

Alle-Kiski Intergovernmental Council
Regular Meeting Minutes
Meeting #7 - March 16th, 2023
New Kensington City Hall

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

AK IGC: Melissa Cortileso (D-Upper Burrell Township), George Hawdon (D-Arnold), Kristen Sarno (A-East Vandergrift Borough), Jody Sarno (D-Vandergrift Borough), Tom Guzzo (D-New Kensington), Michael Kornis (A-Allegheny Township), Ren Steele (D-Allegheny Township), Matt Grantz (D-West Leechburg), Marilee Kessler (A-Vandergrift Borough)

Westmoreland County Planning: Corey Block, Victoria Baur

Guests: None **Public:** New Kensington City resident

Meeting started at 5:06 PM.

1. Review/approve minutes from Meeting 6

A motion was made by Jody and seconded by Ren to approve the Meeting 6 minutes. The Meeting 6 minutes were approved.

2. AK IGC Blight Inventory and Plan

a. Follow-up on participation

Victoria asked for communities to confirm their participation in the AK IGC blight inventory and plan project. Representatives from Allegheny Township, New Kensington, East Vandergrift, and West Leechburg confirmed their commitment, so long as the project costs don't go up significantly. Melissa confirmed that Upper Burrell would not be participating. Victoria shared that John reached out to say that Lower Burrell needs an additional week to determine their commitment.

Jody said Vandergrift needs more time to determine their participation and said that costs were still a hang-up. Jody asked if costs could be broken down to show what each payment will be over the course of the project. George said Arnold is leaning towards not participating and indicated that the project cost was an issue. He added that the upcoming local election may also be a factor, noting that the City might be more likely to say yes after the May election. George added that if their City council says no, there might be an opportunity to ask the Arnold Redevelopment Authority to assist with the project cost.

Victoria said solid commitments from communities were needed this month (March). She said the next step is to start drafting an agreement for comments next month (April). Once agreements are signed in May or June, the project kickoff is estimated for June or July. Victoria said that while the agreement is being executed, the group can start thinking of who they want to be on their project teams. She noted that the blight project meetings will be separate from AK IGC meetings.

Kristen asked if there were any grants available to help offset the project costs more. Corey and Victoria said that grant money is already being given to the Local Government Academy from PA DCED to support the project. The project is also being offset by a contribution from the Redevelopment Authority of Westmoreland County. They noted they were not aware of additional grant funding for blight at this time.

The group discussed participation and decided that they should move forward as if seven communities are participating. Tom asked for the Planning Division to prepare the estimated payment schedule information and to start drafting the agreement for feedback from communities.

3. AK IGC shared code enforcement

a. CEO contact list

b. Sub-committee status

Victoria provided the updated code enforcement officer (CEO) contact list, based on information received from members. She asked for any additional changes to be provided as soon as possible. She noted that the CEO contact list might be helpful to the group as they plan to consider sharing a CEO. Victoria said she would update the list with any remaining changes and circulate to the group via email as well as with the CEOs to encourage them to meet regularly and share information.

Victoria reminded the group that the idea of a shared CEO sub-committee was discussed at the last meeting to push this idea along. Kristen, George, and Marilee indicated they were interested in participating. Victoria asked for the sub-committee to report out what was discussed since the last meeting.

George provided an update, referencing a list of questions and ideas compiled by Kristen. He said that members need to determine what their CEO needs are, what type of codes they have, what type of enforcement (proactive or reactive) they prefer, and what arrangement makes the most sense for their community (i.e. using a current CEO, hiring an additional CEO, or contracting with a third party CEO company). George added that communities should also consider any specific needs like court appearances for cases or costs. The group discussed these options.

Matt shared one downside to using a third party company is that your community might not be a priority and that communication, reporting, and responses can be a challenge. Michael asked how the blight inventory data factors into code enforcement. Victoria noted that the RACW is working towards a long term goal of regionalized or county-wide code enforcement and that the blight inventory data may help feed this. Corey said the data can be useful to support a community's current code enforcement practices.

