

Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council Meeting Minutes
Meeting #6
February 17, 2022
New Kensington City Hall

Attendees (D-Delegate, A-Alternate)

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), Mike Korn (Allegheny Township), John Andrejczik (Lower Burrell), Amy Rockwell (D-Lower Burrell), Kristen Sarno (A-East Vandergrift), Barbara Sharp (D-East Vandergrift), Melissa Cortileso (D-Upper Burrell Township), Michael Conley (A-Upper Burrell Township), Matt Grantz (West Leechburg)

Westmoreland County Planning: Corey Block, Victoria Baur
Public: Marilee Kessler (Vandergrift), Daisha Clayton (Vandergrift)

Meeting started at 5:00 PM

Tom called the meeting to order, confirmed that everyone had a chance to review the meeting #5 minutes, and asked if there were any questions or concerns. A motion was made by Amy to approve the minutes and it was seconded by Melissa. The meeting #5 minutes were approved.

Tom transitioned to the shared services/joint purchasing opportunities survey summary. Victoria thanked the group for their input on creating the survey and for taking the time to provide responses on behalf of their municipalities. She noted that this version of the summary report reflected changes, revisions, and consolidation of responses made at the request of individual municipalities.

Victoria explained that the intention of the shared services/joint purchasing summary report is to provide insight and recommendations for municipalities to begin to take action on shared priorities, joint purchasing, and further sharing of equipment. She noted that it is up to municipal representatives of the AK IGC to take this information back to their respective communities to advocate for arrangements with other communities.

Victoria briefly reviewed the shared services/joint purchasing summary report with the group. She noted that the survey showed that communities have similar priorities for sharing services such as code enforcement and EMS. Victoria also noted that the Planning Division was surprised by how much interest there is among communities to jointly purchase items and how so many communities are already sharing equipment.

Amy brought up that Lower Burrell had jointly advertised with New Kensington in the past for paving projects. She noted that they are thinking about reaching out to other communities to see if they have an interest in working together. She said that they are planning on advertising and going out to bid in March.

Mike Korn added that Allegheny Township has an interest in pursuing joint paving projects. George also added that Arnold may be interested in pursuing joint paving projects.

Tom asked if anyone else had questions or feedback on the summary. John asked if there is a way for communities to indicate when their shareable equipment is not available. Victoria noted one option would be to share a "living document" version of the shareable equipment inventory, adding a column for scheduling, to show when items aren't available. Alternatively, these details can be discussed between communities individually on an as-needed basis.

In addition to the scheduling of equipment, John also suggested that there should be a way for a community to indicate when their equipment operators are available. Victoria noted that if the group had a "living document" version of the shareable equipment inventory, they could include a column to indicate when/if staff are available to accompany items. This could also be discussed on an as-needed and individual basis between communities.

Melissa added that for any piece of equipment that Upper Burrell shares with another community, they would plan to send their equipment operator, but would not ask the borrowing community to pay for their equipment operator's wages for the day(s). Rather, they would just ask that the gesture be returned by that community in the future.

Victoria asked the group if they learned anything new from the summary. The group noted that the information gathered will be useful. Amy brought up that a lot of what was discussed and discovered in the summary already goes on, it's just not necessarily documented. Amy shared the recent example of when Lower Burrell leaned on neighboring communities to plow roads. Lower Burrell reimbursed those communities for salt used.

Corey added that the group may not be thinking of the ways they might lean on each other until an emergency or unique circumstance comes up. Tom brought up that having a record of these instances would be useful so that the group has evidence to show the success and value of working together.

Tom asked the group to reflect on the summary report and consider one of the recommendations to accomplish together. For example, the group should consider one item they have an interest in jointly purchasing to bring up at the next meeting.

Mike Korn brought up MS4 projects and asked if there is an opportunity to pursue a regional approach to stormwater management. Victoria noted that stormwater management was one of the service priority categories included in the survey. The group indicated stormwater management was an area of challenge within their communities, but this service did not filter to the top three priorities.

Mike Korn asked how a regional approach to stormwater management would work. He suggested that communities could jointly take on MS4 projects, fulfilling requirements, rather than individually completing MS4 projects. Victoria noted that the group had not discussed this opportunity yet, but that there is potential to explore a regional approach if communities have interest. Corey and Victoria added that more research would have to be done on their end.

Corey brought up the group's potential to jointly purchase software. Victoria noted that out of the five communities interested in jointly purchasing supplies, about half were interested in technology software. Corey suggested that software for code enforcement management and GIS mapping might be good options to consider as these tend to be expensive on an individual basis. Tom echoed this sentiment and asked which communities have their own GIS mapping software. New Kensington and Lower Burrell indicated they have their own GIS mapping software.

Tom transitioned the group to discuss the opportunity to jointly bid for salt. Amy brought up that most of the Alle-Kiski communities are in on the Compass Minerals bid through COSTARS. The group shared their frustration with the provider, noting major delays in salt deliveries, incorrect deliveries, poor quality of salt, and difficulty communicating with the company. Amy asked the group about their interest in going in on a salt bid together.

Dennis said that what's going on with Compass is a logistics problem because they aren't paying their truck drivers enough to transport the salt. Melissa added that when Upper Burrell called Compass to check on the status of their order, the company said that they have seven days to process an order, which is an extremely long time to wait. Several members of the group noted that they called and complained with the company.

Victoria asked the group what could be done. Dennis noted that they have until mid-March to submit quantity information to the state to be included in the bid through COSTARS for next year. The group discussed the value of sharing advertisement costs to put out a bid for salt together on top of their commitment to the COSTARS bid. This would provide an additional option to choose from.

