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## Plan to consolidate the two Chesters is 'moving forward'

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CHESTER -- Elected officials in Chester Borough and Chester Township are moving forward with plans to consolidate services between the two municipalities, according to borough council member Robert Davis who briefed residents Tuesday night.

"The preliminary report is about finalized," said Davis, who is also a member of the six-member Joint Consolidation Study Commission made up of representatives from both communities. "We are moving forward. We will be looking at forms of government and cost savings."

The commission meets the fourth Tuesday of each month to plan strategy for the most cost efficient ways to reach those goals. It convened in the borough's municipal building Tuesday night in open session to hear plans from department heads and to update those in attendance about progress toward consolidation. It will meet next on Feb. 23.

Township council member Brian Murphy said residents will have the opportunity to stay informed about the consolidation plan every step of the way, through the borough and township web sites and at future public sessions.

"We will have two open meetings in April," said Murphy, who chairs the commission. "They will be heavily advertised."

The overall study and implementation strategy is expected to be complete by the end of April, according to the web site which also details the baseline budget report. Residents can view that information by clicking on "documents," as well as other details through different links. Murphy said cost savings will be based on a report from the Center for Governmental Research, the nonprofit management consulting organization which is in charge of the consolidation study. CGR specializes in government management and municipal consolidation processes.

During Tuesday's meeting, members of the commission listened to budget presentations by representatives of the first aid squad, the fire company and the library.

Chester Borough Mayor Dennis Verbaro, who also is a commission member, told officials from those departments that much information is still needed before they can put a financial plan in place.

"The budget is going to be very lean this year, for a lot of reasons," Verbaro said. "We still don't know what the state is going to do. It's up in the air."