

## SAUCON VALLEY PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Date: January 9, 2008  
Time: 6:30 p.m.  
Location: Hellertown Borough

**Attendees:** - John Bate, Dewey Ambulance & Hellertown Emerg. Mgt. Coord.; Rick Delmore, Matt Andree, Dewey Fire Co.; Bill Cszasz, LST Emerg. Mgt. Coord.; Chris Snyder, Ron Beck, Steel City Fire Co.; Tom Barndt, Patrick Deegan, Gary Wisniewski, Sy-Wy-Co Fire Co.; Mike Eshleman, Ken Luybli, Dave Edge, Southeastern Fire Co.; Scott Krycia, Scott Ziegler, Leithsville Fire Co.; Jane Balum, Susan Baxter, Glenn Kern, Ed Inghrim, Jack Cahalan, Charlie Luthar, Carolyn Yagle, EPD.

Charlie welcomed the representatives from the Borough & Township fire companies, Dewey Ambulance and the Emergency Management Coordinators from both communities and introduced Carolyn Yagle from Environmental Planning & Design (EPD). Charlie advised the group that the Saucon Valley Partnership has been working with EPD for over a year now on a Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan which we hope to wrap up sometime this fall. The fire companies and EMS are the topic tonight and we are looking for your input for the comprehensive plan. Carolyn stated that she understands that there have been some press articles recently about the impacts of a lack of volunteers for emergency services. Some of the representatives here tonight attended the public input sessions that we held in the spring and in the fall where we discussed issues regarding community services. Tonight we want to expand on that and would like to come up with a list of actions or priorities that the community services providers would like to work toward. We will take the information that you provide to us tonight and then formulate it and then give it back to you to review. In the joint comprehensive plan that will be coming out later this year it will set the stage for you and the community and the school district to have a first step toward thinking about optimizing your community services, your costs, thinking about your personnel and what your needs are, getting some responses and steps to move forward so that you can grow on what you have and resolve some of the problems together. Carolyn said that she understands that you have been doing lots of things already through mutual aid arrangements to work together so you do have some commonalities and hopefully through this process we can identify ways that we can do a little bit more and a little bit better in terms of personnel and costs. Carolyn said that at the workshops they asked the people who attended a "king for the day" question, which was what was the first item at the top of your list that you wanted to address the most in terms of services that you are providing? What do you think is the most important thing to address about the services that are provided? One representative stated "working together as one unit". Another representative stated "consolidation and regionalization". Carolyn asked why he mentioned this? He stated "because we are all doing the same thing, we are all doing the same training, we are all doing the same service, and we are all wasting the same amount of money." Another representative said "a guaranteed response, 24/7". Another representative said, "getting the manpower to guarantee that we can get the apparatus out the door 24 hours a day". Another representative said "we need to let the community know that we are volunteers and maybe then more of them would come out and help us". Another representative echoed a previous comment by stating that "it was an adequate 24 hour a day response manpower-wise". One representative said that it was "adequate staffing levels". Carolyn asked regarding the staffing issue, was there a certain time of day that was more critical? She was unaware of the staffing levels of each of the departments and asked if the need was the same across the board? A representative stated that "all of the agencies have adequate staffing given the right time of day. The problem is the not-so-right time of day: 6 a.m. to 6 p.m." He stated that "this is a major issue because you have to rely on all five (5) fire companies. One company may have one (1) guy, another has two (2) guys and a third has one (1) more guy (who is available) and trying to get them all together at

