



DIRECTOR'S FORUM

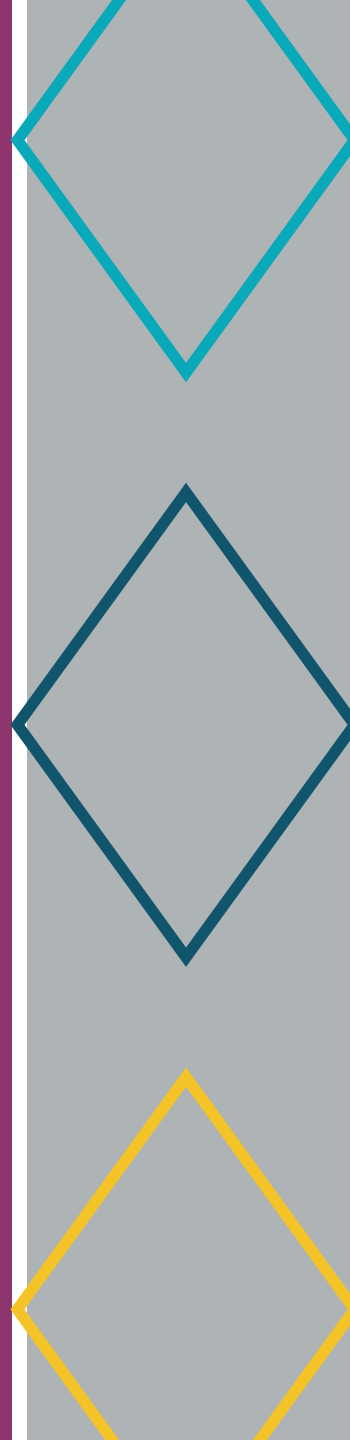
2025 Annual Conference
Tuesday, September 30, 2025

Facilitator

Ben Estelle
Executive Director
Center Region COG



Ben is the Executive Director for the Centre County Regional COG. He is a champion of cooperative government, committed to advancing collaborative efforts that enhance sustainable growth and equitable zoning practices. His work in Dormont, PA, highlights a dedication to strengthening partnerships across municipalities. Estell's approach fosters shared solutions that balance urban growth with environmental stewardship, making him a key advocate for innovative, community-centered governance in Pennsylvania.

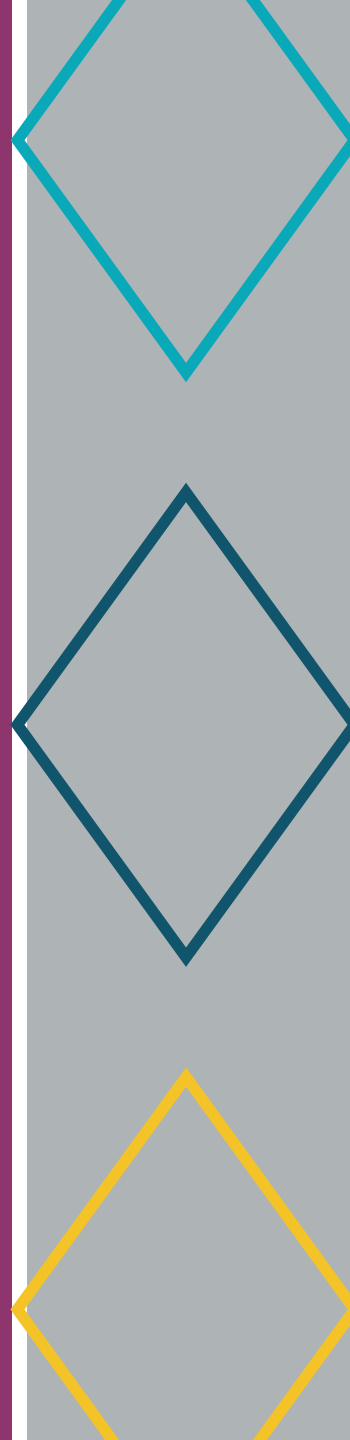


Our Panel

Gary Myers Executive Director Capital Region COG



Gary is a public administration professional with over 40 years experience. The past 8 years he has served as the Executive Director of the Capital Region Council of Governments (CapCOG). CapCOG has 43 municipal members in a five-county area in Central Pa. Gary previously served 22 years as Manager of Susquehanna Township in Dauphin County, retiring in 2016. Gary also served 11 years as Manager of Columbia Borough in Lancaster County. Gary's public service career started with 10 years working for Penn DOT in various administrative positions. Gary is a strong advocate for inter-municipal cooperation, public service, and advancement of costs-saving measures for citizens.

