



**Turtle Creek Valley
Council of Governments (TCVCOG)**

The Past, Present & Future of Intergovernmental Cooperation

Profile 2011

Turtle Creek Valley Council of Governments

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS.....	SECTION 1
MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.....	SECTION 2
ABOUT THE TURTLE CREEK VALLEY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS.....	SECTION 3
SUMMARY OF SERVICES.....	SECTION 4
CONTACT INFORMATION & ORGANIZATIONAL CHART.....	SECTION 5
CDBG SUMMARY BY TOWN.....	APPENDIX A

1 Board of Directors

EXECUTIVE BOARD

TIMOTHY W. BRIDGE, CHAIRMAN
DENNIS J. SIMON, VICE-CHAIRMAN
WILLIAM H. PRICE, TREASURER
CAROL J. McDEVITT, SECRETARY

TCVCOG BOARD OF DIRECTORS

BRADDOCK BOROUGH
MATTHEW THOMAS

CHALFANT BOROUGH
MARK SWINNEY

CHURCHILL BOROUGH
ROBERT L. FERRY

EAST McKEESPORT BOROUGH
LYNN BROWN
PETER MCGINTY

EAST PITTSBURGH BOROUGH
DENNIS J. SIMON
JOHN CORBETT

EDGEWOOD BOROUGH
JACK WILSON
PATRICIA SCHAFER

FOREST HILLS BOROUGH
MICHAEL BELMONTE
BILL TOMASIC

MUNICIPALITY OF MONROEVILLE
CAROL J. McDEVITT
BERNHARD ERB

NORTH BRADDOCK BOROUGH
TIMOTHY W. BRIDGE
JAMES REICHERT

NORTH VERSAILLES TOWNSHIP
RUTH GRIMES

MUNICIPALITY OF PENN HILLS
DR. J-LAVON KINCAID, SR.
GARY N. UNDERWOOD

PITCAIRN BOROUGH
JOHN PRUCNAL
ORELIO VECCHIO

PLUM BOROUGH
CHARLES McMEEKIN
KEITH NOWALK

RANKIN BOROUGH
WILLIAM H. PRICE
LUCILLE RAGO

SWISSVALE BOROUGH
MICHELE STANTON
DAVID PETRARCA

TURTLE CREEK BOROUGH
MAX SPENCER
NICK BIANCHI

WALL BOROUGH
MICHAEL SWIDORSKY
STEVE ARNOLD

WILKINS TOWNSHIP
JOSEPH COSTA
SYLVIA MARTINELLI

WILKINSBURG BOROUGH
PAIGE TRICE
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WILMERDING BOROUGH
STEPHEN SHURGOT
GREG JAKUB

2

Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

I am writing this message on January 25, 2011, and I have just returned to the office from a meeting regarding salt brine. After learning about the equipment and procedures for producing the brine, it became clear that this was an opportunity for multi-municipal cooperation. This became even more clear when I learned that pre-treating roads prior to a storm with brine solution can save hundreds of pounds of salt in a given snow event. Pre-wetting salt can achieve a 30% salt savings.

While salt brine might not be the most exciting topic, it presents an opportunity for municipalities to save thousands of dollars. The Turtle Creek Valley COG is working to create a program whereby those towns that purchased the costly brine making equipment would sell the solution to towns that otherwise may not have access to this money saver. By selling the solution, the host town will be able to recoup its cost more quickly for the equipment purchase, and also have income to sustain the equipment – a win/win for all involved. This is one of numerous examples of how the Turtle Creek Valley COG works for its members.

For over 40 years, the Turtle Creek Valley COG has been assisting municipalities with various multi-municipal tasks. For example, we have represented your interests to the State and Allegheny County in numerous plans and studies. We have successfully administered millions of dollars in State and Federal grants. We have successfully competed to win grants on your behalf. We have filtered propositions on numerous presentations from the private sector. We have successfully implemented projects and on-going programs on your behalf. All of these things save municipal staff time and money, while still being accountable to elected officials.

What else can we do to serve our members? The answer is... whatever our members want! We can provide any government service – from tax collection to billing services! We are here to meet the needs of our members and can adapt our organizational structure to do just that. The good news is that you already have a tried and true organization ready to meet any multi-municipal needs that arise.

