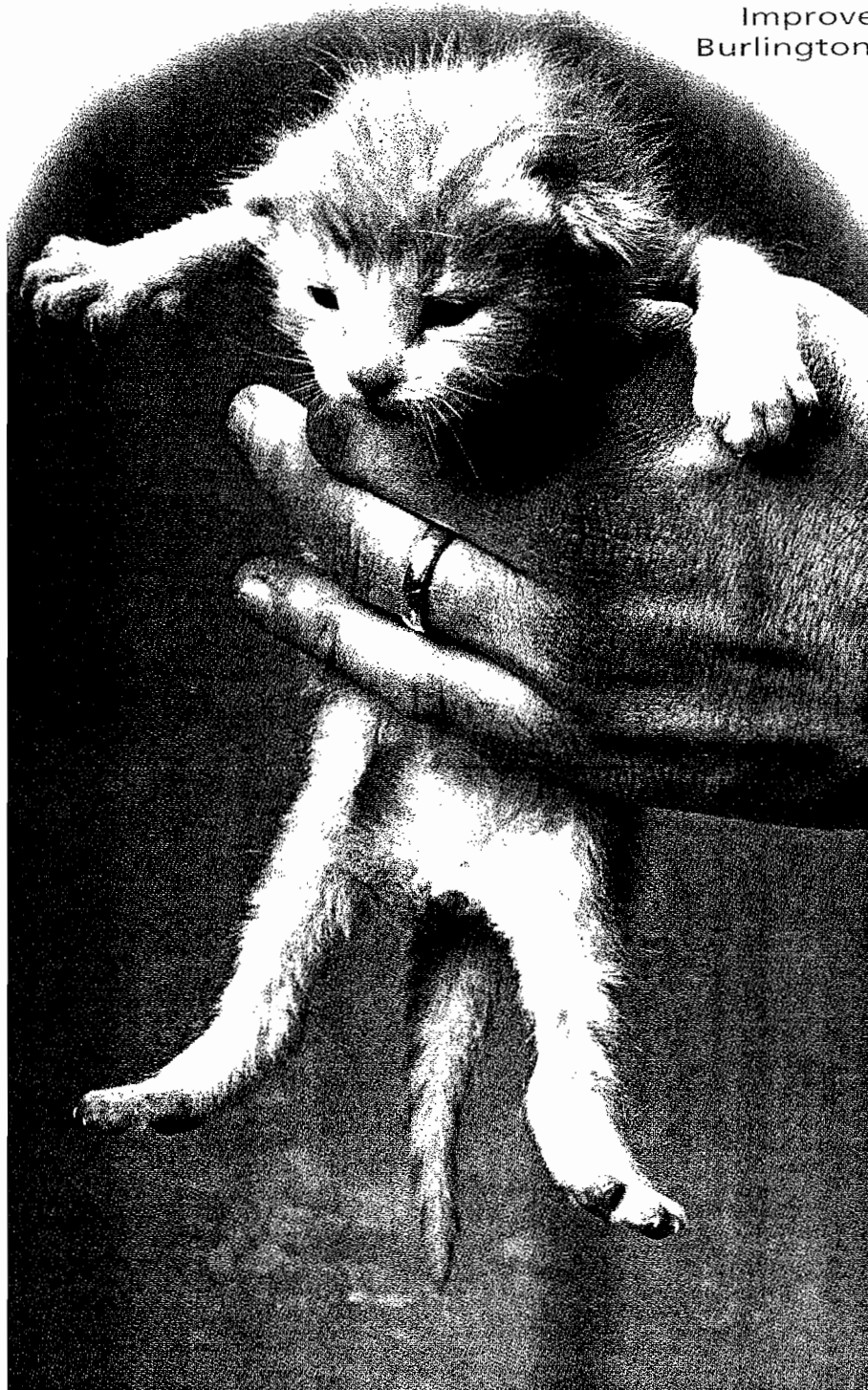


A Successful Forum for Sharing

By George Haeuber,
Township Manager, Maple Shade
Partner, First Jersey Municipal Assistance
& Gary LaVenia, Director of
Improvement Authority Operations
Burlington County Bridge Commission



“Shared services”—it is the new ‘buzz’ word and a concept that has been receiving increased attention as a part of achieving the goal of reducing property taxes. However, as most, if not all, municipal officials will be able to attest, local government has been sharing services and outsourcing services for years. For example, for the past 20 years the Burlington County Board of Chosen

FOR EXAMPLE, FOR THE PAST 20 YEARS THE BURLINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS HAS PROACTIVELY DEVELOPED AND OFFERED OPPORTUNITIES TO PUBLIC ENTITIES IN BURLINGTON COUNTY TO USE THE ECONOMIES OF SCALE TO CREATE EFFICIENCIES AND REAL COST SAVINGS.

Freeholders has proactively developed and offered opportunities to public entities in Burlington County to use the economies of scale to create efficiencies and real cost savings. Maple Shade, before entering into the more recent formal effort to create new opportunities for service sharing among other public bodies county-wide, contracted out and shared many services.

Animal Control is among the 14 services that are shared or contracted for in Burlington County.

