

**MINUTES OF THE JOINT CONSOLIDATION STUDY COMMISSION OF WANTAGE
TOWNSHIP AND SUSSEX BOROUGH,
HELD AT THE WANTAGE TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL BUILDING
ON APRIL 1, 2009**

CALL TO ORDER

Commission Chairman Earl Snook called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM, and requested Secretary Lee Abbott to call the roll. Upon roll call, the following members of the Commission were present:

E. Snook, W. Dunn, S. Hosking, A. Jacobs and E. Meyer. C. McKay arrived at 7:08 and G. Kresge arrived at 7:30. S. Lagattuta arrived shortly after the meeting was adjourned. P. Flynn and A. Little were absent. Lacking a quorum, the Commission met for discussion only, taking no official action.

Also present: G. Fehrenbach, consultant 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."

REVIEW OF MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Consolidation Study Commission of Wantage Township and Sussex Borough held on March 4, 2009 were reviewed. Those present had no additions or changes.

OLD BUSINESS

Letter to Local Finance Board - The secretary read the response received from the Division of Local Government Services. In summary:

1. If consolidation is recommended and approved, the new consolidated municipality would be permitted to continue to provide funding to the volunteer fire departments equal to the current amount provided by the two separate municipalities.
2. The volunteer companies relying on contributions from the municipalities would not receive a reduced amount unless subsequently determined by a future governing body.
3. The new consolidated municipality would be allowed to increase financial support to the maximum amount allowable as if the municipalities were separate.
4. This decision is consistent with the statutory purpose of NJSA40A:65-25.

In addition, the letter confirmed that the length of service programs (LOSAP) could continue without change if the municipalities consolidated, and no new ballot question would be required.

Subcommittee Reports - Mr. Snook emphasized the time pressures and asked that the following subcommittee reports be provided to him and Mr. Lagattuta no later than the following week. They plan to have a draft report ready for review at the April 22 meeting. Mr. McKay offered to help. The final report itself will be brief, and with the various specific reports included as attachments.

Administration - Variations for Existing State Laws / Department Rules. Ms. Hosking has also prepared and distributed a Form of Government summary.

Planning / Zoning - Use of Advisory Planning Districts; the report has been prepared and was to have been presented at this meeting. Due to a family emergency, Ms. Flynn was unable to make the presentation.

Public Safety - Establishment of Service Districts; the report was e-mailed prior to the meeting.

Public Works & Water / Sewer Utilities - Transfer of Property / Assets: Mr. Dunn has drafted a report that will be distributed after discussion with Mr. Little.

There was discussion related to the delineation of future sewer services area in Wantage Township. Wantage and the County have agreed on sewer service areas, but the Department of Environmental Protection has a series of requirements that must be satisfied. There is a deadline for agreement, completely separate from the consolidation issue. Without agreement, application would have to be made on a case by case basis. Mr. Snook stated that this issue should be included in the consolidation report, so that the new community (if recommended and approved) would be aware of the situation. Mr. Dunn and Mr. Meyer will follow up with their communities.

Finance - Apportionment of Debt: the report will be distributed soon and will include a process for issuing more debt during the interim.

Fiscal Aspects of Consolidation - There were no specific questions regarding the revised report. Mr. Fehrenbach distributed graphic analyses of Sussex and Wantage revenue and expenditures from 2004 through 2008.

Form of Final Report - Mr. Fehrenbach is developing a list of specific items to include in the report. The concerns (very critical or critical) raised by the public at the October 8, 2008 meeting must be addressed. It is hard to find the balance between a reader-friendly report and sufficient detail. Mr. Fehrenbach will not be at the April 22 meeting, Mr. Burkholder will be attending. Both will be away between April 10 and 17.

The following suggestions for the final report were discussed:

- Recommendations
- Reasons
- Critical issues
- What the new community would look like
- Topics presented as answers to questions

Mr. Fehrenbach is developing a list of reports to be attachments.

Transitional Costs - the list of needs and wants for consolidation is being assembled. The requests for transition funding should be submitted to the state no later than April 15. Estimated costs should be included.

Sussex Re-evaluation - Mr. Snook reported that Sussex re-evaluation cannot be done before 2012--the state is booked up until then.

Special Meeting - the draft report will be reviewed at the special meeting on April 22. The meeting will be held at 7 PM at Sussex Borough Hall. This meeting is in addition to the previously scheduled meeting on April 29.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSIONERS

There were no additional comments.

OPEN PUBLIC SESSION

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

Bill Gettler, Wantage resident, noted that the *Herald* listed this meeting in Wantage; Mr. Snook stated that the original schedule given to the *Herald* had the meeting in Sussex. Mr. Gettler asked if there was any substance to previous claims that the State would provide funds for debt reduction if consolidation is approved. Mr. Snook indicated that a letter would be sent to Marc Pfeiffer at the DCA regarding the issue. Mr. Gettler stated that he is reworking the numbers using 2009 Sussex and Wantage budgets. He provided copies to the members of the Commission. Data from the schools is not included.

Jim Doherty, Wantage resident and Township Administrator, commended the Commission on staying within the budget. He reminded members to save receipts and submit expenses.

With no further comments from the public, it was moved by Ms. Hosking, seconded by Mr. Jacobs and unanimously carried to close the session to the public.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr. Snook declared this meeting to be adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Lee Abbott, Secretary