the same time with the right equipment to handle the incident is a difficult situation to rectify". Carolyn asked the group "to pretend we have already gone regional" and asked them if they thought they "already had the right equipment?" One representative answered that "we have more equipment than we need". Carolyn said "okay, then it's a staffing issue". Another problem is that you are volunteer organizations and you are having difficulty letting the community know that you need volunteers. The issue of incentives to attract potential volunteers has been raised. Carolyn asked if "there were certain incentives that would be more appealing than others?" A representative said "real estate tax relief", but wanted to go back and discuss the staffing issue first because he stated, "you could have a million dollars in incentives out there, but if there's no bodies to draw from, because they're all working 6 to 6, the issue is still there". Carolyn asked "was that your busiest time?" A representative said "it was for those of us who don't have adequate staffing". A representative said that 64% of their fire company's calls came during 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. period. Carolyn asked how much staff, percentage-wise, do you have from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. versus 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.? A representative said "90/10, if you are lucky". One representative said "they are lucky to have two (2) guys during the day" at their company. After 5 o'clock they may have eight (8), ten (10) guys depending on the type of call." Carolyn asked "what are the ages of your volunteers?" One representative answered "old". The representative stated that at his company "60% are over 40 years old". The rest are "between the ages of 25 and 35". Another company representative said their members were "25 to 35". The representative with the older members said that was because the type of resident that lived in their area were "moderate to high income professional" people who commuted to their jobs. A lot of these residents considered their fire company to be a "paid department". A Dewey Fire Company representative said that the majority of their company members were younger people. Carolyn asked regarding the "90/10" issue, "when did you start noticing that this was happening?" Has it been this way for a number of decades? A representative said "yes". Another representative said that (it's been a problem) "probably for the past 15 years". The representatives from all of the companies stated that the ranks of their junior members have also dwindled to an average of 1 to 2 members during this time. A representative said that most of the new members join because of family ties to the department. Carolyn asked the group what they thought "would be the greatest potential benefit from regionalization?" One representative said "the combination of manpower. Instead of one (1) person at each station you would have four (4) people available to man equipment, respond to fire calls. They could be at one main station with substations." Another representative stated that "there were several routes that regionalization could go: partnerships, association, combine all of the entities into one". The representatives said that "even if we regionalize, it is not going to solve the staffing problems between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m." Carolyn said that "so, before we even talk about the concept of operating as one unit, there is an underlying issue of availability of staffing which is top priority?" The representatives said "absolutely". One representative said that "you could give us all the trucks in the world, all the money in the world, it doesn't matter". One representative said that "if you are considering the concept of combining the personnel in all of the departments, if you look at the township and each department is at each corner of the township, so travel time to get to one guy to help him out is going to be, like, forget it". Just combining personnel "is not going to do it. We have to find a way within our response areas to get people involved". Or, "bite the bullet and say, hey, we have to go with paid staffing". Another representative said "we have money, we have trucks, we have training, it's just (a lack of) people". Carolyn said that back at the workshop in the spring there was a mention of the need for volunteers at the library, at the fire department. It is a community issue. It's just not the fire departments and some of the other services that rely on volunteers. Charlie mentioned that they have the same problem looking for volunteers to fill vacancies on the Planning Commission and Zoning Board. Glenn Kern asked the fire company representatives what had changed in the past 15 years that you are not drawing the volunteers for junior members and firefighters? The representatives said that one reason was that the residents are no longer blue-collar shift workers, but professionals who are raising children and are heavily involved in their children's school, athletic activities. It used to also be a social outlet for the members, today it is more of