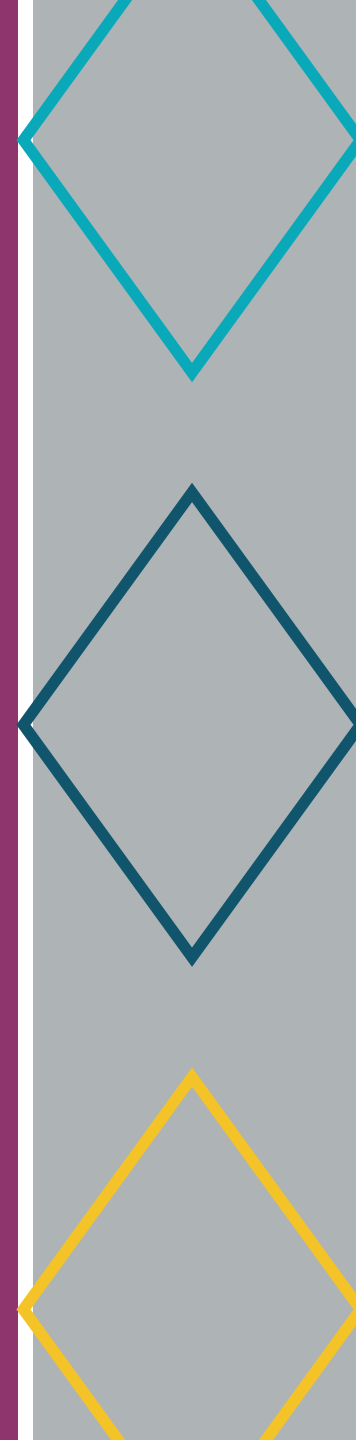


Our Panel

Tracy McKee Executive Director Char-West COG



Tracy McKee serves as the Executive Director of the Char-West Council of Governments, having joined the organization as an Administrative Assistant in October 2021 and advancing to her current position in January 2024. Her extensive background in County, Township and Borough administration has significantly contributed to her professional accomplishments. In her role as Executive Director, Ms. McKee is responsible for grant writing and strategic management across twelve municipalities in the southwestern suburbs of Pittsburgh. The Council also provides stormwater drain cleaning services to its member municipalities, with additional service coverage extended to six municipalities outside the Char-West COG area, as well as PennDOT.

