

Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council
Regular Meeting Minutes
Meeting #3 - October 20, 2022
New Kensington City Hall

Attendees *(D-Delegate, A-Alternate)*

AK IGC: John Andrejczik (D-Lower Burrell), Mark Marmo (Lower Burrell), Ren Steele (D-Allegheny Township), Mike Kornis (A-Allegheny Township), Lee Schumaker (Allegheny Township), George Hawdon (D-Arnold), Melissa Cortileso (D-Upper Burrell Township), Tom Guzzo (D-New Kensington), Dennis Scarpiniti (A-New Kensington), Patrick McGrath (New Kensington), Barbara Sharp (D-East Vandergrift Borough), Kristen Sarno (A-East Vandergrift Borough), Jody Sarno (D-Vandergrift Borough), Marilee Kessler (A-Vandergrift Borough), Daisha Clayton (Vandergrift Borough), Bryan Young (Vandergrift Borough), Matt Grantz (D-West Leechburg)

Westmoreland County Planning: Corey Block, Victoria Baur

Guests: Brian Lawrence (RACW)

Public: None

Meeting started at 5:00 PM.

Review/approve minutes from Meeting 2:

A motion was made by Melissa and seconded by George to approve the Meeting 2 minutes. The Meeting 2 minutes were approved.

Guest speaker returns, Brian Lawrence, RACW - discuss digitized code enforcement software:

Brian shared that the County Commissioners recently granted the RACW \$10.5 million in ARPA funds to eliminate blight in Qualified Census Tracts located in seven communities including New Kensington, Arnold, Vandergrift, Monessen, Jeannette, Greensburg, and Penn Borough. For this program, the RACW is working to create a Central Blight Database (CBD) to cull information from municipal partners regarding the location and severity of blight to help address it. The database will be partially fed from code enforcement software (CodePro) that the RACW has developed and is piloting with these seven communities.

Brian walked attendees through the CodePro software, showing how violations can easily be entered in the field. The value of the cloud-based software was highlighted with its ability to automatically update, include a virtual code book, run off of ordinance-based deadlines for follow-ups, help build a digitized property maintenance history, and relate other important information such as building plans and permits.

Brian asked if the software is a priority for AK IGC communities. He shared that the RACW hopes to make this software available to other communities in the future at an affordable rate. Cost savings may also be possible if interested AK IGC communities approach the RACW to purchase

the software as a group for a bulk rate. Brian also cited a County-led regional code enforcement program as a long term goal for the RACW.

Members discussed the value of the digitized software for code enforcement citing efficiency, easy record keeping, and better follow-ups. Patrick noted that New Kensington is already using a digitized system that helps them save time and streamline property information. Lee shared that Allegheny Township has recently purchased software to use for code enforcement that will also be tied to public works information.

Brian discussed the importance of adopting the most recent version of the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) to enhance code enforcement programs. The IPMC is a standard best practice, model ordinance, and uniform legal infrastructure for communities. The IPMC provides tools and authority to communities to enforce property maintenance codes and enhance communities. Bryan, Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) for Vandergrift Borough, suggested communities use adoption language that ensures that they are always following the most up-to-date version of the IPMC such as "The International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) latest edition is hereby adopted...".

Victoria asked what action the RACW needs to see from the AK IGC to instill confidence in their interest and commitment to purchasing CodePro at a bulk rate. Brian asked for members to tell the RACW that this is an important issue and the AK IGC communities are serious. Tom noted that the AK IGC is serious about regional solutions and believes code enforcement is a viable cause.

Victoria asked CEOs about their interest/appetite to share code enforcement services between communities. She noted that since the RACW's CodePro software may still be a few years out, members should be thinking about what the IGC can do now to address this issue and set communities up for success in the future, such as sharing current capacity, adopting the the current version of the IPMC, and engaging in a blight inventory and plan process.

George suggested that CEOs could meeting regularly to discuss and share information/challenges within the region. Members and CEOs discussed the value of meeting regularly. Patrick shared that some CEOs already meet and that this is useful for brainstorming and sharing experiences. Victoria noted that the Planning Division can help compile an AK IGC CEO contact list to encourage a regular AK region meeting for CEOs.

Brian noted that coordinating a CEO "roundtable" discussion and compiling resources for communities were two take-aways from the RACW's October Blight Plan event at WCCC. He added that the RACW plans to work with the Local Government Academy to develop a curriculum for CEO training that could be offered in the future. Training was cited as a critical element to help prevent staff turnover and to ensure quality enforcement of codes.

Melissa stressed the importance of figuring out a way for communities to speed up the process from violation to payment of fees, referencing lag time with the magistrate. Brian suggested the speed of this process can be enhanced by adopting and enforcing updated ordinances, working with local partners like the RACW, and initiating demo orders and conservatorships when needed. He referenced the City of Jeannette in their ability to nail down a 3-month process to demolish the worst of the worst types of structures.

AK IGC Bylaws - review/discuss proposed amendments:

The group determined this item would be carried-over to a later meeting date.

AK IGC Blight Inventory and Plan - review/discuss draft proposal:

The group determined this item would be carried-over to a later meeting date.

Next AK IGC meeting date: Thursday, November 17th, 2022 @ 5 PM - discuss agenda items for upcoming meeting (questions for guest speaker, Amanda Settelmaier, TCVCOG):

Victoria reminded the group that Amanda Settelmaier, Executive Director of the Turtle Creek Valley Council of Governments is planned to speak at the November 17th meeting to share information about creating a regional code enforcement program. She asked the group to think of and come prepared with questions for Amanda.

Tom reminded the group to send agenda items along in time for the next meeting.

Public comment:

None.

Other discussion:

Victoria thanked members for their timely submission of AK IGC second year agreements and dues. She noted that the agreement had been approved by the County Commissioners and that copies would be mailed out to each community soon.

Victoria reminded members about the Westmoreland Broadband initiative and shared flyers encouraging all of Westmoreland County to take an internet survey which will help determine where broadband investments are made throughout the County. She asked the group to take the survey at their homes and municipal buildings before the survey closes on October 31st.

Adjournment:

A motion was made by Tom and seconded by Jody to adjourn the meeting. The meeting ended at 6:12 PM.