

SUSSEX-WANTAGE

One Community

One Government

WHAT DID THE COMMISSION DO?

- Held 19 meetings over an 11 month period
- Conducted 16 studies encompassing all issues regarding consolidation
- Met with Local, County, School, and State Officials on various matters
- Looked at other towns who previously did consolidation studies
- Published our findings in a 200 page report
- Recommended by majority vote that a vote on consolidation should be forwarded to the people of Sussex and Wantage for final consideration



WHAT WERE OUR RECOMMENDATIONS?

- The name of the new town would be Sussex-Wantage
- New government should be council-manager form with separately elected mayor and 6 council members elected at-large
- The new government would be installed on Jan. 1, 2011
- The new township's laws would be a combination of the existing laws of both present municipalities
- The master plans of both municipalities should be combined and harmonized
- The new town should not operate under Civil Service



WHAT WERE OUR RECOMMENDATIONS? (CONTINUED)

- Municipal debt would be combined
- All real property of both towns would be combined.
- The K-8 school district would become a unified Type II district with all board members elected at-large.
- The 9-12 school district would have a combined membership from Wantage and Sussex elected at-large
- The fire departments and EMS service areas would remain the same and funding levels would be maintained



HOW ARE WE ALREADY ACTING AS ONE COMMUNITY?

- Schools, Post Office, and Library are shared
- Children's sports programs are shared
- Fire and EMS services share coverage
- Shopping is shared
- Churches are shared
- Social organizations – Rotary, Kiwanis, etc.
- Government agencies are shared
 - Courts
 - Housing inspections
 - Tax assessment
 - Animal control



HOW ARE WE DIFFERENT?

- A Boundary line set in 1898
- Our elected governments
- Our Departments of Public Works
- Our ordinances
- Sussex more urban, Wantage more rural



WHY CONSOLIDATE?

- Cost Savings - lower municipal taxes
- Eliminate artificial borders – allow the single community of Sussex and Wantage to be governed by a single more efficient municipal government
- Decide our own fate
- Provide for smart and controlled growth
- Take advantage of incentives offered by State
- Make history



IF SERVICES ARE PRESENTLY SHARED, WHY CONSOLIDATE?

- Presently does not mean forever
- Has only occurred during the last 10 years
- Contracts need to be renewed
- Either party can stop the shared services at the end of the contract period
- Success of shared services is an indicator of the benefits of consolidation to both towns



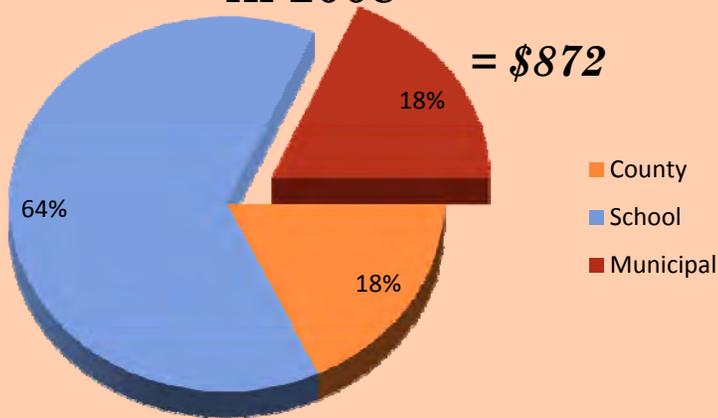
WHY WOULD A PERSON VOTE NO?

- Fear of Change (False Evidence Appearing Real)
- Loss of local identity and history
- Small town feel of Sussex; rural feel of Wantage
- Individual town services
- Assimilation of different types of people
(sense of elitism)
- Emotional decision making
- Short term gains over long term values
- Apathy
- Distrust of government
- Loss of personal, financial, or political situation



ANALYSIS OF TAXES PAID IN 2008

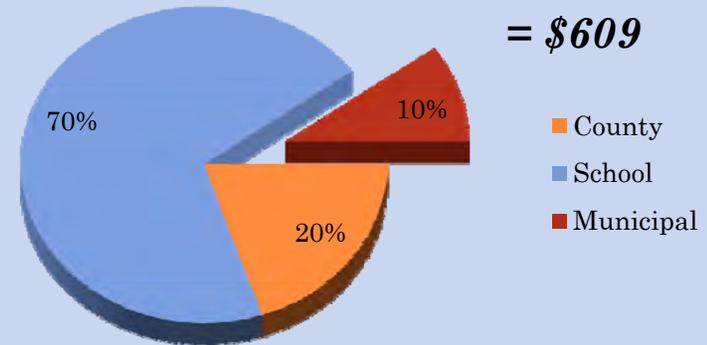
Breakdown of Where Taxes Went for Average Sussex Borough Taxpayer in 2008



