

**SPECIAL TRI-BOROUGH MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEETING
COURT FEASIBILITY STUDY
TUESDAY, MAY 4, 2010 – 7:15 P.M.
PARK RIDGE COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Sign in sheet distributed and attached.

Mayor Ruschman welcomed those attending this evening's meeting. Prior to the meeting, Government Strategy Group (GSG) prepared and distributed responses to requested clarifications which had been received from all three municipalities.

Linda Murphy, Consultant GSG led the discussions.

Group discussion on **implementation costs.**

- Costs would be minimal.
 - The SHARE grant program previously available from the NJ Dept. of Community Affairs is no longer available.
 - It was originally assumed that the grant would cover any costs associated with implementing a Joint Court.
 - No grant funds will be available FY2011
 - Sharing of assets; i.e. office furniture
 - Utilizing DPW staff to relocate office furniture as opposed to Moving Van was discussed
 - Utility Shelving – Approx. \$500
- Possible additional costs would be the purchase of video conferencing equipment - \$11,000 to \$12,000
 - Installation and maintenance of ISDN line - \$220/month, or
 - Installation and maintenance of digital line – less than \$200/month
- Mayor LaPaglia suggested a committee be formed to gather actual costs
 - **Montvale to take lead**
- Linda Murphy advised the cost savings is maximized through the restructuring of staff
 - **Linda Murphy suggested each town appoint an officer as court liaison which helps with communication**

Discussion on the central location of Park Ridge for the three towns

- Determined the current facilities at Montvale could host a joint court, Park Ridge would have required facility improvements which would have increased the implementation costs
 - Discussion of the use of couriers and the necessity that they be Court staff due to the chain of custody requirements

Group discussed **parking at Montvale facility**

- It was determined that the parking is adequate
 - Court times could be staggered if necessary; i.e. 4:00 p.m., 5:00 p.m.
 - Library would be only possible conflict

- Could arrange that no library programs were scheduled on court days

Discussion on **cost to use Montvale facilities** to Park Ridge and Woodcliff Lake

- Linda Murphy stated that whether or not the court was held in Montvale
 - Montvale would still have the expense of the space
 - Additional utility and janitorial costs will have to be tracked for 6 months to a year to determine actual costs
 - The increased costs would be shared by the participating towns
- Discussion on the necessity for Video conferencing
 - Only used for incarcerated persons for first appearances
 - Agreement reached that it is not necessary for Montvale, Park Ridge and Woodcliff lake at this time
 - Could share the equipment with other towns at a later date

Discussion on Pre Hearing/Pre Trial Negotiations

- Police concerned that there is a relationship established and an understanding with their Prosecutors currently
 - Officers could provide written statements to Prosecutor or telephone conferencing in place of appearance at court
- Linda Murphy advised that these are discussions that would be held as to the operations of a joint court
 - There are mechanisms that could be put in place, if agreed upon by all parties

Discussion on **appointment of judge discussed as well as prosecutor and defender**

- Judge Baboulis noted it is a gubernatorial appointment
 - Reality is the assignment judge would make appointment
- Judge Baboulis advised those present that her understanding is that it is very difficult to disassemble a joint court, and that all parties should be aware of that
 - Linda Murphy stated that all shared service agreements have written into them “opt out” clauses and that she advises the participating towns to allow at least a year for an accurate review of operations
 - **She further advised the establishment of an Advisory Committee which would be periodically so as to avoid surprises**
- The study anticipated an estimated savings to the Borough of Park Ridge of approx. \$85,000 and approximately \$71,000 for Woodcliff Lake
- Those present discussed the potential for **increased over time**
 - **Linda Murphy recommended that all three courts review their trials, Special Sessions, DWI and possibly Domestic Violence cases similar to what Montvale had done**
 - Number of sessions at 3-4 hours per session (average case) multiplied at average OT rate for police officer
 - Chiefs could discuss amongst themselves Court security
 - Study outlined Montvale as lead agency the responsible party for court security

- Some security services could be shared with Park Ridge and Woodcliff Lake personnel
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Discussion on who would be responsible for **oversight of expenses**

- Linda Murphy recommended the municipalities utilize the **Case Load Allocator so as to equitably distribute expenses**
 - **Advisory Committee would set the guidelines**

Group discussion on number of court sessions and length of sessions

- Currently 8 court sessions between three towns per month
 - Approximately 24 hours per month
- Recommendation of 4 court sessions, 4 hours each per month and allowance for one Special Session per month
 - Reduced to 16 hours
- Linda Murphy stated that the Judge would set the court schedule

- Linda Murphy thanked all for participating in the night's meeting. Further stated that she sees a worthwhile savings for all three towns and hopes that they will give the concept some thought

- Montvale Court Administrator asked for direction from those present as to the next step.
 - Consensus is necessary from the governing bodies of all three towns
 - Linda Murphy recommended redistribution of the Feasibility Study, Power Point Presentation and this evening's points of clarification

Discussion on timing to move forward if agreed upon

- AOC needs 60 days to do their work
 - Realistically 4-6 months to make the switch over
 - Joint Court could go live January 1, 2011
- Linda Murphy further recommended Dover's agreement as a template for the towns to follow

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.