

**Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**Meeting #3 - October 19th, 2023**  
**New Kensington City Hall**

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

**AK IGC:** Matt Grantz (D-West Leechburg), Melissa Cortilesio (D-Upper Burrell), Tom Guzzo (D-New Kensington), Jody Sarno (D-Vandergrift), Barbara Sharp (D-East Vandergrift), Dennis Scarpiniti (A-New Kensington), George Hawdon (D-Arnold), Mike Korn (D-Allegheny Township)

**Westmoreland County Planning:** Jillian Caswell, Victoria Baur

**Guests:** None **Public:** None

Meeting started at 5:05 PM.

**1. Review/approve minutes from Meeting 2**

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

**2. AK IGC Year 3**

**a. Agreement status**

Victoria shared that she has been checking individually with the municipalities that have not completed their year 3 agreements yet. Victoria mentioned that Vandergrift has confirmed they are currently following up on the approval of their agreement. Mike said that Allegheny Township's agreement has been approved and the county should receive it soon. Victoria noted that the county has received Lower Burrell's agreement but it was signed and not attested. The county has not received dues from Lower Burrell.

Victoria mentioned that if the county receives the remaining items by the end of October, the agreement would be approved by the Commissioners in November and fully executed copies would be provided to communities.

Victoria noted that the letter of interest drafted on behalf of the IGC was sent to the neighboring nonmember communities of Hyde Park Borough, Oklahoma Borough, and Washington Township. The intention of the letter was to remind nonmember communities of the purpose and interests of the IGC and invite them to attend upcoming meetings.

**b. Discuss shifting roles/responsibilities for self sufficiency**

Victoria reminded everyone that this was the third meeting of year 3 for the IGC. She asked the group if they were interested in working towards self-sufficiency throughout year 3. Victoria also asked the group if they were more interested in renewing the county's support for year 4 and slowly working toward self-sufficiency or having the county continue to serve in its capacity as facilitator, so long as this is feasible.

Tom shared that he felt there was an advantage to having the county as facilitator because it helps to encourage group members to remain involved. Tom suggested that when the county is

the driving force behind the group, it continues to give the group legitimacy and he feels that the county is good at keeping the group focused. George echoed these comments.

Jody agreed with Tom and mentioned that having a close connection to the county is part of the benefit of the group. He noted the mutual positives of communication and presence for the county and participating communities. Jody mentioned that an advantage to having less county support would be less costs but less costs would also mean less help with facilitation, minutes, and agendas.

Victoria responded that this role could potentially be filled by a volunteer. Victoria stated that no matter what direction the group goes, the county would be involved in some capacity. She explained this may entail the county not necessarily having a seat at the table but rather keeping tabs on the organization. Victoria reminded everyone that when the group first started, the intention was for county support to be temporary but there was no sunset date planned.

Mike mentioned that the group recently had a similar conversation regarding county support, and he did not think the IGC's opinion has changed. He added that municipal elections have consequences and if any members were to go away, it could change the structure of the group, including if the county is not still involved.

### **3. AK IGC Blight Inventory and Plan**

#### **a. Report/progress**

Jill briefly provided an overview of the Blight Kick-Off Meeting to the group. She explained that the kick-off meeting began with a project overview and transitioned into a review of project teams and their roles in communicating to communities. The Property Conditions Assessment Guide used in the field was also reviewed at the meeting and attendees were asked to think of any additional municipal datasets such as police incidents or code violations to include.

Victoria expanded upon the role of the project team by explaining to the group that communication will be important throughout the blight inventory process, especially with regard to safety. She noted that the planning team will be driving, walking, and stopping in front of homes to collect parcel-level data and that communication from participating communities to the public is essential.

Victoria noted that Arnold and New Kensington were not in attendance at the blight kick-off meeting and suggested the Planning Division may have separate one-on-one meetings with each community to discuss safety and communication before fieldwork begins in the spring.

Jill updated the group on the status of fieldwork. She noted that the planning team has been collecting data for a few weeks and that East Vandergrift and Vandergrift are complete. She also mentioned that Allegheny Township has been started and West Leechburg will be completed next week.

#### **b. LGA resolutions**

Victoria reminded Vandergrift and Arnold that LGA resolutions are still needed in order to receive the market component of the Alle-Kiski Blight Inventory Project.

