Midway through the transition, the subcommittee was approached by the township mayor and asked to provide an opinion on the potential promotion of the township's "lieutenant in charge" to acting police chief. The complication involved the uncertainty of what this promotion would mean for the officer after consolidation. An exhaustive discussion of pros and cons ensued, with persuasive arguments made regarding the decision's potential impact on department morale. The TTF's legal counsel was even dragged into the deliberations. After all parties weighed in, opponents of the promotion prevailed by a 3-2 vote, and the subcommittee advised the Township Committee against the promotion. It insisted that if it were made, it should at least have a sunset date of December 31, 2012, to reduce confusion after consolidation.²⁴ The Township Committee moved forward with the promotion and provided no sunset clause.

The subcommittee was pulled into the weeds unnecessarily on this issue. If the township's main concern was the validity of the appointment to acting chief, the township mayor and governing body should have first addressed its own legal department and the police union to determine the answer. If, on the other hand, the township's concern truly was the lieutenant's position within the consolidated police department and what that would mean for the township's welfare and that of the officers, the township should have first handled the matter separately, fielded answers to its questions, developed a plan, and then presented it to the chief of the consolidated police department for negotiation after he was selected.

3.2.2 Maintaining Jurisdictional Boundaries and Avoiding Subcommittee Mission Creep

In addition to the disagreement on the depth of Transition Task Force subcommittee mandates, TTF leaders also demonstrated competing visions on the breadth of their respective subcommittee mandates. This often led to confusion regarding the jurisdictional

²³ TTF Minutes – 3.7.12

²⁴ PSS Minutes – 5.4.12

boundaries between each subcommittee and risked causing significant duplication of effort between subcommittees.

The process of making decisions regarding personnel redundancy illustrated this complication. From its inception, the TTF tasked all subcommittees covering municipal departments with making all personnel decisions related to those departments. However, this created a natural jurisdictional overlap with the Personnel Subcommittee, which had the job of making personnel-related recommendations for all administrative office staff. Although the confusion was handled well in this case, the situation was potentially problematic because it could have created mistrust among the TTF subcommittees. On the one hand, groups that proceed with analysis without having sufficiently established jurisdictional boundaries can feel threatened when their analysis is disputed by related subcommittees. Likewise groups can feel slighted if they are left out of deliberations they think are within their jurisdiction.

Recommendation on Subcommittee Scope of Work Clarity

We recommend the governing body take measures to ensure that the transition team is absolutely clear on the parameters of its authority. This should be clearly written into the resolution establishing the Transition Task Force. TTF leaders would then be certain regarding the degree to which their work will be limited, thematically, to the scope of pre-vote recommendations and to issues directly related to consolidation. It should be made clear to TTF leaders whether or not they will be permitted to explore systemic reforms and/or other efficiency gains, and whether or not they can weigh in on managerial decisions normally decided by professional staff. Clarity on TTF scope of work will also prevent professional staff from distracting the TTF with the day-to-day particulars or abdicating critical functions to the TTF.

We also recommend that future consolidation leaders ensure that subcommittee jurisdictional boundaries are absolutely clear from the formation of the TTF itself. Through participation in full-committee TTF meetings, subcommittee leadership should be in constant communication, and members should mutually reinforce their commitment to pre-defined roles and avoid the temptation to rehash debates after decisions have been made. Collaboration and communication between and within subcommittees are critical to ensuring TTF and subcommittee leadership abide by established protocols.

3.3 Money Matters

3.3.1 Expected Challenges When Consolidating Budgets

One difficulty that department heads encountered in evaluating opportunities for savings after consolidation was that they could not simply take the budgets of the two municipalities and combine them while eliminating personnel redundancies. The process of consolidating the budgets was complicated by significant differences in the way the borough and the township accounted for various costs.

For example, in the township sixty percent of a department's budget was devoted to personnel costs (salary and health benefits) while four percent comprised other operating

expenses. Other expenses included technical support, materials, and other consumables. In the township, departmental budgets included both employee salaries and benefit costs. In the borough, the budget for each department included only employee salaries and other expenses. The cost of benefits for borough employees was instead part of the borough's general insurance budget.

The manner in which departments were structured also hindered how easily the budgets could be consolidated. The township had an Information Technology (IT) Department, while the borough did not. Instead, all of the IT work in the borough was accounted for in the finance and administration budgets. Reconciling these differences made it difficult for Princeton municipal leaders to plan the budget for a consolidated IT department.

The borough and the township also differed in their budgeting for code enforcement, which is self-funded through permit fees, as required by state law. In the borough, code enforcement officers were part of the Engineering Department. The revenue that the code enforcement office generated went into the general budget. In the township, however, the revenue that code enforcement officers received did not go directly to the general fund.

These three issues complicated efforts to consolidate the township and the borough's budgets. In October 2012 an outside IT consultant was scheduled to modify the accounting systems to enable automatic consolidation of both historical budgets and adjust for accounting differences. Even though the borough and the township were roughly comparable in terms of population, demographics, size and scope of government, combining their two budgets was still complicated. Through the efforts of the consultant and the IT subcommittee, these challenges were successfully overcome, but municipalities with dissimilar government structures and populations may encounter more difficulty in consolidating their budgets.

3.3.2 Challenges When Seeking State Reimbursement

When the Princetons expressed interest in consolidating, the New Jersey state government agreed to provide technical assistance and to appropriate funding to cover up to twenty percent of the upfront costs. As of September 2012, the state Department of Community Affairs was working with Princeton officials to determine which costs were eligible for reimbursement. Township and borough officials debated over which expenses would qualify for state reimbursement. Simply because a cost was incurred during the transition period did not mean the cost was eligible for state reimbursement. Some costs incurred since the consolidation began, such as modernizing the police dispatching system, could not necessarily be attributed to consolidation. The police system upgrade, for example, was anticipated even without consolidation. However, costs such as legal counsel over personnel separation options, or those surrounding facilities renovation are clearly related to the transition.

