Municipal Revenues in Crisis Skill Share Part 2
Friday | May 29, 2020 | 3PM
Via Zoom

Municipal Attendees: Mary Ellen Ramage, Etna; Bruce Fromlak, West View Borough; Darla Cravotta, Allegheny County; Ben Estell, Dormont; Andrew Flynn, Mt. Lebanon; Jessica Semler, Senator Lindsey Williams Office and Etna Borough Councilwoman; Tom Hartswick, Castle Shannon; Ian McMeans, Mt. Lebanon; Brittany Reno, Sharpsburg; George Zboyovsky, Brentwood; Rebecca Vargo, Wilkins; Tim Rogers Shaler; Judy Kording, Shaler; Steve Beuter, Carnegie; Patty DeMarco, Forest Hills; Mark Sampogna, Green Tree
Other Attendees: George Dougherty, GSPIA; Joy Ruff, LGA; Aaron Lauer, IOP; Brian Jensen, Allegheny Conference on Community Development; Emily Woodard, Steel Rivers COG; An Lewis, Steel Rivers COG and Tri-COG Land Bank; Emily Woodard, Steel Rivers COG and Tri-COG Land Bank; Michael Foreman, DCED; Bili O'Hara, Green Party of Allegheny County; Amanda Settlemaier, Turtle Creek Valley COG; Susan Hockenberry, Quaker Valley COG
CONNECT/GSPIA Attendees: Lydia Morin, Tess De Jong, Sarah Downing

Introductions

- Introductions in the Zoom chat
- Five-minute breakout rooms to share with a small group where our mind is around municipal revenue
- Share out the summaries of the small group discussions in the larger room (see the end of this document)

Overview of the tax revenue loss application (Dr. George Dougherty):

- Tour of the site: https://center-for-metropolitan-studies.shinyapps.io/TAX_Revenue_CMS/
- The process of how this came together. The research collaborative volunteer group wanted "good enough" data in the absence of any data whatsoever. The first models were on the 10 counties in SWPA, there is a press release now for the whole state.
- He discussed the numbers in this document: https://www.connect.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/assessing_the_effects_of_covid_19_on_municipal_revenues_in_swpa_5-19-2020.pdf
- We built this web tool because having different revenue sources will affect municipalities differently.
- The goal is to provide enough information to frame where we are now, so that we and the state can know how to move forward, and so that we know how to advocate at the state/federal levels for funding. While we want to help municipalities start looking at

2021 and beyond, we are not yet at the point where we can help individual municipalities.

- We have had several interviews but have not mentioned names of specific municipalities who may be most in trouble. That does not help build collaborative efforts, the data may not be fully up to date, and we don't want a municipality to find out they are at risk from the press.

Round table discussion

- Feedback on the tool: visuals and graphs would help a lot; add more data entry rows so you can tailor it to your specific municipality (not just the region)
- The easier this is for elected officials to understand and use, the more we will realize how it will impact us and we might be more prone to act.
- Potential suggestions for how to enhance the data used to make this model, if there are the resources to do so
- Discussion around how much of this daunting information should be shared with the public and at what speed. One benefit is that residents may better understand when and why service reductions or consolidation happens.
- What other things would you need to help you make financial decisions come September?

Adjourn 4:00pm
Split into breakout rooms to simulate "walking out of the room" together.

Initial breakout room discussion summaries shared with the group at large:

- *Now is the time for intergovernmental cooperation*
- *Cautiously optimistic*
- *Funding looking decent for the rest of this year; funding gaps looking more uncertain and more daunting in 2021.*
- *2021 is the big concern right now*
- *Hoping for legislative relief that allows for flexibility in spending (not just for built projects)*
- *Feeling 1-5 we are a 3. Being conservative with spending*
- *Inequity still exists- and some people will not get past it - not working collaboratively*
- *We are all in the same boat and hopefully, funding will be coming our way to help us meet current expenses and not fund special projects.*
- *I am concerned that the federal and state revenue sharing policies are not taking good account of the distress at the local government level. We are on the actual front lines for communities*

and citizens as they try to cope with this pandemic. Funds for basic health and safety protection should not come at the cost of decreasing resources for all services.

- *It would be nice to get more regionalized unemployment comp numbers. It seems to me that there's a lot of information out there that we just don't have the ability to get. It would be nice to know how many of the businesses in each community continued to employ their personnel; how many were forced to lay off; how many plan on coming back, etc. It would be great if we could have access to some interactive tool that we could share out to our business community so that they could share with us anonymously what their positions are/will be. This would be so valuable. We have so many businesses that it is impossible for me to know/contact each of them to get a general overall warm and fuzzy feel for what percentage losses I really should be assuming.*