

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE JOINT CONSOLIDATION STUDY COMMISSION OF
WANTAGE TOWNSHIP AND SUSSEX BOROUGH,
HELD AT THE WANTAGE TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL BUILDING
ON MARCH 4, 2009**

Commission Chairman Earl Snook called the meeting to order at 7:10 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, W. Dunn, P. Flynn, S. Hosking, A. Jacobs, G. Kresge, A. Little and C. McKay.

E. Meyer was not present.

Also present: G. Fehrenbach, R. Burkholder, consultants and J. Doyle, NJDCA liaison.

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."

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Ms. Hosking, seconded by Mr. McKay and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Consolidation Study Commission of Wantage Township and Sussex Borough held on February 4, 2009.

It was moved by Ms. Flynn, seconded by Mr. Dunn and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the meeting held on February 11, 2009.

OLD BUSINESS

OPRA Requests

Commission secretary Lee Abbott presented the following statement:

As Secretary to the Joint Consolidation Study Commission of Wantage Township and Sussex Borough, I do not maintain an office. To facilitate public access, I name the Administrator of Wantage Township and the Clerk of the Borough of Sussex as Deputy Custodians for OPRA requests and responses, using the attached request form and in accordance with the policies and procedures of their respective municipalities.

Ms. Abbott proposed keeping the record of OPRA requests and responses at the Sussex Borough Hall. It was moved by Mr. Lagattuta, seconded by Ms. Flynn and unanimously carried to approve this process for handling OPRA requests.

Charter Study Commission Issues

Much discussion was devoted to addressing the type and form of government to be proposed if consolidation is recommended. The list of options previously presented by Dr. Reock was

reviewed. The following tentative scenario was developed by consensus:

Form:	Council Manager
Mayor:	Elected
Members:	7 (including the mayor)
Wards:	Combination: 4 wards, 2 at-large members plus mayor
Terms:	Staggered, 4 year terms alternating wards and at-large representatives every 2 years
Elections:	Partisan

Non-partisan elections don't involve primaries and may result in a large number of candidates. Currently, both communities hold partisan elections. Non-partisan elections are held in May, but there is a bill before the legislature to change all elections to November.

There was lengthy discussion related to wards. Comments / suggestions included

- Wards seem to go against the concept of "thinking as one."
- Wards must be balanced by population with logical boundaries and must be redrawn every decade based on census data; Sussex would not be its own ward, but densely populated areas might be combined.
- Wards might alleviate concerns about identity and representation for Sussex residents; wards could be much less appealing to Wantage residents.
- Wards could be established with the recommendation that there be another charter study commission at some time in the future to evaluate continuing the wards.

No formal vote was taken on this scenario; the issue will be revisited at future meetings.

Consultants Reports

Mr. Fehrenbach reviewed the status of the following reports:

Civil Service

A supplementary memo was sent out in response to questions raised at the last meeting. A recommendation is discretionary; however, the consultants believe it is an extremely significant element and the Commission should seriously consider making a recommendation to the electorate. Civil Service is irrevocable once it is established.

It was moved by Mr. Jacobs, seconded by Mr. Little and unanimously carried to accept as final the Title 11A Civil Service report. The report will be available to the public on the municipal websites and at the library.

It was moved by Mr. McKay and seconded by Mr. Lagattuta that Civil Service be recommended if consolidation is recommended. Voting in favor: Ms. Flynn, M. Hosking, Mr. Lagattuta, Mr. Little, Mr. McKay, and Mr. Snook. Opposed: Mr. Dunn and Mr. Kresge. Abstaining: Mr. Jacobs. The motion carried.

Final Consolidated Report on Workload

The report was presented previously and discrepancies between the salary and pension numbers

identified. Corrections have been made so that the chart and the text correlate. Some questions raised after the last meeting were addressed:

- The health program, with state and local funding, maintains a satisfactory reserve. No employee health cuts were recommended--only the elimination of coverage for council members.
- The topic of health benefits for retirees was addressed in the subcommittee's report but not included in the calculations.
- The report recommends staffing levels, not the termination of any specific employees. Attrition might be used to reduce staffing over time.
- The separate analyses of the consultants and the Administrative Subcommittee came to very similar conclusions. The suggested staffing levels line up with those of other municipalities.

It was moved by Ms. Flynn and seconded by Ms. Hosking to accept as final the Report on Possible Benefits and Drawbacks to Consolidation: Staffing. Voting in favor: Mr. Dunn, Ms. Flynn, Ms. Hosking, Mr. Kresge, Mr. Lagattuta, Mr. Little, Mr. McKay and Mr. Snook. Opposed: Mr. Jacobs.

Mr. Fehrenbach will provide a final copy in electronic version to be posted on the municipal websites. A copy will be available at the library.

Letter to Local Finance Board

No response has been received as yet. Mr. Doyle will check on the status.

Subcommittee Reports

Administration - Nothing to report.

Planning / Zoning - A report will be distributed shortly.