As a result, in April of 2000, Burlington County agreed to obtain the services of a consultant to assist with its application for a County challenge grant from the state which would:

- provide funding for the Forum process to promote shared services throughout Burlington County,
- encourage establishment of regional (neighborhood) municipal groups focused on common service needs,
- provide communication among these "neighborhood" focus groups, and
- monitor broader shared services efforts in such areas as electrical aggregation, GIS and purchasing.

The Forum members agreed to match the county/state grant funding by establishing a dues system which would result in raising as much as \$10,000 annually through a population-based schedule (\$100 from each municipality under 5,000 in population; \$250 from 5,000 to 15,000; and \$500 for 15,000+.)

In mid-2000, Burlington County obtained the grant which, combined with funding contributions from municipal members, allowed a contractor to be hired to provide administrative services. Beginning in 2002, the Forum started an effort to involve school districts. After consulting with and observing the operations of other shared services organizations (e.g., Somerset County) in which school districts have played an active role which included funding support, it was found there were many areas of mutual benefit that would be derived from such a dialogue (i.e., purchasing, facility sharing, shared equipment use, training, computers, buildings and ground maintenance).

By 2003, the Forum had been operating for five years. By that time, the County Superintendent of Schools had become a regular Forum attendee, along with representation from the County Vocational/Technical school system. Other school districts had also begun to come to Forum meetings, along with the participating municipalities, 17 of which paid dues. In addition, the county and Burlington County Bridge Commission were active participants who had provided significant funding support for three years.

Successes Realized & Next Steps In that initial time from 1998 to 2003, the Forum was averaging eight to 12

meetings each year. It had been instrumental in the success of a number of initiatives, including:

- Demonstrated a need for the improvement authority powers,
- Joint Auctions,
- Master Public Works Service Sharing Agreements,
- Web Page, and
- Development of stronger interrelationships between governmental entities in all levels through ongoing dialogue resulting in a constant exchange of ideas.

In early 2004, the Burlington County Board of Chosen Freeholders proposed an administrative restructuring of the Forum in order to eliminate the need for the municipal contribution. It was also thought that the reorganization would increase participation from municipalities, school districts and other public entities. While a core group of municipal officials acted as an executive committee, broader participation and more promotional work was needed to increase awareness and attendance. Forum members began to discuss alternative ways to maintain interactions between communities without the high cost. In an effort to rejuvenate or, more appropriately, reenergize the Burlington County Shared Services Committee, the Bridge Commission created the position of Director of Improvement Authority Operations; they hired Gary LaVenía, who became the coordinator of the Forum's programs and activities. Looking at ways to enhance their communications with municipalities as part of their improvement authority mission, the Bridge Commission's Executive Director offered to facilitate the Forum.

Growth Brings New Accomplishments

Among many issues that have been addressed, two of the most important accomplishments of the Forum, as mentioned earlier, were the formulation of the Bridge Commission's improvement authority powers and the formation of the Municipal Apartment Condominium Collection System (MACCS), a joint purchasing program.

As a result of the Forum's efforts, the county was encouraged to prepare legislation, ultimately approved by the state, giving improvement authority powers to the Burlington County Bridge Commission. In its authority role, the Bridge Commission has saved millions of dollars in interest and cost of issuance in the financ-

ing of capital improvements and equipment purchases for all Burlington County public entities.

Over the past three years, the MACCS program has saved 11 municipalities \$654,000 per year in the cost of collecting solid waste for apartments and condominiums, which is required by state law.

The forum has grown tremendously in the last three years, meeting attendance is at an all-time high (averaging more than 70 people at each meeting), and there is representation from more than two-thirds of the counties at each session. Meetings focus on disseminating pertinent and timely information of interest to all participants as well as providing the opportunity for public officials to meet with their counterparts from other counties—all allowing for discussion and exchange of ideas, often sparking new ideas and creating new partnerships.

While Burlington County's achievements have been progressive and successful, as described, the most important part of the process has been officials getting to know one another, establishing relationships which improve intergovernmental relations, and sharing problems/solutions through dialogue.

We invite anyone who has an interest to attend the one of the BCSSF meetings. Feel free to contact Gary LaVenía, 856-829-1900 or George Haeuber, 856-779-9610 for more information. ▲



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Purchasing – County	

The Shared Services Forum In mid-March 1998, Maple Shade Mayor Gerald Mornell and Township Manager George Haeuber sent letters to the Mayors of all Burlington County municipalities suggesting a joint meeting process to discuss sharing services. A very positive response resulted in the scheduling of the first Shared Services Forum in Maple Shade Township on June 2, 1998.

The Burlington County Shared Services Forum is a group of elected and appointed public officials who look for opportunities to share services and programs in order to create financial savings for taxpayers. Over the next two

years, the Forum met 15 times, establishing an organizational structure which included as many as 27 of the 40 municipalities in Burlington County, which offered support by annually approving resolutions. Meetings of this newly named Shared Services Committee consisted of specific program presentations regarding selected topics for sharing services and open discussion on many subjects. The forums also included the faithful attendance and support of key members of county staff and administration.

