

**Turtle Creek Valley COG
Director's Report**

TCVCOG Board Meeting
April 23, 2015

Important Dates:

May 1, 2015: Center for Community Progress presentation: "EVALUATION OF THE TRI-COG LAND BANK BUSINESS PLAN" May 1st 9:00 am at Steel Valley COG, 1705 Maple St, Homestead, PA 15120

May 19, 2015: Police Chief Meeting - 1:00 pm

May 20, 2015: Managers Meeting - 10:00 am

Land Banking:

In November 2014 the Redevelopment Authority of Allegheny County engaged the Center for Community Progress to conduct a review of the Tri-COG Land Bank Business Plan. The CCP is a national organization that specializes in blight and is an expert in Land Banking. Their review of the land bank business plan positive. Quotes can be found on the hand out at tonight's meeting. The CCP did offer some suggestions for revisions to the Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement which we have already taken into consideration. We have been working the Mike McCabe from Goehring, Rutter, and Boehm to revise the language per their suggestions and suggestions Mike had as the solicitor of the Woodland Hills School District. The revisions to the ICA were sent to Allegheny County for their review.

Kim Graziani, Vice President and Director of National Technical Assistance for the Center for Community Progress will be presenting on the report title, "EVALUATION OF THE TRI-COG LAND BANK BUSINESS PLAN: A Solid Foundation for a Regional Approach to Vacancy and Abandonment in the Mon Valley and Beyond." The event will take place on Friday May 1st at 9:00 am in the conference room at the Steel Valley COG. Whether you are considering joining the land bank or have already committed, this event provides a unique opportunity to discuss the Tri-COG land bank business plan and to learn how land banks have had a positive impact in communities throughout the country. This presentation is open to staff, elected officials, and solicitors from school districts and municipalities.

Blight:

We were selected to receive a Local Government Academy Intern this summer. The intern will split his time between our COG and the Tri-COG Collaborative. He will be starting up a GIS

system that will allow the COG to collect data and create community maps. Once the GIS system is up and running we hope that our members use the COG to help them create maps that can better inform municipal decisions. The intern's second project will be to work on the Tri-COG Collaborative's Healthy Housing Market and Asset analysis. He will be in the field collecting data for participating communities. The data that is collected will be used by municipalities and an analysis will be completed in partnership with the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania.

The Tri-COG Collaborative has received funding to support the completion of a housing market profile, asset analysis, and training sessions for each of five municipalities that have interest in participating in the Tri-COG Collaborative Land Bank. The project is intended to enable the selected municipalities to design a strategy for housing market recovery, based on an approach developed by the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania. The housing market profile and asset analysis will provide detailed, up to date information about housing conditions and housing market opportunities specific to your municipality at no cost. This information could be beneficial to your municipality as documentation for development financing proposals, for requests to the land bank, and for applications for state programs administered by the Wolf Administration. Information on how to apply for this opportunity was sent to all the municipal managers in March. The due date for Letter of Intent is April 28th.

At the March 23rd Blight Busters meeting Drew Hohensee from Wells Fargo Bank presented on bank owned properties. We received a lot of positive feedback from the presentation. Wells Fargo works with communities that have Vacant Property Registrations. They are the first bank to have a Property Preservation department that is working on issues of foreclosures and community development. They also have a program of donating properties, oftentimes with funds for renovation or demolitions to municipalities and nonprofits. We see this as a great partnership opportunity for the land bank.

We are happy to announce that the Benedum Foundation has pledged \$150,000 to the Tri-COG Collaborative for a Commercial District Analysis and Strategic Redevelopment Planning. The Tri-COG Collaborative will focus attention in 10 Tri-COG communities to identify and locate commercial corridors and jointly develop a redevelopment strategy and action plan. More information about how to apply to participate in this project will be forthcoming. This analysis, along with the Healthy Housing Market Analysis, are parts of the Tri-COG Collaborative holistic approach to community analysis and redevelopment.

Code Enforcement

Our Code Enforcement Program began on March 9th in Wilkins Township and Churchill Borough. We have hired Jason Heider, who was a former firefighter in Wilkinsburg.

The property maintenance and inspection database has been updated. It allows for citations to be categorized by municipalities and letters automatically generated with language from the ordinances. Jason has a tablet that can be used in the field and correspondence and Notice of

Violations can be wirelessly printed to the office. The database allows for reports to be generated to allow for timely follow-up and dissemination of information for municipal councils.

