

**MINUTES OF THE JOINT CONSOLIDATION STUDY COMMISSION
OF WANTAGE TOWNSHIP AND SUSSEX BOROUGH SPECIAL MEETING
HELD AT THE SUSSEX BOROUGH HALL ON FEBRARY 11, 2009**

Commission Chairman Earl Snook called the meeting to order at 7:15 PM, and requested Secretary Lee Abbott to call the roll. Upon roll call, the following members of the Commission were present: E. Snook, S. Lagattuta, P. Flynn, S. Hosking, A. Jacobs, G. Kresge, E. Meyer. W. Dunn arrived at 7:30, and C. McKay arrived at 8:30. Also present were G. Fehrenbach, consultant and J. Doyle, NJDCA liaison.

A. Little was not present.

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

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."

NEW BUSINESS

Presenting information to the Commissioners - Mr. Lagattuta distributed proposed guidelines for members of the general public to bring printed information to the Commission:

Whereas the Sussex / Wantage Consolidation Study Commission desires input and information from the general public on topics and issues concerning the possible consolidation of the two towns; and

whereas, it is desired to have a controlled process of receiving printed information from the general public during the actual time that a meeting of the SWCSC is taking place;

be it resolved that the SWCSC create the following guidelines for receiving information from the general public during a meeting of the SWCSC:

1. The general public shall reserve their activity and movement to the area of the public microphone and behind said microphone when allowed to speak to the SWCSC.
2. The Chair of the SWCSC meeting can invite a member of the general public to approach the sitting committee members if it is deemed necessary.
3. If a member of the general public has any printed information that is desired to be brought to the members of the sitting committee, a designee of the committee will be asked by the chair of the meeting to approach the public microphone, receive the printed information from the member of the public and bring it to the sitting members of the committee.
4. Consultants and guest speakers of the SWCSC are required to follow the above guidelines unless generally excused by the chair of the meeting at any point of the meeting.
5. If a member of the public does not willingly follow the above guidelines of the SWCSC, the SWCSC will not be required to accept the printed information that was intended for distribution to the SWCSC.

It was moved by Ms. Hosking, seconded by Ms. Flynn and unanimously carried to approve the guidelines as presented.

Newspaper article - Mr. Lagattuta directed the other commissioners' attention the February 9 article in the *Star Ledger* regarding state legislative interest in "doughnut towns."

OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner's comments on the consolidation study - Chairman Snook stated that he had considered calling for a straw vote at this meeting, but rather decided to poll the commissioners about continuing with the consolidation study. The unanimous opinion of those present was to go forward with the study; several commissioners indicated that there were remaining concerns but the final decision should be based on as much information as possible.

Consultant Reports - Mr. Fehrenbach addressed the following reports:

- **School district governance:** The report included advice from the Attorney General's office. There are two possible options; 1) to continue as a regional school system with two districts for elections and apportionment of costs, and 2) to consolidate as a single district. If option 2 is recommended, statute provides for the county executive superintendent to appoint representatives for staggered terms during the transition. At this time, the state is moving towards a goal of K-12 districts by 2010--this goal is outside the purview of this commission. Consensus was that if the municipalities consolidate, the school district would also consolidate as a Type II school district. It was moved by Ms. Hosking, seconded by Ms. Flynn and unanimously carried that the Board of Education Representation Report be approved and made available to the public. Mr. Fehrenbach will send the final version of the report to the Secretary to be posted on the municipal websites and available at the library.
- **Duplicate positions:** A report was e-mailed to the commissioners earlier in the day. It has been reviewed by the Administration Subcommittee. The report will be discussed at the next meeting when the commissioners have had more time for review.
- **Civil Service (Title 11A):** Because Wantage operates under the civil service system, if consolidation is recommended there must be a separate question on the ballot asking if the consolidated municipality shall be subject to Civil Service. A report outlining the history and requirements of civil service was distributed as background information. Questions were raised regarding the guidance or recommendation the Commission must offer to the voters regarding the ballot question. Mr. Fehrenbach will clarify this prior to the next meeting.
- **Variations for existing state laws / rules:** A letter requesting a waiver on fire department appropriations and possible LOSAP issues was sent to the Local Finance Board on February 9.
- **Continued use of local ordinances:** Mr. Doherty has started a comparison of ordinances, which already exceeds 300 pages. Significant issues must be identified and addressed. The study commission's report does not create the new ordinance book but should offer guidance for how it could be done. Funding from the DCA can be requested to support a transition committee to continue the work after the vote if consolidation is approved. Mr. Lagattuta will check with both municipal administrators for their suggestions on the key high-priority issues.

The possibility of assigning each commissioner a section of the ordinances to review and prioritize was considered.

- **Type and form of government:** this will be the focus of the next meeting. Ms. Hosking will bring an overhead projector and Mr. Lagattuta will bring transparencies of information from Dr. Reock's presentation to guide the discussion.
- **Preparation of the final report:** Mr. Snook and Mr. Lagattuta will review the format for the final report. Reports that have been accepted as final can be appendices. Mr. Fehrenbach noted that when the research is completed, the concerns and anxieties expressed by the public must be addressed.

Mr. Snook distributed a list suggesting the assignment of open issues to specific commissioners: the Administration Subcommittee continues to work on duplicate positions and Title 11A; the Planning and Zoning Subcommittee will address the use of Advisory Planning Districts; Public Safety will consider Service Districts; Public Works and Water / Sewer Utility Subcommittee will address the transfer of property and assets to the proposed new consolidated municipality, and the Finance Subcommittee will address the apportionment of debt.

OPEN PUBLIC SESSION

It was moved by Ms. Hosking, seconded by Lagattuta and unanimously carried to open the session to the public.

Bill Gettler, Wantage resident, commented that it would be easier to figure the taxes for a consolidated school district. He stated his opposition to consolidation of the municipalities, and addressed the responses and absence of any corrections to his analysis of the fiscal report.

With no other public comments to be offered, Ms. Flynn moved to close the meeting to the public and return to the regular order of business. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lagattuta and unanimously carried.

ADJOURNMENT

With no other items for consideration it was moved by Ms. Flynn, seconded by Mr. Dunn and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Snook declared this meeting to be adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Lee Abbott, Secretary