

BERKS COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION

1998 SEWER AND WATER
REGIONALIZATION STUDY UPDATE

December 2011

Introduction

The Berks County Commissioners and the Berks County Planning Commission previously prepared a Sewer and Water System Regionalization Study in 1998. The purpose of the 1998 Study was to determine what opportunities existed for improving water quality, reliability, customer service and economic development by strengthening the water and sewerage systems in Berks County. The Study then determined both the current status of the sewer and water systems in the County and what strategies might be implemented to help achieve the goals stated above.

The goal of this Update is to determine whether the original recommendations of the 1998 Study are still valid and to include any new opportunities that would allow the sewer and water systems to achieve these goals.

The Berks County Commissioners are aware that many municipalities are looking for ways to maintain or improve their services and reduce costs. Prior to undertaking the Update, the Berks County Commissioners asked the Berks Municipal Partnership to survey the 73 municipalities within Berks County as to their willingness to participate with the Study Update. The Berks Municipal Partnership was established by the Center for Community Leadership at Albright College to provide a forum for municipal officials to discuss emerging issues that can possibly be addressed on a regional or countywide level. Officials from the five regions of the county, and the Commissioners and County Planning Commission, have discussed several critical issues, including the need to update the information in the Berks County Sewer and Water Study.

The municipalities were asked the following main question:

“Would you be in favor of our updating the information in the Berks County Sewer and Water Systems Regionalization Study in order to identify opportunities for cost savings and improved services? (This will require municipalities to provide us with information regarding rate structure, tap-in fees, capacity, service areas, general financial data, and other pertinent information.)”

The overwhelming response was “yes”. Therefore, the Commissioners asked the Planning Commission to update the Sewer and Water Regionalization Study. The Update started with data surveys being sent out to all public sewer and water systems that operate within the County. A consultant was hired to evaluate the previous goals of the 1998 Study and determine their validity and strategies to achieve them. The consultant was also charged with investigating and evaluating new ideas and strategies that would help maintain or improve sewer and water services and reduce costs or improve economic development.

The Study Update includes:

The main section, completed by the consultant, analyzes the Sewer and Water Regionalization Study of 1998 versus the information received discussions, observations and recommendations developed through the evaluation of the 2010 surveys collected by the Berks County Planning Commission and various conversations and meetings with staff, stakeholders, public finance professionals, township managers and other governmental/authority members. Discussion and recommendations that developed during meetings with the County, municipalities, systems and other stakeholders.

Appendix A includes the tables based upon the 2010 survey and comparisons to the 1998 information.

Appendix B includes the maps that portray the current sewer and water service areas within the County.

Appendix C is targeted towards improving data availability in planning for economic development. This section includes maps that show where there are areas zoned for industrial and commercial uses in correlation with where water and sewer service is available.

This Study Update reviews the initial 1998 Sewer and Water Regionalization Study discussions and recommendations; and provides update, analysis, observations and recommendations developed through the evaluation of the surveys collected by the Berks County Planning Commission and various conversations and meetings with staff, stakeholders, public finance professionals, township managers and other governmental/authority members.

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank all of the public officials, industry experts, and other stakeholders who shared their experience, knowledge, and professionalism with us. In particular, the consultants would like to thank the County of Berks Board of Commissioners, Mr. Glenn R. Knoblauch, Executive Director, the County of Berks Planning Commission, Ms. Shannon Rossman, Intergovernmental Affairs Planner, the County of Berks Planning Commission, Ms. Ashley Mazurek, Planner II, the County of Berks Planning Commission, Mr. John Kramer, Director, Albright College Center for Excellence in Local Government, and Mr. Dale Kratzer, retired, Spotts, Stevens & McCoy for their leadership, guidance, insight, integrity, dedication, and concern.

This Study is not a mandate nor is it a regulation. The intent of the Study Update is to help municipalities and sewer and water service providers with ideas and information regarding the provision of sewer and water services in Berks County.

Consultant for Study Update:

National Management Associates, Ltd.

An Affiliate of Maillie, Falconiero & Co.