

Local Weather Updates: Always up to the minute weather information. Click here.

Friend on Facebook | Follow on Twitter | Email the Editor

THE PRINCETON PACKET

Our Newspapers:

Please Select

HOME | ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT | LIVING | SPORTS | BUSINESS | DINING | OBITUARIES | BLOGS | SERVICES | LOCAL DIRECTOR

TOP NEWS | NEWSLETTER | OPINIONS | HEALTH | BUSINESS | NEWSWIRE | COMMUNITY LINKS | SITE MAP | CALENDAR | FA

Live Music Every Tuesday

Santino's PIZZA & RESTAURANT

ROBBINSVILLE, NJ

PRINCETON: Now the transition process will get underway

DATE POSTED: Thursday, November 10, 2011 6:38 PM EST

By Victoria Hurley-Schubert, Staff Writer

Like

Be the first of your friends to like this.

Tickets start at \$20

McCARTER THEATRE CENTER

A Christmas Carol

Dec 4 - Dec 24, 2011

www.mccarter.org | 609.258.2787

MORE NEWS IN THIS SECTION

[Princeton Prof. West arrested at D.C. protest](#)

[PRINCETON AREA: Police blotter](#)

[PRINCETON: Man charged with DWI after hitting other cars](#)

[PRINCETON: Floyd, late wife honored by Mercer college](#)

[PRINCETON: YMCA to present Centennial Awards](#)

TOP STORIES

[CENTRAL JERSEY: GOP sweeps new 16th district](#)

Voters overwhelmingly approving consolidation was only the first step in what is going to be an intense, detailed process for Princeton Borough and Princeton Township throughout the coming year.

"The really difficult work begins," said Joe Stefko, a consultant with the Center for Government Research, the independent consulting firm the two governing bodies hired to guide the Joint Shared Services Consolidation Commission (JSSCC) some 15 months ago.

"I would expect the two governing bodies will discuss this in short order and come up with a transition plan and appoint an implementation task force," he said.

The task force will be charged with guiding the transition process, setting up the new Princeton under the borough form of government and overseeing the merger of the two police and public works departments.

"The really hard work starts now," said Mr. Stefko. "It's a big step from going from black and white on a sheet of paper to implementation. I have no doubt the community will be able to do it."

Some plans have been laid out in the JSSCC's documentation and work to get to the transition team and the two governing bodies started.

Consolidation passed in Tuesday's election with a 60 percent margin in the borough and 85 percent in the township.

For the start of the merging process, "we need to come together and heal," said Mayor Chad Goerner. "We need to come together as one community."

"The fact is that these two governments and communities have a long history of working together, they are accustomed to working together and are comfortable with working together," said Mr. Stefko.

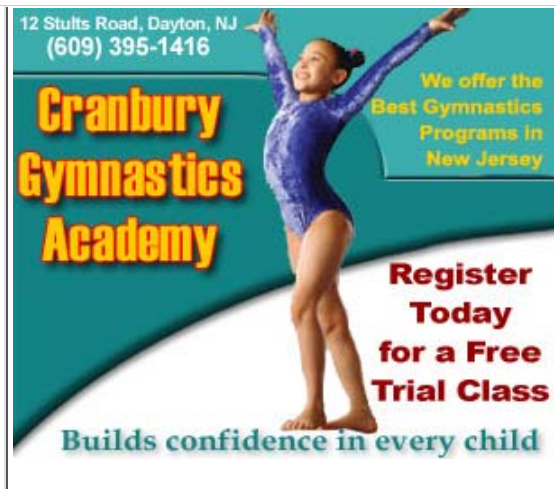
"The steps they will be taking will be to position the new government to hit the ground running in 2013," said Mr. Stefko. "Other steps will be taken to inform the new governing body that will take over in 2013, because that new governing body will need to make decisions on things like facilities, capital planning."

Another thing that needs to happen during the transition year is the framework for advisory planning districts.[cki: which are?:]

"During the transition year you want to set the foundation for those advisory planning districts to take effect in 2013," he said. "Bear in mind in 2012 you have two separate governments, so in 2013 they would take effect."

Some of the things that will need to be focused on immediately include:

* Establish a formal time frame for all of the actions that need to happen during the



transition year.

- * Basic procedural points to “get married.”
 - * Rebidding of contracts.
 - * Determining how to merge funds and revenues.
 - * Dealing with things like signage, stationery and forms.
 - * Picking a logo.
 - * Transfer of assets, property and vehicles.
- Other details that will need addressing include collective bargaining agreements and the unions, said Mr. Stefko.

In the state consolidation law, there is a provision that provides technical assistance into integrate current labor agreements into consolidated ones with the Public Employment Relations Commission, he said.

The first step is to develop the transition team. The mayors will be meeting in the next few days to outline the structure of that team and then put out a request for applications, said Mayor Goerner. The team will be a mix of citizens, elected officials and municipal staff.

[cki: will moore be involved? How big will the team be?:]Anton Lahnston, chairman of the JSSCC, would like to see the transition team in place with in the next 30 to 45 days, “certainly before the end of the year.”

The JSSCC’s recommendation document was designed to serve as a roadmap for the process.

“I would see the transition team using that roadmap as a vital, vital document and hold people to it and that the decisions being made are consistent with it,” said Mr. Lahnston. “The Borough Council and the Township Committee will be intimately involved with the decision making. The transition team will bring things to them.”

The elected officials will be working to ease concerns among the municipal staff, said Mr. Goerner. The departments will also be encouraged to work together more in the coming year to develop a rapport and comfort to ease the transition.

Mr. Goerner, who plans on staying on as mayor next year, believes the transition can happen in one year.

“It’s going to be an ambitious endeavor,” he said. “Look what we accomplished this year and what we had on our plate (and got through). It’s going to take a collective effort.”

The transition cost estimate does have funds allotted for an outside consultant to assist with the process; no decision or talks on the issue have been held yet, said Mayor Goerner.

Transition costs would come from the municipal budgets, from the work staff would do normally during the regular calendar year. Transition costs, such as moving offices, would hopefully come from the state, and some things would need to be looked at to see if they could take place over time.

“We are relying on the state to provide a portion of that in the first year,” said Mr. Lahnston. “The current understating is that 20 percent of the transition costs that would be incurred in the transition period would be supported by the state, but that’s not limitless, although there is not a fixed amount, we have to be careful with that.”

Although exuberant cheers rang out at Democratic and Republican headquarters when the consolidation vote tallies came in on Tuesday night, not everyone had the same reaction.

Jim Floyd, longtime township resident and former mayor, said, “It’s all for naught if it’s not advantageous to the citizenry ... it could be for naught. We will be used as an example.”

“We’re disappointed obviously, but took solace in the fact that Districts 4, and 6, which is the core of the borough, voted consolidation down, and (District) 5” said Kate Warren, the spokesperson for Preserve Our Historic Borough. “We’re saddened another generation won’t have the sense of the borough, a sense of place of the borough. But it’s a new day and we are moving on.”

RECENT COMMENTS

Please sign in to leave comments.

...