

**MINUTES OF THE JOINT CONSOLIDATION STUDY COMMISSION OF
WANTAGE TOWNSHIP AND SUSSEX BOROUGH, HELD AT THE SUSSEX
BOROUGH MUNICIPAL BUILDING, 2 MAIN STREET, SUSSEX, N.J. ON THE DATE
OF AUGUST 6, 2008**

Commission Chairman Earl Snook called the meeting to order, and requested Acting Secretary Jim Doherty to call the roll. Upon roll call, the following members of the Commission were present: Earl Snook, Wayne Dunn, Pam Flynn, Sharon Hosking, Art Jacobs, Sal Lagattuta, Alonzo Little, Chuck McKay, Edward Meyer.

The following member was absent: Greg Kresge

Also present: NJDCA Representative Jack Doyle

Mr. Snook stated, "This meeting is being held in compliance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, Public Laws 1975, Chapter 231. It has been properly noticed and posted to the public, and certified by the Secretary."

Mr. Snook led the assembly in the Salute to the Flag.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Hosking moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Consolidation Study Commission of Wantage Township and Sussex Borough held on July 1, 2008. The motion was seconded by Mr. Little. Upon roll call,

Ayes: Snook, Dunn, Flynn, Hosking, Jacobs, Lagattuta, Little, McKay, Meyer

Nays: None **Absent:** Kresge **Abstain:** None

CONSULTANT SEARCH

Mr. Snook requested a report from the Consultant Search Subcommittee.

Ms. Hosking and Ms. Flynn reported that three firms were interviewed based on their submittals from the "Request For Proposals". All three firms were considered highly qualified and capable. After due consideration, the Consultant Search Subcommittee has recommended unanimously that Government Management Advisors LLC of East Brunswick, NJ be hired to serve as the Consultant.

Ms. Hosking moved to hire Government Management Advisors LLC of East Brunswick, NJ to serve as the Consultant for the Joint Consolidation Study of Wantage Township and Sussex Borough, in accordance with their Proposal dated June 19, 2008, at a cost not to exceed \$35,000, as per the following resolution:

WHEREAS, NJSA 40A:11-5 et. seq. allows for a public body to award a contract without public advertising for bids and bidding thereof under certain circumstances, and

WHEREAS, the Joint Consolidation Study Commission of Wantage Township and Sussex Borough has a need for assistance during the course of this year involving professional services, and

WHEREAS, the Joint Consolidation Study Commission of Wantage Township and Sussex Borough is of the opinion that the circumstances for professional service contractual arrangements, as required by NJSA 40A:11-5(1) are satisfied in this situation,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Joint Consolidation Study Commission of Wantage Township and Sussex Borough, in the County of Sussex, New Jersey, that the following contract be and it is hereby approved without the need for public advertisement of bids and bidding thereof:

Awarded to: Government Management Advisors, LLC of East Brunswick, NJ

Services: Consultant for the Joint Consolidation Study of Wantage Township and Sussex Borough

Duration: Twelve Month time period from August 6, 2008 through August 5, 2009.

Amount: Fee not to exceed \$35,000.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Commission Secretary is hereby directed to post this resolution on the bulletin board of the Wantage Township Municipal Building and the Sussex Borough Hall, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in accordance with the requirements of NJSA 40A:11-5(1), the Board Secretary is hereby directed to publish a brief public notice stating the nature, duration, service and amount of the contract herein awarded, and that said contract and this resolution are on file and available for public inspection in the office of the Wantage Township Municipal Clerk.

Ms. Flynn seconded the motion.

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On the question, Mr. Jacobs requested some explanation regarding the scope of work that the Consultant would be performing, and Mr. Lagattuta requested some details regarding the qualifications of Government Management Advisors compared to the other firms interviewed.

Ms. Hosking, Ms. Flynn and Mr. Doyle responded, explaining that the principal of Government Management Advisors, Greg Fehrenbach, was present this evening. Ms. Hosking explained that Mr. Fehrenbach served as the Sussex County Administrator and Interim Manager of Vernon Township, and has a firm understanding of Sussex County. Ms. Flynn indicated that all three firms were very good candidates, but Mr. Fehrenbach's passion for the work to be done was the deciding factor.

Upon request, Mr. Fehrenbach introduced himself, stating that his firm serves as the Coordinator of the New Jersey League of Municipalities' Interlocal Municipal Cooperation and Management Advisory Service, and has extensive credentials and experience dealing with the State of New Jersey regarding both shared services. Mr. Fehrenbach explained that, in accordance with the Request For Proposals, the consultant's role would be to act as the focal point for communications; to act as an Advocate on behalf of the Study Commission; to attend all meetings; and to prepare and present three reports on various topics including police coverage options, COAH impact, and service delivery options.