an occupation. A Southeastern Fire Company representative said that when he started his fire company ran 25-30 calls a year and he was involved with the fire company one night per week for training. Now they are running in excess of 140 calls and some of the companies are up over 200 calls, so these guys are out every other night. Then there is training, business meetings, social events and other miscellaneous meetings like this, so you are out every night. When you are talking about asking somebody to volunteer for the library or Planning Commission, they may have to be out one (1) night a month; for a volunteer firefighter, he can't even get on the fire truck until they complete 160 hours of training just for the basic stuff. The representatives said that it takes four (4) months to just complete the firefighting essentials course. Each company's operating procedures differ. A representative said that because of the commitment required, a young member will realize "that you will have no social life". Carolyn asked the representatives how many of them "knew of someone who is under the age of 18 who is interested in becoming a firefighter?" The representatives laughed and said that if they knew of someone "they would all be at their doorstep". Carolyn asked if the fire companies in the neighboring communities were facing the same thing? The representatives said, "absolutely" and that it was a "statewide problem". Carolyn asked if anyone had looked into the cost of staffing a fire station? The representatives said that the cost would be "well in excess of a million dollars". Carolyn said that from the budget numbers that they have gotten from Charlie and Jack for community services, right now they estimate that the cost runs approximately \$130-\$150 per resident and 80-90% of that cost is for police services. We should start putting together these fire staffing costs since as the communities are projected to grow so also will the demand for these services and the staffing to meet these growth projections. The Dewey Ambulance representative said that last year EMS spent about \$200,000 for one (1) EMS truck operating 24/7. That did not include insurance, workers comp, uniforms, etc.; it was just the cost of putting two EMTs on the truck 24/7. This year with a second truck this cost has risen to approximately \$240,000. The firefighters said that to take a fire truck out on a call you need to have a minimum of four (4) guys. All of the fire company representatives said that their companies are all working to get their companies certified, which helps with grants. All of the companies apply for any grant opportunity that comes along. They have started applying together for interoperability grants. The fire companies said they conduct open houses and do presentations at the schools to attract new members. Glenn Kern asked the fire company representatives, if they had paid staff during the 6 a.m. – 6 p.m. period, how many would they need? The representatives said eight (8) people and the appropriate apparatus could cover the Township and Hellertown Borough. The representatives cautioned that, based on their experience, a combination department (½ paid – ½ volunteer) would cause a drop-off in their number of volunteers and the company would be faced with a choice having to go all paid to keep operating. One representative said that fire companies in NJ started out just having paid drivers to get the fire trucks to the fire and gradually they went with more and more paid staff so a lot of them are 75-80% paid staff now. The representatives said that there are a lot of "combination departments" operating successfully, but there are issues with them that have to be understood and addressed; we should look into and research them. The representatives said that our region does not have any large commercial/ industrial companies that normally allow staff to run to fire calls. Glenn Kern asked Carolyn if they could estimate the number of fire calls that we would be experiencing at full build-out? Carolyn said that this can be done. The fire company representatives said that you would also have to factor into that estimate the increased traffic we are experiencing from Routes 78, 33, 412, and the development of the Bethlehem Steel property. Jack stated that the Township has been working with the fire companies to address the scarcity of fire water supply in the outlying areas of the township through the SALDO, and we are also looking at the requirements for commercial and residential sprinkler systems. Carolyn said that she would like to begin looking at the cost numbers for paid staff and asked if any of this information was available? Jack said that he can contact Dean Fernsler at DCED and ask him for this information. The representatives said that there is information available through the Pennsylvania Fire Commissioners Office, Emmaus Borough who has a combination department, and the National Volunteer Fire Council website. Carolyn

said that we will provide them with some feedback once we gather this information and provide you with the options. This will not be a short-term project and she would like to put together the first set of steps that you as a group can work together on.

**A. Call to Order** - 7:40 p.m. Jane Balum, Vice-Chair

**B. Roll Call** - Present: Jane Balum, Susan Baxter, Glenn Kern, Ed Inghrim, Jack Cahalan, Charlie Luthar. Guests: Jenny McKenna, John Bate, Carolyn Yagle, EPD

**C. Election of Officers** - Jane said that the position of Chair has been rotating between representatives from the Borough and Township for the past few years. Priscilla was the Chair for this past year. Jane said that she does not have the time to assume the position of chair this time around so she is going to pass on the position this year. Glenn nominated Ed Inghrim for the position of Chair. There were no further nominations and Ed was elected Chair by a unanimous vote.

**D. Council Of Governments**

1. The minutes of the December 12, 2007 meeting of the Saucon Valley Partnership were approved following a motion by Glenn, seconded by Jane.
2. Treasurer's Report - Jack stated that the Checking Account has a current balance of \$36,398.39 at the end of December. He stated that a payment of \$2,764.34 was made to EPD during December from this account. We did receive funding from DCED in the amount of \$2,195 during December. The Treasurers Report Account has a balance of \$6,589.55. There were no payments or receipts for this account during December. Charlie said that the Hellertown Borough Council at their last meeting authorized the payment of their \$1,000 dues payment for 2008. Jack said that he will be contacting Dave Bonenberger at the school district to notify him that the 2008 dues are due. The Checking and Treasurers Account reports were approved following a motion by Glenn, seconded by Susan. Jack advised that we have a bill from EPD to approve for their services for the period December 1-31, 2007 which is contained in the letter dated January 7, 2008 in the amount of \$2,529.58. Jack stated that he reviewed this bill and found it to be in order and he recommended that it be paid. On a motion by Glenn, seconded by Jane the bill dated January 7, 2008 was approved for payment.

