

**Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council
Organizational Meeting Minutes
Meeting #1 - August 17th, 2023
New Kensington City Hall**

Attendees (D-Delegate, A-Alternate)

AK IGC: Matt Grantz (D-West Leechburg), Tom Guzzo (D-New Kensington), Adam Zweig (A-Arnold), Deborah Vernon (Arnold), George Hawdon (D-Arnold), Barbara Sharp (D-East Vandergrift), Kristen Sarno (A-East Vandergrift), Jody Sarno (D-Vandergrift), Marilee Kessler (A-Vandergrift), Missy Cortileso (D-Upper Burrell), John Andrejczik (D-Lower Burrell), Mike Kornis (D-Allegheny Township)

Westmoreland County Planning: Jillian Caswell, Victoria Baur

Guests: Jill Cooper (District 55), Jarrod D'Amico (Harshman CE Group), Daci Szarell (Harshman CE Group), Dave Coldren (KLH), Kelly Krider (KLH), John Trant (Strategic Solutions), Patrick Kelly (Strategic Solutions), Chelsea Puff (Strategic Solutions)

Public: None

Meeting started at 5:01 PM.

1. Review/approve minutes from Meeting 11

A motion was made by George and seconded by Missy to approve the Meeting 11 minutes. The Meeting 11 minutes were approved.

2. AK IGC Year 3

- a. Approve Dues Schedule**
- b. Affirm/select Delegate/Alternates and Office positions**
- c. Year 3 agreements to be distributed after meeting**

Victoria noted that the group discussed the year 3 dues at the last meeting. The proposed dues were revised to reflect feedback to incorporate virtual meetings every other month. Victoria noted that the dues were reduced slightly with this change and that no additional feedback was received. Victoria asked for any feedback at this time. No additional feedback was provided.

Victoria noted that six out of the eight communities were present and a simple majority vote was all that was all that was needed to approve the dues schedule. She said approval of the dues schedule was needed in order to proceed with the year 3 cooperation agreement.

Tom asked for a motion to approve the proposed year 3 dues schedule. Missy made a motion which was seconded by George. The motion passed with a formal roll call majority vote of 6/8.

Victoria thanked members for their work in approving the dues schedule and continuing to partner with the county to support the AK IGC. She noted that year 3 agreements would be distributed after the meeting and that the group would follow the same agreement process as usual.

3. AK IGC Blight Inventory and Plan

a. Agreement status

Victoria shared that the AK IGC blight project agreements had been received by New Kensington, West Leechburg, East Vandergrift, and Vandergrift. She noted that Arnold approved the agreement last week and that Allegheny Township indicated this was on their most recent agenda for approval. She thanked the group for their work in seeing the agreements through to completion.

b. LGA Resolution

Victoria reminded the participating communities about their obligation to adopt the resolution provided by the Local Government Academy (LGA). She said communities participating in the regional blight project were asked to review and agree to the eligibility criteria in the LGA scope of work and adopt the LGA resolution, in order to receive the market component of the project - provided by LGA. Victoria said she would provide a reminder to communities.

c. Kick-off meeting tentative September

4. Shared code enforcement

a. Third party provider presentations & Q&A

Tom and Victoria introduced and thanked the third party companies for attending. Everyone thanked George for his work in contacting/coordinating the presenters. Each company provided a brief presentation about their services, experience, and answered questions from members. Materials provided by members can be found online [here](#).

Tom asked members to reflect on the information provided by the companies and to send any additional questions along to Victoria. Victoria said she could compile questions and forward to the companies to follow-up on. She said that the needs are different from each community so discussing and sharing this information with fellow council members and supervisors is important.

George pointed at that not every community is looking for only property maintenance code support. He said to keep this in mind when reviewing materials from the companies. He also noted that each company indicated they were willing to negotiate their rates, based on the group's interest.

i. Harshman CE Group

Jarrold D'Amico, Director of Codes and Zoning provided background information on Harshman CE Group - a civil engineering firm based out of Washington, PA. They work in a variety of areas from building codes to code enforcement and represent 22 communities.

Jarrold explained that their approach to code enforcement is more reactive and complaint-based. They document everything through photographs obtained from the right-of-way and they use a proprietary digitized system to keep track of violations. He explained that they do not currently have a client portal for people to view items in their system.

Harshman's method of communication with municipal clients is through a municipal contact or point person. Jarrold said that harshman is able to communicate with a municipal client before violations go out - to ensure the community's money is being spent where they want it. He

explained that they are able to provide monthly reports to clients, providing updates on violations/cases and what work was completed. They also provide copies of violation letters to the municipality for their records. He noted that Harshman is experienced in enforcing the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC).

Jarrold said Harshman works by 6-month agreements, bills by the hour, and is open to negotiating rates with a group of municipalities. He also explained that they have experience working with municipalities that have very limited budgets. Jarrold added that, although they are not interested in additional office space, their employees are capable of working remotely and can plug in or work from a municipality's office if needed.