#### **4. Shared code enforcement**

##### **a. Subcommittee check-in, report**

There was no subcommittee report. George said he provided a contact for MuniReg to Victoria, suggesting that the group consider hearing about their services at an upcoming meeting. Victoria said MuniReg is an organization that assists with property registration programs and that this could be of interest for the group in their efforts to mitigate blight. Victoria said she reached out to Michael Halpern, President of MuniReg, and he seemed willing to present at an upcoming meeting if the everyone had an interest.

Dennis mentioned that New Kensington has previously worked with MuniReg. He explained that they provide a list of foreclosed and vacant properties, which helps the City. The group agreed that they would be interested in hearing from Micheal at a future meeting.

##### **b. Discuss third party provider survey results**

Victoria shared the third party provider survey results - a tie between Strategic Solutions and Harshman CE Group. George mentioned that Arnold is temporarily using KLH but they would potentially be interested in Harshman in the future for other services. Mike said Allegheny Township is currently using KLH and they have been responsive but Allegheny Township would still be open to other companies in the future.

Barbara mentioned that Strategic Solutions is going to East Vandergrift next week to speak to their council about their services.

##### **c. Determine next steps**

Victoria asked the group what the next steps for shared code enforcement will be. She noted that the group previously discussed a follow-up meeting with the top company. Tom suggested that the group will discuss next steps after East Vandergrift meets with Strategic Solutions.

#### **5. Shared fire service subcommittee**

##### **a. Check-in, report**

##### **b. Tax incentive program**

There was no subcommittee report. George announced that Arnold is voting on the volunteer fire service tax incentive ordinance next week and offered to send a copy of their ordinance that includes a provision for reciprocity in other communities. Victoria said she could share this with the group in a follow-up email.

Mike suggested that the group consider participating in the volunteer fire service tax incentive program, if they aren't already doing so. Mike and George suggested that a simple change everyone's ordinance to make the ordinance reciprocal would help make sure that firefighters and emergency responders who are residents in neighboring communities can benefit. Members agreed that participating in the program is beneficial and that making the change for reciprocity is achievable.

Victoria shared the contact, Rob Brady, with Mike. She explained that he is a consultant that works in the areas of mergers and consolidations of fire service. She noted that he recently worked with

Hempfield Township to review their fire services as a part of their comprehensive plan update, and that he might be able to provide advice on shared fire service.

**6. Next AK IGC meeting date: Thursday November 16th, 2023 @ 5PM (virtual via google meet)**

**a. Discuss agenda items**

Victoria suggested that MuniReg attend the next meeting in November via Google Meet and the group agreed.

**7. Public comment**

None.

**Other Discussion**

Victoria suggested that the group complete a priority aspiration exercise to think about future goals for the IGC beyond what tasks are currently being worked on already. The exercise helped the group identify future goals, challenges, and ways to accomplish said goals.

The group briefly discussed the results from their exercise. Mike shared that his goal was shared MS4 projects for municipalities that are required to do them. Tom mentioned that a former organization, WeDig, took on a similar project that was successful in the past. The organization applied for a grant as a group and it benefited New Kensington, Arnold, Upper Burrell, and Lower Burrell.

Missy shared that her goal was shared police services. Victoria suggested the group could reach out to Terry Carcella, who played a significant role in the regionalization of the police force in Ligonier Township. Jody suggested that one community may be able to help a neighboring community with police services, even if they do not regionalize. Tom mentioned that contracts can be a major hurdle when trying to regionalize police services.

Tom shared that his goal was for the group to increase broadband capacity. Victoria suggested everyone encourage their residents to report any unserved or underserved locations through the Westmoreland Broadband program. Victoria further explained that the county is supporting internet service providers to improve broadband service to all identified unserved locations throughout the county, beyond the early action projects located in Ligonier, Fairfield, and Derry Townships.

Jody shared his goal was to maintain or grow the IGC's membership numbers. Tom suggested that the group can work towards Jody's goal by making individual visits to other communities to discuss the advantages and accomplishments of the IGC. Dennis suggested the mayor or chief official of a given community can help overcome the obstacle of changing council positions by appointing members of their council to serve on the IGC. Victoria encouraged group members to reach out to other communities and speak to them about the advantages.

**8. Adjournment**

A motion was made by Tom and seconded by Jody to adjourn the meeting. The meeting ended at 6:11 PM.