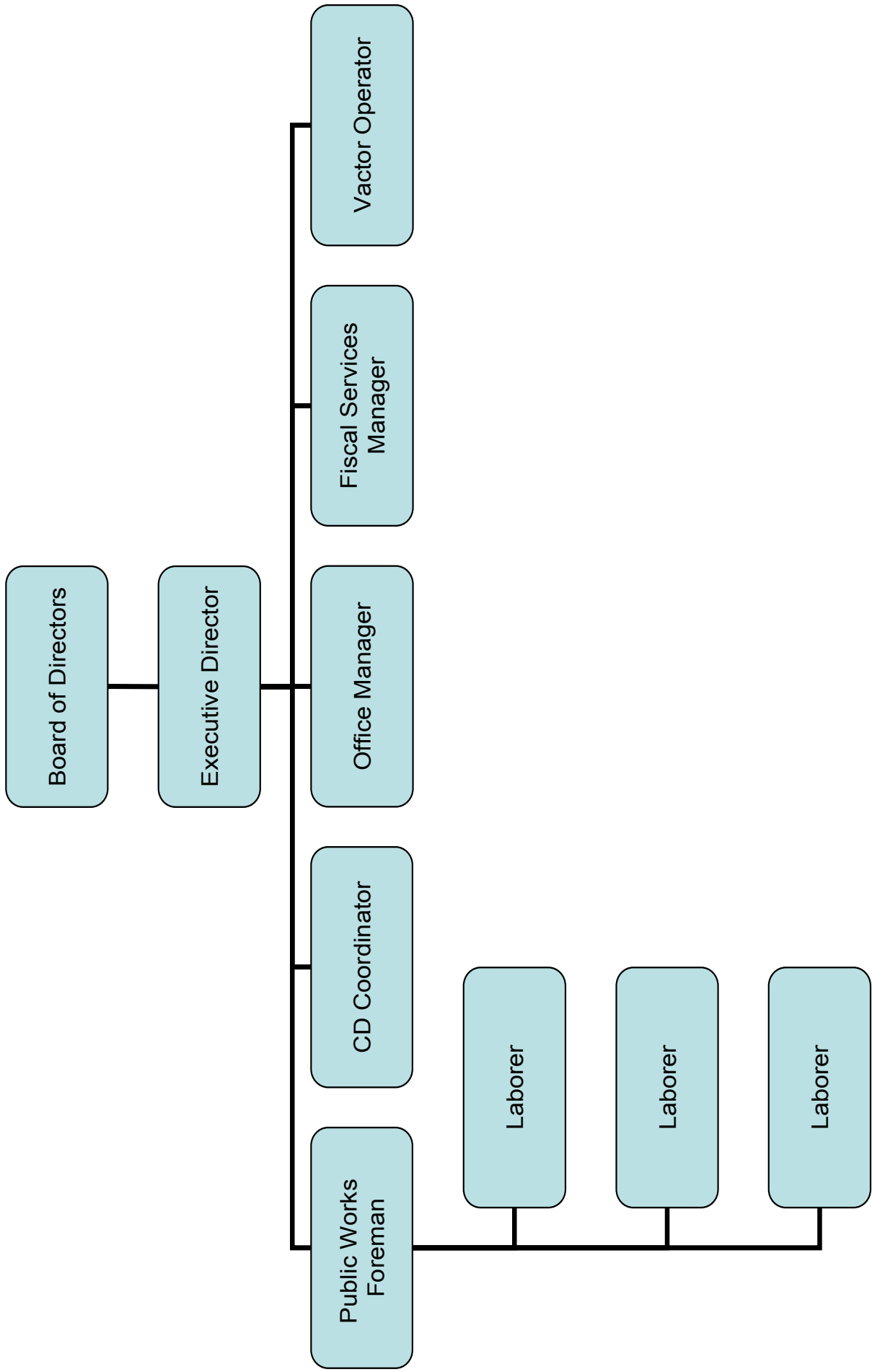
I hope that you will find the enclosed information informative and helpful. Take a look at Appendix A to see a summary of CDBG projects administered by the COG. Please keep in mind that this does not include the numerous State and Federal grants that have been won on your behalf.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as the Executive Director of this COG that represents twenty great communities. It is my privilege to work with our dedicated staff and with municipal staff. The Turtle Creek Valley COG is the past, present and – with your support - future of shared municipal services and intergovernmental cooperation. We hope that you recognize all the ways in which the Turtle Creek Valley COG continues to add value to membership.

Respectfully yours,

Amanda Settelmaier

TCVCOG Organizational Chart



3

The Turtle Creek Valley Council of Governments

The TVCOG is a non-profit organization that facilitates multi-municipal efforts and implements efficient, cost-effective programs on behalf of its members. The organization operates under a set of written by-laws and is governed by a Board of Directors.