According to the Transition Task Force, "A cost qualifies as a true transition cost if it was (or is expected to be) incurred directly as a result of the consolidation of the Borough

and Township, and would not otherwise have been incurred in the absence of a consolidation process, either in 2012 or the near future.” As part of consolidation, Princeton University provided the municipalities with aerial maps to be used for determining taxes. The aerial maps were an in-kind transfer that would have otherwise been eligible for state reimbursement. The state, however, may not reimburse the consolidated municipalities the expense that the aerial maps would have cost because the cost was borne by the university. Princeton municipality officials disagreed with the state’s assessment and believed the maps should still be eligible for reimbursement. As of September 19, 2012, this issue had not been resolved.

Ultimately, neither the percentage of the state transition cost reimbursement, nor the cost reimbursement eligibility criteria are specified under the Local Action Municipal Consolidation Act. However, state officials agreed the Princetons were reasonable in their approach, and suggested that the experience may likely set the precedent for state contribution toward future consolidation efforts.

3.3.3 Cost Savings Challenges Through Involuntary Separation of Employees

As part of consolidation, eighteen employees were projected to be laid off. Employees of the borough and township who lose their jobs involuntarily due to consolidation are to receive pay for unused vacation time and severance payments based on their length of service and their salaries. When employees resign voluntarily, however they receive pay for accumulated vacation time but do not receive separation packages. Under this scheme the costs can escalate if more senior-level employees are separated because they typically have accumulated more unused vacation time and will merit a larger severance package.

In the case of Princeton, separation costs turned out lower than many expected because a number of senior employees voluntarily resigned or retired. One of the administrators resigned voluntarily, and most of the highly paid public works and engineering employees were not in line to become redundant with consolidation. Other municipalities should be advised, however, that if higher-paid staff members lose their jobs involuntarily due to consolidation, this may significantly increase the costs of consolidation.

Recommendation on Managing Transition Costs

The state may not reimburse all the costs that Princeton officials consider a cost to consolidation. The extent to which the state reimburses Princeton’s transition costs may set a precedent for what other municipalities may expect. Regardless, we recommend that municipalities considering consolidation try to secure a clearer agreement from the state stipulating the specific expenditures to be reimbursed. We further recommend that municipalities considering consolidation anticipate that the transition costs associated with personnel reductions may be significant if senior-level personnel do not resign voluntarily, as in the case of Princeton. Lastly, consolidating municipalities should assess from the outset any difficulties in harmonizing their financial and budgetary systems, adjust cost-savings estimates accordingly, and seek outside support if necessary. While Princeton

benefited from the fact that the financial procedures of the borough and township were relatively uniform, other municipalities may face additional complications in this regard.

3.4 Subcommittee Deliberation Transparency: Efficiency Arguments Against Abiding by the Open Public Meetings Act

Process transparency was important to all stakeholders involved in consolidation – advocates and opponents. The Consolidation Study Commission and TTF were committed to abiding by New Jersey’s Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA), a law protecting the public’s right to be present at all meetings of public bodies.²⁵ Even though the TTF’s legal counsel ruled that subcommittees were not subject to OPMA provisions, the TTF advised the subcommittees to abide by provisions of the law wherever possible to maintain procedural transparency.²⁶ The ambiguity of the TTF’s guidelines was a source of contention on some subcommittees.

3.4.1 Personnel Discussions Behind Closed Doors – A Lapse in Transparency or Protection of Confidentiality?

Debate over subcommittee authority to call closed meetings, whereby non-essential members (i.e., non-voting staff and liaisons) and the public could be excluded from sensitive discussions, was an issue on the I&O subcommittee. Some subcommittee members challenged the merits of holding organizational-chart deliberations in closed sessions. After much discussion, the subcommittee chair decided to take the issue back to the TTF for clarification.

The TTF ultimately gave the I&O subcommittee its approval to proceed in closed session on personnel issues, and the subcommittee held two closed meetings during its tenure.²⁷ As mentioned earlier, however, the township and borough administrators were included in these discussions to ensure that relevant staff and operational perspectives would be accounted for. Additionally, in an effort to minimize public speculation and protect disclosure rights, the two closed meetings were followed within 24 hours by an open meeting to convey public information.

When the organizational chart proposals were unveiled for vote in a subsequent open meeting, there was no public outcry from those in attendance. The decision to hold closed personnel discussions while including municipal administrators was a way to avoid conflict of interest of municipal staff while ensuring recommendations were operationally sound, to minimize community speculation, and to maintain discussion objectivity and integrity. Subcommittee efforts to affirm TTF support for closed sessions, incorporate staff feedback, and ensure prompt disclosure to the public all contributed to the relative smoothness of the organizational-chart recommendation process.

²⁵ The New Jersey State Library. Open Public Meetings Act. Title 10, Chapter 4. http://ldb.njstatelib.org/Library_Law/lwopnmtg.php

²⁶ Email from I&O Subcommittee Chair to the subcommittee listserve, June 1, 2012

²⁷ Phone conversation with I&O Subcommittee Chair, October 5, 2012

Why were similar personnel discussions not as contentious during Consolidation Study Commission discussions? The answer likely involves timing and context. Although the commission's organizational-chart discussions were indeed carried out in public, attendance was thin. Less interest during the study stage may have been due to the fact that commission recommendations were still many procedural steps and more than a year removed from personnel decision-making and implementation.

