

**Minutes for the Joint Consolidation/ Shared Services Study Commission of  
Princeton Borough  
and  
Princeton Township  
November 21, 2011 – 7:09p.m.  
Township Municipal Building – Committee Room, Princeton NJ**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:09 p.m., with Phyllis Persicketti reading the Open Public Meetings Act Statement:

The following is an accurate statement concerning the providing of notice of this meeting and said statement shall be entered in the minutes of this meeting.

Notice of this meeting as required by sections 4a, 3d, 13 and 14 of the Open Public Meetings Act has been provided to the public in the form of the written notice attached hereto,

On November 16, 2011, at 9:30 a.m., said notice was posted in the official bulletin board, transmitted to the Princeton Packet, the Trenton Times, the Town Topics, filed with the Township Clerk and posted on the Princeton Borough and Princeton Township websites.

**2. ROLL CALL - ATTENDEES:**

*Commission Members Present* – Anton Lahnston, (Chair), Valerie Haynes (Vice Chair), Mayor Chad Goerner, Carol Golden, David Goldfarb, Ryan Lilienthal, Bernie Miller, Alice Small, Bill Metro, M. Patrick Simon, Bob Bruschi, (Borough Administrator), James Pascale (Township Administrator) and Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Representative Eugene McCarthy

*Others Present:* Joseph Stefko (Center for Governmental Research-CGR) and Marc Pfeiffer, Deputy Director, Local Government & Agencies, DCA

*Absent:* Mayor Mildred Trotman

Roll Call for the Commission was called out by Board Secretary Persicketti. There was a quorum present, therefore, the meeting was held.

**3. REVIEW and APPROVE MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 21, 2011**

A motion was made to approve the minutes as read by Mr. Miller. The motion was seconded by Mayor Goerner. No discussion. All board members voted in favor; therefore, the *September 21, 2011* minutes were approved as read.

#### **4. REVIEW and APPROVE MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 26, 2011.**

The borough clerk's name was spelled wrong which will be changed to reflect the correct spelling. Mr. Metro said that a suggestion was made to add the Police Summary Chart to the minutes as an amendment. Chair Lahnston stated that the Police Summary chart prepared by Mr. Metro will be referenced in the minutes and attached as a single page document. The chart which is currently in the minutes will be removed. Mr. Metro will send Ms. Persicketti the PDF version.

A motion was made by Mr. Miller to approve the October 26, 2011 minutes with the aforementioned noted changes. The motion was seconded by Mayor Goerner. No discussion. All board members voted in favor; therefore, the *October 26, 2011* minutes were approved with the noted changes to be made.

#### **5. COMMISSION BUDGET UPDATE – ANTON LAHNSTON**

Thus far, the Commission has spent \$89,030.39 out of a total budget of \$120,274.00. There are a few items which have not been logged. One is for Phyllis and the other is for Joe of CGR. There is a surplus and the Commission and its budget will continue to exist and will be supported for at least six (6) months.

#### **6. COMMISSION RETROSPECTIVE – WHAT DID WE LEARN**

Chair Lahnston said that the Commission needs to look at what they learned so they can bring it to the State for future reference. As the entire process moves forward, with the transition team, the documentation will be important. What did the Commission learn from the outset and moving forward over the past sixteen (16) months. This is invaluable for the State and the DCA.

Mayor Goerner responded that "why did consolidation not work in New Jersey. A lot was understood in Princeton, based on past experiences. This is important for other towns to know to get to the point which Princeton started from. The Committee addressed the towns' concerns and did an effective job. The voters have spoken out this time around. There was an alignment of the things which occurred in the Borough and the Township. People in the two communities voted by a landslide to make the change.

Mr. Lilienthal pointed out that Princeton had a good consultant who provided detail, background and structure. The combination of elected and appointed officials by the municipality in addition to the volunteers contributed to the process because these individuals who served on the Commission put in a lot of time and effort to get the message out to the public. Mr. Simon added that the economy mattered for the voters. Also, the help which was provided by the State (DCA) was critical. Ms. Haynes felt that speaking to the citizens and informing people helped to shape their thoughts. The trash collection issue was a troublesome with not many options available. Mr. Simon felt that current state laws allow the DCA to help municipalities who need help; but the State has to be as flexible as possible.