Member municipalities join the COG through Council resolution. Each member pays annual dues of \$4,500 and is entitled to appoint two representatives to the Board of Directors – one voting and one alternate delegate.

The TCVCOG was founded in 1971 when eleven municipalities recognized a benefit to working cooperatively and sharing services. Currently, there are twenty municipalities in the TCVCOG with total population of approximately 190,000. The members are:

Braddock	Penn Hills
Chalfant	Pitcairn
Churchill	Plum
East McKeesport	Rankin
East Pittsburgh	Swissvale
Edgewood	Turtle Creek
Forest Hills	Wall
Monroeville	Wilkins
North Braddock	Wilkinsburg
North Versailles	Wilmerding

An administrative staff hired by the organization carries out the day-to-day activities and programs of the COG. Currently, this staff consists of an Executive Director, Community Development Coordinator, a

computer/fiscal services manager, an office manager, a vactor operator, a public works foreman and three public works laborers.

The COG derives its operating funds from various sources including annual membership dues, fees for contracted services, an administrative fee from Allegheny County Department of Economic Development to administer CDBG grants, and through RAD. The COG does not have a dedicated source of funding.

The TCVCOG continuously is in search of self sustaining shared municipal service programs and multi-municipal projects. Our ongoing activities include:

- REGULAR MANAGER’S MEETINGS
- REGULAR POLICE CHIEF MEETINGS
- COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT ADMINISTRATION
- MULTI-MUNICIPAL AND OTHER GRANT ADMINISTRATION
- MULTI-MUNICIPAL CONTRACTS
- COMMUNITY EDUCATION
- PAYROLL SERVICES
- ACCOUNTS PAYABLE/GENERAL LEDGER
- UTILITY BILLINGS
- EQUIPMENT SHARING
- JOINT PUBLIC WORKS
- JOINT PURCHASING
- VACTOR TRUCK SERVICES

In 2010 we provided accounts payable, payroll and utility billing services to seven municipal clients and one apartment complex. We processed \$1.8 million

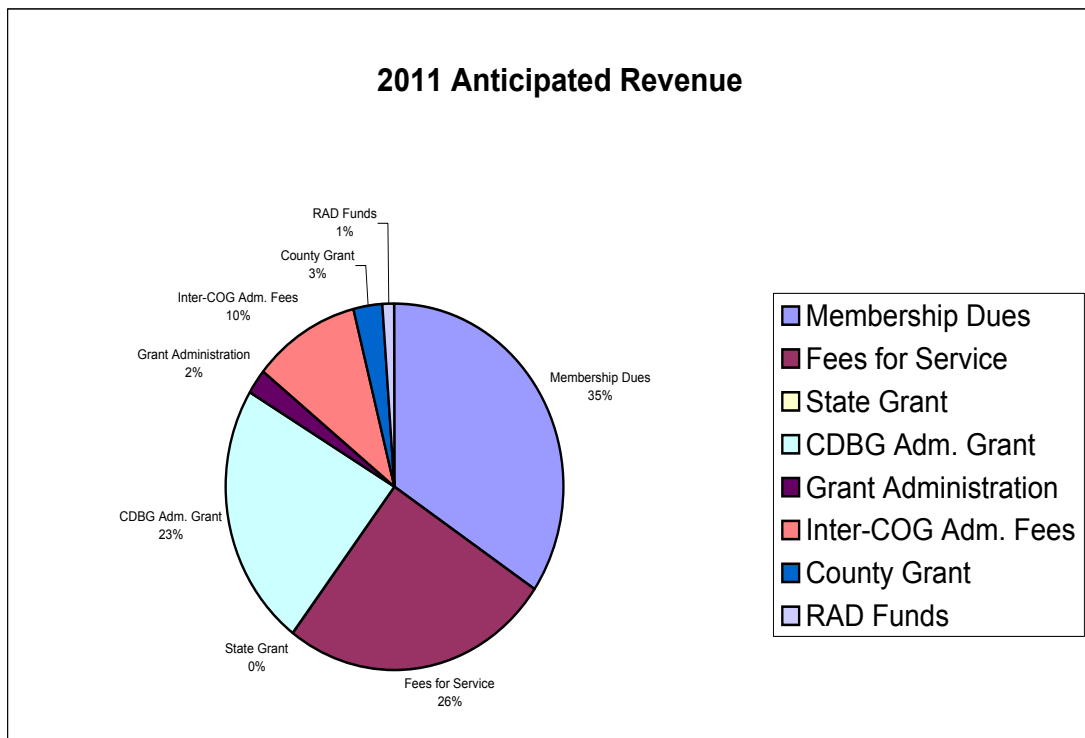
through our utility billing program alone. Our utility billing rate is typically passed along to the household, therefore costing the borough virtually nothing. A check with detailed reports is supplied to the municipality monthly or upon request. This is a great program that supports the COG and provides the municipality with an efficiently managed shared service. We are pleased to welcome two new municipal clients into this program in 2011.

