

## **Offering Some Reasons to Explain Why Consolidation Commission Was Wrong**

To the Editor:

The Consolidation Commission is composed of intelligent, well-meaning, hard-working people. So why did the Commission reach the wrong conclusion about the benefits of consolidation? Why did it recommend consolidation, even though consolidation will greatly disadvantage Borough residents and will provide little or no benefit to Township residents? Here are some of the reasons:

The majority of the Commission members were already pro-consolidation when they were appointed to the Commission.

Group dynamics pushed the few undecided Commission members towards supporting consolidation. (As a sociologist, I saw this happening during Commission meetings.)

Commission members seem to favor consolidation for emotional reasons. They ignore the hard economic facts. They seem determined to consolidate, no matter what the cost and no matter what the negative effects.

Commission members dismissed major disadvantages of consolidation (for example, Borough disenfranchisement: The 2:1 ratio of Township to Borough voters and all the at-large seats on the new Council would result in most seats being filled by Township residents).

The initial goal of consolidation was a large decrease in property taxes. But when the Commission projected negligible savings (a few hundred dollars a year), the Commission switched to vague goals that cannot be measured, such as "efficiencies" and "effectiveness."

The Commission is overoptimistic about even the few hundred dollars per year, because the new government would probably find it difficult to implement all the layoffs required to achieve these savings.

The Commission was hoping to get reimbursement from the state for \$1.7 million in expenses for the transition to consolidation. But recently the state said it would reimburse no more than 20 percent of the expenses.

The Commission's recommendation ignored the large upcoming additions to the Borough tax base in Palmer Square and the hospital site, and the comparatively few additions likely in the Township. If we do not consolidate, Borough taxpayers get 100 percent of the municipal benefit from additions to the Borough tax base. If we do consolidate, Borough taxpayers get only approximately 1/3 of the tax benefit.

Commission members are so committed to consolidation that they ignored a better option — shared services. Merging the police departments would, by the Commission's own calculations, save 2/3 of the savings they calculate from consolidation. Shared services are superior to consolidation. They would not disenfranchise Borough residents. They would not require \$1.7 million in transition costs. They would not demand changes in ordinances and governance.

It is not surprising that Commission members who favored consolidation at the beginning would decide to recommend consolidation at the end. What is surprising is that we, the public, are expected to accept the Commission's incorrect recommendation. It is even more surprising that Borough residents are expected to vote in favor of losing their representation and most of their tax benefit from Palmer Square and the hospital site.

Fortunately, most of us are wise enough to recognize that the Commission's recommendation is wrong. On November 8, we will vote against consolidation.

*Phyllis Teitelbaum  
Hawthorne Avenue*