3.4.2 Discussion of Emails Outside the Public Domain

One challenge for members was refraining from discussing substantive subcommittee matters via email. All voting members were volunteers, and many had full-time jobs. As a result, when an issue remained unresolved between bimonthly meetings, email was the easiest and most efficient way for members to continue the conversation as new information became available. When such email discussions started to take the form of new policy proposals—or when they devolved into heated debates—leadership decided to prohibit further email dialogue.²⁸

If email discussions between meetings truly increased the productivity of the subcommittee, one way to leverage that efficiency while respecting public transparency would be to have subcommittee-specific blogs or chat rooms that the public could view but not comment on. Making these inter-meeting discussions public might also help to de-emotionalize debates and formalize new ideas.

3.4.3 Do Public Meetings Politicize Votes?

Another critique of the open meeting policy was that it increased the politicization of the subcommittee deliberation process and led to suboptimal recommendations. Had the voting members been able to candidly speak their minds, they could have approached the recommendation process with purer intentions to fulfill the promise of consolidation (cost savings without diminution of service). In a survey of TTF members, one respondent argued that members “would have supported a position different from the public stand...if the meeting had not been public.”²⁹

Recommendation on Meeting Transparency

The benefits and costs of holding consolidation deliberations in public, and the degree to which closed meetings are merited, are complex issues. In future cases, transitional bodies should outline public meeting policy prior to the initiation of the recommendation process to resolve ambiguities like those listed above that can stall deliberation. The legal counsel of the Transition Task Force should issue a clear directive along these lines, indicating all the circumstances under which private meetings will be justified, and the TTF should make extra public outreach efforts, perhaps holding debriefings after closed meetings when necessary. Finally, municipal leaders should make efforts to inform citizens of their right to request information (including that contained in email communications) relating to the work of the TTF not immediately the subject of a closed meeting. Although the public may request all consolidation-related documents—including email chains—under the New Jersey Open Public Records Act, a social-media

²⁸ Email from I&O Subcommittee Chair to the subcommittee listserv, June 1, 2012

²⁹ TTF member survey response, 9/10/2012 2:15 PM

platform would provide community members with a quick and easy way to access documentation.

3.5 Communicating Reforms

In deliberating several of the reforms most central to achieving the projected \$3.1 million in annual taxpayer savings, Transition Task Force members encountered considerable opposition. The process of recommending reforms to the municipal employee benefits structure was particularly fraught with controversy. One survey respondent said that sharp disagreements surrounding this issue set the project back almost one month during a critical juncture in the consolidation implementation effort. Setbacks like these can be avoided if community leaders implementing consolidation efforts understand the interests at play, anticipate subsequent reactions to their recommendations, and plan accordingly.

3.5.1 Understanding Interest Group Configurations

In order to anticipate responses to proposed reforms, it is important to understand the configuration of interests surrounding specific issues. The Interest Group Matrix below is used to map policy reforms along two critical dimensions: the cohesiveness of the reform’s opposing parties and that of the reform’s proponents. The issue of benefits restructuring would fall into what political scientists would call “entrepreneurial politics.” This is the most difficult type of reform to get approved because, while the costs of the reform are concentrated among a specific group of individuals that work for the same organization (and are thus already highly organized), the benefits are diffused across a fairly widely dispersed electorate.³⁰

3.5.2 Engaging More Disparate Beneficiaries

With an understanding of the interest groups affected and their relative levels of organization, the negative reaction to the personnel benefits reforms could easily have been anticipated. Once such challenges are anticipated, policymakers generally have several options to maximize their likelihood of success. First, they can attempt to harness the support of an organized interest group that would benefit from the proposed reform. In the diagram, this would have the effect of shifting the reform from the upper right to the upper left, and would greatly improve its chances of success. In interest-group politics, both the opposing and supporting parties are on equal footing. To provide this balance, the community leaders could have considered asking taxpayer advocacy or other community business groups to

| | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|--|--|
| | | Proponents of Policy/Law | |
| | | Organized | Not Organized |
| Opponents of Policy/Law | Organized | Interest group politics <i>environmental protection</i> | Entrepreneurial politics <i>trade liberalization</i> |
| | Not Organized | Client politics <i>tax breaks</i> | Majoritarian Politics <i>Creation social security</i> |

Figure 2: Interest Group Matrix

³⁰ For a more systematic approach to diagramming incentives, capabilities and expected influence of the interests, consult the research of Charles Cameron at Princeton University and the Distributive Politics Worksheet.

assist in the process of drafting the benefits harmonization reforms, in order to bring in a specific proponent constituency from the initial stages of the proposed reform.

Second, community leaders seeking to implement the reform can tailor their communications strategy to minimize controversy by preventing false rumors from being repeated. The proposed benefits package reforms failed to gain sufficient support because the leaders pursuing these changes allowed the terms of the debate to be defined by those who opposed the reforms. In another case, the Transition Task Force voted down the Open Space Fund because borough representatives did not understand what it was, and may have believed it was a new tax or a tax increase. After more information was provided, however, the TTF approved the fund for inclusion on the November ballot. Psychological research has shown that when reputable sources repeat false information in an effort to dispel such information, the public may be more likely to believe that the rumors are correct.³¹ By merely repeating the misperceptions surrounding the proposed benefits reforms community leaders only reinforced these false notions in the minds of those who opposed them. Municipalities attempting consolidation should be careful about how they convey information to the public.