Mr. Doyle also reported, in connection with the costs of the Consultant's services, that he has been in contact with the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs on this day, and has received confirmation that the Grant application of the Commission, in the amount of \$46,000, has successfully passed through the preliminary review process. Mr. Doyle states that the commission may anticipate receiving formal approval of the grant application within the next several weeks.

Also on the question, Mr. Lagattuta inquired if the wording of the Professional Services Resolution was accurate, as it related to the advertisement of bids or proposals. Upon review and consideration, all members present agreed that the wording was correct and appropriate.

There being no one else wishing to question the motion, Mr. Snook called the motion and requested a roll call vote. Upon roll call,

Ayes: Snook, Dunn, Flynn, Hosking, Jacobs, Lagattuta, Little, McKay, Meyer

Nays: None **Absent:** Kresge **Abstain:** None

COMMISSION SECRETARY SEARCH

Mr. Snook requested that the Secretary Search Subcommittee offer a report on the results of their interviews. By consensus it was agreed that this discussion should take place in closed executive session. Mr. Dunn made a motion to enter into executive session as follows:

WHEREAS, the Open Public Meetings Act, P. L. 1975, Chapter 231 permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting in certain circumstances; and WHEREAS, this public body is of the opinion that such circumstances presently exist; NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Joint Consolidation Study Commission of Wantage Township and Sussex Borough, that the public shall be excluded from discussion of the following matter: the employment, terms and conditions of employment, and evaluation of a specific prospective public employee to be appointed by the public body, being the Commission Secretary. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Minutes will be kept on file in the Wantage Township municipal clerk's office, and once the matter involving the confidentiality of the above no longer requires that confidentiality, then the minutes shall be made public, no later than the date of May 1, 2009.

The motion was seconded by Ms. Flynn. Upon roll call,

Ayes: Snook, Dunn, Flynn, Hosking, Jacobs, Lagattuta, Little, McKay, Meyer

Nays: None **Absent:** Kresge **Abstain:** None

After meeting in closed executive session, Mr. Lagattuta moved to return to open session and continue with the regular order of business. Ms. Flynn seconded the motion. Upon roll call,

Ayes: Snook, Dunn, Flynn, Hosking, Jacobs, Lagattuta, Little, McKay, Meyer

Nays: None **Absent:** Kresge **Abstain:** None

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Mr. Lagattuta moved to hire Shirlee Abbott as the Commission Secretary, at a rate of \$12 per hour. The motion was seconded by Mr. Dunn. Upon roll call,

Ayes: Snook, Dunn, Flynn, Hosking, Jacobs, Lagattuta, Little, McKay, Meyer

Nays: None **Absent:** Kresge **Abstain:** None

DISCUSSION WITH CONSULTANT

Mr. Snook welcomed Mr. Fehrenbach to the commission, and inquired if he would wish to address the commission members at this time.

Mr. Fehrenbach suggested that the first action step, based on the input he has received during the interview process, would be to assist the commission in identifying specific public fears and critical issues that need to be addressed in the study. Mr. Fehrenbach suggested two approaches for accomplishing this. One approach would be for Mr. Fehrenbach and his associate, Mr. Reagan Burkholder, to work directly with the Commission members and identify fears and critical issues at the September 3 meeting. The other approach would involve greater direct public participation in the process. Mr. Fehrenbach also suggested that a combination of these two approaches could be put together, creating a third alternative for action.

General discussion of the pros and cons of the approaches suggested took place. Mr. Lagattuta suggested there would be a good opportunity for public input by proceeding with an internet-based survey, which could be combined with an open meeting for public input. Mr. Jacobs stated his belief that the public's views on the consolidation issue are varied and passionate. Ms. Flynn cautioned that not all members of the public have access to on line information, or rely on computers for their public information needs. Mr. Doyle stated that it would be important to receive a broad cross section of input from the public. Mr. Fehrenbach stated that the approach selected needed to balance the need for public participation against the need to expedite the study, as there is a definite deadline for completing the study. Mr. Fehrenbach also suggested that the typical response to public surveys is generally minor, and may not produce the level of input desired for the cost and effort involved.

After due deliberation, the members of the commission agreed by consensus that they would hold a workshop during the September 3 meeting, to list all of the fears and concerns they believe exist within the public as it relates to the consolidation study; and to list the critical issues that must be addressed in the study. Between this meeting and the September meeting, an *ad hoc* Public Relations Subcommittee would reach out to the news media and the various civic groups and organizations in the communities, to solicit input regarding these lists. After the September meeting, the final list of fears and concerns, and the critical issues, would be made known to the general public through press releases, and website posting, to make known the list, and to request the public offer any further input they may have in its regard, so that a final and complete list of fears and concerns may be compiled by the October meeting date.