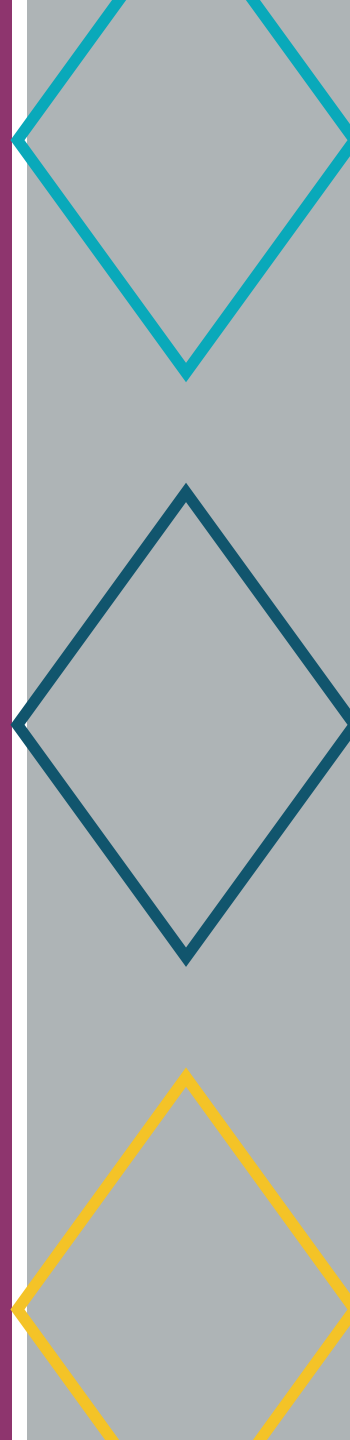


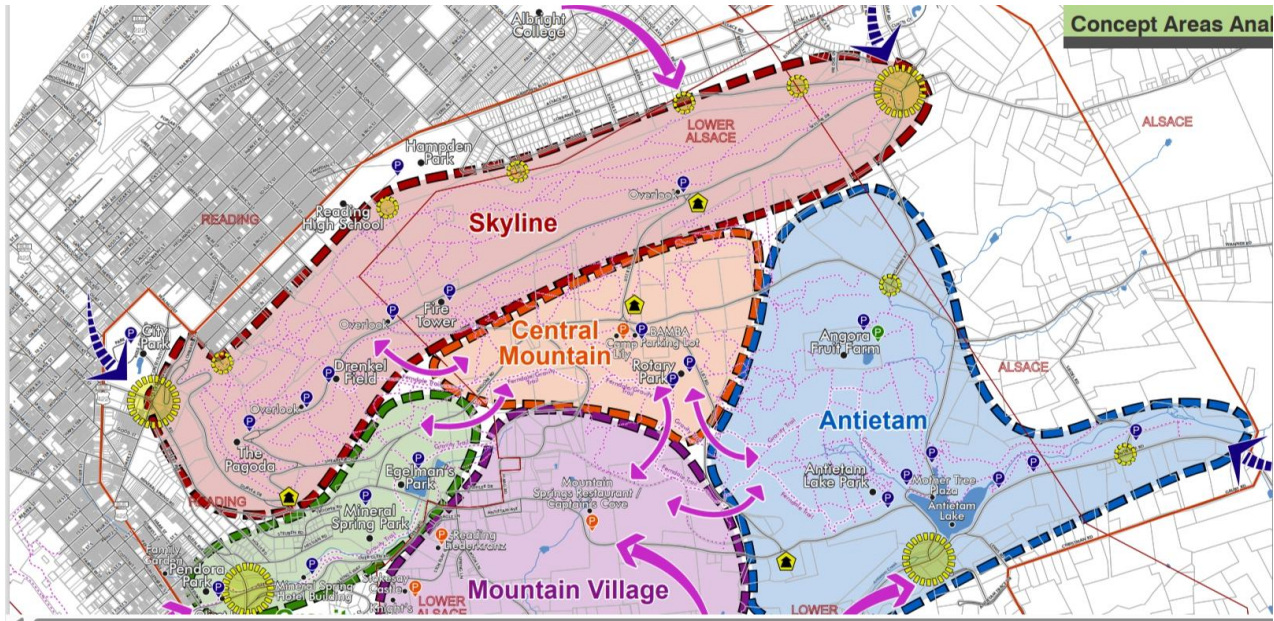
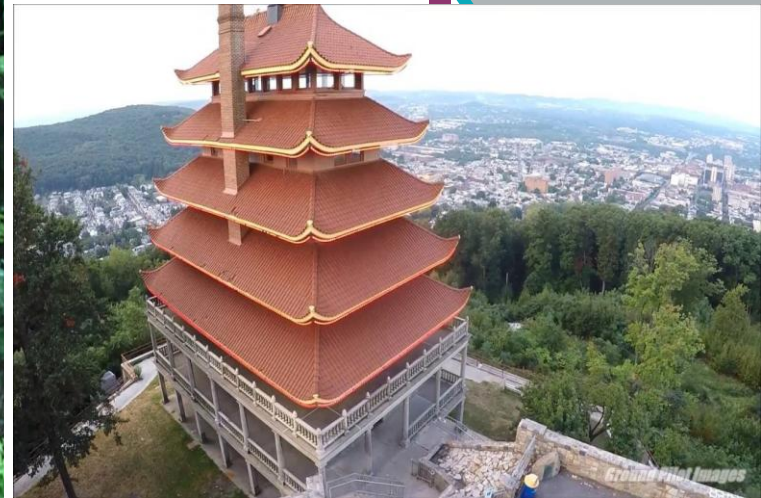
Our Panel

Lee Olsen Board Member Mount Penn Preserve Partnership (MP3 COG)



Lee is one of the founding Board members of the Mount Penn Preserve Partnership (MP3) COG which was established in 2016 to protect, preserve, and promote the natural beauty and recreational opportunities of the Mount Penn Preserve area in Berks County. Lee has 50+ years of experience in all phases of architecture. He has engaged in a regional practice of architecture, master planning, facility planning and interior design for a range of projects that include commercial, retail, educational, institutional, health care and residential.







