



Municipalities decline to talk merger with Newberry Township

Newberry Township's was the latest failed effort to discuss consolidating local governments.

By TERESA ANN BOECKEL
Daily Record/Sunday News

Updated: 09/25/2009 07:05:28 AM EDT

Newberry Township officials recently sent a letter to the neighboring boroughs of Lewisberry, Goldsboro and York Haven to see if council members would be interested in talking about a municipal merger.

All three councils responded: No.

It marks the latest failed effort to discuss consolidating local governments as a way to save money and eliminate duplication of services.

East Manchester Township and Mount Wolf participated in a merger study until the borough opted out last year. Manchester Borough also had been involved early on but dropped out.

Newberry Township vice chairman supervisor Stephen Pancoe said there has been a lot of discussion at the state level about municipal mergers, and he knew that the state Department of Community and Economic Development could provide money for a study.

The boroughs already contract police services from the township, Pancoe said. He could see combining existing authorities, such as sewer, into one. A single road crew could tend to all the streets. The savings could add up.

"We were trying to reach out and say 'let's talk,'" Pancoe said. "They aren't interested. It's pretty much a dead issue at this point."

Council members from all three boroughs reviewed the letter from the township, and they were not interested in discussing it, representatives said.

"I guess we like our little empire," Lewisberry council president William Thompson said.

Council members didn't want to lose control over its borough buildings, the park or its electric services, he said.

Lewisberry buys electricity from a distributor and then sells the power to the residents. The borough has a contract through 2015, Thompson said.

Goldsboro would rather remain independent, council president Cory Ensor said.

York Haven council members want to keep the town the way it is, council president Margaret Malehorn said.

People like the idea of having representatives down the street that they know, and they think their local government is working well for them,

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said Dan Fink, a spokesman for YorkCounts. The organization looks for regional solutions to problems.

It took a couple of years and many meetings to bring representatives from nine municipalities together to do a study on a larger, regional police force, Fink said.

Talking about a municipal merger intensifies the difficulty exponentially, he said.

POLICE STUDY

Representatives from nine municipalities have been meeting since April to discuss a police consolidation study, said Dan Fink, a spokesman for YorkCounts.

They are awaiting a proposal from a consultant that would outline what the study would involve and how much it would cost.

YorkCounts had been hoping to pay half of the cost of the study with money from one of the state Department of Community and Economic Development's programs.

However, the state budget currently has no money in that program, Fink said.

YorkCounts is confident that the money can be found through other sources, he said.

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