We are very grateful to the Municipality of Monroeville who has generously donated a vehicle for the code enforcement department. The vehicle has been installed with a GPS to allow oversight of the program.

We are meeting with Churchill and Wilkins Township on Tuesday, January 28th to air and resolve any potential issues. To date, all feedback has been positive.

Jason will be attending the Local Government Academy program on implementing Act 90 next week.

ALOM Conference:

Our hospitality room at the ALOM Conference at Seven Springs was filled with our members, partners, and other local and state elected officials. This year was the first year we had a booth in the exhibitor hall. We partnered with Muni-Link to advertise our municipal billing service to municipalities outside of the TCVCOG. We also gave out information about our vector services. We are in the process of following up with interested municipalities. Overall I think the weekend was a success and there were many connections that were made.

Utility Billing:

We had a training with Muni-Link on April 6th to get a better feel for the software. Muni-Link is currently working with our office and our software programming to get all of the current data converted.

Joint Police Testing:

An advertisement for our Joint Police test appeared in the paper on April 19th. Churchill, Forest Hills, North Versailles and Wilkins Township are participating. Applications are due by 2:00pm on May 4th, and the test will take place on May 14th.

Other:

Allegheny County Economic Development is planning on updating the county's Comprehensive Plan that was completed in 2008. The planning department has proposed that it focuses on the Tri-COG region. The preliminary meeting was held on March 2nd. The county has asked the three Executive Directors of our COG, the Twin Rivers and Steel Valley COGs to sit on the committee that will review the RFP, assist with the selection of the consultant, and advise and assist the consultant as they conduct their analysis.

Liz sat on an advisory committee that was assisting Allegheny County Economic Development Housing Division in the selection of a consultant that will complete a Housing Market analysis of all municipalities in Allegheny County outside of the City of Pittsburgh. The analysis and the data should be in a format that can be used by municipality for future planning.

On April 8th Liz attended the Allegheny Conference of Economic Development's quarterly meeting. They released their 2014 Annual Report and cited job growth and a focus on technologically based industries. The biggest barrier to development, that they have identified, is the lack of "pad ready" sites. Pad ready meaning all of the needed infrastructure is in place prior to developers coming to look at the properties. They have put together a fund to subsidize getting properties pad ready. We will be looking into these funds once they become available.

On April 17th Amanda was asked to join the PA Housing Alliance in a meeting with Rep. Joe Markosek to ask his support for the Housing Trust Fund. The legislation currently being debated takes a portion of the Real Estate Transfer tax and allocates it toward affordable housing and blight related projects. Proceeds from this tax currently go into the State's General Fund.

Because we've had ongoing problems, and because our needs have changed, we made some improvements to our phone system. The improvements include a separate line for code enforcement, music on hold, and a fix for a voicemail issue.

On May 7th, Amanda has agreed to present on Land Banking at the PA Land Trust Association conference. As the Tri-COG Land Bank moves forward, Land Trusts can be important partners for disposition of property.

Police Chief Meeting – April 17, 2015

In attendance: Chief Williams, Forest Hills; Chief Farally, Pitcairn; Asst. Chief Watson, Swissvale; Chief Funcek, East Pittsburgh; and Asst. Chief Kujava, Churchill

At our last police chief meeting that took place on April 17th at 1:00pm in the COG office, the chiefs discussed the desire to form a Tactical Training program for Patrol Officers. The concept is to establish and teach standard operating procedures, and critical combat care. It is hoped that this would count toward MPOETC in service training.

It was suggested that the COG apply for, and administer grants, that would help offset the cost of the program. Initially it is estimated that training equipment for 20 officers will cost approximately \$17,500. It was also estimated that two trainers would be needed to conduct a class at a cost of \$50 per hour each. The COG will charge \$60/hour for time spent toward this project, with the goal of covering this expense through a grant. Otherwise this cost will be split among the participating towns.

A goal of the program is to minimize municipal costs by offering training at various times of the day. Other issues yet to be determined are secure storage of equipment, and insurance. Plus, some type of ongoing commitment to the program should be established to demonstrate sustainability.

The Westinghouse facility in Churchill, and/or at the Monroeville Public Safety Training Center were identified as possible training locations. Letters of support from each organization should be obtained for the grant application process.

Please let me know if your department would participate. Also, please indicate how many officers are in your department.