

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

### **Meeting #4**

**November 18, 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), Amy Rockwell (D-Lower Burrell), Kristen Sarno (A-East Vandergrift), Barbara Sharp (D-East Vandergrift), (D-Delegate, A-Alternate)*

**Westmoreland County Planning:** *Jason Rigone, Corey Block, Victoria Baur*

**Public:** *None*

*Meeting started at 5:01 PM.*

*Tom called the meeting to order. Tom then confirmed that everyone had a chance to review the meeting #3 minutes and asked if there were any questions or concerns. A motion was made by Ren to approve the minutes and it was seconded by Barbara. Meeting #3 minutes were approved.*

*Tom acknowledged the last-minute change to the meeting agenda – Brian Lawrence with the Westmoreland County Redevelopment Authority and Land Bank was not able to attend the meeting. Tom asked if the group could reschedule with Brian to attend and speak at the January meeting. Victoria confirmed that Brian would be rescheduled for January.*

*Tom then welcomed and introduced Jason Rigone, the Director of the Westmoreland County Department of Planning and Development. Tom thanked Jason for his time and support, working directly to improve the City of New Kensington and the larger Alle-Kiski region.*

*Tom transitioned the group's attention to the preliminary results from the shared services/joint purchasing survey. Victoria noted that the Planning Division would be preparing a summary of the survey results, once all responses are received, after some analysis and matchmaking of the responses.*

*Amy and Kristen confirmed that both Lower Burrell and East Vandergrift would be providing responses to the survey ASAP. A pdf version of the survey will be provided to East Vandergrift Borough for representatives to obtain consensus on answers before submitting an online response.*

*Kathy noted a correction to Allegheny Township's response to questions #29 and 30 – stating that Allegheny Township and Lower Burrell have jointly purchased an asphalt chipper. Both municipalities were able to jointly apply for a grant to make the large purchase. Amy noted that the asphalt chipper is stored and repaired at Allegheny Township, but that Lower Burrell purchases any needed parts for the machine. Both communities co-own the machine and have access to use it – but they make sure to coordinate and communicate efforts ahead of time.*

*Kathy mentioned that this purchase was made roughly two decades ago and that the idea excited a bit of skepticism from the public.*

*Amy noted that joint purchasing of large/heavy equipment isn't common. It is more common for a municipality to purchase equipment on its own, and then offer to share said equipment. When equipment is being borrowed, municipalities will send their respective operator of said equipment to ensure it is used appropriately. This arrangement is typically a mutual understanding and not indicated in an agreement or contract.*

*The group discussed and confirmed that they would be more likely to lend equipment out if they are able to send their operator with the equipment. The group also indicated that when they lend equipment and operators out to another municipality, they do not typically charge for their use.*

*Tom asked George if a revision needed to be made to Arnold's response for questions #1 and 2 – New Kensington and Arnold have a shared arrangement for police service and road and street repair/maintenance. George agreed.*

*Victoria asked that if any other responses needed to be revised, to please let her know during the meeting or to email her directly after. Victoria also noted that two responses were received by West Leechburg Borough and that she will be following-up with them to confirm which response to use.*

*The group reviewed and discussed survey responses. It was noted that there is some overlap in terms of top priorities and opportunities for shared services including emergency medical service, code enforcement, building inspection, and police. Tom noted that shared code enforcement would be a great way to show the value of working together.*

*Victoria asked the group if there was an interest in obtaining a list of equipment from each municipality's public works department to create an inventory. Kathy suggested that the list of equipment should only include items each municipality is willing to share. The group confirmed that each municipality would be willing to provide a list of equipment that they are willing to share with others, prior to the January 2022 meeting. The inventory of shareable equipment will be included in the summary of survey results.*

*Amy shared Lower Burrell's experience working with New Kensington to bid out and complete an asphalt paving project. Both communities had their own separate contract for paving service (contract A and B), but the project was under one scope of work. Because of this arrangement, both communities benefited from cost savings and a fair price – for example, only one advertisement had to be placed.*

*John pointed out that the municipal representatives of Allegheny Township, New Kensington, and Lower Burrell have a very unique, good working relationship and shared sense of responsibility that the AK IGC can work off of. The group discussed the importance of continuing to show up, work together, and get to know each other.*

*Jason praised the group for continuing to work together and highlighted the opportunity for municipalities that have paid administrative staff to be able to support the needs of and lift up the municipalities that may be lacking administrative staff and capacity – noting that there may be cost savings in doing so.*

*Victoria summarized that once additional responses are obtained, West Leechburgh's responses are clarified, and corrections are made to responses, a summary of the survey results will be prepared and shared at the January 2022 meeting. Municipalities will be contacted to provide a list of equipment they are*

*willing to share with others to be included in the summary prior to the January meeting.*

*Tom transitioned the conversation to revisit the discussion of the AK IGC goals and interests from the last meeting to ensure that they remain at the forefront of the group's mind. At the last meeting, the group indicated an interest in pursuing next steps in the following areas: marketing the Alle-Kiski region, options for regional recycling and waste services, creating a vacant/available commercial property list to market, and jointly using a code enforcement officer between interested communities.*

*George noted that Arnold needs a new garbage truck within the next 1-2 years. Tom asked if there is an opportunity for the group to assist with this purchase and/or to pursue a regional waste service arrangement. Tom suggested that Waste Management or another waste hauler should be invited to an AK IGC meeting to discuss opportunities in the future.*

