



JOINT MEETING MINUTES
UPPER PROVIDENCE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS & TRAPPE BOROUGH COUNCIL
TRAPPE BOROUGH HALL – 525 WEST MAIN STREET
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2018 – 7:00 P.M.

ATTENDANCE:

Borough Council: Nevin Scholl, President; Cathy Johnson, Vice President; Scott Martin, Councilor; Phil Ronca, Councilor, Stu Strauss, Councilor; Pat Webster, Councilor; and Brett Yeagley, Councilor.

Board of Supervisors: John Pearson, Chairman; Albert Vagnozzi, Vice Chairman; Philip Barker, Supervisor; Helene Calci, Supervisor; and Laurie Higgins, Supervisor.

Staff Present: Tamara Twardowski, Borough Manager; Timothy J. Tieperman, Township Manager; and Bryan Bortnichak, Assistant Township Manager.

Consultants Present: David Onorato, Borough Solicitor; Joseph Bresnan, Township Solicitor

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. David Onorato, Esq., on behalf of the host municipality Trappe Borough, facilitated the joint meeting between Trappe Borough and Upper Providence Township and officially called the meeting to order at 7:00p.m., followed by the pledge of allegiance. Mr. Joseph Bresnan, on behalf of Upper Providence Township, provided facilitation support as needed.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

Mr. Onorato asked all attendees to introduce themselves and provide a brief professional background of themselves and to share any opening comments about this joint meeting. He commented about the historic nature of this joint meeting.

GENERAL REVIEW OF THE ISSUES BEHIND THE DELIVERY OF EMERGENCY SERVICES IN UPT AND TRAPPE

Mr. Onorato provided some opening comments. He explained the primary reason for this joint meeting is because there is a majority interest and desire among the elected officials from both Trappe Borough Council and the Upper Providence Board of Supervisors to combine resources in a proportionally fair manner to provide a regional solution for timely and efficient delivery of emergency services.

He highlighted some of the issues driving the current crisis in emergency services: The declining number of available, active volunteers; aging facilities and apparatus; duplication of apparatus and equipment; increasing call volume in municipalities; the burden of increased training requirements; the changing demographics in both Trappe and Upper Providence

Township and the declining insurance reimbursement to EMS agencies. He then encouraged comments to expound on these issues and offer additional insights.

Mr. Scholl provided everyone with statistical information on call volume history within Trappe as well as data on Trappe Fire Company's fixed assets. He also distributed information on the Borough's financial support. He acknowledged the decline in volunteerism and the need to work regionally to boost volunteerism, to streamline operations and improve overall efficiencies over the next 10-15 years. He stated that Trappe Fire Company's apparatus is turn of the century and their fire company building is over 100 years old.

Mr. Vagnozzi distributed a redacted map showing the location of all active firefighters within Trappe's services area, supporting the need for a joint facility closer to the Trappe border.

REVIEW AND DISCUSS ALTERNATIVES FOR A REGIONAL APPROACH TO THE DELIVERY OF EMERGENCY SERVICES IN BOTH MUNICIPALITIES

Following a general discussion of the issues, Mr. Onorato then laid out three (3) possible alternatives on how a Trappe-Upper Providence Township could forge a regional approach to the delivery of emergency service in both municipalities.

Under Alternative #1, Trappe and Upper Providence Township would enter into a basic inter-municipal agreement to share resources for the construction of a regional emergency services facility. Trappe Fire Company would retain its existing charter but would likely be renamed to reflect its new location and expanded service area. Trappe Ambulance would be relocated to UPT and base its headquarters out of this new facility.

Under Alternative #2, the two communities would follow the same playbook utilized in the creation of the Western Berks Fire Department (WBFD), which was formed from the merger of Wernersville, Sinking Spring, Lower Heidelberg and Fritztown Fire Companies. The home municipalities for each of these companies passed an ordinance establishing the WBFD, which operates under one charter.

Under Alternative #3, both municipalities would create a Council of Governments (COG) to manage the regional department. While similar to Alternative #2, a COG would comprise a more formalized regional entity with a governing body comprising representatives from TRAPPE and UPPER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP.