Chair Lahnston indicated that Consolidation is a “work in progress” because there are not good examples to follow. It is breaking new ground. Mr. McCarthy indicated that the appointed officials and the volunteers contributed to get all information out by having meetings and posting minutes which made the message clearer to the public and helped to create reasonable understanding of the Consolidation process from the outset. Mr. Goldfarb gave credit to Chair Lahnston and the Committee to get the report together because people looked at the report and believed what they read. People had faith in the work which was done by the Commission, per Mr. Goldfarb.

Mrs. Small stated that there was a meeting with LUARC (Local Unit Alignment, Reorganization and Consolidation Commission) at which flexibility with laws that are currently in place when choosing methods of government and other aspects of the Consolidation Statute were discussed. Moving forward, more flexibility built into the State statutes would be helpful. With respect to the report put out by the Commission, people felt that the report was persuasive and the Commission did a good job.

Joe Stefko said that he agreed with Mrs. Small in what was said to ensure local flexibility to address some of the issues in consolidation laws. There is anticipation as to how the process will work when moving forward; but one cannot anticipate how everything will work out, therefore, additional flexibility should be built into the laws. Mr. Stefko said he learned the real power of public engagement. The members of the Commission in Princeton did more listening than speaking to the public. The members of the Commission spent time ensuring that this was community dialogue not just a one way transfer information to residents. There was more public engagement in Princeton than Mr. Stefko has seen in any other community in New Jersey and other states. Dialogue is so important. One of the challenges with the complex consolidation process is that members of the Commission compiled data, came up with options and delivered a dense report to the community. It was based upon the Options Report that the citizens made their decision to consolidate.

Ms. Golden feels strongly that success was due to the members of the Commission and their commitment.

Mr. Simon recommended that the state encourage other municipalities to adopt a slightly longer schedule for consolidation, by about two months. He said that the Commission did a great job; but he also felt that the Commission could have used more time to discuss options before finalizing the report.

Ms. Haynes indicated that the availability of the website, which did not exist before, was a key element contributing to the success of the referendum in that people could see for themselves the information that was available on-line.

Chair Lahnston wanted to acknowledge the Commission members by “thanking” each member individually. Chair Lahnston also recognized each Commission member for their special expertise they brought to the table to enable the Commission to achieve their goals:

☐ Ms. Haynes was someone he could always count on, no matter what the task was at hand. Also Ms Haynes' gave great guidance to the Public Works Subcommittee and related issues..

☐ Although, Mrs. Small was an alternate, she took on full responsibility of the work of the Commission and attacked legal issues as they arose. Mrs. Small took on this responsibility from the beginning to the end.

☐ Mr. Lilienthal became fully committed as time passed. In particular, he provided skillful leadership in the Chestnut Street Firehouse meeting, a pivotal gathering.

☐ Mr. Miller was the lead of the Municipal Consolidation Subcommittee; he did a masterful job of guiding the Commission through some of its most difficult chapters.

☐ Mr. Metro – no one else could have come close to his suburb guidance in leading the work of the police subcommittee.

☐ Mrs. Golden provided the key role of the quintessential community organizer. She stepped up and gave all of her organizational talents to the Commission..

☐ Mr. Goldfarb, while pursuing his own vision, brought clarity and depth to many issues unique to local government, and helped to make a better roadmap.

☐ Mr. Simon's analysis was especially appreciated and his dedication and dogged determination in solving many, many sticky financial issues was appreciated.

☐ Mayor Trotman was not present; in her absence, Chair Lahnston acknowledged Mayor Trotman for her full support and enthusiasm for the work of the Commission as one of her great contributions as Borough Mayor.

☐ Mayor Goerner, was commended for his work for the Commission and for Chairman Lahnston personally -- he brought wisdom, level headedness and personal commitment that were always invaluable.

☐ Eugene McCarthy and Joe Stefko were recognized for their guidance and always being there for the Commission.

To complete the chapter, the Commission must 'move on', per Chair Lahnston.

