

**LUZERNE COUNTY HOME RULE TRANSITION COMMITTEE**

**March 7, 2011**

**MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE**

A Special Meeting of the HRTC convened in the Commissioners Meeting Room at the Luzerne County Courthouse, 200 River Street, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. It was called to order by Vice Chair Jim Bobeck at 6:45pm. The meeting was to interview consultants with potential to assist with the county home rule transition.

**ROLL CALL**

<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>	<b>ALSO PRESENT</b>
Jim Bobeck, Vice Chair	Maryanne Petrilla	Attorney Jeff Malak
Ronna Ciaruffoli, Secretary	Steve Urban	Clerk Gloria Kijek
Rob Bakewell		
Tom Cooney		
Kick Heffron		
CJ Kersey		
Rick Morelli, via telephone		
Susan Shoal, Treasurer, via telephone		
Jim Haggerty, Chair arrived after roll call.		

**CITIZEN COMMENT (agenda items)**

None.

Vice Chair Jim Bobeck introduced the two consultants present. Mr. Kaplan from PFM and Mr. Mohr from Mohr Management. He explained they should address the following questions during their presentation. Does the HRTC need a consultant? And why should it be you?

**PRESENTATION/INTERVIEW OF PFM**

Mr. Kaplan introduced his organization as being from PA but they have worked with folks all over the country; most recently working with Cuyahoga County, Ohio with forming their new government and also Alleghany County, PA with their Home Rule transition.

Mr. Kaplan first addressed the question does the HRTC need a consultant? He explains their view is that it is your government, your charter. But it is a big, tough job; there are a lot of changes. Committee members are part time volunteers and it is a time consuming job. You may need some expert experience and outside perspective in some areas. You may need some research that you are capable of doing but that you may not have the time or specific background to do.

Mr. Kaplan used Cuyahoga County as an example. He explained they worked with a citizens group and the County itself on a list of tasks, much like what the HRTC has identified. They walked through some of the key issues with that county and where exactly they wanted to be on Jan. 1. Then they sorted through what they could do themselves, what the County Staff could do with support, and what they wanted PFM's assistance to do in areas that there was not sufficient

help or expertise. Mr. Kaplan then gave some specific examples of the kind of support his organization provided Cuyahoga County that would be similar to what the HRTC may experience in their transition. Mr. Kaplan's assistant, Seth Williams, passed out some handouts showing some of these examples, with emphasis on the Cuyahoga transition.

Mr. Kaplan then addressed the question why his organization?

He expressed again that they were a PA based company with Home Rule experience around the country. They worked with Luzerne County on other funded projects and have familiarity on the structure of government departments and what some of their challenges are and what some of their failures have been. They have worked with situations similar to Luzerne County nationwide. He feels they have the experience to address the needs of the HRTC and if not, they know where to research and find the experts that would. They also have a consulting group consisting of professionals who were former county officials.

Question CJ Kersey - Concerned about overlapping and contradictions of codes and has PFM seen this?

Mr. Kaplan replied most of the governments they have worked with had left a certain piece of that for the administration to develop. However they have experience with different codes from working around the country.

Question Ronna Ciaruffoli - Asked about the 100 to 200 volunteers that Cuyahoga County had and how were they organized?

Mr. Kaplan said Cuyahoga County had solicited a large amount of citizens through a website and folks would express interest in a certain area. Some of the committees had more dedicated volunteers than others. We had suggested that they go to the community and seek out experts and professional volunteers. For example the legal community got together and provided each of the committees with a legal advisor.

Question Kick Heffron - Asked about combining the row offices and asked about Unions - - who worked with them and how?

Mr. Kaplan said one of the biggest issues was personnel in the row offices. Some offices had job descriptions and specific plans of promotions and other row offices were completely random. He talked about budget issues in row offices and how they liked to maintain their independence on these matters. He also talked about the resistance of the process in the DA's office in Cuyahoga County and how it was explained to Cuyahoga County that PFM's job was to be there to help make an effective transition not to make and resolve political decisions. Separating these two issues is important.

Seth Williams commented that it is a complicated system because of all the row offices that are being consolidated. It helped to let folks know that PFM was there for the transition process and not to decide who should be working where, and at what pay rate. He said this was a big factor in its success.

Question Kick Heffron - Asked if PFM actually looked at the space issues and location of each job position?

Mr. Williams responded yes they looked at this and all the strengths and weakness of job specifications. And they actually sat down with each department and went through everything

from job description to discipline to reporting structure to performance reviews. Not everything can be resolved prior to the transition; much planning was still left to the new government.

Question Jim Bobeck -What problems do these counties still have? And why do they still have them?

Mr. Kaplan said one reason is there are a lot of immediate and day-to-day issues you have to deal with when the new government comes in. Second, is it is critical to get the right people in place as far as department heads and selecting a manager. And finally he said public trust is an issue and will be an ongoing problem. Mr. Kaplan used examples of ways others have promoted this ongoing trust, particularly with citizen involvement in the process.

Question Jim Haggerty - Referred to page 23 of proposal, in regards to critical day to day issues, concerned that the committee may not know all that there is to know about these to make good recommendations to the manager. Asked Mr. Kaplan his thought on this issue.

Mr. Kaplan said they came up with a list and then they went directly to the departments, the professionals, and asked their input and what they were concerned about. Then we identified, prioritized, and addressed the majority; those items that weren't addressed prior to the transition were submitted for action.

