

**TURTLE CREEK VALLEY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
November 20, 2014
6:30 pm**

VOTING DELEGATES:

Timothy Bridge, Max Spencer, William Price, Robert Parker, Peter McGinty, Sylvia Martinelli, John Prucnal, Dennis Simon

ALTERNATE DELEGATES:

Bill Pfoff, Kevin Collins, Joe Costa, Karen Peterson

STAFF:

Amanda Settelmaier and Liz Kozub

GUEST:

Derek McLaurin and Scott Baker, Muni-Link

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 6:34

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Peter McGinty, seconded by Rob Parker to approve the October 23, 2014 Minutes and Treasurer's Report. Motion passed unanimously.

UTILITY BILLING SOFTWARE

Amanda talked about last month's preliminary discussion of potentially changing the COG's utility software. Our current software is home grown and was built but a very smart woman from Turtle Creek. However it is outdated, and we rely exclusively on Karen to make updates. It will be very difficult for our organization when she decides she no longer would like to maintain the software. Derek and Scott are in attendance from Muni-Link to talk about the company's software product and answer any questions. Scott gave the presentation on Muni-Links. Below are some highlights:

- Muni-Link is a utility billing software, and it is a part of Link Computer Corporation
- The company came into the business of municipal billing because their existing computer and software customers urged them to get into the industry.
- Pitcairn has recently signed a contract with them for electricity, cable, and garbage billing.
- The company has switched a lot of customers who have used single person software developers to Muni-Link. One of the major problems with having a home grown system is that you are totally reliant on one person.
- Muni-Link has 22 employees in its municipal software division
- Once you are a customer of Muni-Link you can access a complete help desk that has 13 programmers on staff to answer questions and trouble shoot. These programmers are also constantly enhancing the program based on customer feedback.

- Amanda said that there still needs to be a person to print the bills, apply payments and answer constituent phone calls, therefore Muni-Link is not a competitor to the COG billing program
- Municipal managers and staff can have access to the program in a “view only” mode and “view and reporting” mode
- There is no upfront software costs. The only upfront charges are for Muni-Link to complete the data conversion
- Amanda explained that the advantage is by coming together collectively. The costs per bill are lower with more participation. Muni-Link charges cents per account on a sliding scale. Therefore the greater the number of billing accounts the lesser the cost per bill.
- There are functions for residents who own multiple properties to manage multiple accounts
- Also there are additional functions so that landlord can be made aware of problems on their accounts. Right now we cannot store tenant and landlord information
- Amanda remarked that Muni-Link offers constituents’ payment options that we currently cannot offer. Constituents can look online to see consumption history and bills that are due. They also have the ability to receive electronic bills and pay online. These functions will actually decrease the cost of billing. If residents choose electronic bills the cost we spend in postage will decrease.

Amanda concluded that the COG needs the utility billing program to sustain the revenue and keep the membership dues low. This is a very important part of the COG’s operating revenues and without this program our organization will look very different. It will likely be a good investment for the COG if more communities will use the COG services for their billing. She is looking to the Board for guidance on this decision.

ANNUAL DINNER

Tim asked if there were any ideas for location, date or speaker to invite to the annual dinner. The dinner typically takes place on the fourth Friday of February, the board agreed that date will work. Also, over the past several years the dinner has taken place at Banquets Unlimited in Wilmerding. Sylvia suggested checking out the Comfort Inn in Wilkins. Amanda will get some pricing on both locations and come back to the board for a decision.

Bill Pfoff suggested having a speaker from the Cuyahoga County Land Bank. They have been used as an example of a very successful Land Bank and their history with a decline in the steel industry is very similar to what we face in this region. He feels that since the COG has put a lot of effort in blight mitigation work and land banking that the theme of the dinner should be in line with those efforts.

Amanda thought that was a great idea and suggested having the Center for Community Progress, who recently conducted an analysis of our Land Bank business plan. They are a national organization with a lot of experience working with land banks across the county.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

See attached report.

OPEN DISCUSSION

Joe went to the Local Government Academy sewer conference last week and it was very informative. There was a lot of good information that was disseminated that can be shared if others are interested.

Rob Parker made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Sylvia Martinelli. Meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m.