

## April 2020 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday | April 16, 2020 | 10AM

Via Zoom



**Municipal Attendees:** Deneen Underwood, Carnegie; JR Henry, West View; Mindy Ranney, Mt. Lebanon; David Finer, Pittsburgh; Rob Zahorchak, Edgewood; Tom Rengers, Etna; Darla Cravotta, Allegheny County; Mary Ellen Ramage, Etna; Ben Estell, Dormont; John Frombach, Brentwood; Phyllis Anderson, Oakmont; Marita Garrett, Wilkinsburg; Tara Yaney, Edgewood; Patty DeMarco, Forest Hills; Kyle Thauvette, Collier; Tom Hartswick, Castle Shannon; Tim McLaughlin, Aspinwall; Brittany Reno, Sharpsburg; Lindsay Powell, Pittsburgh; RJ Susko, McCandless; Greg Butler, Ingram; Deborah Gross, Pittsburgh; George Zboyovsky, Brentwood; Andrew Flynn, Mt. Lebanon; Steve Beuter, Carnegie; Mark Sampogna, Green Tree

**Other Attendees:** Marita Kelley, DCED; Jeanne Clark, ALCOSAN; Brian Jensen, Allegheny Conference on Community Development; Jessica Walls-Lavelle, Office of the Governor; George Dougherty, GSPIA; Lance Chimka, ACED; Laura Stephany, Allies for Children; Sarah SanGiovanni, GSPIA

**CONNECT/GSPIA Staff:** Lydia Morin, CONNECT; Tess De Jong, CONNECT; Dave Miller, CONNECT; JoEllen Marsh, CONNECT; Ally Walker, CONNECT; Kaleigh Dryden, CONNECT/GSPIA; Prince Matthews, CONNECT/GSPIA

### Introductions & Zoom housekeeping

#### Approval of March 2020 Executive Committee Minutes

Zoom poll, none opposed – approved.

#### Approval of January 2020 Executive Committee Minutes

Zoom poll, none opposed – approved.

#### Updates and Q&A with DCED – Marita Kelley, Central Office Director

- DCED staff is working 24/7 to support PA's economy and lives
- There are loans through your respective Certified Economic Development Organization, in this case the Allegheny Conference
- Addressing immediate needs, there has been \$75 million in loans applied for and only \$60 million available
- SBA Economic Disaster loan to assist with small business loans (100 employees or less, and less than \$1 million in assets).
- Paycheck Protection Program
- As of today (April 16) there are portals for manufacturers and those who can retrofit for ventilators, mask, and aprons
- See more about everything above on this [PDF](#).
- DCED is committed to working with CONNECT and looks forward to closer relationships

#### Updates and Q&A with ACED – Lance Chimka, Director

- We are still in midst of the first wave of the crisis: food and housing crises. Before the CARES Act money comes, we are mobilizing existing resources
- Planning to prevent people from being evicted the moment the moratorium is lifted
- We are especially considering those who, before COVID, would receive food from congregant food distributions, or whose temporary shelter conditions required people to be in close proximity.
- A nearer term need is helping businesses. The need for capital for businesses is completely overwhelming. We are trying to position businesses to be ready to receive federal resources. The strength of our region after this will depend on businesses that reopen, and we don't want lack of access to capital to be the inhibiting factor.
- We are working closely with Pittsburgh. Who we can assist in the county depends on the funding source we use
- Discussion around municipal budgets, tax revenue sources, municipal staffing decisions, and concerns over pension obligations
- Overall, in the US, Pittsburgh is positioned to be relatively [resilient](#).
- ACED is committed to working with CONNECT and looks forward to closer relationships

### **Making tough budget decisions – George Dougherty, GSPIA MPPM Director and Act 47 Coordinator**

- There are municipalities that were already on the edge financially and aren't prepared for this hit. I am trying to get managers, council, and finance staff to think about the timing for when things are going to start to hurt
- This is like preventative care. Think about these 3 key points if you haven't already:
  - Create a revenue/cash flow dashboard. Think about the last few months vs. the last 2-3 years. Earned income tax, business privilege tax, cash payments
  - Develop a furlough plan. It probably won't work to do it just by seniority. Unemployment compensation costs are an emergency expenditure. In the past, 90% of FEMA/PEMA bridge funding loans have been forgiven
  - Track pandemic expenses – document everything! Have employees track overtime due to COVID (like police and EMS). It would be great to make a separate code for pandemic related expenditures in your excel sheet. Most will be reimbursable through state or federal funds
- Members requested a focused conversation deeper into this
- Dormont has offered to share how they are tracking pandemic expenses in this [Excel](#) sheet. (Download as an Excel sheet, don't open with Google Sheets). Would this be a desirable skill share for our members?

### **Shared services discussion**

- Positioning ourselves for shared services will make us resilient. Strains on our budgets won't go away after 2021.
- EMS update: COVID might push a merger more quickly with people who had resisted it before. The roots for shared services are there. We're getting to the point where no

municipality will have the luxury of investing in their own nice equipment. If we want to give our residents what they deserve, we need to do this

- Requires uncomfortable conversations. The benefits are clear on a 5-7 year timeline, but individuals may not benefit if you only look on a 2 year timeline.
- Agreement that we must revisit the Student Capstone Fire Report
- An aversion, especially recently, to “government over-reach.” But coordinating with others and planning is a major function of good governance.
- Having more tracking and data – ways to easily show collaboration will be effective – will help communicate the benefits with others. Besides figuring out the technicalities of who will be paid what amount, this is how we will move forward with it.
- The shared services conversation has always been top down, from either the state or county. Municipal elected officials are the key to leading this conversation and potential major change from the ground up. COVID-19 really is an opportunity to start having these conversations on the ground with your staff and residents.
- One of the best roles CONNECT can play is bring in the experts on merging contracts and operations together. It IS a political issue; no elected official wants to be the one that appears to have “lost” a public service. A 3<sup>rd</sup> party facilitator could help.
- Collaboration with the COGs or ALOM is an option too

#### **Discussion around the Sunshine Act**

- Updates on bills
- Experiences with adapting processes very quickly
- The City of Pittsburgh is happy to help others with what they learned from getting theirs up so quickly. They endorsed zoom as the best platform.
- Some residents have asked their municipality to use Zoom more often as it is easy to attend and participate

#### **ALCOSAN Updates**

- GROW application letters of interest are not due until May 1
- We are speaking with your engineers about reporting repairs
- Advisory meetings are cancelled for now
- Working with the USDA to assist rural communities during this time
- Working with FEMA and the US Army Corps of Engineers. We are getting lots of requests for infrastructure money. That should allow you to allocate more of your budget into operations
- Clean water assistance fund: 1-888-282-6816 or you can apply online
- We understand what you are going through, our bills are not insignificant in terms of what you have to meet, and your rate payers are in a time of crisis. We will work with you if necessary. We have always and will continue to!
- For parents homeschooling – Our Scholastic Outreach Dept is putting material on our website every day - environmental projects kids can do at home

Adjourn 11:59am.