

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

TCVCOG Board Meeting  
September 2024

### **Upcoming Meetings**

October 3<sup>rd</sup>: Manager's Meeting, 2:00pm  
October 15<sup>th</sup>: Police Chief Meeting, 2:30pm  
October 24<sup>th</sup>: TCVCOG COG Meeting, Virtual

### **Joint Verizon Contract Renewal**

A project kick-off meeting was held on August 1<sup>st</sup> during our regular Manager's meeting.

### **Appeals Boards**

In May I indicated we need to fill positions on both our UCC Appeals Board and our Property Maintenance Board. Serving on one of these boards is a great way to give back if there's not a lot of time to spare. The boards meet infrequently. Thank you for your assistance in getting these important positions filled with reliable board members.

### **Code Enforcement/CodeNforce**

I'm happy to report we began property maintenance work and Occupancy Inspections in Forest Hills Borough on August 1st. Furthermore, Etna Borough and Sharpsburg Borough have expressed interest in codeNforce.

We hosted a BETA CNF Lunch & Learn meeting in August.

### **PA Tax Exempt Appeal**

Our liquor store purchase for ALOM sparked an inquiry of our tax status by a State Auditor. The auditor told me that we have to apply for tax exempt status with the PA Dept. of Revenue, which I did. The Dept. of Revenue declined our request, so Dayne Dice and I appeared at a virtual hearing with the Dept. of Revenue to appeal their decision. Essentially, we argued that COGs are quasi-governmental and therefore tax exempt and I presented a power point that described our work. We're hoping that the original decision was based upon lack of knowledge of COGs. A decision should be rendered on or before January 2025.

### **Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) partnership**

TCVCOG has entered into an agreement with ACHD to help facilitate participation from targeted TCVCOG communities. This community climate resilience project is funded by an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant through the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD). ACHD was awarded \$930,411 for this 3-year long project.

The main goal of the grant, titled Environmental Justice Government to Government (EJG2G), is to improve climate change resilience and engage in climate change preparedness within local environmental justice (EJ) communities. This grant seeks to achieve this goal through collaboration with municipal communities, local government, councils of government (COG), ACHD, and climate-environment focused organizations and partners. Eligible TCVCOG towns are: Braddock, North Braddock, Rankin, Swissvale, Turtle Creek, Wilksburg and Wilmerding.

The project contains the following activities and elements:

- Develop a municipal-level climate resilience plan (CRP), with the intention of being proposed to municipal council for adoption. This plan should be community and expert informed. **And,**

- Participate in at least one flood mitigation project: a Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) project and/or waterway cleanup project
  - The GSI projects include either a new GSI installation **OR** an upkeep of an existing GSI site; in collaboration with the University of Pittsburgh Mascaro Center for Sustainable Innovation and Landforce
  - The waterway cleanup projects include a waterway cleanup or an illegal dump site near a waterway cleanup; in collaboration with Allegheny Cleanways

### **Retirement Savings Plan**

It has come to my attention that TCVCOG would be eligible for state reimbursement if we change our 403(b) plan to a 401(a) plan. Equitable, our current broker, does not offer 401(a) plans, so we would need to switch. As such, I've been working with Sue Trout from Mockenhaupt. Sue has put me in touch with NPPFA Benefits out of Chicago. Since TCVCOG opted out of social security in the 1980's, we should consider upping our Retirement Savings Plan contribution to 12.65% (7.65% + 5%). Doing so will help us attract and retain employees.

### **Accounts Payable**

It has been brought to our attention that moving to a fund account platform would better serve the three communities we serve. Our current system, Great Plains, does have a fund module, so we are currently investigating that option.

### **Utility Billing**

Please reach out if we can help with your refuse, stormwater or sewage billing. We have submitted a proposal to the Southwest Buter Stormwater Authority, and hope to work with them on their stormwater billing.

### **Payroll**

We are investigating other payroll services since Paycor has not been responsive to our needs. Kirsten Gusten, our shared finance professional with SRCOG, has suggested we move to Gusto.

### **Manager's Meetings**

June 6, 2024 - Managers Meeting @ Monroeville Community Park

Attendance: Connie Rosenbayger, East McKeesport; Greg Bachy, Swissvale; Alex Graziani, Monroeville; Tim Saunders, Wilkins; John Antinori, Wilkinsburg; Mike Bolen, Pitcairn; Natalie Merola, TCVCOG; Amanda Settelmaier, TCVCOG;

#### Old Business:

- a. Verizon Contract Renewal Update: We have enough towns participating to maximize our 20% discount with Cohen Law Group. Amanda asked what format was preferred for the kick-off meeting. It was agreed that virtual would be best.
- b. The TCVCOG will contribute \$2,000 toward the cost for each participating town in the contract renewal project, except Penn Hills.