Last, TTF leaders should avoid overemphasizing losses incurred by opposing groups. At first it does not seem obvious why, in debating a reform that proposed increased benefits for some and decreased benefits for others, the voices of those adversely affected would be heard so much louder than those who stood to benefit. However, research into the psychological models of choice suggests that this is common.³² When making decisions, prospective losses loom larger than gains. As such, those affected negatively by a proposed reform receive more consideration than those that would benefit from it. Consequently, in situations similar to what Princeton TTF members faced in reforming the existing benefits plan, the status quo often prevails.

Recommendation on Transition Authority Communication

In communicating proposed reforms associated with consolidation, municipal leaders implementing consolidation should seek, whenever possible, to highlight gains and downplay losses. Where losses are tangible and the groups that bear them are cohesive, municipal leadership should attempt to engage disparate beneficiary groups to ensure that their interests are equally represented during the deliberations.

Rather than repeating inaccuracies and allowing false rumors to fester, municipal leadership should seek to elevate the conversation toward the overarching goal of the consolidation effort, communicating any supplementary reforms as logical extensions of the consolidation effort and in keeping with the spirit of the endeavor. Because the overall benefits to the community can get lost in the details, leaders should continually link reform

³¹ Schwarz N. Sanna, L. J. Skurnik, and Yoon C. Metacognitive experiences and the intricacies of setting people straight: Implications for debiasing and public information campaigns. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 39, 127-161. See also the research of Daniel Oppenheimer, Princeton University.

³² Kahneman, Daniel; Jack L. Knetsch and Richard H. Thaler. 1991. Anomalies: The endowment effect, loss aversion, and the status quo bias. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 5: (193-206). See also the research of Alex Todorov, Princeton University.

proposals to a more salient, symbolic end, emphasizing the resulting single, accountable government created through consolidation over any specific material gains or losses.

3.6 Balancing the Competing Promises of Consolidation: Achieving Cost Savings Without Loss of Service

The need to balance the twin promises of municipal consolidation—organizational performance and cost savings—was a recurring theme throughout the consolidation implementation process. Each subcommittee grappled with decisions that required them, at times, to compromise on one objective or the other. Compromises did not come easy. Agreements were almost always preceded by intense debate and almost always resulted in an adjustment of post-consolidation expectations.

3.6.1 Brush and Leaf Collection and Trash Pickup

One of the most surprisingly tenuous items on the Infrastructure and Operations Subcommittee’s agenda was recommending options for municipality-wide leaf and brush collection. Before consolidation, collection services in the township were more frequent than those in the borough in the fall, and borough services were more frequent in the spring and summer.³³

There was no clean and simple service option to pursue. If the subcommittee recommended using one of the two service schedules across the consolidated municipality, there was no way to prevent a reduction in services for some residents, or avoid imposing an extra fee on others. Cost savings and/or quality of service (i.e., collection frequency) would likely be compromised to ensure that any modifications from the status quo were fairly distributed across borough and township residents.

Trash pickup was similarly challenging. While trash collection in the borough was paid for with tax revenue, township residents had to pay a fee to private contractors for trash pickup. Shifting to a municipally funded trash pickup system was one of the most explicit financial gains for township residents from consolidation.

Reconciling the differences in service levels between the pre-consolidation municipalities was further complicated by the divergent needs of property owners. Some argued that more dense zones (i.e., central Princeton, the downtown area, and densely populated township areas) and smaller lots should receive more frequent brush and leaf collection.³⁴ The heterogeneity of needs across the municipality made it difficult for the subcommittee to determine levels of service across the consolidated community.

The I&O subcommittee seriously considered two options for brush and leaf collection. The first would eliminate the service differential across the borough and township by implementing the more frequent of the two municipal collection schedules across the consolidated municipality. The hybrid second option aimed to satisfy equality

³³ Presented to the TTF, September 19, 2012. Exhibit: [Leaf and Brush Collection Presentation](#)

³⁴ Chain of emails contained in email from the I&O Subcommittee Chair to the subcommittee listserve on June 1, 2012.

and equity demands by providing a similar level of service for both the borough and the township, except that Central Princeton would get more frequent pickups during the fall and spring seasons. In the end, the subcommittee proposed the second option that provided added services for high-density areas.³⁵

Service differential in the name of equity (i.e., more intensive service needs in dense areas) was not going to be a serious consideration until service quality was leveled across the municipality. Otherwise, the Transition Task Force would not have kept its promise to protect the community against a degradation of services. Even with this service standardization, the TTF was able to mitigate costs by shifting service from lower to higher-need periods (e.g., from summer to fall).³⁶ By examining the community's big picture and identifying seasonal needs, the subcommittee was able to redistribute resources in a more efficient way throughout the year.

3.6.2 Finance Department Reporting Burden

Another challenge that arose during the process of restructuring the organizational charts was the question of reporting burden. Although some redundant positions were eliminated, the process of combining two organizations into one had the inevitable net effect of expanding the size of many functional departments. Personnel Subcommittee leaders realized early on that the increased size of the consolidated Finance Department, in particular, put a strain on existing management. Under the new structure there would simply be too many people reporting to the department head. Consequently, the subcommittee decided to create an additional mid-level financial officer position to ease the reporting burden.³⁷ However, the establishment of this position meant sacrificing savings, which would have to be generated elsewhere, in order to keep to the \$3.1 million target.