Adam shared that he deals with Harshman CE Group in a different capacity through his job and spoke highly of their level of professionalism.

ii. KLH Engineers Inc

David Coldren, Vice President provided background information on KLH Engineers Inc. - a full service engineering firm specializing in municipal water and sewer, zoning, and code enforcement services. They are based out of Robinson Township and have satellite offices in Canonsburg and West Mifflin.

Kerry Krider, Senior Project Manager said their approach to code enforcement is more proactive and less reactive. He explained that KLH recently acquired new software and they use this to track and issue violations. KLH communicates to clients via a point of contact and is able to provide reporting at the request of the client.

Kerry explained that they are able to work as little or as much in a community, based on the community's needs and wants - there is no minimum number of hours per month. He noted that KLH has experience working with existing code enforcement officers to support their work or divide responsibilities. He indicated they have sufficient staff to prioritize issues and respond accordingly, depending on the issue or hazard at hand.

Kerry noted that if multiple Alle-Kiski communities are interested in their services, rates can be negotiated to reflect bulk costs savings and an arrangement can be made to work out of an office based in the Alle-Kiski region, which would reduce the cost of mileage.

iii. Strategic Solutions

John Trant, President provided an overview of Strategic Solutions, their services, experience, and introduced their team. Strategic Solutions is a Pittsburgh-based consulting firm that focuses on community planning, zoning, and code enforcement issues for public sector clients.

John explained that their approach to code enforcement is a mix of both proactive and reactive. He said they have experience working with communities with a blend of both borough/township codes and the IPMC. They are able to work alongside existing code enforcement software or can help communities implement a microsoft-based system. He explained that information is always housed on the municipality's system. He added that they can work with existing code

enforcement officers and are flexible in supporting a community's code enforcement program with what is most needed by the community.

Patrick Kelly, Code Enforcement Officer pointed out that their violation letters are short and to the point. He also stressed that Strategic Solutions does a lot of community outreach and relationship building - as this is important for an effective code enforcement program. They are able to provide reporting to clients to see what work was completed.

Chelsea Puff, Project Manager explained that in addition to supporting or improving code enforcement, they are able to help update a community's codes, ordinances, and processes. She noted that expectations are discussed up front for what services are provided.

John noted that they are able to work with communities on an as needed basis or more and that there isn't a minimum number of hours that are required. He said communities pay for what they use and that they are willing to negotiate a discounted rate if multiple communities from the Alle-Kiski are interested in their services.

Missy asked about the effectiveness of their violation letters and expressed frustration over the lengthy legal process - from violation to action, it can take a long time to see any change. John and his team noted that although not much can be done to change the legal process, Strategic Solutions is able to take steps prior to citations to help yield a better result. This includes talking with residents, educating people about available resources, and providing property owners with contact information to lead them to action.

Jody asked if Strategic Solutions could provide their cost of services or hourly rate. Victoria noted she could upload Strategic Solution's materials to the shared Google Drive folder and ask Strategic Solutions for their standard rate of service to share.

~~iv.~~—Code Enforcement Agency (CEA)

George noted that CEA pulled out of the presentations prior to the meeting.

5. Next AK IGC meeting date: Thursday, September 21st, 2023 @5pm

Tom reminded the group of the next meeting date and noted that this will be a virtual meeting. Victoria said she would send additional reminders and that Westmoreland County Planning staff would be available to trouble shoot and support members on Google Meet.

Victoria noted that Marilee reached out and asked if the virtual meetings would be recorded and made available to the public. Victoria asked if members had any interest in recording the virtual meetings - she noted that an audio version of every meeting is recorded for the purpose of meeting minutes and that this could remain the same for virtual meetings. The group discussed and determined that virtual meetings would only be recorded for the purpose of meeting minutes and not published online.

Victoria reminded the group that all meetings are public, including virtual ones. She suggested that virtual meetings may be a good opportunity to get fellow council members and supervisors interested and involved in AK IGC meetings.

6. Public comment

None.

Other Discussion

Tom introduced Representative Jill Cooper. She noted that she serves District 55, which includes several Alle-Kiski communities. She thanked the group for letting her sit in on the meeting and said she is interested in learning more about what the communities are working on.

George reminded the group that Arnold will be voting to adopt the [OSFC volunteer tax credit incentive program](#) at their regular meeting on September 12th. He noted that he would like to see other Alle-Kiski communities do the same thing, as volunteer firefighters work and live across municipal boundaries. He explained that it will be a stronger program and volunteers will benefit the most if all communities participate in the program. George asked for members to attend the meeting and show support for the program. John asked for George to share this information as a follow-up.

7. Adjournment

A motion was made by Tom and seconded by Missy to adjourn the meeting. The meeting ended at 6:23 PM.