*Kathy brought up her conversation with Vogel Disposal Service, Inc. – where it was indicated that they would not be able to provide service to the entire Alle-Kiski region due to a lack of manpower. Vogel suggested looking into Waste Management or Republic Services.*

*Amy added that waste haulers across the board are struggling with not only manpower but with garbage trucks and said that an existing hauler may not be able to service the entire Alle-Kiski region. Amy also noted that Lower Burrell is required to offer recycling and that they bid this service out, but that residents have the option to select their own waste service.*

*George discussed the value of having an inventory of vacant commercial properties that are cleared and ready for redevelopment and investment – working with a realtor to list the properties specifically owned by the municipality on some type of database. This would be a multi-municipal database.*

*The group discussed the challenges with properties that have varying degrees of tax delinquency and the risks and additional challenges that come with property owners who are located out of state. George estimated that the City of Arnold has*

*roughly 30 available repository parcels with a total of 50 properties available within the city.*

*Jason asked if this list would include both commercially viable properties as well as vacant properties that have been prepared/repositioned for resale. George noted that the list should include both types of properties.*

*Jason added that the WCIDC keeps an inventory of available industrial properties (both privately and IDC-owned) and suggested the group could eventually develop a similar database specifically for the Alle-Kiski. The WCIDC database of available properties includes filter options for users to select and search for a specific size building, for example. Jason noted that some software also allows site administrators to set a cut-off date for properties, which will automatically remove the listing after a certain date.*

*Jason suggested that the group should define the type of properties to be included on the list, determine who would manage the site, and establish a point of contact for available properties within each municipality.*

*Ren brought up that Lee Schumaker is Allegheny Township's code enforcement officer and that there might be an opportunity to use Lee's expertise to train other code enforcement officers in the area. The group discussed the need for having additional code enforcement officers in other municipalities to lean on when there is an emergency or if someone isn't able to work for a period of time. It was noted that if a code officer covers multiple municipalities, they need to have an understanding of the types of codes used within each community.*

*Kathy expressed a need for rental inspections in Allegheny Township (currently they do not have anyone to conduct them). Corey suggested looking into adopting a rental inspection ordinance or program and recommended that Brian Lawrence with the Redevelopment Authority might be willing to talk about the value of a rental inspection program as a tool to prevent blight.*

*John suggested developing an inventory of each municipality's code enforcement staff and their corresponding experience to get a better understanding of each person's strengths.*

*Tom transitioned the group to review the 2021 AK IGC contact list. The list contains the contact information for the Delegates, Alternates, officeholders, and other participants of the AK IGC for 2021. Victoria asked for the group to confirm that the contact information is correct. The list will be circulated via email after the meeting.*

*Tom then invited Jason to say a few words.*

*Jason praised the group for their commitment to working together as the AK IGC. He shared that the County is excited about this group taking the Planning District effort to the next level and that the County is anticipating value from this process. Jason added that County Planning staff are a part of this process not only to support the group and provide feedback, but to also help drive discussion/structure and to push in areas if needed, ensuring that those involved in the AK IGC gain value from it.*

*Jason announced that the County is gearing up to start the second Planning District process, working with 15 municipalities in the central part of the county. He indicated that he may be asking one of the AK IGC members to attend an upcoming Central Planning District meeting to provide a testimonial to the new group – sharing a value proposition from the first Planning District process in the Alle-Kiski. The meeting is scheduled for the end of January.*

*Jason then transitioned the discussion to broadband, noting that the County has been participating in SPC's regional Connectivity Improvement Program. Currently, the program is gathering feedback from stakeholders and the public regarding broadband access. The County plans to use information gathered from this regional process, and from a previous regional broadband study, to invest in areas that are unserved and underserved throughout the county to improve broadband infrastructure.*

*Jason noted that the TIP process for transportation projects is ongoing. Public Participation Panel members and anyone interested in submitting a transportation project (especially those transportation and mobility projects that were identified as a part of the AKPD process) are encouraged to get involved, and reach out to Planning staff for more information.*

*Jason also announced that the County is currently going through a countywide branding and marketing effort with Go Laurel Highlands. The brand and marketing*

*plan will be released soon. Jason noted that although this is a countywide branding effort, if people are interested in seeing regional-specific elements, there may be an opportunity to incorporate this into the marketing plan.*

*Ren brought up the need to push the Erie to Pittsburgh trail down to New Kensington. The group discussed the difficulty in acquiring property from private owners. Jason suggested reaching out to the Regional Trail Corporation (RTC). The RTC is a nonprofit that is responsible for acquiring, developing, and managing trail corridors in southwestern PA. Jason noted that Malcolm Sias, the former Westmoreland County Parks & Recreation Director, is the president of RTC and is very good at finding funding for these types of projects.*

*Tom thanked Jason for attending the meeting and expressed understanding and excitement in producing value as the first intergovernmental cooperation group to come out of the Planning District process.*

*Victoria reminded the group to provide any corrections regarding the contact list or shared services/joint purchasing survey directly to her prior to the next meeting. The next AK IGC meeting is on January 20, 2022. There is no meeting in December 2021.*

*Barb asked if those involved in the council need to be an elected official. It was confirmed that those participating in the AK IGC do not need to be elected or appointed officials of their municipality, but that those serving as Delegates and Alternates for a given municipality must be an appointed or elected official. Votes can only be cast by the Delegates or Alternates at AK IGC meetings.*

*Meeting ended at 6:07 PM.*