3.6.3 Police Staffing

The Consolidation Study Commission recommended a 51-officer model for the merged Police Department, a reduction from the 60-officer capacity of the combined department that was expected to be phased in over three years and save the consolidated municipality more than \$2 million.³⁸ The police chiefs and union said they were unsure of how the commission developed its recommendation and expressed their concerns about a loss of service that could occur if the cuts were made.³⁹ The Public Safety Subcommittee reviewed three staffing models including the commission's report and agreed upon a 56-officer model that coincidentally would not result in a force reduction, as the borough

³⁵ <http://www.cgr.org/princeton/transition/meetings.aspx> Princeton Leaf and Brush Pickup: Recommendations of TTF I&O Subcommittee. Presented to the TTF, September 19, 2012. Exhibit: [Leaf and Brush Collection Presentation](#)

³⁶ <http://www.cgr.org/princeton/transition/meetings.aspx> Princeton Leaf and Brush Pickup: Recommendations of TTF I&O Subcommittee. Presented to the TTF, September 19, 2012. Exhibit: [Leaf and Brush Collection Presentation](#)

³⁷ July 18, 2012. Minutes of the Personnel Subcommittee, Transition Task Force. At <http://www.cgr.org/princeton/transition/docs/PersonnelsubcommitteeMinutes7-18-12.pdf>

³⁸ Consolidation Commission, Report of Official Recommendations, pg. 10

³⁹ <http://www.towntopics.com/wordpress/2012/03/21/dudeck-urges-no-police-cutbacks-princeton-deserves-high-end-service/>; <http://princetonindepth.files.wordpress.com/2011/10/pba-letter-final.pdf>

operated with 30 officers and the township with 26 officers at the time.⁴⁰ The details of its implementation were left to the chief of the consolidated department.⁴¹ Once selected, he determined that with a 56-officer model, services to both the township and borough would remain at the same level or improve, with all officers feeling comfortable enough in all areas of the consolidated municipality to respond quickly and effectively to calls and incidents.⁴²

Nevertheless, the Police Department could not avoid a significant reduction in the number of civilian employees. The subcommittee approved the Consolidation Study Commission's recommendation to retain all civil employees in the first year of consolidation. In the second year, however, one dispatcher, one records clerk, and one chief's administrative support person would be dismissed. If an employee in one of those groups left prior to the second year, the vacancy would not be filled, and work would be redistributed among the remaining employees or a part-time temporary employee would be assigned to cover the workload. Although the subcommittee moved this recommendation forward, its members made note of their concern that reducing the number of administrative positions from two to one in the second year could pose a problem because the position provided support for all six senior officers.⁴³

3.6.4 Relocation of Police Dispatch Facility

Determining where to place the merged dispatch center involved another difficult evaluation of costs and benefits⁴⁴ In this case, the desire to reduce costs held sway. Under one proposal, the center would remain in Borough Hall because the facility's ample space would allow for future expansion into a regional dispatch center. The base radio and antenna that were used by both the township and borough were housed there. Another alternative, expanding the dispatch center at Township Hall, could lead to disruption of vital emergency communications during the upgrade. A third alternative, building a new dispatch center, would have high cost. Because of the anticipated cost savings and the fact that the police department would be housed at the township's existing headquarters, it was agreed that the consolidated dispatch center would be at Township Hall and expanded. The choice was expected to cost less in the long term and allow the dispatchers to continue checking up on inmates awaiting trial in the facility's holding cells, although it allowed only for expansion to cover local emergencies or the dispatch needs of another municipality but not an entire region. For cost reasons, the base station and antenna remained at Borough Hall.

⁴⁰ <http://princeton.patch.com/articles/police-ask-transition-team-to-keep-staffing-level-constant>

⁴¹ PSS Minutes – 5.4.12 & 6.29.12

⁴² <http://princeton.patch.com/articles/police-coverage-to-remain-constant-or-improve-with-consolidation-chief-says>

⁴³ PSS Minutes – 5.16.12

⁴⁴ PSS Minutes – 6.19.12. The problem in this case was exacerbated by the fact that the consolidated municipality had no police chief for a substantial period of the early consolidation implementation effort. Appointing a new chief earlier and involving the new chief in this process could have prevented some of the confusion.

It was also agreed that the dispatchers would remain municipal employees, even though outsourcing by a private company could result in cost savings. This decision pleased subcommittee members who had voiced concerns about having critical emergency services handled by outside dispatchers who lacked extensive knowledge of the consolidated municipality's physical layout. Information provided by one firm explored the possibility of outsourcing dispatchers from other states, but the subcommittee learned that New Jersey State Police would not approve it because of the potential conflict of authority from different state agencies.

3.6.5 Facilities Rearrangement

Along with the need to balance the promises of municipal consolidation came the need to balance the differing cultures of the borough and township when subcommittees discussed their recommendations to the TTF. For example, the Facilities and Other Assets Subcommittee had to confront the differences between the borough and the township when deciding which municipal building to use primarily and which departments to put where. Generally speaking, the borough has a more “downtown” vibe, while the township is more residential. Many borough residents can walk to municipal hall, while visitors to the Township Hall mostly drive. At the same time the Township Hall is a much newer, larger and more modern facility.

This led to the key issue of prominence. The idea was that the consolidated municipality's new hall should have a prominently visible location, and from this perspective, the Borough Hall was a strong candidate. However, the Township Hall was closer to the geographic center of the consolidated municipality. Taking into account various factors, the outside architectural firm hired by the subcommittee, KSS Architects, determined that it would be cheaper to renovate the Township Hall to house most of the important departments of the consolidated municipality. Thus the argument was that even if the offices that interacted most with residents, such as the mayor, clerk and administrator's offices, were located in the township municipal complex, there should be an office space in the borough municipal complex in order to allow for accessibility to public.

