

Consolidation Savings a Myth

Dear Editor:

The real myth in the Consolidation debate is the belief that combining the municipalities will save us money. This myth is promulgated by every pro-consolidation advocate except the mayor of the township. To his credit, the mayor has repeatedly stated that, after transition costs (now publicly estimated to be \$1.7 million), there may be NO net savings. He is a member of the Consolidation Commission with the credentials (CFP, CIMA) to make that claim authoritatively.

Supporting evidence surfaced during the Oct. 26 meeting of the Commission, when it was publicly revealed that the original estimate by municipal employees of the transition costs of IT (computers and communications) substantially exceeded \$1,000,000, but that amount had been reduced by the Commission to below \$200,000 on the advice of the consultant, on the basis that the State had previously rejected another municipal merger reimbursement application because it deemed the cost too high. Thus our \$1.7 million cost estimate, which includes only the reduced amount, may be substantially understated – by well over \$800,000 in the IT category alone. And the reimbursement amount we receive will be much less than 20% of the actual transition costs, even if our leaders can convince the State to pay it.

We have been deceived by false promises before. For example, the Borough garage was presented to us as a money-making venture. But with debt service, insurance, and all other costs included, it is losing money. The politicians, however, report a profit by commingling the garage loss with parking meter income. The difference between parking meter income and reported income is a garage subsidy which we would receive if the garage did not exist or were privately owned.

If consolidated, our government leaders will try to hide any loss, as they did with the parking garage. However, if they are unable to conceal it, they will blame it on “inflation”, “deflation”, “unexpected transition costs”, or any other handy excuse. Only the prospective mayor, the current Township mayor, need not resort to such subterfuge, because he has already warned us of this possibility. In either case, we cannot expect our taxes to decrease during the 5-year transition period.

If controlling the cost of living in Princeton is important to you and you believe the warnings of the Township mayor, as I do, you should also vote NO on consolidation.

Ronald Nielsen
Princeton Borough