

LUARCC Minutes – Wednesday May 6, 2009

Flag Salute.

Roll Call was read.

Commission members present: John H. Fisher, III, Chair; Joseph V. Doria, Jr.; Marvin Reed, Robert F. Casey, Steven M. Cozza, Joseph Donahue (for the State Treasurer). Absent Gary Passanante.

Staff in Attendance: Hannah Shostack, Executive Director; Dennis Smeltzer; and Albert J. Wolfe

Certification of Public Notice was read by Staff.

Adoption of the minutes of the March 27, 2009 meeting was moved by Mr. Reed, seconded by Mr. Casey and approved unanimously. Mr. Cozza abstained.

Adoption of the minutes of the April 17, 2009 meeting was moved by Commissioner Doria seconded by Mr. Reed and approved unanimously. Mr. Fisher abstained.

Hannah Shostack, Executive Director of LUARCC, announced her resignation as of May 16, 2009.

Commissioner Doria moved that the LUARC Commission commend Ms. Shostack for her service. Motion was seconded by Mr. Casey and approved unanimously.

Mr. Reed moved that the five reports submitted by Rutgers be accepted. Commissioner Doria seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Progress report by Commission member Robert Casey regarding his further development and analysis of a database to assess implications of consolidating “doughnut” and “doughnut-hole” municipalities was presented.

Mr. Casey said that he would, today, address the “almost-donut-hole municipalities.” He defined these as small municipalities substantially surrounded by another, larger municipality. Factors examined: 1) geography; 2) connectivity; 3) population size. Mr. Casey said he was looking for both negatives vs. positives especially in current tax structure; police and public safety.

Commissioner Doria said the screening process seems to be a good one.

Mr. Reed asked if the ultimate goal is a list of towns that should look at merging or is it a list of towns that should merge?

Commissioner Doria said LUARCC does not have authority to create a list of municipalities that should merge.

Mr. Cozza agrees with the methodology and believes LUARCC should continue on this line.

Mr. Fisher asked if the Commission is consulting with people outside of LUARCC?

Mr. Casey said yes, he welcomes review of the methodology by others. He also said the end goal of this methodology was to identify municipalities that the Commission should examine further for possible realignment, reorganization or consolidation. He said that he would present his analysis today as far as it is developed and would complete the analysis for the next Commission meeting.

Mr. Casey reviewed a list of “almost donut hole” municipalities that should consider merger:

Using his methodology Mr. Casey discussed 26 sets of municipalities involved in “almost-donut-hole” relationships. These 26 sets include 51 municipalities. Of the 21 sets 12 of the sets were good candidates for in-depth study and two sets merited possible study.

During general discussion, Commissioner Doria suggested that the Commission should seek to share information and work with County Executive Superintendents of Schools through the Department of Education. The County Executive Superintendents are charged with consolidating school districts and may have valuable information to share.

Mr. Reed commented that the restriction against considering consolidations that cross county or legislative district lines was problematical and should be revisited. This issue was a factor during Mr. Casey’s presentation.

Mr. Cozza suggested that, while consolidation may be warranted in some cases, the combining of two economically unstable units might result in one larger economically unstable unit.

Public Comment:

Eugene Sarafin of Hightstown believes the State should be committed to municipal merger of services.

Commission went into Executive Session.

The members discussed the appointment of an Acting Executive Director.

The Commission returned to open session:

Mr. Casey moved that Dennis Smeltzer be appointed Acting Executive Director of the Commission, Commissioner Doria seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Reed moved that the final invoice from Rutgers for the work accepted earlier in this meeting be paid, Mr. Reed seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Reed and Chairman Fisher discussed their attendance in Princeton at a meeting to discuss a possible merger of the Township and Borough. They commented on the presentation given by Marc Pfeiffer of the Division of Local Government Services. Mr. Reed

said that the presentation would be a useful resource for anyone exploring these issues. Commissioner Doria suggested that the Commission cooperate with any requests from Princeton Borough or Princeton Township connected with exploration of consolidation. Further, he said that the Commission should provide access to Mr. Pfeiffer's presentation through the LUARCC web site.

Adjournment. On a motion by Commissioner Doria, seconded by Mr. Cozza the Commission adjourned at 11:55 p.m.