Although a reasonable compromise was reached in this case, various concessions were made to appease the borough-township differences. Perhaps a better decision might have been made in terms of unifying the community members of the consolidated municipality. However, the use of the outside consultant helped lend a sense of legitimacy and objectivity to the final decision making, as the chairman of the Facilities and Other Assets Subcommittee noted.

Recommendation on Balancing Cost Savings and Service Maintenance

In sum, the process of reconciling differences in service levels and payment methods across the consolidated municipality may result in unanticipated costs. This may render the twin promises of consolidation—achieving cost savings while maintaining service levels—difficult to accomplish. Where there is a substantial disparity in the level of service (and its associated cost) between the consolidating municipalities, as in the case of brush

and leaf collection and policing services, achieving one of these objectives may come at the expense of the other.

In this case it seems Princeton consolidation planners could afford to be most cost-conscious when the potential risks of service reduction—in the case of the facilities relocations—were relatively minimal. Conversely, in the cases of staffing for the Finance Department and Police Department, where Princeton planners opted to maintain services and forgo projected cost savings, another less affluent town in the same situation may have to sacrifice services to protect the budget.

We recommend municipalities anticipate that consolidation implementation measures will likely appear, in the eyes of the public, to disproportionately sacrifice levels of popular municipal services. Decision-making bodies consequently may have the tendency to err on the side of maintaining service levels over reducing costs, especially when it comes to issues such as public safety. Cost savings estimates and communication and implementation efforts described previously should be calibrated accordingly.

Otherwise, the municipal leaders implementing consolidation will have to be resolute in their efforts to implement cost-savings consolidation measures. They must be prepared to make some politically unpopular decisions and communicate their reasoning effectively to their constituents. When weighing these tough reforms, it can be helpful to hire an outside consultant who is independent of the competing political interests and can lend a sense of neutrality and objectivity to the decision-making process.

Consolidation leaders will also be successful if they deflect attention away from these zero-sum issues and focus on consolidation measures that bring about efficiencies of scale and reduced redundancies, rather than simply the elimination of programs. As was demonstrated in the case of brush and leaf collection, not all measures need represent such a stark trade-off between service levels and tax burden, and leaders will benefit to the extent they can concentrate efforts on those measures that provide both. There are ways to generate additional value out of current resources or even curb costs. When decision makers are willing to investigate the rationales behind past allocation decisions and re-assess community needs, there can be opportunity to pivot to a more efficient and equitable distribution of resources.

IV: CONCLUSION AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Case for Princeton Exceptionalism

Some may argue that consolidating Princeton Township and Princeton Borough was a much simpler process than that which other municipalities might face. Indeed, Princeton enjoyed several advantages in making the transition to consolidation.

First, Princeton's municipalities had roughly similar demographics. The township's population of 16,200 was comparable to the borough's 12,300. While the borough represented the downtown core of the community and the township the surrounding residential area, the age, race, income, and average household size were comparable.⁴⁵ Second, consolidation was made simpler by the fact that the municipalities already had many shared services (thirteen in all). Among the shared services were animal control, The Corner House (a social service agency), the Fire Department, first aid and rescue, the Health Department, recreation, planning and the library.⁴⁶ In addition, the two municipalities shared the same school district⁴⁷ and the Open Space Fund. Lastly, the borough and township faced similar fiscal outlooks, which made debt sharing a relatively simple issue.⁴⁸ The borough and the township's sound financial standing also bolstered consolidation efforts. To help consolidation, the municipalities hired an independent consultant, the Center for Governmental Research (CGR), which managed a consolidation website and maintained relevant data and analysis.

The township and borough's consolidation efforts also benefited from a high level of civic engagement and a well-educated public. The Transition Task Force was run by highly qualified professionals with decades of experience in relevant fields such as corporate finance and law. These community volunteers contributed a great deal of their personal time to provide technical expertise. Princeton University bolstered consolidation efforts with personnel and financial support.⁴⁹ The borough and township each received \$250,000 in addition to the payment in lieu of taxes, which the university pays to the municipalities. The university also provided the TTF with aerial maps that would have cost an estimated \$200,000.

The Case for Princeton Generalizability

While the two municipalities admittedly shared many characteristics favorable to the consolidation process, the Princeton consolidation experience remains valuable for all

⁴⁵ US Census Bureau 2010 Census and the American Community Survey.

<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/34/3460900.html>,

http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/DEC/10_DP/DPDP1/0600000US3402160915

⁴⁶ Princeton Township Website: <http://www.princetontwp.org/departments.html>

⁴⁷ Princeton Public Schools Website: http://www.princetonk12.org/student_services/registration/residency

⁴⁸ Interview with Scott Sillars. 6/17/2012

⁴⁹ The University's in-kind and financial contributions were not included in formal financial reporting, which could consequently underrepresent the overall transition cost. In addition to its financial contributions, University affiliates served as liaisons on the information technology, facilities, and public safety subcommittees to determine how to best coordinate services.

municipalities considering such a combination. Surely, the area’s abundance of personal, professional and financial resources allowed the borough and the township to implement consolidation at a lower cost than might be possible in other situations. However, it is worth considering that the very factors that made Princetonians more disposed toward consolidation—the preponderance of shared services, the already consolidated public school district, the harmonized financial outlooks, and so forth—also limited the Princetons’ gains from consolidation in the first place.

The Consolidation Study Commission estimated the per-household gains of consolidation to be in the range of \$300-\$500 per year. In other contexts involving other New Jersey municipalities, the gains of consolidation could be much higher. Consolidating underutilized school and library buildings, recreation facilities and fire departments could bring a wealth of savings that Princeton borough and township already had captured prior to consolidation.