Amy added that the North Hills COG puts their own salt bid out every year, not through COSTARS. She said she may even have the bid specs from the North Hills COG to use as an example. Melissa suggested that the AK IGC could draft a letter directed towards COSTARS explaining the group's frustration with the current salt provider. The letter could describe the group's intent to band together and bid for their own salt contract. Amy volunteered to draft and send the letter to COSTARS on behalf of the group. She noted that this would be prepared in a week or so, with the deadline to turn in by March 15th.

Tom transitioned the topic to discuss current municipal Delegates/Alternates. Victoria added that this was included on the agenda to ensure that the group was following their by-laws. According to the AK IGC by-laws, Delegates and Alternates from municipalities must be elected and appointed officials.

Amy and John discussed swapping the Delegate and Alternate for Lower Burrell. Currently, Amy serves as the Delegate from Lower Burrell and also serves as the Secretary for the AK IGC. Chris Fabry is listed as the Alternate for Lower Burrell.

Amy brought up that Lower Burrell is starting a comprehensive recreation and open space planning process, and that this group meets on the same night as the AK IGC. John suggested that he could serve as the Delegate and Chris Fabry could remain as the Alternate for Lower Burrell. Amy noted that the Secretary position would have to transition to John or the group would need to appoint a new Secretary, if she no longer serves as a Delegate or Alternate.

Mike Korn asked who the Delegate and Alternate are for Allegheny Township. Ren noted that he is the Delegate for Allegheny Township. Kathy noted that she is the Alternate for Allegheny Township. Mike Korn said that Allegheny Township would discuss any changes and follow-up at the next AK IGC meeting.

Victoria asked the group who would fill the Secretary position. Tom asked if John wanted to take over the responsibility. Victoria explained that the responsibilities of this position are minimal with County Planning providing support. The Secretary position can be fulfilled by a Delegate or Alternate. John agreed that he could serve as the Secretary, if no other members have interest in the position.

Tom transitioned the group to revisit and discuss the AK IGC year 1 priorities. Tom noted that the items crossed-out indicate that those items have been completed including creating AK IGC letterhead and conducting a survey of AK IGC shared services/joint purchasing opportunities. Tom also noted that the group has already begun the mid-term goal of initiating a conversation about regional/joint code enforcement.

Tom asked the group to think about what they want to work on next and consider what they can accomplish in the remaining months of year 1. Tom noted the importance of having something to show the Central Planning District municipalities and others the value of working together. Tom asked the group to pick out one or two of the mid-term goals to get started on. He suggested that perhaps the group can look into initiating blight mapping with support from the County Planning Division. Tom also suggested that the group think about one long-term goal to get started on as well.

Victoria echoed that the group should be thinking about their year 1 priorities and asked what the County Planning Division can prepare, research, and present at the next meeting to help initiate some of their priorities.

George agreed that blight is a priority and that he'd like to initiate blight mapping in some capacity. Corey noted that there is a lot of funding coming out to help address blight. Tom asked what the group's appetite is for creating a list of developable lots and vacant/available property to market within the region. Matt suggested that creating a list of developable property and initiating blight mapping go hand-in-hand.

Tom asked which communities are members of the Land Bank already. Lower Burrell, East Vandergrift, and Allegheny Township are members of the Land Bank. Dennis asked if there is an opportunity to jointly or regionally participate in the County's Land Bank. Tom added that jointly participating in the Land Bank might be more appealing for those municipalities who can't afford to join on their own.

John shared that he, along with Ren, are interested in initiating the long-term goal of establishing a riverfront trail, and other trail improvements. Ren added that there may be some federal dollars to help target trail projects in New Kensington and Lower Burrell, extending the existing trail down.

Kristen shared that East Vandergrift's priority is code enforcement. George added that Arnold is very interested in a regional code enforcement program. George shared that Arnold recently hired a part-time code enforcement officer and that this individual is interested in pursuing different tactics to address blight like a vacant property ordinance. John brought up that Lower Burrell recently created a vacant property ordinance.

Melissa brought up that when she worked in Vandergrift handling code enforcement, there was such a long delay from the time you cited a property to when the Magistrate made notice and a hearing was scheduled. This lengthy process exacerbates blight and property

maintenance issues because conditions get worse or are no longer relevant by the time a hearing is scheduled.

George brought up a similar issue with snow removal in Arnold. George further explained that the City had an ordinance (from 2017) that cut down on the amount of time in between citation and fee collection, but they hadn't used the ordinance until recently. Tom brought up a recent example issue in New Kensington where a property owner was parking their car in their yard, instead of their driveway. They insisted on paying the citation fee, just so they could keep parking in their yard, until they realized the frequency of the fee.

Victoria summarized that the group's homework for next time is to reflect on the shared services/joint purchasing recommendations, think of items they are interested in jointly purchasing (big or small), and think of the AK IGC year 1 priorities to determine what the group should tackle next. Additionally, Amy and the Executive Committee will draft and submit a letter on behalf of the AK IGC to COSTARS noting their frustration with Compass Minerals.

Victoria added that it sounds like the group's consensus is to focus on initiating blight mapping and creating a list of developable property. Corey noted that County Planning can at least help get the conversation started on these priorities. She added that municipalities are also encouraged to reach out to the County Planning Division individually to discuss blight inventories and blight plans if they have an interest.

Marilee asked about the blight event on April 22. Victoria said that the Westmoreland County Redevelopment Authority and Land Bank is hosting their first annual blight remediation summit on April 22 at the Westmoreland County Community College Event Center in Youngwood. Municipal officials and others are encouraged to attend the meeting.

Tom asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made by Amy and seconded by George.

The meeting ended at 5:55 PM.