Total Average Taxpayer Taxes = **\$4,730**

Based upon 2008 Data and Average **Assessed** Value = \$115,822

Breakdown of Where Taxes Went for Average Wantage Township Taxpayer in 2008



Total Average Taxpayer Taxes = **\$6,071**

Based upon 2008 Data and Average **Assessed** Value = \$320,326.
(Data excludes Municipal Open Space Tax unique to Wantage)



PROJECTED TAX SAVINGS AFTER CONSOLIDATION



*Sussex Borough 2008
Municipal Tax Levy = \$600,454*



*Wantage Township 2008 Municipal
Tax Levy = \$2,752,555*



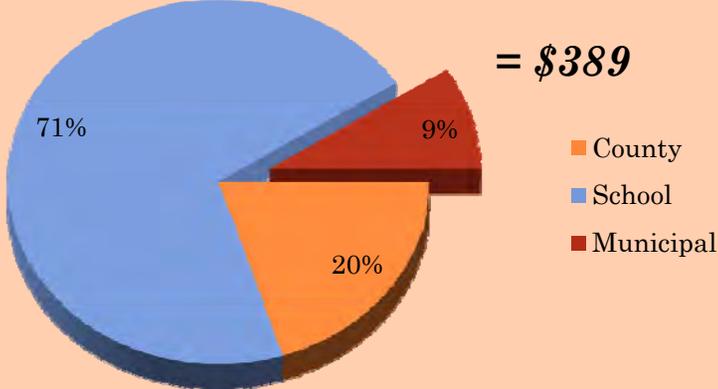
*Projected Consolidated Municipal Tax
Levy = \$2,767,984*

**Savings =
\$585,025**



PROJECTED TAX SAVINGS AFTER CONSOLIDATION

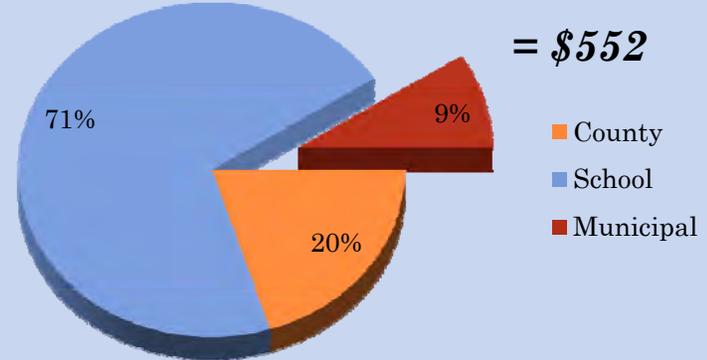
Anticipated Taxes for former Average Sussex Borough Taxpayer in Consolidated Municipality (With Projected Savings)



Total Projected Taxpayer Taxes = \$4,245

\$872 - \$389 = \$483 Savings

Anticipated Taxes for former Average Wantage Township Taxpayer in Consolidated Municipality (With Projected Savings)



Total Average Taxpayer Taxes = \$6,033

\$609 - \$552 = \$57 Savings



SUMMARY OF EFFECTS ON TAXES?

- School and County taxes are separate and not in our control, but otherwise would be unaffected by consolidation
- The Study projects that \$585,025 in savings are possible. If the new government somehow fails to provide any such savings, there would be:
 - Sussex: \$402 decrease in municipal taxes
 - Wantage : \$67 increase in municipal taxes that would be offset fully by a Tax Credit issued by State for as long as the original homeowner remains in that residence.



HOW COME WANTAGE SAVES LESS THAN SUSSEX?

- Sussex presently pays Wantage for shared services. These fees would no longer be paid directly but would be collected instead through municipal tax.
- Wantage taxpayers are already paying a smaller proportion of their total taxes for municipal government.
- There is significant disparity between Sussex and Wantage as far as number of residents and total assessed value. This disparity has a magnifying effect for Sussex.



WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO OUR HOME INSURANCE?

- Presently, Sussex has a better insurance rating than Wantage because of the fire hydrants in the Borough.
- According to insurance industry papers, the ratings for Sussex is about a 5.5, Wantage is a 9. 10 is the worst rating to have.
- New town would have a new combined rating



WHAT IS THE STATE DOING FOR US?

