Robert B. & Helen S.
Meyner Center
for the Study of State & Local Government

Forks Township

Strategic Plan

March 2009

Lafayette College
Robert B. & Helen S. Meyner Center
For the Study of State & Local Government
002 Kirby Hall of Rights
Easton, Pennsylvania 18042

The Robert B. and Helen S. Meyner Center
For the Study of State and Local Government

The Robert B. and Helen S. Meyner Center for the Study of State and Local Government, which began operations in August 1994, is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, semi-autonomous unit of Lafayette College. Robert B. Meyner was a graduate of Lafayette College (1930) and Governor of New Jersey from 1954 to 1962. Helen S. Meyner served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1965 to 1969. The Meyner Center is supported by an endowment contributed by the estate of Robert B. and Helen S. Meyner, contributions from Richard and Priscilla Hunt of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and other Meyner family and friends, and external awards and contracts from specific projects by private foundations, nonprofit entities, and government agencies.

The Center educates students about the vital importance of state and local governments and encourages young people to participate in state and local affairs as volunteers, interns, and future leaders. The Center also works with state and local government officials and civic groups in its Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York region to enhance public awareness, effective governance, regional cooperation, and public policy. For local governments in the region, the Center provides such specific services as administrative and financial reviews, comparative salary studies, executive-search assistance, strategic planning/visioning programs, and educational workshops and forums. The Meyner Center works, as well, with national associations of state and local officials, such as the Council of State Governments, National Conference of State Legislatures, National Governors Association, National League of Cities, Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs, and Multistate Tax Commission.

Internationally, the Center engages in educational and training programs on regional and local governance, federalism and decentralization, and intergovernmental relations at the request of foreign governments and universities, the World Bank, and U.S. agencies. The Center has worked on issues of federalism, democracy, and local governance in, for example, Brazil, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Turkey, and Ukraine. The Center also has hosted USIA/Fulbright and National Endowment for the Humanities summer institutes as well as visiting scholars, public officials, and delegations from abroad. The Center also is a focal point for a long-term project entitled "A Global Dialogue on Federalism in the 21st Century," which is sponsored jointly by the Forum of Federations and the International Association of Centers for Federal Studies.

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Preface

Most municipalities do not have a Strategic Plan to guide them into their future. This deficiency can create confusion, dysfunction, and inefficiency amongst the professional staff and elected Board members. A comprehensive Strategic Plan lists goals that are identified by the Board of Supervisors, assigns individual(s) with the responsibility of achieving the goals, and identifies the criteria for reviewing performance. This program provides several, significant benefits to the Township. The Final Report becomes the Strategic Plan that can be amended in the future to reflect the changing needs of the Township. The visioning process develops trust and camaraderie amongst staff and members of the Board, and opens the lines of communication that help the Board members to understand one another, and provides the staff with the opportunity to better understand the Board's vision for the future. This trust, respect, and understanding will help to make future Supervisor meetings more efficient and productive, which benefits everyone individually and the Township as a whole.

This is the Strategic Plan of Forks Township, Northampton County, Pennsylvania. It has been prepared after a visioning session held on January 24, 2008, which was attended by Township Supervisors (Chairman) C. David Howells, (Vice Chairman) Bonnie L. Nicholas, (Secretary/ Treasurer) Robert Egolf, Erik Chuss, and Donald H. Miller. Also in attendance were Township Manager Richard C. Schnaedter, Human Resource Manager Barb Bartek, Finance Manager Jim Farley, Zoning Officer Tim Weis, Public Works Director Mark Roberts, and Police Chief Greg Dorney. The report was prepared by David L. Woglom, Associate Director of the Meyner Center, pursuant to a January 7, 2009 contract between Lafayette College's Meyner Center and the Township. The Center thanks the Township Board of Supervisors, Township Manager, and Department Heads who participated in the planning session necessary to complete this report. Any views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of Lafayette College.

John Kincaid
Director & Professor

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Introduction

Forks Township operates as a second-class township in Pennsylvania. It has a population of approximately 12,551 (according to the estimate of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission), a 2009 budget of approximately $7.2 million, and sixty full-time employees. It is governed by a five-member Board of Supervisors elected for four-year terms of office. It has a Township Manager who administers the day-to-day activities of the government, and five Department Heads: the Police Chief, Finance Manager, Human Resources Manager, Public Works Director, and Zoning Officer.

The Township has never had a comprehensive Strategic Plan. The Board of Supervisors is to be commended for their decision to prepare this document. All Board members and staff were responsive and deeply involved during the visioning session on January 24, 2009. They each offered comments and suggestions that were indicative of their dedication to their role as either an elected Supervisor or a member of the full-time management staff. At the end of the visioning session, the Board decided to not list its goals in any order of preference. Rather, they decided to list all goals as equally important, and to assign the responsibility of meeting each goal to the person(s) identified in the Strategic Plan.

There are eighteen goals in the Plan. For purposes of review, these goals are placed into three categories:

1. Internal Policies and Management
2. Continuation/Expansion of Existing Programs and Projects
3. New Programs and Projects

Following each goal is a "Role" and "Expectation." The Role identifies the person responsible for working to achieve the goal; the Expectation identifies the criteria for reviewing future performance.

Strategic Plan

Internal Policies and Management

1. ***Goal:*** Clarify and/or Improve internal communications between the Board of Supervisors, Township Staff, and volunteer Boards and Commissions through:
   a. More timely preparation of Board of Supervisor meeting agendas in a more timely manner;
   b. Preparing the role of all Township volunteer Boards and Commissions
   c. Clarifying the role of the Board of Supervisors in township operations; and
   d. Clarifying the role of the standing committees of the Board of Supervisors.

