

## **Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council Meeting Minutes**

### **Meeting #3**

**October 21, 2021**

**New Kensington City Hall**

#### **Attendees**

**AK IGC:** George Hawdon (D-Arnold), Dennis Scarpiniti (A-New Kensington), Tom Guzzo (D-New Kensington), Ren Steele (D-Allegheny Township), Kathy Starr (A-Allegheny Township), John Andrejczik (Lower Burrell), Kristen Sarno (A-East Vandergrift), Barbara Sharp (D-East Vandergrift), Matt Grantz (West Leechburg), Mike Conley (A-Upper Burrell Township), Melissa Cortilesio (D-Upper Burrell Township),

(D-Delegate, A-Alternate)

**Westmoreland County Planning:** Kristi Mitchell, Victoria Baur

**Public:** None

Meeting started at 5:04 PM.

Tom called the meeting to order and asked for everyone to introduce themselves. Tom then confirmed that everyone had a chance to review the meeting #2 minutes and asked if there were any questions or concerns. John asked about the process for taking meeting minutes as he was tasked by Amy to fill in in Amy's absence. Victoria clarified that county staff would record and take detailed notes to be reviewed by the secretary after each meeting. A motion was made by Melissa to approve the minutes and it was seconded by Ren. Meeting #2 minutes were approved.

Tom then opened the floor for the group to finish the discussion of the year 1 long-term and short-term goals of the IGC.

Kathy brought up the importance of identifying the region's niche, highlighting the Alle-Kiski's history in the tool and die industry as well as assets such as parks, trails, and cultural attractions through marketing, in order to attract visitors and residents.

Ren added that the region has a lot of potential for tourism, noting the major assets such as proximity to the river and opportunities to improve and expand trail systems including the Rough Diamond Trail. Ren also pointed out the importance

*of having a united front in messaging and marketing the Alle-Kiski as a region. Tom noted that the Alle-Kiski region acts as the gateway to the Laurel Highlands.*

*Dennis suggested marketing materials such as maps and brochures as one way to welcome visitors and highlight the region's assets. Dennis also brought up looking into the county's hotel tax program for tourism, as the Laurel Highlands has seen success with this. Victoria confirmed that the program was developed by the commissioners but was uncertain of its specifics (she will follow-up with information about the program). The group discussed whether the Alle-Kiski could benefit from the program with current limited lodging available.*

*Ren mentioned that there are still existing tool and die shops in operation such as Penn United, Oberg Industries, and Compositie, Inc. John brought up the close proximity to Pittsburgh and how the region could be known as the foothills of the Alleghenies.*

*Ren talked about the effort to buy the Kiski Junction Railroad bridge, which would allow a trail to be built up to Kittanning and beyond, providing access to more recreation. John added that trout fishing is another great amenity of the region and Pennsylvania, with more miles of trout waters than any other state in the US. Victoria recapped that the group's first long-term goal is to establish a niche and marketing initiative for the Alle-Kiski region.*

*Tom transitioned the discussion to the short-term goals for year 1, noting that identifying opportunities for shared services, joint purchasing, and shared use of vehicles and heavy equipment had already been identified. Tom then brought up the topic of garbage collection and exploring opportunities for one hauler for all communities.*

*Ren added that recycling is a big component when selecting a hauler and that using one hauler would reduce the amount of truck traffic within each community. Kathy talked about how Allegheny Township previously looked into using one hauler (at the time, they had 5-6 haulers) and that Republic with the Municipality of Murrysville appeared to be the best service program available.*

*Kathy stressed the importance of establishing a recycling program that people want to sign up for, but do not feel obligated to participate, but that some haulers*

won't work with communities that don't have an ordinance in place requiring all residents to recycle.

George brought up that the benefit to having a municipality-operated service is more accountability and that the municipality can handle issues directly, rather than relying on a third party. George added that the challenge with providing this type of service directly is that when personnel limitations arise, any short term services needed from another collector can be very expensive. Melissa talked about how each community's needs are different and that this should be considered.

Kathy suggested creating a wish list of items of an ideal hauler and sending out an RFP. The group discussed that WEDIG explored establishing a recycling center in New Kensington, but coordinating next steps on where to send items after collection proved to be challenging.