Question Jim Haggerty - He said members of this committee had never been involved operating a county government. His concern is that no matter how much time they spend on it they may never be able to identify the day to day issues that professionals will be able to identify.

Mr. Kaplan said the new government and new manager will still have a lot of the County employees working with them, and they are dedicated and know the day to day issues.

Question Susan Shoal - Asked what worked for other counties, and how much has PFM adopted from them?

Mr. Kaplan said they look at similar areas in the country, such as population and salaries and see what works for them. They also target the issues that are really critical to your county.

Question Ronna Ciaruffoli – How far was Cuyahoga County into their transition when they came to you for consulting?

Mr. Kaplan said they had the same time frame as you, about 14 months. It was about May we started working with them.

Question Jim Bobeck – What concerns us is what we don't know. How do you address that, the unknown?

Mr. Kaplan said you folks have written the charter and know the issues. The most important thing for us to do is to focus on the big issues and let the selected manager and the council fill in the gaps. If its public trust, we focus on that, whatever the big issues are.

Question Tom Cooney - What budget was Cuyahoga County allocated for their consultant?

Mr. Kaplan said about \$450,000.

Question Tom Cooney - What kind of budget we should be looking at?

Mr. Kaplan replied not everything is scaled, because you are looking at structure, probably between \$100,000 and \$200,000.

Question Jim Bobeck – What kind of interaction would you have with county?

Mr. Kaplan said it was important to first identify what tasks you want your consultants to address. Develop a scope and set deadlines.

Jim Bobeck stated for the minutes that the phone was still working but no response from Rick Morelli.

### **PRESENTATION/INTERVIEW OF MOHR MANAGEMENT RESOURCES**

Jim Bobeck introduced Mr. Mohr and asked him to start by addressing the same initial questions.

Mr. Mohr introduced himself and said he was approached in December by Gerry Cross (NE PEL) who said the county is going through a transition and they may need some help from someone familiar with the PA home rule transition process. He then started attending some meetings of the HRTC.

Mr. Mohr answered the first question does the HRTC need a consultant?

He said he presented an approach in his scope of work. He said his job would be to help facilitate the process and help the HRTC come to decisions they need to make. He said it is a complicated process and he can make it easier for the HRTC to get from here to there. He will help with the process and provide resources for research, codes, job descriptions, government practices, salary scales, etc. He will provide the HRTC with information that provides them with a high level of understanding of county government. You need someone with that expertise to help.

Mr. Mohr addressed the question why him?

He said he knows the HRTC is on a modest budget. He based his scope on that and it is based on an hourly rate. With more money, of course more could be done. He will familiarize himself with each member by meeting with them one on one to find their expectations and goals, and what expectations the HRTC has for a consultant. He will always work with the end in mind. He will look for the best practices in PA and take from them what is unique for this county. He, as a consultant, helps make your job easy. He would participate in whatever meetings they feel he should attend; and if he feels he doesn't have to be there in will say so to save money. He has experience in job descriptions, office set up, salary scale, internal alignment, etc. For example, he would suggest ways to save money with advertising. He would help with the manager selection process. He would also look at keeping everything within budget.

Question CJ Kersey - What were some of the challenges that you saw working with Lehigh County and what can Luzerne County transition committee learn from that?

Mr. Mohr responded that paying too much attention to detail and getting as much as possible into place was counterproductive. The transition goes on into many of the years of the Home Rule transition.

Question Kick Heffron - How did you deal with Unions?

Mr. Mohr said not too difficult, union contracts still stand and what isn't covered under union contract will be covered under the personnel policy.

Question Kick Heffron - How do you deal with two people sitting across from each other doing same job one making \$8 an hour and one making \$10 because they are in different unions. Did you find this worked itself out over the years?

Mr. Mohr stated union agreements dictate rates; rates would be renegotiated with the contracts. This will be something the Manager will address.

Question Jim Bobeck - Do you see any similarities between Lehigh and Luzerne Counties?

Mr. Mohr replied most counties have the same five codes, some codes will have the same items broken down into different categories. You have to look at different ones and choose what works for you and what you like.

Jim Bobeck, noted for the minutes that Rick Morelli wasn't on line anymore.

Question Ronna Ciaruffoli - What is your most recent role in a government transition?

Mr. Mohr talked about his credentials.

Question Susan Shoal - Her concern is with structure of government and asked about streamlining. Is there more enthusiasm in rewriting code?

Mr. Mohr responded you can change code anytime. You can put as much or as little into government structure; your county manager can take a look at this. You want remain flexible. Susan Shoal expressed concern some of the actions committees are working may become irrelevant later with changes in organizational structure.

Question Rick Morelli – Asked about the cost and if there is any other funding available to help pay for it?

Mr. Mohr said his cost is \$90 hour; doesn't charge for travel if in Luzerne County, and he can look around for grants and funding for HRTC.

### **CITIZEN COMMENT**

Steve Englot, Swoyersville - Commented on county employees' willingness and capabilities in being able to provide help; it's a resource that can be tapped.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Jim Haggerty commented on the County's budget's flexibility.

Susan Shoal asked about the process from here as far as hiring a consultant.

Jim Haggerty said he will have on agenda for the next meeting on Wednesday for committee to discuss if we need consultant and if so, selection.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Upon motion by Ronna Ciaruffoli, second by Rob Bakewell and unanimous approval of the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 9:05pm.