The group determined that they would provide answers to the questions prepared by the CEO sub-committee, serving the purpose of a CEO “needs assessment”. Victoria noted she would circulate the document after the meeting.

4. Joint purchasing equipment

a. Discuss items under consideration

Victoria reminded the group that they were asked to think of up to five equipment items (of any price) to consider jointly purchasing with other communities. She asked for the group to share their top items, costs, and questions.

Ren and Michael said that Allegheny Township is interested in a drone, plotter printer, crack sealer, and diagnostic equipment for trucks. Michael shared that the Township currently shares an asphalt zipper and sewer camera with Lower Burrell. George said that Arnold could use a crew truck, garbage truck, and software subscription for cyber security. Kristen noted that East Vandergrift could use a street sweeper and a backhoe. Tom indicated Dennis prepared a list and said New Kensington could use a backhoe. Representatives from Vandergrift and West Leechburg noted that they weren’t able to get information from their public works contacts. Melissa said Upper Burrell might not be interested in joint purchasing and noted that questions on when items are shared needed to be answered.

The group discussed options and determined that purchasing an item that is used intermittently would make sharing easier. Victoria asked the group to consider questions of equipment storage, maintenance costs, insurance costs, and operation. Michael shared that in the example of the asphalt zipper, Allegheny Township takes care of storage, maintenance, and insurance, and the Township bills Lower Burrell for their use of the zipper.

Victoria asked the group what the next steps for joint purchasing should be. Tom suggested that the group needs a list of what each community has already to determine needs for joint purchasing and sharing. Victoria reminded the group of the [AK IGC 2021 survey of equipment](#), where communities indicated which items they were willing to share. Victoria noted that Vandergrift was not included in the survey, as this was prior to their addition to the AK IGC.

Victoria said she would circulate the equipment list and update it with Vandergrift’s responses. She said it sounded like some communities still needed more time to come up with their wish lists of items to discuss again at the next meeting.

5. Next AK IGC meeting date: Thursday, April 10th, 2023 @5PM

a. Discuss agenda items

Micheal suggested an agenda item - that the group consider discussing regionalizing municipal fire departments, to help share resources as departments are struggling with resources and volunteers.

George reminded the group that Arnold is pursuing the Volunteer Tax Credit for Firefighters by adopting an ordinance, to provide real estate tax and EIT incentives for volunteers to thank them for their service. He encouraged other communities to consider adopting a similar ordinance.

Victoria noted that both of these items can be added to the agenda to discuss at the next meeting.

6. Public comment

A resident of the City of New Kensington asked if the City is adopting new codes soon. Tom noted that the City is moving forward with adopting new design guidelines and said copies of the documents are available at City Hall. The resident also asked about the rules on the frequency of yard sales within the City. Tom said he would follow-up with this information after the meeting.

Victoria provided an overview of the AK IGC and its purpose. She noted that this meeting was not a regular City Council meeting and no decisions on ordinances were being made.

Other Discussion

Victoria reminded the group that the Redevelopment Authority of Westmoreland County is having their second annual Blight Remediation Summit on April 21st at the Westmoreland County Community College campus in Youngwood. She encouraged members to register and attend the event to network and learn about the latest tools to address blight.

Corey provided an update on the Westmoreland Broadband program, noting that the Feasibility Study and Report, as well as an interactive broadband map, are available to review on WestmorelandBroadband.org. She added that the County is moving forward with a request for proposal (RFP) process to identify quality partner(s) to accomplish three early action projects located in Ligonier, Derry, and Fairfield Townships.

Corey announced that this will be her last meeting, as she is moving on to another opportunity on March 28th. She thanked the group for letting her be a part of this unique experience. Members thanked Corey for her time and contribution to the group.

7. Adjournment

A motion was made by Tom and seconded by Melissa to adjourn the meeting. The meeting ended at 6:13 PM.