

**MINUTES
EXETER TOWNSHIP/ ST. LAWRENCE BOROUGH
MERGER MEETING
APRIL 7, 2016**

A merger meeting between Exeter Township and St. Lawrence Borough was held on Thursday, April 7, 2016 at 6:00 P.M. in the Township Building, 4975 DeMoss Road, Berks County, Pennsylvania.

Committee Members Present: Lisa VanderLaan, Alternate 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

Introduction

Paul Jansen stated he and John Kramer have done two (2) other consolidations; this will be their third. He stated tonight's meeting will cover procedural items. The committee members introduced themselves.

Appointment of Co-Municipal Chairman

The committee appointed Gary Lloyd and Warren Lubenow as Co-Municipal Chairman; the committee agreed since Mr. Lubenow will not be present for the next meeting he would Chair this meeting.

Designation of Meeting Minute Process and approval of the CELG Scope of work

• **Meeting Minute Process**

Mrs. VanderLaan stated Exeter Township's staff would record the minutes and the meetings would be audio recorded and video recorded as well. She stated the video would be publically available on Exeter Township's website. Mr. Lubenow stated St. Lawrence Borough has advertised in their newsletter that the minutes from these meetings would be available on the Exeter Township website; he stated they also included Exeter's website address in their newsletter for their residents.

• **Center for Excellence in Local Government (CELG) Scope of Work**

Mr. Jansen stated they are working for the municipalities, however; the County will be compensating for most of the work. He stated there will be some cost to the municipalities; he stated as we get closer to the final decision the Solicitor will need to get involved.

What is the Process

• **Examine the Issues**

Mr. Jansen stated tonight they are going to present the alternatives and at the next meeting they will start to look to see what information is needed beyond general discussion.

- Financials
- Personnel
- Ordinances / Fee Rates
- Facilities / Equipment
- Pension / Benefits

- Waste Collection
- Fire Hydrant Tax
- other issues; determine what other issues may be a concern

- **Recommend if the Consolidation should go to the Referendum**

Mr. Jansen stated this committee has been asked to be formed by both municipalities, their role is to go through the process and make a recommendation to their elected bodies. He stated both elected bodies will have to agree on the recommendations or they would have to agree on what the final decision would be. He stated the ultimate thing could be to vote not to move forward.

- **Development of the Referendum Ordinance and Consolidation Agreement**

Mr. Jansen stated there are two parts; one is the Ordinance that puts the language for the Referendum on the ballot. He stated the other part is the Consolidation Agreement; the agreement would discuss how the merger would occur. He stated once we have the Ordinance and Consolidation Agreement it gets recorded to the municipalities, they then either adopt it or deny it. He stated if either Board chooses not to move forward the process is dead; he stated if they chose to move forward it goes to the elector. He stated their time frame now is they want to report this out in time for the May Primary vote in 2017, which means their work needs to be done by February 2017; he stated that gives them a lot of time.

Citizen Input

Mr. Jansen stated this is a good time to have Citizen Input.

Tom Howell, P.O. Box 4635 stated the dissemination of information is not always the best in Exeter Township. He stated he is going to try to get the public to fill the seats at these meetings. He stated the only thing listed on the website regarding this meeting was the date and time; he stated its very important for people to get involved early in the process. He stated the biggest thing is to inform the people.

Mr. Fritz stated he agreed and this is their largest task; he stated it has been discussed to possibly hold Town Halls at St. Lawrence Borough has been discussed. He stated it is very early in the process which is a good point because they can take as much time as needed to do this. He stated he encourages residents to attend the meetings because this committee wants to hear from them. Mr. Lloyd stated any documents that are produced from these meetings will be uploaded on Exeter Township's website for the public to review. Mr. Jansen stated there will be two (2) Citizen Meetings during this process. He stated these meetings will preferably be held in September and December 2016. Mr. Kramer suggested both municipalities create a mission statement stating why they want to move forward with a merger.

Ron Iverson, resident of St. Lawrence stated he has concerns with three (3) issues:

- Trash Collection
- Amount of overtime incurred by the Police Department
- Unresolved sewer issues

he stated if these issues are resolved successfully it will be an important part of the merger, however; if they are not resolved it will put a damper on the merger. Mr. Lloyd stated well develop a list of issues and concerns and what the response is. He stated they have already discussed the trash collection. He stated according to PEL Report the Police Department is seriously understaffed; he stated we could put the PEL Report on the website so everyone can read it. Mrs. VanderLaan stated some of the overtime is contractual. Mr. Lloyd stated this is something that will be addressed. Mrs. VanderLaan suggested giving a copy of the PEL Report

to St. Lawrence Borough as well as putting it on our website. Mr. Kramer stated consolidation does not necessarily mean change; he stated there are things that will stay the same and some things will differ.

Options for the Consolidated Municipality and Projected Work

Mr. Jansen stated the only way to consolidate municipalities is by a vote of the entire municipality. He stated there are two processes to go through:

1. Consolidate the municipalities
2. Home Rule Charter Commission and recommend a form of Government; he stated this is a 2-year process.

He stated there are many options to choose from: Borough Code, 2nd Class Township Code, 1st Class Township Code and City Process Codes; except the State also created optional Home Rule processes which are fixed home rule sets. He stated all of these options have the same form of Government and have to follow the same basis. He discussed the different options with the committee.

Citizen Input

Tom Howell, P.O. Box 4635 stated the Sunshine Law is 8 pages long and people aren't going to read the whole thing. He stated he is hoping this can be broken down.

Hunter Ahrens, 5450 Oley Turnpike Rd stated he felt that a Home Rule Charter would be the best way to go with this process. He suggested distributing pamphlets to all the residents.

Summary

Mr. Lloyd stated Exeter Township will create a dedicated merger page on their website. He stated the committee will create a list of questions/concerns that residents are raising. He stated they will also discuss what type of Government form the committee wants and the financial process.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:04pm.