

# **Mount Penn Borough Municipal Merger Ad Hoc Committee Meeting Minutes**

**February 13, 2025**

**6:34 PM – Municipal Meeting Room**

## **1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance**

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 PM by Hunter Ahrens. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those in attendance.

## **2. Attendance**

### **Committee Members Present:**

- Ryan Mauer (Chair)
- Thomas Baer
- Michael Kindlick
- Hunter Ahrens
- Troy Goodman
- Yrisol Garcia
- Several other committee members and speakers.

## **3. Election of Chairperson**

The committee unanimously elected Ryan Mauer as the Chairperson of the Municipal Merger Ad Hoc Committee.

## **4. Agenda Review**

No changes were made to the agenda. The committee agreed to follow the outlined discussion points.

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## **5. Discussion Items**

### **A. Possible Municipal Names for the Future Municipality**

- Various potential names were discussed, including maintaining existing names (Mount Penn or Lower Alsace) for branding and cost efficiency.

- "Antietam Valley" was considered as it has been previously discussed in merger studies.
- Some concerns were raised about residents' reluctance to lose individual municipal identities.

## **B. Government Structure and Representation**

### **1. Type of Government**

- Options discussed included Second-Class Township, Borough, City (Third-Class), or Home Rule Charter.
- The committee leaned toward **Second-Class Township** due to its straightforward governance model, historical precedent, and lower resistance compared to Home Rule Charter.
- Home Rule Charter was acknowledged as an option but was deemed less favorable due to concerns about raising Earned Income Tax (EIT), which could deter support from Lower Alsace.

### **2. Number of Governing Members**

- The committee reached consensus on a **five-member governing body**, as it provides stability without unnecessary complexity.
- The possibility of a seven-member board was discussed but ultimately dismissed as potentially excessive.

### **3. Representation Structure**

- The options discussed included at-large, district-based, or hybrid representation.
- The committee reached consensus that **at-large representation** would be most effective, ensuring equal input from both municipalities and avoiding gerrymandering issues.

## **C. Financial and Tax Implications**

- The committee reviewed municipal debts and tax structures, confirming that Mount Penn's debt is minimal (under \$300,000).
- The Business Privilege Tax (BPT) would be impacted, and further exploration is required to determine its future under a merged municipality.

- Property tax rates and assessed values were discussed, with Mount Penn's millage rate being lower than Lower Alsace's.

#### **D. Merger Study Consideration**

- The committee debated whether an external merger study was necessary.
- Given prior experience and expertise within the committee, it was suggested that an internal analysis might suffice.
- The decision was made to **hold off on a merger study** until further discussions with Borough Council and Lower Alsace officials occur.

#### **E. Water and Sewer Authority Protections**

- The committee acknowledged concerns regarding potential privatization of municipal water and sewer infrastructure.
- A resolution was suggested to formally declare that there is **no intent to privatize** these utilities.
- It was noted that future governing bodies could not be bound by this resolution, but it would serve as a clear statement of intent.

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### **6. Next Steps & Action Items**

#### **1. Presentation to Borough Council**

- The committee will present these discussions and recommendations to Borough Council at their next meeting.
- If Borough Council approves, the recommendations will be presented to Lower Alsace Township for consideration.

#### **2. Drafting a Resolution**

- Hunter Ahrens will draft a resolution affirming the committee's position on water and sewer authority protections.
- Ryan Mauer will coordinate outreach with Lower Alsace officials to gauge their stance on the merger.

#### **3. Further Research**

- Committee members will review past municipal mergers in Berks County for additional insights.
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## **7. Public Comments**

- Residents inquired about Lower Alsace's position on the merger.
  - Concerns were raised regarding the tax impact and representation fairness.
  - The committee reiterated that discussions are still in the early stages and that public input will be considered throughout the process.
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## **8. Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The meeting adjourned at **7:02 PM**.