

LOWER ALSACE TOWNSHIP & MOUNT PENN BOROUGH
MERGER WORKSHOP AND SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETING
September 23, 2025

The Lower Alsace Township Board of Supervisors and the Mount Penn Borough Council met for a Merger Workshop and Special Business Meeting on September 23, 2025, at the Mount Penn Borough Hall at 200 N. 25th Street, Reading, PA 19606. Borough Council President Rick Lombardo called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and adjourned at 7:54 PM.

Township Supervisor and Board Chairman John Theodossiou, Supervisor and Vice Chairman Todd Weikel, and Supervisor Ann Sellers were present. Borough Council President Rick Lombardo, Council Vice President Christine Dise, Council Member Thomas Baer, Council Member Kelly Dudash, Council Member Yrisol Garcia, Council Member Troy Goodman, Council Member Michael Kindlick, and Mayor Ryan Maurer were present.

Staff and professional members present were Township Manager Don Pottiger, Borough Manager Hunter L. Ahrens, Chief of Police Ray Serafin, Deputy Chief of Police Justin Johnson, and Codes Administrator Arthur Kelly.

Several community members were also in attendance, including Curt Hill, Lorraine Storms, Holly Rigg, Karen Sadlowski, Alison Seward, Corinne Hauk, Heidi Fox, and Matt Piatt.

Attendance Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. A roll call was conducted, and all members of both boards were accounted for.

Discussion of Opportunities and Risks in a Merger

Mr. Theodossiou began by expressing that the township is willing to explore merger possibilities, provided everyone is genuinely interested in investigating whether it would benefit both municipalities. He emphasized that the Township did not want to merely go through the motions if elected officials were actually against it. He suggested that if a complete merger wasn't deemed appropriate, the process might still open doors for better inter-municipal agreements regarding buildings, equipment, and personnel.

Regarding board composition, Mr. Theodossiou noted the township's preference for a smaller governing body, stating that they would prefer three members (like county commissioners) but were willing to negotiate for five members. He cited the difficulty in recruiting qualified representatives with sufficient time to commit to service.

Mr. Weikel acknowledged the importance of comparing infrastructure between the municipalities. He highlighted the water and sewer authorities as significant considerations, especially after witnessing challenges in neighboring communities. Ms. Sellers expressed support for a five-member board, suggesting it would provide better representation and reduce risk.

Mr. Maurer raised concerns about the different tax structures between Mt. Penn and Lower Alsace, noting that Mt. Penn has higher property tax rates and a business privilege tax that Lower Alsace does not have. He emphasized the need to address how these differences would be reconciled in a merger to ensure mutual benefits for both communities.

Mr. Maurer asked about potential state assistance. Mr. Ahrens confirmed that the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) was engaged and prepared to contribute to a merger process directly, and potentially would fund a study to evaluate the costs and benefits.

Mr. Theodossiou stressed the importance of focusing on financial aspects rather than getting bogged down in details like building selection or staffing decisions, which he commented had hindered previous merger attempts. He suggested that potential benefits included cost savings through consolidated health insurance policies, shared public works capabilities, and eliminating service duplication.

The group discussed how a merger might strengthen emergency services, particularly the police department. The police department would no longer be a regional force and could qualify for more grant opportunities. Mr. Goodman noted that combining vehicles would create a fleet that could qualify for better insurance rates.

Regarding next steps, there was consensus to invite DCED to present on the formal merger process and potentially fund a feasibility study. The boards expressed interest in obtaining cost estimates from firms that study municipal entities for such a financial review. The group also discussed the possibility of surveying residents to gauge community sentiment.

Mr. Theodossiou emphasized that they couldn't make binding decisions for future boards. He added that they were not looking to eliminate any positions through a merger. He noted that both municipalities were operating with minimal staffing, and a merger might allow for enhanced services through more efficient personnel use.

Public Comment

Curt Hill, 1706 Friedensburg Road – Mr. Hill expressed concern about how taxes would be balanced between the two municipalities. He also emphasized the importance of maintaining focus on individual entities like the sewer and water authorities, suggesting that separate boards might be needed to ensure proper attention to these critical services.

Alison Seward, 822 Friedensburg Road – Ms. Seward asked a question about school taxes.

Chief Serafin noted that while daily operations would not change much under a merger, the department would benefit from no longer being classified as a regional force, which would open up more grant opportunities. He explained that the consolidated department would likely retain its identity to avoid expensive rebranding costs. He shared about cost savings opportunities, such as the police commission no longer needing its own solicitor.

Matt Piatt, 801 Friedensburg Road – Mr. Piatt asked a question about the interim governance structure in between a successful merger and the next elections. He also noted that Lower Alsace voted overwhelmingly in favor of the previous merger attempt, while Mt. Penn voted against it. He suggested that Mt. Penn would need to lead the way in emphasizing merger benefits for the effort to succeed.

Don Pottiger commented that he did not believe there was staffing that could be adjusted based on the current contingent of all municipal entities.

Other Business

Mount Penn Borough Resolution Adopting the CY 2026 Minimum Municipal Obligations (Pension MMO)

The Borough Council reviewed Resolution 11-25 regarding the Minimum Municipal Obligation for the pension plans. The defined benefit plan obligation was calculated at \$22,196.00, and the defined contribution plan at \$3,584.00, for a total of \$25,780.00.

Thomas Baer made a motion to adopt Resolution 11-25 for the CY 2026 Minimum Municipal Obligations. Seconded by Troy Goodman. Motion carried unanimously.

Mount Penn Borough Resolution Authorizing Grant Applications on Behalf of Lower Alsace Ambulance and Central Berks Regional Police Department

The Borough Council considered a resolution authorizing grant applications for two projects: \$467,100.00 for Lower Alsace Volunteer Ambulance Association station renovations, and \$321,586.00 for Central Berks Regional Police Department's police station renovations, totaling \$788,686.00.

Troy Goodman made a motion to adopt Resolution 12-25 Authorizing Grant Applications to the Commonwealth Financing Agency. Seconded by Michael Kindlick. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment

Michael Kindlick made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kelly Dudash seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:54 PM.