Mr. Onorato opened the floor for general discussion on these alternatives. It was noted that these alternatives were not intended to be all-inclusive, that there could be other alternatives worthy of further consideration. There was substantial discussion on the pros and cons of each alternative. Supervisor Vagnozzi expressed reservations over the COG concept, stating that it dilutes Upper Providence Township's voice at the table, being the larger economic stakeholder. However, Councilor Webster cited the successful model between Colledgeville and Trappe as a good model for providing joint sewer and public works services. Mr. Barker opined that the Western Berks model, which espoused a singular company model, is a good approach to consider.

At the conclusion of this discussion, there was no clear consensus on what this correct model would be. There was unanimous agreement, however, that ironing out such details was not the purpose of this initial joint meeting, that such details are best left for a working joint committee consisting of both UPPER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP and TRAPPE representatives.

DISCUSS THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FAIR COST SHARING FORMULA TO ADDRESS THE CAPITAL AND OPERATING COSTS FOR A REGIONAL OPERATION

Following the discussion of these regional alternatives, discussion then shifted to what a fair cost sharing formula would entail, not only for the capital costs associated with a new regional facility but also the recurring costs to operate the new facility.

Discussion centered around four (4) cost sharing formulas that could be applied based on (1) call volumes; (2) tax base; (3) demographics; and (4) square mileage or possibly a combination of one of these metrics. There seemed to be general agreement that call volumes should play a predominant role in determine a fair cost sharing formula. While this approach seemed fairly straightforward for the capital costs of the new facility, there was some debate on how much Trappe should contribute to the general operating costs, specifically the cost sharing of the full-time career firefighters.

Councilor Martin opined that Trappe should participate at some level in the costs of the career staff, although no specific formula was discussed. It was agreed that these details were best left to the joint working committee and that once a fair cost sharing formula was identified, then each municipality will have the responsibility to identify its own revenue source to fund the required capital and operating costs of this regional venture.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE LEGAL ISSUES THAT WILL NEED TO BE ADDRESSED IN FORMING A SUCCESSFUL REGIONAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND CONSIDER RETAINING SPECIAL LEGAL COUNSEL TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL

Discussion then transitioned to the likely legal issues that will need to be addressed before the creation of any regional emergency services facility. Mr. Bresnan highlighted the necessary legal steps for each of the three (3) alternatives discussed earlier. There was unanimous agreement that both municipalities should immediately engage the services of a special counsel that has renowned expertise in this specific type of legal field. Such expertise would be needed to guide both municipalities through the tricky legal process of regionalized emergency services. Everyone concurred that the devil is certainly the in the details once both communities begin forming a regional financial and governing structure.

Prior to this joint meeting, representatives from both communities had the opportunity to interview John E. Muir, Esq., of Berks County-based Kozloff Stoudt Attorneys who successfully presided over the successful merger of Royersford's two fire companies and is currently involved with the Linfield-Limerick merger. Mr. Bresnan vouched for Mr. Muir's qualifications in this area.

There was general consensus that both communities should officially retain Mr. Muir at their next regular respective meetings.

CONSIDER SELECTING A JOINT UPPER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP-TRAPPE COMMITTEE TO WORK COLLABORATIVELY IN DEVELOPING AN ACTIONABLE, REGIONAL BLUEPRINT FOR BOTH MUNICIPALITIES' FUTURE ADOPTION

As this first joint meeting drew to a close and as the deliberations ended, Mr. Onorato inquired of both governing bodies whether, based on this evening's discussions, there was a collective desire to move forward. If so then the first order of business should be the appointment of a joint Upper Providence Township-Trappe task force.

Both Mr. Onorato and Mr. Bresnan concurred that the task force should comprise non-quorum representatives from Trappe Borough Council and the Upper Providence Township Board of Supervisors, along with designated professional staff. Such a task force would meet on a regular basis and update both governing bodies as warranted.

DISCUSS OTHER MATTERS OF REGIONAL INTEREST AND SET A FUTURE JOINT MEETING DATE

While there was insufficient time to discuss other non-fire issues, there was unanimous consensus that both communities should continue a dialogue of exploring ways to work together as both communities will soon be entering the 2019 budget cycle.

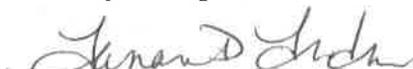
ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Onorato thanked everyone for their attendance this evening and adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Timothy J. Tieperman, UPT Township Manager



Tamara Twardowski, Trappe Borough Manager