Furthermore, many of Princeton’s perceived singularities have equivalents in other municipalities across the state. Other municipalities may not have a university that can provide financial support on the same level, but they may be able to partner with other types of large, anchor institutions in the area that could generate useful in-kind and financial support. Large businesses, whose operations might straddle two municipalities considering consolidation, may have a stake in consolidation efforts and might be willing to contribute resources toward the effort.

Ultimately the metric that matters most is the break-even point where the fixed upfront cost of consolidation meets the variable per-annum benefit. After investigating the material costs of consolidation and tallying them up, the Princetons’ Consolidation Study Commission ultimately determined that the consolidation would pay for itself in less than one year. It projected the material costs of consolidation at \$1.7 million and the savings at \$3.1 million a year.⁵⁰ This is a phenomenal investment return by any business standard. And even if other New Jersey municipalities face larger initial costs, they are likely to reap proportionately greater savings. If the savings don’t exceed the costs in the first year, a break-even point within the first three to five years (or a cost figure within 3-5 times the savings estimate) would still justify consolidation.

Concluding Recommendations

Accordingly, despite Princeton’s unique circumstances, other municipalities considering consolidation stand to learn much from the township-borough experience. The authors’ recommendations for other municipalities looking to implement consolidation are as follows:

⁵⁰ At the time of the writing of this report final cost figures were not yet calculated. The cost figure does not, of course, include the cost of the countless hours of time that community members devoted to helping study consolidation alternatives, mobilize a vote, and then actually implement the consolidation decisions.

Setup of the Transition Task Force

- To manage the transition and ensure continuity, create a Transition Task Force composed mostly of willing members of the Consolidation Study Commission, one governing body member from each one of the consolidating municipalities, and administrators from each.
- The Consolidation Study Commission should clearly define the mandate of any body subsequently created to implement consolidation and provide clear guidance on the reach of the body's authority in making policy decisions and enacting reforms to existing institutions tangentially related to consolidation. Transition planners should exercise restraint and avoid getting caught in the weeds planted by special interests on peripheral issues.
- Future consolidation leaders should ensure jurisdictional boundaries of subject area subcommittees are absolutely clear from the outset, so as to avoid mission creep.

Communication

- Weigh the costs and benefits of open versus closed meetings. Outline public meeting policy prior to the initiation of the recommendation process to keep the public informed and also to promote candid conversation without politically related interference. Consider establishing subcommittee-specific blogs or chat rooms that the public can view but not comment on.
- Carefully manage communication by avoiding the repetition of misinformation or rumors regarding proposed changes and deemphasizing losses incurred by opposing groups. Engage beneficiary taxpayer interest and other beneficiary groups to ensure their interests are given equal voice.

Management

Given the difficulty of delivering cost-savings promises associated with consolidation, especially those requiring reductions in services, initial cost-savings estimates will be hard to achieve. We recommend the following measures, as transition leadership is confronted with the reality of implementing difficult decisions.

- Anticipate that cost-savings measures associated with consolidation may appear to reduce levels of popular municipal services. Decision-making bodies will have the tendency to err on the side of sacrificing cost savings in favor of maintaining service, especially when it comes to high-profile issues such as public safety.
- Recognize the political forces at play in transition-related decisions. Groups that are organized, or for whom the effects of a proposed decision may be more highly concentrated, may wield disproportionate influence over groups for whom the effects are more widely dispersed. Transition leaders should attempt to ensure that the interests of all residents are equally considered.
- Municipalities considering consolidation should secure a definitive agreement from the state stipulating the specific upfront consolidation-related expenditures that will be reimbursed and the process by which the reimbursement will take place.
- Anticipate higher transition costs relating to personnel reductions given that most senior personnel merit larger severance packages, and typically have accumulated substantial payments related to unused vacation time.

ANNEX

JOINT RESOLUTION – OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF PRINCETON AND THE MAYOR AND COMMITTEE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF PRINCETON ESTABLISHING A TRANSITION TASK FORCE

Whereas, on November 8, 2011, the voters of the Borough of Princeton and the Township of Princeton approved by referendum a ballot question asking whether the Borough and Township should be consolidated into one municipality to be named “Princeton”; and

Whereas, said consolidation shall occur on January 1, 2013; and

Whereas, to appropriately plan for the consolidation of municipal operations and finances, the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Princeton and the Mayor and Committee of the Township of Princeton deem it advisable to establish a Transition Task Force for the purposes of recommending and facilitating appropriate actions and decisions concerning the legal consolidation that shall occur on January 1, 2013; and

Whereas, the Transition Task Force shall derive its authority from and report to the governing bodies of the Borough and Township of Princeton; and

Whereas, the general mission of said task force shall be to propose implementation of the recommended municipal consolidation of the Borough and Township, using the Consolidation Study Commission Final Report dated June 2011 as a guide;

Whereas, to appropriately advise the governing bodies of the municipalities as stipulated in the Municipal Consolidation Act at N.J.S.A. 40:43-66.57.c (Discharge of Commission, the Shared Services and Consolidation Commission may issue advisory

opinions to the governing bodies, the Transition Task Force, and to the Task Force subcommittees;

Now, therefore, the Borough and the Township hereby jointly resolve as follows:

1. **Name**. The Borough and the Township hereby establish a Princeton Municipal Consolidation Transition Task Force [the “Transition Task Force”].