   Role: Board of Supervisors Chairman
   Township Manager

   Expectation: Review of report submitted to Board of Supervisors by May 1, 2009

2. ***Goal:*** Improve the timeliness of distribution of memos, reports, and meeting minutes to the Board of Supervisors through use of the Township server.

   Role: Board of Supervisors Chairman
   Township Manager

   Expectation: Review of report submitted to Board of Supervisors by May 1, 2009

Continuation/Completion of Existing Projects & Programs

1. ***Goal:*** Improve the quantity and quality of information on the Township's website.

   Role: Community Relations Committee

   Expectation: Review of Committee Report to Board of Supervisors by May 1, 2009

2. ***Goal:*** Create and maintain an aggressive grant development/search program and report the program activities to the Board of Supervisors on a regular basis.

   Role: Department Heads
   Township Manager

   Expectation: Review of initial report by May 1, 2009

3. ***Goal:*** Define, clarify, and regularly update the Township's Five-Year Improvement Plans.

   Role: Department Heads
   Township Manager

   Expectation: Review of reports by May 1, 2009

4. ***Goal:*** Prepare a Public Works Facility Report, which will include the plans, cost, and location for a new complex to house the Township Public Works Department.
   Role: Public Works Director
   Finance Manager
   Township Manager
   Expectation: Submission of report to Board of Supervisors by April 1, 2009

5. ***Goal:*** Prepare for the possibility that the Township may need to locate a site for the EMS Squad in the future.
   Role: Public Safety Committee
   Expectation: To be reviewed depending on future developments of EMS Squad

6. ***Goal:*** Prepare a plan to increase the recreational and intellectual programs for all residents, particularly senior citizens.
   Role: Community Center Manager
   Township Manager
   Expectation: Submission of report to Board of Supervisors by May 1, 2009

7. ***Goal:*** Complete the updates to the Township Comprehensive Plan.
   Role: Comprehensive Plan Adhoc Committee
   Expectation: Continue the review that is currently underway

New Programs and Projects

1. ***Goal:*** Prepare a Park and Recreation Development Plan, which will include:
   a. Information on and location for an amphitheater;
   b. Recommendations for completion of the recreation path missing links;
   c. Recommendations for future development of the Remaley tract; and
   d. Information on the creation of an Arboretum Plan.

   Role: Community Center Manager
   Township Manager
   Expectation: Submission of report from Park and Recreation Committee by May 1, 2009

2. ***Goal:*** Create a Farmland Preservation Plan
   Role: Board of Supervisors
   Expectation: Review by Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission on an on-going basis

3. ***Goal:*** Begin review and discussion of potential Township acquisition of additional land
   Role: Board of Supervisors
   Expectation: Discussion in Executive Session no later than March 1, 2009

4. ***Goal:*** Develop an Economic Development Plan to attract more businesses to the Township and improve the aesthetic appearance of the Town Center.
   Role: Board of Supervisors
   Expectation: Discussion by Board of Supervisors by May 1, 2009

5. ***Goal:*** Conduct an environmental review of Township operations that includes:
   a. Review of potential sites for an organic waste (recycling) facility;
   b. Review of the trash disposal specifications relative to recycling requirements; and
   c. Creation of an Environmental Advisory Council.

   Role: Public Works Director
   Finance Manager
   Township Manager
   Expectation: Submission of report to Board of Supervisors by May 1, 2009

6. ***Goal:*** Review the Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) regarding street construction specifications and the tree-planting locations.
   Role: Public Works Director
   Zoning Officer
   Expectation: Submission of report to Board of Supervisors by May 1, 2009

7. ***Goal:*** Develop a Human Resources Evaluation Plan that creates:
   a. A plan for annual written evaluations of all employees;
   b. A merit-pay increase program for Department Heads that is based on performance; and
   c. A financial-reward program for all employees that is based on cost-saving proposals.

   Role: Human Resources Manager
   Administration and Finance Committee
   Expectation: Continuation of the review that is currently underway

8. ***Goal:*** Prepare a proposal for the Township Police Department to seek accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA).
   Role: Police Chief
   Expectation: Submission of proposal to Board of Supervisors by February 5, 2009

9. ***Goal:*** Develop an Employee Wellness Program.
   Role: Human Resources Manager
   Expectation: Submission of report to Board of Supervisors by May 1, 2009

Recommendations

The creation of a Strategic Plan is an achievement for any company, including a municipal government. The members of the Forks Township Board of Supervisors are to be commended for their recognition of the need to prepare this list of goals for themselves and the Township staff.

What is equally important is for the Board to utilize the plan it has now prepared, and to follow the guidelines it has established for the Township. Specifically, within about six months, the Board should schedule a formal review of its progress in carrying out this plan. This deadline will provide an extra incentive and deadline for individuals who have a role in administering the plan.

The Board should also consider conducting another visioning session in approximately one year and in each subsequent year for purposes of updating the previous year's plan.

A municipality is, in many ways, a business, although a unique kind of business that measures its ultimate success by the quality of public services and assistance that it provides to its residents. It is difficult for any full-time business to be run effectively by a Board whose members work on a part-time basis; therefore, the elected officials need an effective administrator and staff that understand the policies of the Township, and the direction established by the Board. Forks Township has a Board of Supervisors whose members are dedicated to serving its residents. It also has an administrator and five Department Heads capable of administering the day-to-day activities of the Township. The most effective way to administer the municipality is to create a team consisting of the Board members and the full-time management staff. If they work together and communicate thoroughly, the Township can succeed in providing a high quality of public services and assistance to the residents of Forks. We recommend that the Board of Supervisors empower its Township Manager and Department Heads with the authority necessary to carry out the policies established by the Board. The Board should steer the boat, and leave the rowing to the staff. This delegation of responsibility by an informed Board to a skilled management team will result in an effective, efficient, and productively run municipality.