**D. Citizens On Agenda Items** - None

**E. Citizens On Non-Agenda Items** - None

**F. Work Session - Saucon Valley Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan**

Carolyn said that she thought the community services session that preceded this meeting was very successful as it gathered everyone in the same room and gave them a forum specifically for them to talk about the issues that they have recognized and wrestled with on a daily basis such as what to do about staffing especially during daytime hours and how that has shifted over the years with the residents who have moved into the community and how that has continued to shift in new directions as the communities continue to grow. We have looked at their information and have looked at it in terms of adequacy of services in the context of the buildout. We will get back to them with some recommendations in the short term for some organizational opportunities that may help them out with the staffing issues. Carolyn will get together with Jack and look over the information that has been gathered so far and see how that can help at the next level. Carolyn said that the lack of volunteers in the community for such things as the library and for firefighting is something that you are going to have to community-wide wrestle

with. They will come back in February with an assessment of community services to see how that fits into the overall action plan. Charlie said that one of the firefighters mentioned to him that this was the first time that they have had this level of participation. John said that he was impressed with their honesty and sharing and he thinks that it is something that we can build on. John cautioned that if we do consolidate you will be combining the calls from each of the five (5) companies and you will be up around the 1,822 calls that Dewey Ambulance did last year and you will lose volunteers since they have to go to work the next day. Carolyn said that they will be able to illuminate the problems of lack of volunteers in the plan document so that people will see that it is a real problem. Ed said that tonight was an eye-opener for him and he feels that this is a very critical problem and it needs to be beefed up in the action plan. John said that you shouldn't leave here tonight thinking that we are in danger because the fire chiefs have an excellent mutual aid system in place right now so this is not something that has to be done overnight. John does feel that there is some duplication of fire apparatus. Glenn said that he has been asking for a general overview from someone for sometime to see if there is duplication of fire equipment and what to do about it. Carolyn said that that can be incorporated into the action plan as a recommendation. Jack said that DCED does offer that type of analysis but according to Dean Fernsler they would like us to set up the Fire Services Task Force structure first and then that body can request this study by the state.

Carolyn asked if anyone had a chance to look through the Internal Working Draft document? She said that she did speak to Priscilla and Priscilla said that she originally thought that this document would just be the Partnership and after looking at it she realized that it wasn't just the SVP but individual entities who are doing certain things and the Partnership having a considerable say in these things, or at least being aware of what's being done. Jack said that he thought that Priscilla was also concerned that the plan was suggesting a larger role for the Partnership than what it is doing now and who would do this additional work? Ed said that Priscilla had called him the next day and she was concerned about this additional role for the Partnership and was saying that "her dance card was filled" and now you are asking me to take on this additional role as coordinator for these different organizations? Jack said that he believed that the model that Carolyn was alluding to was not one that would further tax the current members but envisioned the Partnership having a part-time or full-time director in the future. Carolyn said that that was correct. Charlie said that Renew Lehigh Valley has done something like this. They had an intern from Lehigh and they have now hired him permanently as the director. The COGs in the northern part of the county have directors with staff to fill this role. Carolyn said that there are a lot of issues on our list. The question is what do you want to be involved in and what level of involvement do you want to have? Jack said that this model then is what Carolyn was referring to in the working draft as the entity responsible for collecting data, maintaining a database, etc. Carolyn said that was correct. Carolyn said that they have a pretty good idea of what our priorities issues are; they need to know who do you want involved in working on them, and when do you want to start working on them: now or in a couple of years? She would like us to comment on the primary stakeholders and the timeframe portion of the draft. Carolyn asked if the steering committee would send her their comments on the internal working draft within the next two weeks. She will forward Jack an Excel copy of the draft which he can distribute to the members. She asked that they put their initials on it and if they want to remain anonymous, to put their comments in color.

## **G. Brief Reports and Discussion Items**

1. **Casino Related Issues** - Jack and Charlie said that they and Freemansburg Borough are setting up a meeting with the managers from the other two priority municipalities (Bethlehem & Hanover Townships) to try and convince them of the wisdom of the five (5) contiguous municipalities banding together to maximize our receipt of the casino host funds from Northampton County. We will ask them to go back and talk their elected officials

about this and, if they agree to it, we will put an agreement together with five (5) signatures on it to send back to the County Casino Impacts Committee.