- Over \$50,000 given to help us conduct the Study.
- A state DCA consultant has been assigned to us for a year to help with the study.
- Giving \$250,000 for transition costs
- If consolidation is approved:

A – Each homeowner will receive a tax credit for any tax increase due to consolidation for as long as that person owns the house.

or

B – The new town will get \$500,000 to defray debt costs or any one time expenses (if there are no tax increases



WHAT ABOUT A POLICE FORCE AND FIRE PROTECTION?

- Everything would stay as it is with the State Police.
- Future officials could study what possible options the new town can do for police protection: none, it's own force, regional force, shared service with other town.
- Everything would stay as it is with Fire protection.
- Funding for Fire Depts would also remain as it is.



WHAT ABOUT CRIME IN SUSSEX AND WANTAGE?

- 2008 statistics:

○	Sussex	Wantage
○ Murder	0	0
○ Rape	0	1
○ Robbery	1	0
○ Assault	5	5
○ Burglary	8	29
○ Larceny	34	71
○ Car theft	2	7
○ Total	50	113



WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO OUR SCHOOLS?

- Sussex-Wantage Regional school district will become the unified Sussex-Wantage School District.
- BOE members would be elected at large.
- For High Point HS, the present number of board members from Sussex and Wantage would be combined and elected at large. Everything else stays the same.



WHAT ABOUT DEBT PAYMENTS?

- Both towns have similar debt ratio, so there would be very little change in debt service payments if we consolidate.
- One town would not be burdened by the others debt service.
- The utilities are self-liquidating and not part of the debt service.



HOW ABOUT THE UTILITIES?

- The water and sewer utilities presently existing in Sussex would be overseen by the new town.
- They are paid by the users only, not through taxes.
- Increased water service can be provided where feasible in the new town according to the amount of usable water in Lake Rutherford.
- Increased sewer service can be developed according to the State approved waste water plans for Sussex and Wantage.
- Increased users to both utilities should stabilize or even reduce fees presently charged.



HOW ABOUT THE UTILITIES? (CONTINUED)

- Sussex has already addressed sewer and water repairs for the future.
- Obtained \$2 Million in grants and loans
- Total cost - \$50 per user per year.
- Taxes do not pay for this – either consolidated or separate.



WHEN THE TOWNS CONSOLIDATE, WILL PEOPLE LOSE THEIR JOBS?

- State required positions (elected and non-elected) in both towns would be consolidated from 18 to 11.
- Consolidated town officials would have to see what personnel would be needed from both towns to fill the needs of the new consolidated town.
- There could be some savings due to retirements and combining duplicated positions.
- Some people working in present positions might work in a different position.
- One of the reasons for consolidation is to save money by becoming more efficient.



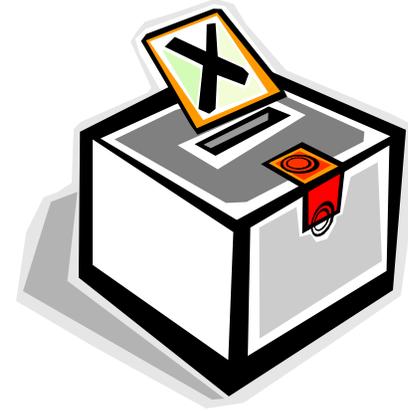
DID THE COMMISSIONERS AGREE ON EVERYTHING?

- No – there were several issues that were decided by majority vote.
- Many issues and reports were accepted by unanimous vote.
- Final vote for consolidation was done by majority vote with one person voting no.



WHEN DO WE VOTE?

- At the regular Nov. 3 election.
- There will be 2 questions:
 - 1 – Should we consolidate
 - 2 – Should the new town's employees be governed by Civil Service statutes.
- Question #1 needs a majority vote in BOTH towns in order for it to be approved.
- Question #2 only becomes valid if there is a positive vote in both towns on question #1. A universal majority vote is only needed.



WHAT HAPPENS IF THE VOTE IS NEGATIVE?

- Everything stays the same in both towns.
- The issues that exist in both towns will also stay the same.
- Sussex will look to expand the users of its utilities to what best suits the Boro.
- Wantage might not receive State approval for its revised waste water management plan.
- It could be more difficult to stabilize municipal tax increases in both towns in the future.
- The State could force all towns similar to Sussex and Wantage to consolidate without any aid at all in the near future.



WHAT WOULD THE CONSOLIDATION COMMISSIONERS WANT?

- Understand the facts and issues.
- Separate emotions from objectivity.
- Discuss this with your neighbors and friends.
- Don't get mad at others if they have different opinions than yourself.
- Don't let political agendas of others interfere with your decision.
- Honestly vote what you believe is right.
- Accept the results of the outcome of the vote.



THANK YOU.