

**MINUTES
EXETER TOWNSHIP/ ST. LAWRENCE BOROUGH
MERGER MEETING
MAY 5, 2016**

A merger meeting between Exeter Township and St. Lawrence Borough was held on Thursday, May 5, 2016 at 6:00 P.M. in the Township Building, 4975 DeMoss Road, Berks County, Pennsylvania.

Committee Members Present: Jeff Bukowski, Standing Member, Exeter Township
Gary Lloyd, Standing Member, Exeter Township
John Cusatis, Standing Member, Exeter Township
Warren Lubenow, Standing Member, St. Lawrence Borough
Michael Fritz, Standing Member, St. Lawrence Borough
Cary Whitman, Standing Member, St. Lawrence Borough

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of April 7, 2016 Merger Meeting

MOTION by Mr. Fritz, seconded by Mr. Lloyd to approve the minutes of the April 7, 2016, Merger meeting as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment

Tom Howell, P.O. Box 4635 stated he read the articles in the Reading Eagle; he stated Mr. Jansen should be congratulated on the mergers in the other Townships and Boroughs. He stated a \$1 million tax was put on the lights and most of it was for the Borough; he asked if there was a way to equalize the tax.

Mr. Jansen stated the base property tax when you consolidate a community has to be of mind for the next fiscal year. He stated either the Upper Tulpehocken taxes would have to change or the Straustown would come down to where Upper Tulpehocken was. Mr. Howell asked why the agenda for the meeting wasn't posted on Exeter's website. Mr. Lloyd stated currently Exeter is going through an IT transition and we're almost locked out of displaying things on the front page; he stated we are working on it. He stated he printed out the Borough Law and Second Class Township Law; he stated there is a lot of information and it would be good to post this information on the website so the residents could look through it.

Ron Ivison, resident of St. Lawrence Borough stated at the last meeting he spoke about unresolved sewer issues. He stated he followed up with that as best he could; he stated three (3) officials from St. Lawrence said the basic issue was how the meters were reading the flow of water to the Exeter sewer system. He stated there is a dispute as to the placement of those meters. He stated St. Lawrence was over charged for that meter reading. He stated the issue remaining is if St. Lawrence will receive a refund which would be retroactive or if there will be a change in the meter reading. He stated he was disturbed to find out that the sewer fund there was a commingling of money so there was not a definite fund set aside for these issues. He stated he felt this is an issue that will need to be resolved. Mr. Lloyd stated some of the things that Mr. Ivison just spoke about are Executive Session issues. He stated they are currently in discussions with St. Lawrence Borough about these issues.

What is the Process

• **Draft Mission Statement**

Mr. Lloyd stated Mr. Lubenow had given everyone a copy of a draft Mission Statement to review.

Mr. Jansen stated early in the process the Mission Statement can be as long as the committee wants it to be; he stated as we begin to sort through the issues the Mission Statement will come down to why we are here and why we are doing this. He stated at this point the Mission Statement should be why we are here and

issues that need to be identified. Mr. Bukowski stated he felt it was a good Mission Statement; he read the first paragraph aloud.

MOTION by Mr. Fritz, seconded by Mr. Lloyd to publish the Mission Statement as is.

Mr. Bukowski asked if they should add "Planned Action Steps" into the Statement; the committee agreed to add a heading.

MOTION by Mr. Fritz, seconded by Mr. Lloyd to publish the Mission Statement with a heading regarding the planned action steps. Motion carried unanimously.

Examining Issues

- **St. Lawrence Borough Police Contract**

Mr. Jansen stated St. Lawrence Borough is in their first year of a five year contract; he stated more than likely St. Lawrence will be in their 3rd year of the contract by the time the merger takes place. Mr. Fritz stated he has had a conversation with Chief Serafin regarding this issue. He stated the contract is a legal binding document and there are legal issues. He stated the agreement was that they should turn it over to the solicitors. Mr. Lloyd stated Exeter's solicitor has already looked at the contract.

- **Combined Financial Services**

Mr. Lloyd stated figuring out the finances is the first step of this process. Mr. Jansen stated when municipalities merge there is a savings; he stated in the first year of the merger there will be some duplicate expenditures, but after that we wouldn't spend the same amount of money. Mr. Lloyd stated before the next meeting they'll have staff figure out how their budgets will be modified if they would be servicing St. Lawrence Borough.

Ron Ivison, resident of St. Lawrence Borough stated his understanding is .5 mils is dedicated for pensions in Exeter Township; he asked if they merge will pensions be funded or will there be a deficit. Mr. Lloyd stated that is a very good question and something they will definitely need to look into. Mr. Bukowski stated this is something they will have to look into and will be discussing; he stated this is something that will need to be resolved as they discuss the Police issue.

Options for Consolidating Municipalities

Mr. Jansen stated as we move forward the consolidation committee will consider if this is an option that they want to make a recommendation on. He stated ultimately what happens is this committee will make a recommendation to the governing boards and that recommendation will then take the form of an Ordinance that would be presented to both boards that ordinance needs to be adopted 90 days in advance of the election that the referendum would occur. He stated this committee has already discussed they are headed for the Spring of 2017 which means there is a date in early February that these Boards have to take formal action and if both actions are a positive vote to move forward with it then the registration of the Ordinance which has the referendum question in it has to be filed with the Board of Election and it's that date that is the critical 90 day period. He stated the law states we have to be done 90 days in advance to give the public plenty of time to review and look at what is being proposed. He stated if the option is Home Rule and we have adopted the charter anything that is identified in the charter can only be amended by citizen referendum. Mr. Jansen stated this committee needs to look at the choices of consolidation:

- Borough
- Second Class Township
- First Class Township
- Optional Home Rule
- Home Rule

Mr. Lloyd stated he felt this committee could come to an agreement on what type of municipality they want to be. Mr. Jansen stated it is significant that with each of the consolidations that have occurred there has been a larger municipality that has consolidated with a smaller municipality. He discussed the different types of municipalities with the committee. Mr. Fritz stated like Mr. Lloyd, he is leaning towards the Second Class Township. Mr. Bukowski stated what he likes in the Home Rule piece is the ability to modify the tax code. Mr. Jansen stated the beauty of the Home Rule Charter is that it gives the ability to manage taxes on a year to year basis. He stated the Governing Bodies are allowed to educate their residents about a merger.

Committee Questions

Mr. Lubenow asked with the new form could an official work for the municipality; Mr. Bukowski stated if it's a Second Class Township they can.

Mr. Whitman stated if we have a Home Rule we should consider what would be best for both municipalities; Mr. Lloyd stated we will have to do that with everything. Mr. Jansen stated one of the things on the agenda is to hold two (2) citizen's meetings. He recommended these meetings be held at a mutual site such as the library or school. Mr. Lloyd suggested the committee decide on dates for these citizens meetings at their next meeting in June. Mr. Jansen recommended the meetings be held in September and December.

Mr. Lloyd stated the first step should be to setup a meeting between this committee, Exeter Township's Police Chief, Central Berks Police Chief and representatives from the Police Commission to determine a solution for police coverage.

Public Comment

Tom Howell, P.O. Box 4635 stated if Exeter Township would need to hire two (2) additional police officers he hopes this wouldn't have to go to litigation.

Adjournment

MOTION by Mr. Fritz, seconded by Mr. Bukowski to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:44pm.