Victoria summarized that exploring opportunities for regional garbage collection and recycling was in line with the group's already identified short-term goal and that the shared services survey might also provide insight on this topic.

Tom introduced the next potential short-term goal of identifying vacant and available properties to market, which was discussed at the last meeting. Tom also brought up the short-term goals of transit improvements using data collected during the AKPD mobility planning steps as well as exploring opportunities for joint code enforcement.

The group discussed the benefits of utilizing a joint code enforcement officer across communities. George talked about the struggles to keep up with code violations and said that a shared services agreement between communities would help alleviate the challenges that come with code enforcement.

Barb suggested that shared code enforcement staff would have to be well-rounded to work across the different communities and coordination would have to be clear. The group discussed the need for an agreement between municipalities to spell out the details of this type of arrangement and authority.

Kathy suggested the group look into opportunities through the Westmoreland County Land Bank. The group discussed that some municipalities already participate in the Land Bank. Victoria noted that Brian Lawrence with the

*Redevelopment Authority and Land Bank would be more than happy to discuss options as a group or individually.*

*Kristen brought up that those municipalities that are interested in shared code enforcement should consider coordinating their codes. The group discussed the value of working under the same set of codes. Dennis suggested finding a funding source to hire a shared code enforcement officer.*

*Tom transitioned the group to briefly review the draft shared services/purchasing survey. Victoria confirmed that the survey will be online and will be distributed via email after the draft is finalized. Victoria explained that the survey was divided into two sections: services and purchasing, and asked for confirmation on who should be completing each section. Tom confirmed that the manager or clerk of each municipality would be the best point of contact to complete the survey.*

*Dennis suggested adding a storm sewer camera to the list of small equipment, as this is something that New Kensington does not have but could use. John added that they recently purchased a new camera for \$85,000. Ren mentioned that they occasionally borrow Lower Burrell's camera.*

*Dennis also suggested that a drone could be added to the list of small equipment or as a shared service from a local contractor because communities could use this to look at property conditions. John and Tom suggested looking into the New Kensington-based drone business, Eye-bot.*

*The group discussed the lack of options for animal control and that Hoffman Kennels is the only contractor in the area. Victoria asked if piggybacking on contracts was an option. Victoria pointed out that the shared services section of the survey is intended to extract the shared service priorities and challenges out of the group to see where issues and opportunities line up to take next steps. Tom suggested changing the number of top shared service priorities to top four instead of three.*

*Victoria asked for feedback on the purchasing section of the survey. Tom noted that small equipment may not be as important to explore joint purchasing opportunities, unless the small equipment is expensive. Tom and John mentioned that many communities are already sharing small to large equipment and that there would be value in having an inventory of these items, their location, and point*

*of contact. Matt agreed that having an inventory of equipment would be valuable as not everyone is aware of what equipment each municipality has.*

*Victoria asked if municipalities maintain inventories of equipment. The group confirmed that they do and that they would be able to provide this information to create a larger inventory.*

*Victoria asked the group if they had interest in pursuing joint purchasing of technology like computers or bulk office supplies like paper or ink. Tom said he didn't think the smaller items had value. John suggested that the smaller items like technology and office supplies should be included in the survey because there could be opportunities for cost savings. Victoria noted that feedback would be incorporated into the survey.*

*Dennis brought up that communities can use COSTARS, the cooperative purchasing program, to piggyback on prices and contracts to purchase equipment and supplies. Members mentioned that they have had success purchasing an array of items such as playground equipment, trucks, police vehicles, and street sweepers using this program.*

*Tom introduced that the county commissioners are hosting a public hearing on October 28th at WCCC in Youngwood to obtain feedback on how the county should utilize ARPA funds. George brought up that funds should be allocated equally to municipalities. Tom suggested that anyone with comments should register or submit comments accordingly.*

*Tom noted that the next meeting will be on November 18th. Tom also asked if there were any further questions or comments.*

*Victoria brought up that Kristen suggested a contact list of AK IGC members. Victoria will circulate a contact list for the good of the group by the next meeting.*

*Tom asked for a motion to adjourn, a motion was made by Melissa and seconded by Ren.*

*Meeting ended at 6:04 PM.*