Mr. Snook named Sharon Hosking, Chuck McKay, and Sal Lagattuta to serve on the Public Relations Subcommittee with him.

Mr. Doyle stated that he would be continuing with the Fiscal Analysis required in order to deliver the NJDCA Financial Report in compliance with the deadline.

A general discussion ensued regarding the five month report deadline of the NJDCA Financial Report. Mr. McKay indicated that the meeting schedule of the Commission states the report is due by November 5, but the actual five month time frame would be November 17. Mr. Doyle stated that it would be very difficult for him to deliver the report by November 5, and indicated his desire that the deadline be November 17.

Mr. McKay moved to confirm the deadline date for the submittal of the NJDCA Financial Report to be November 17, 2008. Ms. Hosking seconded the motion. . Upon roll call,

Ayes: Snook, Dunn, Flynn, Hosking, Jacobs, Lagattuta, Little, McKay, Meyer
Nays: None Absent: Kresge Abstain: None

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Mr. Snook asked Mr. Fehrenbach if he would find it helpful to have the commission members working in sub-committees to address the various aspects of the study.

Mr. Fehrenbach stated that the benefit of such an approach would depend heavily on the action plan. If the commission members were going to work independently in between meetings to gather data and report back at regular meetings, the approach might work. However, if all of the subcommittees were going to be calling upon his firm for assistance and input beyond e-mail communication and telephone contact, then the scope of services would probably exceed that which was envisioned in the Request For Proposals.

Mr. Snook stated that for the time being, the commission would continue to work under *ad hoc* subcommittees that will be appointed on an as-needed basis, as has been done with the Consultant Search Subcommittee, the Secretary Search Subcommittee, and the Public Relations Subcommittee.

Mr. Snook stated that he and Mr. Doyle had the pleasure today of holding a courtesy meeting with John Hannum, the Superintendent of High Point Regional High School, for the purpose of opening a dialogue with the High School administration on the study's focus as it relates to education. General discussion ensued regarding the need to address this aspect of the study, which will be made difficult because of the recent retirement of the County Superintendent of Schools.

Discussion turned at this time to the need for addressing impact of consolidation on tax assessment and property values.

Mr. McKay suggested that, while it is certainly helpful to have assurances from the State of New Jersey regarding tax stability for current homeowners after consolidation, the public is anxious to know what the State's model is for handling the tax impact once a homeowner attempts to sell their property to a new owner. Mr. McKay stated that knowing what impact taxes will be upon resale of property after consolidation is an important question in the mind of taxpayers in both communities.

Mr. Doyle stated that this was indeed a valid question and concern, and will need to be addressed. Mr. Fehrenbach also offered his understanding that the State of New Jersey has no working model regarding details such as this, given the relative lack of experience regarding actual consolidation of towns in the past fifty years. Mr. Fehrenbach agreed that the State will need to address these questions so that the public may make an informed decision.

Discussion turned to the topic of selecting a new form of government for a consolidated municipality. Mr. Lagattuta inquired if it were possible to select a form of government other than the ones available within the structured models.

Mr. Fehrenbach stated that such an option is available, and is called a "Special Charter", which would need to be submitted to the New Jersey Legislature for permission to create a unique form of government specifically tailored to the needs of the community. Mr. Fehrenbach stated that there are a certain small number of Special Charter municipalities in New Jersey, and identified Hardyston Township's form of government as one such special charter.

OPEN PUBLIC SESSION

Ms. Hosking moved to open the meeting to the public, for any questions or comments at this time. Mr. Little seconded the motion. Upon roll call,

Ayes: Snook, Dunn, Flynn, Hosking, Jacobs, Lagattuta, Little, McKay, Meyer

Nays: None **Absent:** Kresge **Abstain:** None

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Mr. Terry West, representing the office of Governor Jon Corzine, offered the services of his office to assist the commission members in their efforts to get the word out to the general public regarding their efforts. Mr. West detailed a number of suggestions that could be pursued in this regard.

There being no one else present wishing to address the commission at this time, Mr. McKay moved to close the meeting to the public and return to the regular order of business. Mr. Lagattuta seconded the motion. Upon roll call,

Ayes: Snook, Dunn, Flynn, Hosking, Jacobs, Lagattuta, Little, McKay, Meyer

Nays: None **Absent:** Kresge **Abstain:** None

There being no other items for consideration at this time, Ms. Flynn moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. McKay seconded the motion. Upon roll call,

Ayes: Snook, Dunn, Flynn, Hosking, Jacobs, Lagattuta, Little, McKay, Meyer

Nays: None **Absent:** Kresge **Abstain:** None

Mr. Snook declared this meeting to be adjourned.

James R. Doherty, Acting Secretary