## **7. CONCERNS and/or ADVICE FOR TRANSITION**

Chair Lahnston stated that he would like to set the transition process in a perspective. Mayor Goerner said that he met with Mayor Trotman last week and the Mayor elect Moore and they outlined the structure of the transition team based. There are to be two elected officials from each municipality and three residents from each municipality on the core transition team. There will also be sub-committees, including department heads and police chiefs. A letter should be sent to the newspapers making a request for individuals to apply to serve on the Transition Team and its sub-committees. The deadline for application will be December 7, 2011. In addition, a cover letter needs to accompany each applicant's resume, stating what they will bring to the table and the services they can offer. A separate committee will be assigned to review the applications and make recommendations. The appointments will then be made at the January 2012 Re-Organization meeting in each municipality.

Mr. Pfeiffer of DCA said that he worked with the two mayors and was impressed with the convictions and integrity which the Commission brought to the process. When Mr. Pfeiffer referred to the 'Commission', he was also referring to the elected officials and the business

administrators who participated effectively as full members and partners. Also, credit was given to Eugene McCarthy of DCA and Joe Stefko of CGR. There was communication and technology available. The role played by the people who did not think that consolidation was a good idea played really led to an incredible community discussion. A turnout of over 50% in a municipal election says a lot about the engagement and attention that focused on this matter. Mr. Pfeiffer stated by moving forward, Princeton is doing something which no one has done before. They are dealing with a law which created a theoretical basis about how municipalities could consolidate. Thus, they are now dusting off a law which was effectively created and last updated in 1978/1979 (with respect to implementation). The local consolidation option will deal with implementation through the Task Force. Discussions have already been held about the Task Force and coordination with the State. There will be interesting challenges along with creative solutions. The municipal offices will work together where laws are involved. The discussions will be interesting and the challenges will be met. The governing bodies will go into the transition with the transition team and will need a lot of people assisting on the subcommittees.

## **8. PUBLIC COMMENT**

The Public Comment portion of the meeting began at 8:37 p.m.

Jim Levine, Linden Lane was in favor consolidation. The outcome of the process will make it work and he 'thanked' all the Commission members.

Kate Warren, said she has a concern about redistricting and questioned a statement that had been made about a political element in the process. It was explained that what had been meant was that the Mercer County Board of Elections, which consists of two Democrats and two Republicans, is by its nature, a political body.

Chair Lahnston indicated that there now is an opportunity to bring the communities together and not leave the districts as is. But, it is uncertain as to what will happen within the next 45 days, which means that the process will be completed by December 23rd.

At 8:40 p.m., the Public Comment portion of the meeting was closed.

## **9. FUTURE ROLE OF THE COMMISSION IN THE TRANSITION**

The Commission does not go away, because they exist at the longest for six (6) months into 2013 or until the governing bodies adopt new ordinances. Mr. Pfeiffer stressed that the Commission should look at the ordinances and make recommendations to the new governing body.

The immediate thing which needs to get started is the election process for the new governing body. There will be a primary election next June and petitions will need to be filed. The Board of Elections is responsible for starting this process and are aware of what their responsibilities are. They have to decide within 45 days what the boundaries are. The law provides that the two municipal clerks have to act as a committee to start viewing the single

set of petitions. The two municipal clerks will work together as part of the committee under the guidance of the Board of Elections (who will be doing this for the first time under consolidation).

Next, tax maps need to be worked on with the Division of Taxation's Tax Assessor. This will lead to setting property values which will become effective for tax year 2013. This step needs to be done in October of 2012.

The School Board needs to be addressed because it will involve the county superintendent. The library board needs to go from a regional board to a municipal library board, which will be appointed by of the new governing body.

Who will be doing what jobs in the new government? These decisions will be made by the new governing body.

Legislation needs to be passed, which was introduced in the Legislature last week. The legislation will permit the special emergency process to be used to fund implementation costs. Governor Christie will be in Princeton on November 22, 2011 to discuss 'Consolidation.' He will support Consolidation.

The role of the Consolidation Commission is limited and the process was developed in the absence of real life experience with the process. It was what smart people assumed would have to be done. Depending on which municipalities would consolidate one would have different processes. However, the Commission has dealt with Consolidation over the past year and half and the members can bring wisdom and knowledge to that process.