#### New Business:

- a. Sue Trout, VP of Client Relations with Mockenhaupt attended the meeting to discuss Drop Pensions. She thoroughly explained what they are and how they work. She also discussed pro's and con's of having drop pensions. (pro's: good for retention and recruitment, and for planning; cons: no state aid or employee

contribution during drop). She also advised the group that fiduciary responsibilities still lie with the town, not the police, during a drop. That means the drop money is not theirs until exiting the drop. Funds in the drop cannot be invested. She also suggested that drops start in July to keep six months of state aid.

Meeting concluded at approximately 3:30pm.

### August 1, 2024 – Manager’s Meeting, hybrid

#### August 8, 2024 – Police Chief Meeting

Chief Cole, Monroeville, Chief Como, Penn Hills; Chief Conley, Plum; Chief Watson, Swissvale; Chief Lowden, East McKeesport; Chief Locke, North Versailles

The PA DUI Association joined us to update the group on opportunities through the association. Law enforcement is getting increased attention at the association. Currently, Plum Borough and Monroeville have 2 DRE’s (Drug Recognition Experts) that are shared with other municipalities. The Drug Ed application is due in Aug/Sept, and awarded in December. This opportunity will pay for officer time and backfill.

#### September 5, 2024 - Managers Meeting

Attendance: Connie Rosenbayger, East McKeesport; Greg Bachy, Swissvale; Tim Saunders, Wilkins; Rebecca Vargo, Wilkins; Seth Abrams, Forest Hills; Michelle McAndrew and Ashley Brown, Churchill; Mike Boland, Pitcairn Amanda Settlermaier, TCVCOG;

Virtual Attendance: Lou Ransom, Braddock; Joe Varhola, North Versailles

Old Business:

1. Franchise Renewal Update – No Update

New Business:

1. TCVCOG Social Media Posts – Amanda presented a media kit to the managers for their use. Social media images, Newsletter content, and towns-specific flyers are all part of the media kit, and can be found here: <https://tcvcog.com/code-enforcement-media-kit/>. We received positive feedback from the managers. There was some discussion about ordinances and newsletters.

Open Forum for Discussion: There was discussion pertaining to refuse collection.

Meeting concluded at approximately 3:40pm. Next Meeting: October 3, 2024 at 2pm

### **Snapshot of events throughout the Recess**

June 12- North Hills COG CNG Demo for managers- Virtual Amanda, Natalie and NH managers, there was interest from two towns in discussing CNF more and demos.

June 13<sup>th</sup> – Lunch with Judge C and CE officers – discussed streamlining hearings-

June 20<sup>th</sup> – CBO meeting @ S Hills Country Club: updates to Code Enforcement and Networking with local building officials.

June 24 – Meeting with Stephanie Edwards - ( DCED) Amanda, Natalie, Norine discussed MAP Grants

June 26 -Natalie & Melinda – LGA event

July – Start CE property maintenance services in Turtle Creek

July 3 – Amanda Alex and Keegan joined Kate for an interview with WESA to discuss Code Enforcement. Stay tuned for the article.

July 5 – Meeting with Hillman Foundation, Pam, Meredith, Natalie, Amanda, Ann, - Discussed wrapping up the Hillman Grant for year 2. Discussed how funds were used, reviewed goals and exceeded them. Also received approval for remaining funds to be used towards onboarding new towns.

July 9<sup>th</sup> – Amanda talk with Sue Trout

July 10<sup>th</sup>- met with Reserve township for a CNF Demo, Reserve twp is seeking board approval. They were given a demo login to explore the system over the summer.

July 15<sup>th</sup>- Melinda participated in the Lead Safe Allegheny and Housing Data Group meetings

July 30<sup>th</sup> – Software Demo Account- Amanda, Norine, Kathi w/ Debbie Grass &

Aug 1<sup>st</sup>- Start CE services in Forest Hills

Aug 6<sup>th</sup> – Codenforce Beta user meeting, Eric, Amanda, Natalie, Melinda, Alex, Mike, Karl, Ryan from Wilkins Twp, Anthony from N. Braddock. Discussed the app and other new updates to CNF in person.

Aug 8<sup>th</sup> – Police Chief – special meeting –

Aug 8<sup>th</sup> – LGA intern recognition luncheon

Aug 14<sup>th</sup> – Claire Dunning’s first day – Claire will be working at the front desk and learning all of the office functions with an emphasis on CE admin support.

Aug 14<sup>th</sup> – Amanda meeting with Dayne Dice

Aug 23<sup>rd</sup> – Amanda virtual with DOT

Aug 27<sup>th</sup> – Amanda & Natalie discussed MAP grants with Stephanie from DCED

Sept 4<sup>th</sup> – Amanda and Natalie – visited open office space @ MMA ( INCLUDE ??) – Also working on ordering new desks.

Sept 5<sup>th</sup> – Code Enforcement Check in with Seth, Amanda, Natalie, Alex

Sept 11 & 12<sup>th</sup> CBO conference – Alex, Mike, Karl, Natalie Merola- topics covered basic CE services, new updates in Code Enforcement

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Respectfully submitted,  
Amanda Settelmaier