2. **Membership**. The Borough and the Township hereby appoint fifteen persons to serve as members of the Transition Task Force. Membership in the Transition Task Force shall include:

- A. Two members of the 2012 governing body of the Borough, with power to vote; and
- B. Two members of the 2012 governing body of the Township, with power to vote; and
- C. Four residents of the Borough of Princeton, three of whom shall have power to vote and one of whom shall serve as an alternate with no power to vote except in the absence of a voting member of the same category of member; and
- D. Four residents of the Township of Princeton three of whom shall have power to vote and one of whom shall serve as an alternate with no power to vote except in the absence of a voting member of the same category of member; and
- E. One representative of the State Department of Community Affairs, with no power to vote;
- F. The Administrator of the Borough of Princeton, with no power to vote; and
- G. The Administrator of the Township of Princeton, with no power to vote.

3. **Quorum and Voting**.

A. A quorum of the Transition Task Force shall be three voting members who are residents of the Borough and three voting members who are residents of the Township.

B. The Transition Task Force shall make decisions by majority vote of its members present who are residents of the Borough and majority vote of its members who are residents of the Township.

4. Structure and Appointments.

A. The Transition Task Force shall elect co-chairpersons, one resident of the Borough and one resident of the Township, and shall engage legal counsel independent of the Borough and Township; that is, not in the employ of either the Borough or the Township.

B. The Transition Task Force shall establish and administer subcommittees at their discretion. It is expected that subcommittees will exist in respect to major departments (including police and public works), personnel finance, information technology and other areas to be defined by the Transition Task Force. Subcommittees should involve the participation of Borough and Township staff in addition to residents and/or municipal governing body members. Such subcommittees will be created by, report to and serve at the pleasure of the Transition Task Force.

C. For each subcommittee affiliated with a particular municipal department, the Borough Administrator and/or the Township Administrator shall appoint at least one municipal staff person to serve that subcommittee under the direction of the appointing Administrator. There shall be no requirement that subcommittee members

be resident in Princeton Borough or Township. Membership on subcommittees shall be open to persons affiliated with educational institutions, and persons with commercial and/or professional offices, located in the Borough and Township. The Transition

D. Task Force may employ such assistance and professionals as it deems appropriate, upon approval of the Borough and Township Administrators.

5. **Powers.** The Transition Task Force shall operate under the joint authority and direction of the Borough and the Township governing bodies, acting through their respective Administrators. The Task Force shall have all such powers as are provided under the County and Municipal Investigations law, N.J.S.A. 2A:67A-1 *et seq.*, additionally, the Task Force's powers shall include, but not be limited to:

A. meeting in open and executive session;

B. engaging professional advisors on such budget and conditions as may be determined by the Borough and Township, including, but not limited to, legal counsel, auditor, facilitator, and clerk;

C. requiring the production of documents from the Borough and the Township;

D. requiring the appearance and testimony before the Transition Task Force of any employee or contract worker of the Borough and the Township;

E. producing reports and recommendations concerning (i), the consolidation and/or operations of all agencies of the Borough and Township, as compared to the Joint Consolidation Study Commission Final Report dated June 2011, and (ii) the

creation and operation of the municipality of Princeton in all manner and form as the Transition Task Force shall deem appropriate.

F. establishing a budget for its operations, subject to approval of the Borough and Township Administrators.

6. **Reports.** The Transition Task Force shall prepare written minutes of its meetings. The Transition Task Force shall hold open public meetings to discuss its work with the general public on Wednesday, March 21, 2012, at 7 p.m. and on Wednesday, May 23, 2012, at 7 p.m. Additionally, if needed, the Borough and Township governing bodies hereby agree to meet in joint open session to consider the work of the Transition Task Force, as follows:

- A. Tuesday, February 14, 2012, 7 p.m.;
- B. Tuesday, March 13, 2012, 7 p.m.;
- C. Tuesday, April 16, 2012, 7 p.m.;
- D. Tuesday, May 14, 2012, 7 p.m.;
- E. Tuesday, June 19, 2012, 7 p.m.

The Transition Task Force shall deliver to the Borough and Township governing bodies a preliminary report on or before April 10, 2012 and a Final Report on or before June 26, 2012. The dates specified herein are provided as a guideline for the Transition Task Force. After constitution of the Transition Task Force, it will either agree to the dates specified herein or provide alternative dates for approval by the governing bodies.

7. Budget.

A. To support the operations of the Transition Task Force, the Borough hereby agrees to budget \$25,000 and the Township hereby agrees to budget \$25,000 in 2012 general operating funds.

B. No municipal employee shall be compensated for his/her work in connection with the operations of the Transition Task Force, except upon joint approval of the governing bodies of the Borough and Township.

8. Termination

The Transition Task Force shall terminate on June 30, 2013

Robert W. Bruschi, Acting Borough Clerk

Yina Moore, Mayor

Linda McDermott, Township Clerk

Chad W. Goerner, Mayor

| Councilperson | Absent | Present | 1 st | 2 nd | Yea | Nay | Abstain | Disqualified |
|----------------|--------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|-----|-----|---------|--------------|
| Ms. Butler | | | | | | | | |
| Ms. Crumiller | | | | | | | | |
| Ms. Howard | | | | | | | | |
| Mr. Martindell | | | | | | | | |
| Ms. Trelstad | | | | | | | | |
| Mr. Wilkes | | | | | | | | |
| Mayor Moore | | | | | | | | |

I, Robert W. Bruschi, Acting Borough Clerk of the Borough of Princeton, do hereby certify that the above is a true and complete copy of a resolution adopted by the Mayor and Council of said Borough at a meeting held January 3, 2012.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I hereunto set my hand and affix the corporate seal of said Borough, this day of January, 2012.

ROBERT W. BRUSCHI
Acting Borough Clerk