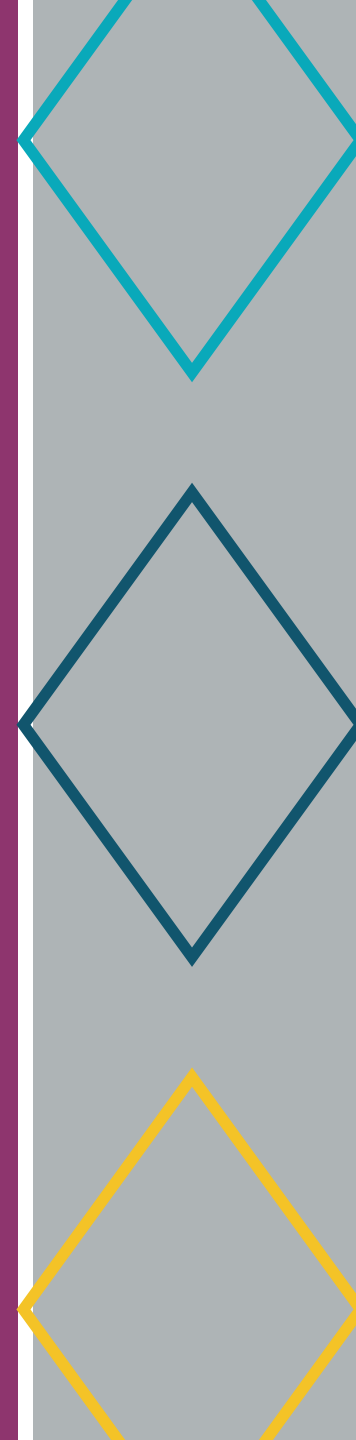
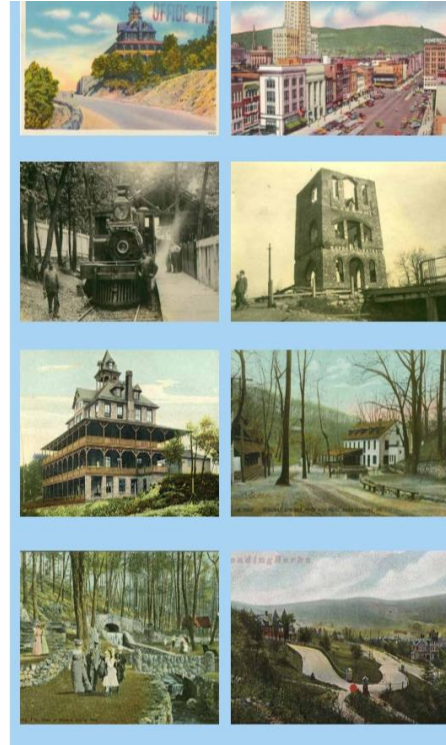
William Penn Memorial Fire Tower



Mineral Spring Park

Mount Penn Preserve – Historical Snapshot

Encompassing an area of nearly 4,000 acres, The Mount Penn Preserve is a conglomeration of mostly wooded open space intermingled with residential properties, restaurants, iconic architecture and parks along with the remnants of buildings and places of recreation and enjoyment that have long vanished from the landscape. Mount Penn Preserve is stitched together by a sinuous network of roads and trails that have withstood the test of times and the sometimes questionable skills of motorists. Road cyclists race its hilly turns and automobile races are a part of the living history that is the Mount Penn Preserve. Today these roads are used to access the mountain, for pleasure driving, and to reach the popular public destinations such as the Pagoda, Fire Tower, Antietam Lake, and Mineral Springs Park. The many miles of trails draw mountain bikers from far distances and equestrians, hikers, runners, bird watchers and nature lovers of all types have their favorite trails.



First Discussion Topic

Councils of Government (COGs) across the Commonwealth struggle to identify dedicated sources of revenue to support the operation and provision of services to their member municipalities.

What are some funding and revenue sources and methods that you have used to financially support your COG?

Second Discussion Topic

COG's don't have natural boundaries or identified members – COG's use various methods to attract new members.

How can COG's build out their membership numbers? What methods have you used to grow your membership?

Third Discussion Topic

An important function of COGs is to foster relationships and to provide services and programs that are important to their members.

What methods do COGs use to engage their members and demonstrate their value?

Fourth Discussion Topic

Providing shared services requires a certain level of technical expertise and ongoing evaluation and monitoring of the services provided.

Do you incorporate subject matter experts to guide you in the provision of shared services? How is that structured?

Fifth Discussion Topic

PACOG provides an array of services for its members

- Platform for statewide discussions among members
- Dynamic website
 - On-line applications and payments
 - Reference library with documents and publications
 - Members tab with profiles and links
- Monthly newsletter
- Regional meetings
- Webinar education and training series
- Legislative updates
- Annual conference

What additional support and resources can PACOG provide to strengthen the role of COGs in Pennsylvania?

Additional topics and questions?

This is your opportunity to share with your colleagues and to discuss your opportunities and challenges.

Your issues and concerns are important to us!