Early programs were presented on cooperative purchasing of geographic information services; electrical aggregation; county improvement authorities; shared services legislation; Y2K Readiness; and emergency medical services (daytime response). Forum discussions touched on such services as: equipment sharing, animal control, library administration, emergency dispatch, health services, fuel dispensing, legal services, inspection services, data processing professional services and recreational programming.

Making it Official In February, 2000 the Forum met to determine the value of its continuing activities and concluded that the process had been and continued to be an important part of county intergovernmental relations. The decision was made to approach Burlington County and discuss formalization of the Forum organization and creation of a funding mechanism for administrative support.

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PSE&G Puts Traffic Control Payments on a Faster Track



By Donald Tretola
Regional Public Affairs
Manager, PSE&G

Delivering safe, reliable gas and electric service to customers is a top priority at PSE&G. Keeping employees—and the public—safe while performing that job is equally important.

Work site safety plays an important role in helping to keep PSE&G crews and its customers safe when utility work is being performed. Frequently, municipalities require or PSE&G requests traffic control services when working on major roads or when there is the potential for danger. The municipalities, in turn, expect to receive prompt payment for these services, ensuring that they will continue to be provided when PSE&G needs them.

So when municipalities began to express frustration with payment delays, the utility took a hard look at its payment process and made some changes.

To address the payment issues, PSE&G partnered with approximately 115 municipalities to implement a new expedited payment process for traffic control services provided by municipal police.

Instead of using a third-party vendor to pay local police, PSE&G now pays the municipalities directly. This new process helps to speed up payment, reduces PSE&G's administrative costs and enables our electric and gas crews to complete their work in a timely manner.

To expedite the payment process, PSE&G created purchase orders for each participating municipality. These purchase orders authorize PSE&G's field locations to directly request traffic control services from the municipality, and then pay the municipality. The purchase orders



A Kearny police officer stands watch to make sure a backhoe operator from PSE&G's Harrison gas shop works safely while servicing a gas main on a busy street in Kearny, NJ.

also allow PSE&G to control the funds to pay the municipalities.

Thanks to this new expedited process, municipalities are now receiving their payments more

The success of the new process didn't come without hard work and effort. PSE&G has worked for the past four years to address municipalities' issues, explain the benefits of the

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promptly. In most cases, payment is remitted within 14 business days after the appropriate paper work is submitted by the municipality.

new process and form partnerships with the municipalities. In the end, it was all worth it. The greatly improved process is yielding excellent results.

Many of the participating municipalities have praised the new payment process. "Our officers are pleased with PSE&G's new payment process because we receive more timely payments. I deal with two people at PSE&G, one for gas and one for electric. They both are very professional, knowledgeable and courteous," said a municipal representative from Lyndhurst, NJ.

Following is a brief overview of how the new process works:

- A designated employee at the PSE&G field location contacts the appropriate person in the municipality to request traffic control services and provides information such as date, location, time and number of personnel needed for a job. A confirmation fax for the request also is sent by PSE&G.
- The municipal contact identifies the appropriate personnel to handle PSE&G's traffic control request. PSE&G completes and submits the

appropriate paperwork provided by the municipality.

THE NEW EXPEDITED PAYMENT PROCESS IS WORKING SO WELL THAT PSE&G REPRESENTATIVES WILL BE REACHING OUT TO MUNICIPALITIES THAT ARE NOT YET PARTICIPATING TO DISCUSS IMPLEMENTING THE PROCESS.

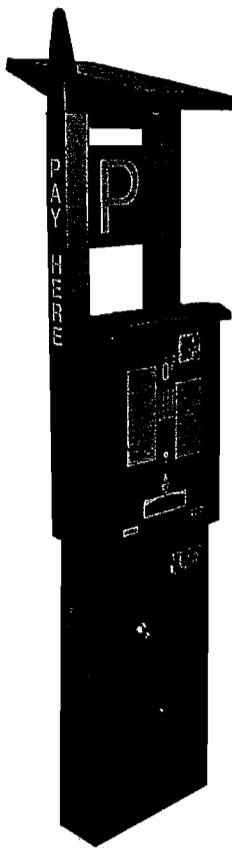
- After receiving the documentation from PSE&G, the municipal contact then schedules the appropriate traffic control personnel for the job.
- At the job site, PSE&G employees require municipal police officers to complete a voucher of service.

- The municipality then faxes that voucher, along with an invoice and a list of applicable rates of service, to PSE&G's field location.
- The PSE&G field location employee then processes the invoice for payment.
- Finally, PSE&G remits payment within 14 business days of receipt of the properly signed voucher and completed invoice.

The new expedited payment process is working so well that PSE&G representatives will be reaching out to municipalities that are not yet participating to discuss implementing the process.

Municipalities interested in implementing PSE&G's new expedited payment process or those with questions should contact Don Tretola by mail at 4140 Quakerbridge Road, Lawrence Township, NJ, by phone 609-799-6953 or by fax at 609-799-3984. ▲

Donald Tretola is a regional public affairs manager at PSE&G. He serves Middlesex, Mercer and Monmouth counties.



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