Public Safety - Mr. Meyers has drafted a report that is being reviewed. It should be distributed before the next meeting.

Public Works & Water / Sewer Utilities - some issues relating to transfer of assets are being clarified. The report is in progress.

Finance -Issues are being discussed, but there is nothing to report at this time.

Continued Use of Local Ordinances

Mr. Lagattuta distributed a report with the following recommendation for a Local Ordinance Committee to work between the time of a vote approving consolidation and the first meeting of the consolidated municipality's new governing body:

- A committee of 10 representatives shall be established only after a positive referendum vote occurs to consolidate both municipalities. Five members will be from Sussex Borough and five members will be from Wantage Township.
- The five members from each municipality will include but not be restricted to: an elected official from the municipality, a township or borough administrator and a member from the Consolidation Study Commission

from said borough or township. All five members from each municipality will be approved by the seated elected council or committee members of each municipality within two months of a positive outcome for consolidation.

- This Local Ordinance Committee (LOC) will be responsible to organize and prepare for submission the revised ordinances that will govern the newly consolidated municipality. The report will be submitted to the new elected members of the governing body of the consolidated municipality for approval or amendment at the initial organization meeting of the new municipality.
- All present ordinances in both municipalities that are found to be common in nature to both former municipalities should be combined into one ordinance which shall serve the useful purposes of the new municipality.
- All existing ordinances that serve the unique issues of the various sections of the two former municipalities (such as but not limited to municipal services, open space, parking, etc.) shall be preserved in the ordinance book of the new consolidated municipality.
- All existing ordinances in the borough or township that are not useful or viable for the new consolidated municipality shall be struck and eliminated.
- The ordinances regarding Land Use / Zoning shall be reviewed and recommended for placement in the new book of ordinances for use in the newly consolidated municipality.
- The LOC will not recommend any ordinance change which would be deemed illegal within the constitutional boundaries of the laws and ordinances of the State of New Jersey.
- The LOC will be dissolved once the report has been submitted to and received by the elected officials of the new consolidated municipality.

It was moved by Ms. Hosking, seconded by Mr. McKay and unanimously carried by roll call vote to approve this recommendation for a Local Ordinance Committee to address the continued use of local ordinances.

Any costs relating to this Local Ordinance Committee might be covered by the transition fund. The Consolidation Study Commission will be submitting a list of itemized transition costs to the DCA for review. Mr. Burkholder has started a list, and it will be circulated to the commission members and municipal administrators for additional suggestions.

NEW BUSINESS

Amendment - Fiscal Aspects of Consolidating Sussex Borough and Wantage Township

Mr. Doyle distributed a revised copy of the November report. The material and non-material changes are noted on page ii. The difference in the average municipal tax levy after consolidation is now calculated as a decrease of \$400 for Sussex and an increase of \$62 for Wantage. The Commissioners will review the amended report prior to the next meeting.

Voucher

A voucher for \$16.90 from the NJ Herald for publication of the special meeting notice was presented. It was moved by Ms. Hosking, seconded by Ms. Flynn and unanimously carried to approve payment. Mr. Snook will notify Wantage Township of the approval.

April Meetings

The original meeting schedule includes meetings on April 1, 2009 and April 29, 2009. Several commissioners have conflicts for the 29th. It was moved by Ms. Flynn, seconded by Mr. Jacobs and unanimously carried to meet on April 22, 2009, 7 PM at the Wantage Municipal Building.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSIONERS

Mr. Snook noted that the April 22 meeting must include review and acceptance of any remaining reports, along with development of the final report. The meeting notice and purpose will be sent out following the April 1 meeting.

OPEN PUBLIC SESSION

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

Jim Doherty, Wantage resident and Township Administrator, clarified that health benefits for retirees were part of the 2001 union contract and negotiated out of the contract in 2006; instead, employees with 25 years of service and retiring after age 65 receive \$2000 per year. Only three retirees met the requirement. From a taxpayer standpoint, it would be better if the new consolidated community did not offer this. He noted that he sees Civil Service from different points of view as an administrator and a taxpayer, and he recommended that the commissioners carefully consider the various viewpoints. He urged that all recommendations be based on the best option and not on what commissioners think the voters will approve.

Bill Gettler, Wantage resident, stated that the revised DCA report confirmed his analysis. He asked if the revised report was available to the public. Mr. Snook stated that it would be made available after the next meeting when the commissioners had studied and approved it.

Kathy Little, Sussex resident, suggested that the salaries in the workload report weren't realistic because employees taking on additional responsibilities would want more money. She recommended that the costs of mapping and changing signs be added to the transition costs.

Chris Parrott, Sussex resident and Mayor, expressed support for four-year terms in that contacts from the state, League of Municipalities and other organizations are very helpful and it takes time to develop those contacts.

With no other members of the public wishing to speak, it was moved by Ms. Hosking, seconded by Mr. Lagattuta and unanimously carried to close the public session and return to the regular order of business.

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 9:40 PM.

Lee Abbott, Secretary