The TCVCOG received funding for two competitive multi-municipal grants totaling \$1.3 million. The funds were used to upgrade traffic signals and street lights to cost effective, and environmentally friendly LED technology. Participating members not only received the initial benefit of the equipment upgrade, but will realize major savings in electricity in the long run.

Municipalities that chose to opt-in to our Vactor program received 14 days of service at a rate of \$7,500. Compared to our cheapest competitor, this saved each town at least \$10,000 – that’s a \$70,000 dollar savings that could be invested into other municipal programs or projects! Non opt-

in towns also received significant savings by using our service. Creating an opt-in program has allowed us to provide quality service while covering our operating budget. Our challenge for 2011 is finding a way to fund a new Vactor since ours is operational, but significantly aged.

The TCVCOG manages the CDBG program on behalf of its members. Our service is all-inclusive from the initial application phase, to advertising and bidding, to awarding contracts, to the final drawdown of funds, and the audit. In 2010, we administered \$2.5 million in grants filtered through Allegheny County. Our towns benefit by not having in-house staff responsible for overseeing the complexities of complying with Federal and County regulations.



4

Summary of Services

FISCAL SERVICES

We currently provide sewage/refuse billing services, accounts payable services, and payroll services.

Sewage/Refuse Billing: At low to no cost to the borough, we manage municipal account data, manage individual municipal bank accounts, field constituent phone calls, and provide detailed collection reports. We are pleased to have secured two new municipal accounts for refuse billing this year. Beginning this year, we are also pleased to offer the ability for your constituents to pay by credit card online or by telephone.

Accounts Payable: We enter billing data into our computer system, produce checks, and provide detailed monthly and end of year reports.

Payroll: We enter payroll data, produce checks and provide detailed reports.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS (CDBG)

Our experienced and dedicated staff manage grant funded projects from the application phase; through the bid, award process and construction phase; to the final audit. We ensure compliance in the ever increasing complexity of grant administration. Please see Appendix A to see how many projects have been funded in your town.

GRANTS

Over the years, the TCVCOG has applied for and received millions of dollars in competitive grant funding. Most recently we have applied for \$2 million through the EPA that – if funded - will provide for the environmental assessment of brownfield and commercial properties. Although grant funding is far less accessible, we inform our members of opportunities as we learn about them.

JOINT PUBLIC WORKS

For the past twenty years, the TCVCOG has operated a joint public works department for the boroughs of Braddock and Rankin. We are fortunate to have the support of our state legislators, who have helped with the purchase of equipment over the years. This, combined with savings from the Allegheny County COG InterCOG purchasing alliance for rock salt and other commodities, has allowed us to keep our costs low.

VECTOR

The Vector is an expensive piece of equipment that is used to clean catch basins and sewer lines. Every town is mandated by law to comply with these sewer maintenance activities. We are about to embark on our second year of an opt-in program for the vector. Our rate is \$9,000 for 15 days of service - that's just \$600/day! Compare that to our cheapest competitor's price of \$1,400/day, and the savings are obvious. The opt-in program allows towns to comply with state and

federal mandates in the most cost effective way possible, while also allowing the COG to cover our costs.

Our challenge is to find funding to purchase new equipment. While our vactor does the job, it is old and costly to maintain. Unfortunately this self-sustaining and cost effective shared service program will go away if a funding solution cannot be found.

MANAGER'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Municipal managers and secretaries are invited to monthly meetings to discuss common issues and solutions. Occasionally we will invite experts to speak and answer questions on topics of mutual interest (ie: Act 44).

These meetings provide an opportunity to discuss the feasibility of new shared service programs. We are currently investigating the feasibility of a multi-municipal salt brine program.

POLICE CHIEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Police Chiefs are invited to monthly meetings to discuss common issues and solutions. Although this group has only recently been established, the chiefs have expressed interest in pursuing several new programs. It is anticipated that cost saving programs such as joint testing and joint training through the COG will begin this year.

THE TCVCOG WORKS FOR YOU

The Turtle Creek Valley COG takes pride in providing exceptional service. We look forward to working together with you and your staff to cost effectively meet your needs now, and into the future.

5

Contact Us

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