

Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council
Regular Meeting Minutes
Meeting #5 - January 19th, 2023
New Kensington City Hall

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

AK IGC: Tom Guzzo (D-New Kensington), Ren Steele (D-Allegheny Township), George Hawdon (D-Arnold), Melissa Cortileso (D-Upper Burrell Township), Michael Conley (A-Upper Burrell Township), John Andrejcik (D-Lower Burrell), Dennis Scarpiniti (A-New Kensington), Matt Grantz (D-West Leechburg), Jody Sarno (D-Vandergrift Borough), Marilee Kessler (A-Vandergrift Borough), Barbara Sharp (D-East Vandergrift Borough)

Westmoreland County Planning: Daniel Carpenter, Victoria Baur

Guests: None

Public: None

Meeting started at 5:00 PM.

1. Review/approve minutes from Meeting 4

A motion was made by Jody and seconded by Melissa to approve the Meeting 4 minutes. The Meeting 4 minutes were approved.

2. AK IGC Bylaws

a. Discuss proposed amendments

The group discussed the proposed amendments to the bylaws. Victoria noted that the only proposed changes were to update the operating dates to reflect the AK IGC's current schedule and add language to the financial section to clarify when the budget, allocations, and auditing come into play - specifically when the AK IGC is more independent with a budget. Victoria added that the only comment received was from Kristen Sarno of East Vandergrift, asking that additional language be added to the financial section to say financial reporting can be requested at any point from Westmoreland County Planning by the member governments.

Jody suggested that the sentence in the financial section be changed from "A full accounting of expenses shall be provided to the Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council at the frequency designated by the member governments" to "at the request of member governments". The group agreed to this minor change. Victoria noted that the revised bylaws could be voted on at the next monthly meeting, once a final revised copy is provided to members at least five days prior to the meeting.

3. Financial reports

a. Year 1, Year 2

The group reviewed and discussed the financial reports for Year 1 and Year 2 thus far. Victoria noted that the reports reflect dues paid and costs incurred by the County to provide administrative support to the IGC. The reports were prepared based on feedback received by member governments at the last meeting. The group agreed that the reports would suffice as presented.

Daniel noted that the original dues structure was based on a quarterly meeting schedule and that the intent of the County's administrative support to the AK IGC was to be temporary, while the group started out. He added that the County is committed to helping the AK IGC continue its momentum, following the Alle-Kiski Planning District process, by absorbing some of the costs not covered by the dues. Daniel said that the goal is to get to the point where the County can begin to ramp down support of the IGC, while communities ramp up their support to become more independent and self sustaining.

Victoria pointed out that the financial reports might also be useful in helping the group plan for their future independence to determine a sufficient dues structure and salary for a staff person or a member community to serve as the administrative support to the AK IGC. She added that this is the model that Beaver County Council of Governments uses - member governments pay a designated community to provide administrative support, rather than relying on a volunteer or paid staff person.

4. AK IGC Blight Inventory and Plan

a. Discuss draft proposal

b. Identify next steps

Daniel shared that the proposal recommends conducting a complete blight inventory of all eight communities plus a regional blight plan to identify strategies to address blight. He noted that this is the first regional blight inventory and plan that the Planning Division has considered undertaking. Victoria asked if there was still interest by all communities to do the project, as conducting a blight inventory was a priority identified by the AK IGC early on.

The group discussed the proposal. Marilee indicated that Vandergrift Borough is interested in the joint project. Barbara and Melissa expressed that their communities (East Vandergrift Borough and Upper Burrell Township) may not be interested in the project. Matt indicated that West Leechburg might be on the fence about the project. George said Arnold would have interest, but that there might be pushback.

Jody asked if costs would change if not all communities participate. Daniel clarified that costs would change - the plan cost would be absorbed by participating communities. He added that there are costs savings on the plan side, not the inventory side, as a blight plan typically costs just \$5,000 on its own, while the inventory cost is based on the number of parcels. To help compare numbers, Daniel provided an example, noting that a community in Westmoreland County

recently paid a private consultant close to \$20,000 just to create a blight plan (not an inventory) and that this ended up not being quite what the community wanted.

George asked if a pre-existing inventory would reduce the cost for a community, since Arnold recently identified blighted properties. Daniel clarified that a pre-existing inventory wouldn't reduce the costs as this data would need to be collected following the same standards/methods for all communities participating in the project. Dennis asked if the end product would be available in ArcGIS. Daniel noted that the end product would be presented in ArcGIS and that the raw data would be made available to communities.

Daniel shared that the Planning Division was contacted by the Local Government Academy (LGA), as they have acquired funding from the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) to provide technical assistance to address blight. After sharing the AK IGC blight inventory and plan proposal with LGA, they are interested in proving funding to complete the regional blight inventory and plan project.

Daniel added that the funding amount has not been determined yet, but that it could offset the project's costs by between 25 - 40 percent. He noted that the Redevelopment Authority of Westmoreland County is also interested in funding a portion of the project, but that this would possibly cover an additional market analysis that LGA wants incorporate. Daniel said that LGA has to spend the money this year, so the opportunity to jump on this project and funding is urgent.

Members indicated that the costs would still be a challenge, as municipal budgets have already been allocated for the year. The group asked if additional funding or grants could be applied for to cover more of the project's costs. Dennis suggested public safety grants. Tom suggested Community Foundation of Westmoreland County grants. Daniel and Victoria said that they weren't aware of additional funding that would cover the blight project. Members also expressed the need for more specific grant funding numbers to be able to present the project to their municipal council members for a vote. Daniel and Victoria confirmed they would obtain and pass along more information to the group from LGA regarding funding amounts.

5. Next AK IGC meeting date: Thursday, February 16th, 2023 @5PM

a. Discuss agenda items for upcoming meeting

i. AK IGC shared code enforcement

Victoria suggested that an agenda item for the next meeting could be to pick back up on the shared code enforcement item, as this has continued to be an important priority for the AK IGC. She added that a sub-committee could possibly be formed out of the members most interested in shared code enforcement to take on more responsibility and action in between meetings to report back to the larger group. Victoria noted that the Planning Division could support this sub-committee, if formed, by scheduling virtual meetings if needed.

ii. Review priorities on Project Management Tracker

Victoria asked for all members to review the online [AK IGC Project Management Tracker](#) before the next meeting to revisit the other ongoing AK IGC priorities such as drone projects, joint purchasing, shared code enforcement, etc. She asked for members to be thinking about what goal they want to have accomplished by the end of the year and how the Planning Division can best support that.

6. Public comment

None.

Other Discussion

John asked if minutes could be made available sooner after meetings. The group agreed that having minutes earlier, prior to upcoming council meetings, would be useful to be able to bring fellow municipal council members up-to-speed on the AK IGC's activities. Victoria confirmed that meeting minutes could be made available sooner, prior to the first of the following month after each meeting.

7. Adjournment

A motion was made by Jody and seconded by Ren to adjourn the meeting. The meeting ended at 5:59 PM