

**Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**Meeting #6- February 15th, 2024**  
**Virtual Via Google Meet**

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

**AK IGC:** Tom Guzzo (D-New Kensington), Matt Grantz (D-West Leechburg), Dennis Scarpiniti (A-New Kensington), Kristen Sarno (A-East Vandergrift), Jody Sarno (D-Vandergrift), Marilee Kessler (A-Vandergrift), Michael Kornis (D-Allegheny Township), Greg Primm (D-Lower Burrell), Chris Fabry (A-Lower Burrell), Melissa Cortilesio (D-Upper Burrell), Adam Zweig (A-Arnold)

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

**Guests:** N/A **Public:**

Meeting started at 5:00 PM.

**1. Review/approve minutes from Meeting 5**

A motion was made by Michael and seconded by Greg to approve the Meeting 5 minutes. The Meeting 5 minutes were approved.

**2. AKPD Plan Reminder**

**a. Project, program, policy ideas for communities**

Victoria reminded the group of the Alle-Kiski Planning District plan that was created in 2019-2020. Victoria urged the group to revisit the content in the AKPD plan. She noted that there are dozens of project, policy, and program ideas in the plan that can be revisited and implemented. Victoria said that the plan is available through the [Reimagining Our Westmoreland](#) website and through the [county's website](#). Victoria mentioned if any of the AK IGC communities are currently implementing an objective from the plan to let the Planning Division know so progress can be documented. Victoria reminded the group that the plan was meant to be implemented over time and she asked the group if they would consider revisiting the plan as a recurring agenda item.

Greg mentioned that he plans to revisit the AKPD plan to see what Lower Burrell has accomplished and what they can accomplish moving forward. Tom agreed that the AKPD plan should be visited regularly so the group can see what programs and policies should be prioritized moving forward. A motion was made by Jody and seconded by Tom to make discussing and checking in on the status of the AKPD plan a recurring agenda item moving forward.

**3. Discuss SHACOG Purchasing Alliance Program**

Greg said that Jason Dailey from Allegheny Township suggested discussing the SHACOG's Purchasing Alliance Program as an agenda item to see if they could offer savings on bids/advertisements and purchasing materials. Greg mentioned to the group that the SHACOG has several staff members, an administrative office, and an executive director offering them resources to work at a larger capacity and in comparison, AK IGC is still a young group with limited capacity.

Greg noted that when he worked in Allegheny Township, they typically got resources through the state's COSTARS (cooperative purchasing) contract but they bid out separately for resources such as stone, pipe, and fuel. Greg suggested to the group that someone would need to take the lead on communications and cooperation between municipalities for AK IGC involvement if they chose to participate. Greg mentioned that he does not see the group having time, capacity, or a prepared leader/spokesperson to be involved before spring commodities specs are due.

Victoria clarified that the SHACOG are their own organization and many of the COGs in the area participate in their Purchasing Alliance Program. Victoria agreed with Greg that she is unsure if the group would be prepared to join by the spring. Victoria suggested that the group would need to do extensive exploration in advance to determine the products and specifications for interested communities. Additional costs would also need to be calculated and added to AK IGC dues for next year.

Jody said if joining results in a possible increase of dues, members would need to consult with their communities and suggest the long term benefits and savings resulting from involvement with the SHACOG. Jody expressed concern that Vandergrift might not agree with an increase in costs for this program.

Greg said from a public works perspective, there is value in joining a COG's purchasing program because communities sometimes receive a better rate for products like road salt compared to the COSTARS program. He noted that resources such as office supplies are already available through COSTARS at the most affordable value available.

Greg suggested that the group does research into how the SHACOG's former bids resulted so they have an understanding of savings before they seek membership. Victoria reminded the group that there might be cost differences and rate increases when several counties are involved because of varying volumes and travel distances for products.

Greg suggested that if the group chooses to participate, they should agree on one product and use it as a test to see what savings and efficiency results from joining. The group agreed that if they were to join the program, they would start off by jointly bidding on salt. Greg mentioned that PennDOT asks communities for numbers to plan the volume for next year by March so there would likely not be enough time to prepare before then.

Jason questioned if communities do their own bidding for salt through PennDOT or if communities submit volume numbers to PennDOT and PennDOT does the bidding. Greg clarified that communities submit numbers to PennDOT and PennDOT does the bidding for communities. Greg also noted that communities agree to 60% of the cost when they submit numbers to PennDOT.

Jason asked the group if there is benefit to bidding out themselves for salt if PennDOT offers pricing and bidding that is used regionally already. Greg explained that PennDOT bids vary depending on what county it is for and their bid would have to be compared to the bid that would result from participation in the SHACOG.

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

##### **a. Report**

Jill provided a status update on the Blight Inventory project. She informed the group that the Planning Division met with the Local Government Academy (LGA) last week to discuss progress on the project. Considering four communities have already been completed, LGA expressed interest in having one-on-one discussions with communities. Jill told the group that LGA will be reaching out to those communities soon.

Victoria elaborated and said LGA is reviewing the data collected by the Planning Division as well as sales data for communities. She said they will use the data to guide conversations with communities and further discuss qualitative information and priority properties that are prime for redevelopment.

Jill reminded the group to continue to send in additional datasets such as code violations and crime incidents to enhance the upcoming analysis and blight plan for each community. Jill also reminded the group that blight project invoices have been sent out. Victoria explained that the Planning Division is invoicing quarterly for the blight project. She said she has received payment from each community involved except for Vandergrift. Marilee said she would check to see if their payment has been mailed yet.