Mr. McCarthy has been in constant communication with the Board of Elections. The Board of Elections stated that they are working on the maps. The Commission can participate in what is happening with the Board of Elections. The County Board of Elections may keep the existing voting districts in place and just renumber them in neighborhoods which are split. Example: there are election districts in some parts of town, in which one walks across the street, and is in the other municipality. Yet, one does not know this because they look exactly the same. These places are in separate election districts currently. This may or may not be appropriate moving forward, per Mr. Pfeiffer.

Mr. McCarthy indicated that he felt that it was appropriate for the Commission to offer suggestions to the Board of Elections. Mayor Goerner feels that the process has to come to a close quickly. The Board of Elections has the responsibility to complete the process within 45 days. Mr. Pfeiffer will reach out to the Board of Elections on November 22, 2011 and express to them the Commission's concerns as a result of the November 21, 2011 meeting and they will get back to the Commission with the Board of Elections answers. Chair Lahnston, at this time, reiterated that the Commission would like to be part of the process. Also, both communities would like to provide input as well (township and borough). The 45 day deadline date is December 23, 2011, per Chair Lahnston. DCA will reach out to each cabinet office to appoint an individual from each department to be DCA's contact person.

Mr. Miller asked if the Commission will play a role or will there be another commission? Mr. Pfeiffer replied that the transition team was not addressed in the statute. The reading of the statute states that “the Consolidation Commission serves for 180 days after the effective date of consolidation” which is January 1, 2013. The transition team members may be members of the commission. The Consolidation Commission could also serve as advisors to the governing bodies of the consolidated community. The law does not address that process. The governing bodies need to play a role as to what needs to be done for the short and long terms. Chair Lahnston asked if members of the Commission can serve on both Commission and the Transition Task Force? Mayor Goerner replied that there is certain expertise which the Commission members brought to the table. For example, Mr. Metro services are police specific which is an important part of the process. Administrator Bruschi feels that employees will do the basic plan using existing personnel. Both Administrators Bruschi and Pascale met and they discussed that one clerk will retire. Also, both the township and borough have vacancies. However, they need the transition numbers (goals) to make it all happen. Currently, all the departments have met.

Chair Lahnston stated that the members of the Commission have a strong desire to be in collaboration with the county on voting districts. Secondly, does the current Consolidation Commission have a role to fulfill between now (with the next month and a half) and January 1, 2012? There was no clear answer.

The issue of transition costs is currently being prepared. The concrete amounts need to be made known and put into a budget. It was noted that on January 1, 2012, the borough will have a new mayor and at that time the members of the transition team will be appointed (on January 1, 2012). Administrator Bruschi said that the staff has started to work on consolidation already. Mr. Pascale said that a meeting was held with the department heads and they will make this process work. Both Administrator Bruschi (borough) and Administrator Pascale (township) will work together with public works, police, etc.

The next meeting date for consolidation Commission will be **December 14, 2011 at 7:00 p.m.** Transition costs will be discussed at that time.

A meeting will be held with the Board of Elections. Mr. Goldfard, Mr. Miller, Mr. Lilienthal, Ms. Haynes and Chair Lahnston will meet with the Board of Elections. Mayor Goerner will be out of the country at that time and will not be able to attend the meeting.

Mrs. Small addressed the fact that the ordinances which were previously mentioned by Mr. Pfeiffer must be dealt with. Once the transition team is appointed by the two governing bodies, then the process will start to unfold. Once transition cost legislation passes, all things will start to happen.

## **10. OTHER BUSINESS**

Ms. Haynes stated that an e-mail was received from Brian Grady who is using Princeton as a case study. He will be in New Jersey and would like to meet with the Commission members on December 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

Mr. Simon would like to know the status of the website (transfer township/borough) and update it. Chair Lahson asked CGR to leave it as is for the time being.

## **11. ADJOURNMENT**

No other business came before the Committee, therefore, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Mrs. Golden and the motion was seconded by Mrs. Small. The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Phyllis Persicketti, Board Secretary  
Joint Consolidation/Shared Services  
Study Commission

/p