

PRELIMINARY REPORT

DESIGNATION OF CONCERNS & APPREHENSIONS

DESIGNATION OF CRITICAL ISSUES

Background

On Wednesday evening, September 3, 2008, the Joint Consolidation Study Commission of Wantage Township and Sussex Borough met to discuss two topics:

1. Elements of consolidation that may cause concern or apprehension among residents of the two communities.
2. Critical issues that need to be addressed if the study is to be considered valid and complete.

This report summarizes the outcome of the meeting. Issues are listed in order of perceived importance.

PART 1: CONCERNS & APPREHENSIONS

The discussion centered on the issues about which people in the community are expressing questions, concerns, or apprehension.

Extremely important

- Various issues related to the Sussex utility system. These include:
 - Capacity
 - Financial condition
 - Physical condition
 - Potential for connections within Wantage
 - Concern about mandatory connections
 - Concern about overburdening system
 - Form for management & decision making

Very important

- Financial issues: costs, savings, effect on taxes, relative debt
- Police services, and the options available
- Issues related to the current autonomy and identity of the two communities

Important

- Form of government
- Sussex residents' ability to have representation on the new governing body
- Status of low-income housing and state Council on Affordable Housing requirements

Other issues discussed

- True cost, without state tax assistance
- Potential loss of municipal employment
- Status of the volunteer fire and EMS agencies
- Differential in public works services between the two communities
- The name(s) of the communities
- How municipal services will be organized & structured

- Potential effect on state school aid
- Potential impact on residential sale price when state tax aid is lost
- Status of existing shared services between the communities
- Impact of future growth in Wantage
- Impact on school taxes
- Fear of Sussex becoming an insignificant part of a larger community
- Image of the communities
- Fear of change
- Different perceptions among residents, based on age and length of residency

PART 2: CRITICAL ISSUES

This discussion centered on issues that the commission needs to address in detail because failure to address them would threaten the success of the study.

Extremely critical

- Developing a complete financial picture of the two communities, including a forecast of finances three to five years into the future. This includes considering the need for – and potential impact of – property revaluation or reassessment for tax purposes.

Very critical

- Complete evaluation of the Sussex utility system, including all elements listed under **Concerns & apprehensions**, above
- Maintaining effective communications within the two communities throughout the study
- Form of government

Critical

- Analysis of the two communities' master plans and any potential need for harmonization
- Development of a complete transition plan, including services to be provided and staffing levels
- Maintenance of identities of the two communities

Other issues discussed

- Potential impact if existing shared-service agreements were not renewed when the contracts expire

Respectfully submitted,

Government Management Advisors, LLC



Consultant & discussion moderator

September 8, 2008