Victoria noted that the Planning Division will meet with New Kensington and Arnold soon to discuss safety protocols and communications before data collection begins again. She said they hope to resume data collection in April and the safety meeting will likely be in March.

#### **5. Shared code enforcement**

##### **a. Subcommittee report**

Kristen said she reached out to the LGA about the status of their code enforcement intern program. The LGA said they are hoping to start this summer and they would be willing to meet virtually with group members to discuss the program and any opportunities to collaborate. Victoria explained that the Municipal Intern Program through the LGA connects college students with internships in areas of code enforcement and local government.

Victoria said she checked if the County provides funding towards this program because the question was brought up at the last meeting. She said the County may have supported it at one time but they are not currently. Victoria said this could be an area of opportunity in the future. She noted that an organization like the Workforce Investment Board might be able to provide grant funding to support the County's contribution towards the program.

Michael mentioned to the group that KLH is no longer in the business of code enforcement so Allegheny Township is currently searching for a new code enforcement provider. Kristen said East Vandergrift has used Strategic Solutions for a month and the borough is happy with their service so far.

#### **6. Shared fire service**

##### **a. Subcommittee report**

##### **b. Discuss/plan volunteer fire service meeting**

Michael circled-back to the conversation from last month's meeting regarding coordinating a discussion about a program to support/recruit/train volunteer firefighters through local high schools. Michael said he reached out to a contact at Highland and Natrona Heights because they have a successful fire academy program.

Michael suggested that the group invite contacts from Highland School District along with local school district superintendents to the in-person meeting in May. Tom suggested to have the fire chiefs from New Kensington and Arnold attend the meeting as well. Victoria suggested if the group is planning to have a roundtable discussion with school personnel, Highland Hose, and fire chiefs that the group should have discussion items and/or an agenda prepared for the conversation. Michael asked Victoria to reach out to contacts at Highland Hose. Tom said he will reach out to contacts at local school districts and local fire chiefs.

## **7. Next AK IGC meeting date: Thursday, March 21st, 2024 @ 5PM (in person)**

### **a. Discuss agenda items**

#### **i. Follow-up: Greg & Chris to lead discussion on EMS funding at March 21st meeting (in-person)**

Greg said he and Chris will present information about EMS funding at next month's meeting.

#### **ii. Reminder: invitation to MuniReg, Michael Helpert available to attend in-person on May 16th**

## **8. Public comment**

None.

### **Other Discussion**

Victoria reminded the group that everyone should have received information about the Smart Transportation for Livable Communities funding program. She said SPC opened up the program recently and prequalification for applications are due in March. Victoria explained that the county can only support/submit one project for this funding so the county is looking for communities to indicate their interest by 2/16. The funding applies to projects such as bike and pedestrian improvements, corridor management, congestion reduction, streetscapes, and traffic calming.

Victoria announced that the [Broadband Ready Community pre-registration](#) is available through the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority. Victoria said the PBDA is hosting an information session in March for interested communities to learn more about improving broadband access.

Jason updated the group on the [Westmoreland Broadband Program](#). He said the county conducted an analysis and has a preliminary plan in place. Jason explained broadband funding has to be put towards unserved areas before other areas are prioritized. He said while unserved locations do not apply to most areas in the Alle-Kiski, there are some in Allegheny Township and Upper Burrell. Jason explained that the first step is to use ARPA funds to target unserved locations which are mostly in the eastern part of the county, and then move onto other areas of the county.

Jason noted that the next round of funding will be from the state's Capital Projects Fund (CPF) and announcements on that round of funding will most likely be in late March or early April. He

said these funds are part of the BEAD funding under the Infrastructure Bill. Jason added that the county is going to begin developing a digital equity and navigator system that is geared towards lower income communities and it will likely begin later next year.

Jason also reminded the group about the county's [Lead Hazard Control Program](#). He explained that there are houses in communities that were likely built before 1972 that have lead paint. Jason noted that if those houses are considered low income and if there is a child six years of age or less in the house, they are eligible for funding to remediate the lead paint. Jason said Janet Thomas is the contact person for the lead program.

In addition to the Lead Hazard Control Program, if the house is lead eligible, the [Whole Home Repair Program](#) can also apply. These funds would go towards rehabilitation improvements that are nonlead related for low income individuals. Jason noted that the county Redevelopment Authority and Land Bank are managing that portion of funding. He urged group members to contact the Redevelopment Authority if they have residents who express needs for home rehabilitation on items such as roofs, windows, gutters, doors, etc.

Jason announced that the state has recently pushed out 45 million dollars towards the [Multi-Purpose Community Facilities Program](#). Jason said this funding could apply to municipalities for improving, constructing, or acquiring facilities, buildings, libraries, schools, etc. Jason urged group members to apply if they have projects that need funding.

Victoria brought up that Upper Burrell recently had an article published indicating they are open to a regionalized police force. Missy shared that Upper Burrell recently sent out letters to neighboring municipalities to see if there is interest in joining together to create a regionalized police force. Missy said Upper Burrell has not heard back from other municipalities yet.

Tom said New Kensington is always willing to listen to the proposal and see how it would be advantageous to the AK IGC communities. Victoria suggested that Missy contact Terry Carcella in Latrobe because he was involved in the regionalization of Ligonier's police force. Missy said if there is interest from other communities, they plan to move forward with a DCED feasibility study. Jason suggested that regionalization of code enforcement may be an easier first step towards before attempting regionalization of police forces.

Jody asked if any communities that have property use permitting process would be willing to send the guidelines to him to use as an example as Vandergift works through the process of reviewing and developing a policy.

### **Adjournment**

A motion was made by Tom and seconded by Missy to adjourn the meeting. The meeting ended at 5:55 PM.