2. **Regional Policing** - Charlie stated that we have a meeting scheduled here on Monday, January 14, 2008 at 6:30 p.m. with Ron Stern from DCED and the two (2) peer consultants to review their initial Police Study report. Charlie said that he understands that the purpose of this meeting was to get input from the Councils and Police Chiefs and then to go back and fine tune the report. Charlie said that this has been advertised as a public meeting.
3. **Polk Valley Road Intersection Enhancements** - Jack stated that the traffic signal application package has been submitted to PennDOT. Jack gave John Bate a short update on the meetings that we had with the property owners on each of the corners.
4. **Joint Enterprise Zone with City of Bethlehem** - Charlie said that the City of Bethlehem has submitted their application to DCED and after they receive approval they intend on amending it to include Hellertown, Freemansburg Boroughs and Lower Saucon Township.
5. **Hellertown - Lower Saucon Compost Center** - Charlie said that we had a great first year at the Compost Center with a total of 3,034 customers from both municipalities using the Center over the 62 days that the Center was open. The Center will be open Saturdays this month to accept Christmas trees and then will be re-opening in April.
6. **Tax Reassessment** - Ed said there is nothing really new on this issue. He did give a presentation to the school board last night and since it looks like the County will not be doing anything in this area he will be recommending at an upcoming school board meeting that the school district consider doing point-of-sale appeals of assessments where the school board will challenge the assessments of properties that have been sold. Ed said that he did a study looking at what would happen if we didn't implement this program versus if we did implement it and found that, if we don't do something, in ten (10) years, the school district's tax millage will be 70 mills. It's now 50. If we implement the program, it would drive the tax millage rate down to 47 mills.
7. **Fire Analysis Study** - Jack stated that the Township is waiting to hear from the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) fire company in the Township by the end of this month about their interest in participating in the concept of the Fire Services Task Force that was presented by Dean Fernsler of DCED. Three (3) of the Township fire companies so far have agreed to participate in the concept. Dewey Fire Company will be involved in this process. Charlie said that Dewey Fire Company has submitted an application for a federal SAFER grant which they would like to utilize to pay for full-time staff at the fire company. Jack said that the Township fire companies had put together a list of incentives to assist with their recruitment and retention efforts.
8. **Proposed Leithsville Sewer** - Charlie said that there have been a number of presentations to the Borough Council by Gar Davidson and Brad Youst from the Lower Saucon Authority. At the last meeting of Council there were a number of issues that were raised that were put together in a letter from the Borough Solicitor to the Authority solicitor and they are waiting to get feedback from that. Charlie said that the discussions on the Leithsville sewer line between the municipalities will have an impact on the concept of the Municipal Services Boundary that we are in the early stages of discussing with the Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plan since the implementation of this plan may require additional sewer/water lines to be run through the Borough. If we can't come to a successful conclusion on this, it will have an impact on the future buildout development of the Township.
9. **COG Website** - Jack said that this is still being worked on. There will be an area on the Township website for Partnership information, agendas, minutes, and, in the future, the draft comprehensive plan.

#### H. Other

1. Glenn said that as a point of order he realized that he made the motion for the approval of the December 12<sup>th</sup> minutes and the Treasurers reports and he was not at that meeting. A

motion was made by Susan, seconded by Jane to approve the minutes. An additional motion made by Susan, seconded by Jane was made to approve the Treasurers reports.

2. Jane said that we did not elect a Vice Chair for 2008. Jack said we also did not appoint a Secretary-Treasurer. Glenn said that he was interested in being the Vice-Chair if anyone wants to nominate him. Jane nominated Glenn with Susan seconding the motion. Following a unanimous vote, Glenn was elected Vice Chair. Jack stated that he will continue as Secretary Treasurer for another year. Glenn made a motion seconded by Susan and with a unanimous vote Jack was appointed Secretary-Treasurer.
3. Jack mentioned that the Township had asked the PADEP to come in on January 25<sup>th</sup> and do an energy audit. Tina has been invited to attend for the Borough.

**I. Events Calendar** - no update

**J. Adjournment** - The meeting was adjourned at 9: 00 p.m. by a unanimous voice vote.

The next meeting of the Saucon Valley Partnership will be held on February 13, 2007 @ 7:00 p.m. at Lower Saucon Township.