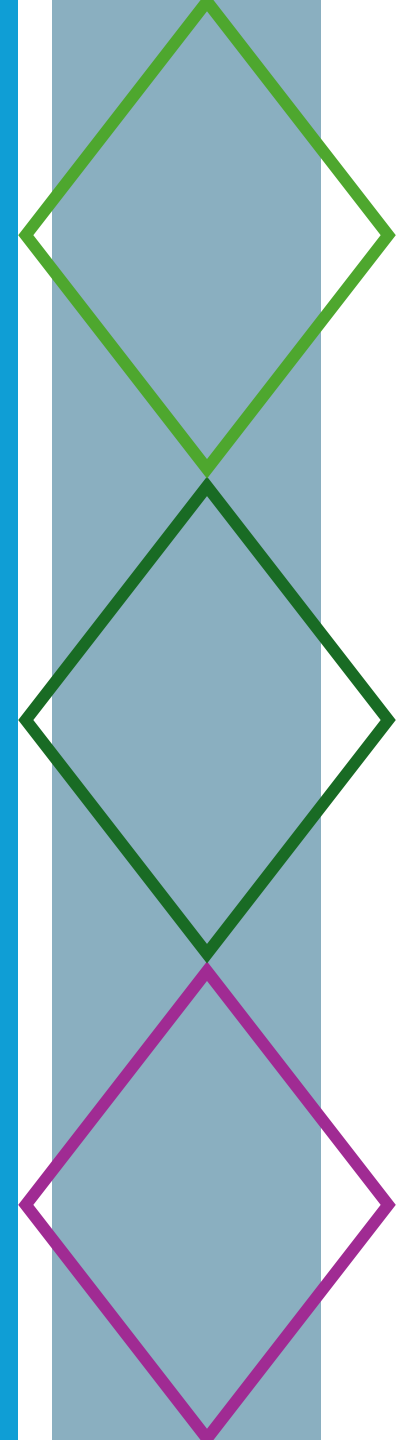


Public Safety: A Regional Solution Centre Region COG

Ben Estell
Executive Director
Centre Region COG





Regional Fire and Rescue



Fire Director: Shawn Kauffman



Regional Fire and Rescue

Service Area:

104 square miles

*State College Borough,
College Township, Ferguson Township,
Patton Township, Penn State University and
a portion of Benner Township*

Three Fire Stations:

*State College Borough,
College and Patton Townships*

- ✓ 1,500 TO 1,650 annual incidents
- ✓ 100 volunteers / 7 staff
- ✓ \$11 million in apparatus assets





Regional Fire and Rescue

The annual cost of fire protection in **2025** per capita, excluding students from the population was **\$34.74**. It remains less than the average of \$55.25 per capita nationwide for similar combination fire departments.





Emergency Management



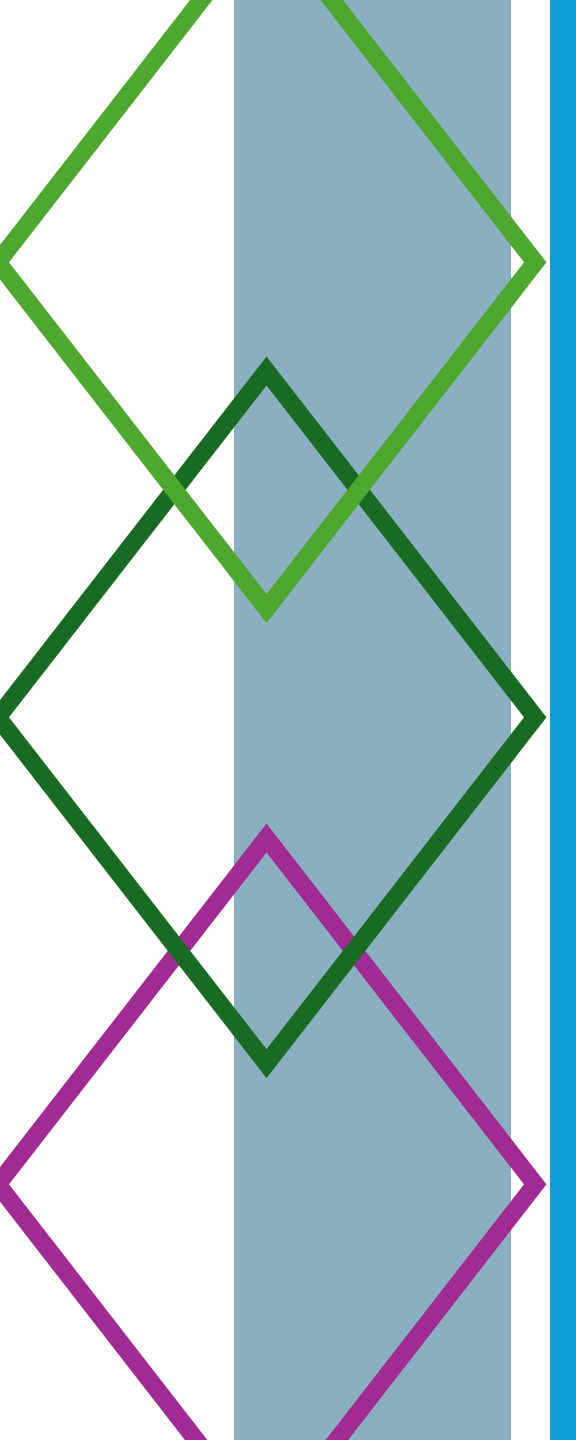
Coordinator: Jonathan Risley



Emergency Management



- ✓ Regional Emergency Operations Plan for Centre Region municipalities
- ✓ Joint Emergency Operating Center with Penn State University
- ✓ 5 emergency shelters with back-up power capability
- ✓ COG Chair declares emergency then ratified by individual municipalities
- ✓ Emergency Management Council provides policy guidance. General Forum Vice-Chair is a member.



REGIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY: HARMONY FIRE DISTRICT

Chris Rearick
Executive Director
Southwestern Butler COG

How is the COG used in Administration and Funding?

- Member Municipalities fund emergency services through real estate tax.
- COG Serves as an Administrative Oversight Committee to Member Fire District and EMS Service.
- COG Committee approves annual budget, capital improvements plan, and purchases over \$100,000 and reviews routine financial reports throughout the year.
- COG employs full-time administrator and third-party bookkeeper funded by member municipalities. Arrangement provides for separation of duties.
- Arrangement is based on understanding that millage commitment is associated with adherence to agreement and policies, providing for united front between the municipalities.
- Administered through an intergovernmental cooperation agreement.

How is the Cooperative Agreement Arranged?

- Cooperative Agreement between:
 - Four Municipalities
 - Stormwater Authority
 - Fire District
 - Southwestern Butler COG
- Agreement provides for:
 - Shared staffing for oversight of Fire District finances and management of the Stormwater Authority,
 - Municipal and Authority contributions
 - Office space donated for Authority by Fire District
- Resulting formation of the Southwestern Butler Stormwater Authority (2023-2024)
- Capital Improvements and Dedicated Millage Increase for Fire District (2023)

How Did We Get Here?

- Fire District consolidation and proposal for new station.
- Request for increased millage.
- Presenting a united front to residents and the Fire District
- County efforts, ARPA Funding, and Joint Stormwater Study (2018)
- Resulting formation of the Southwestern Butler Stormwater Authority (2023-2024)
- Capital Improvements and Dedicated Millage Increase for Fire District (2023)
- The Member municipalities share:
 - Historic and ongoing challenges of flooding and stormwater issues
 - Shared fire and EMS services.
 - SR 19 and I-79 corridors.
 - Trail systems and town centers

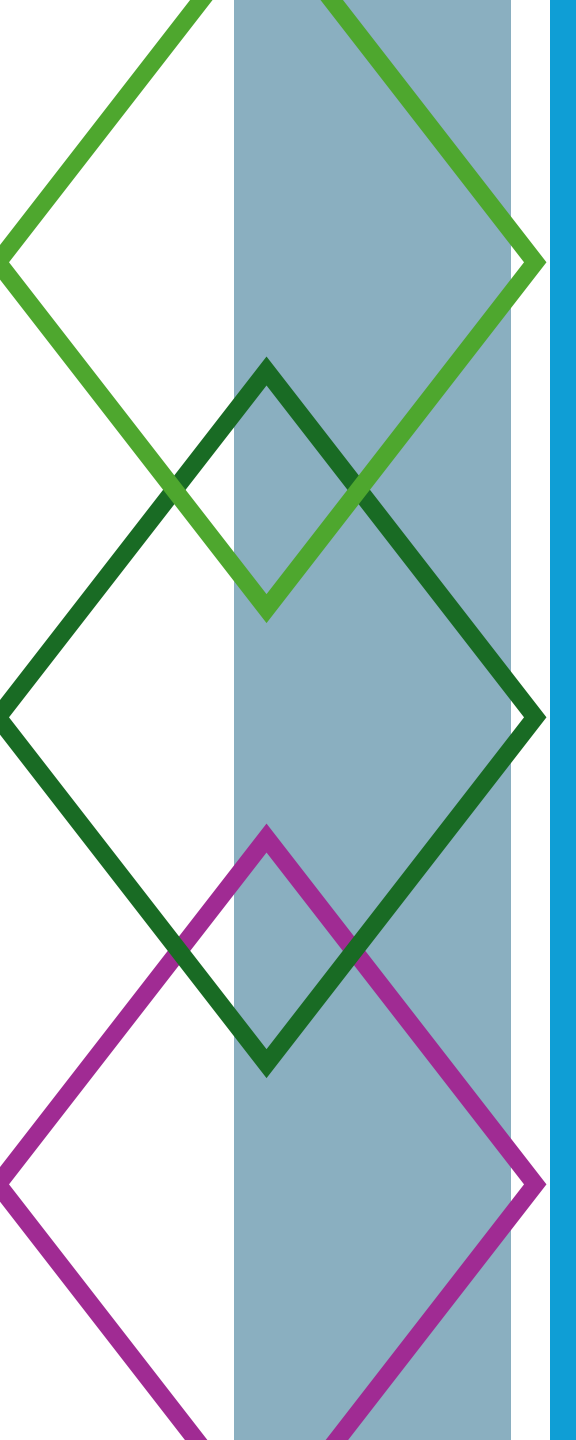
Advantages of COG Model

Promotes Transparency through routine communication amongst members.

Presents a consistent message across municipalities.

Accountability

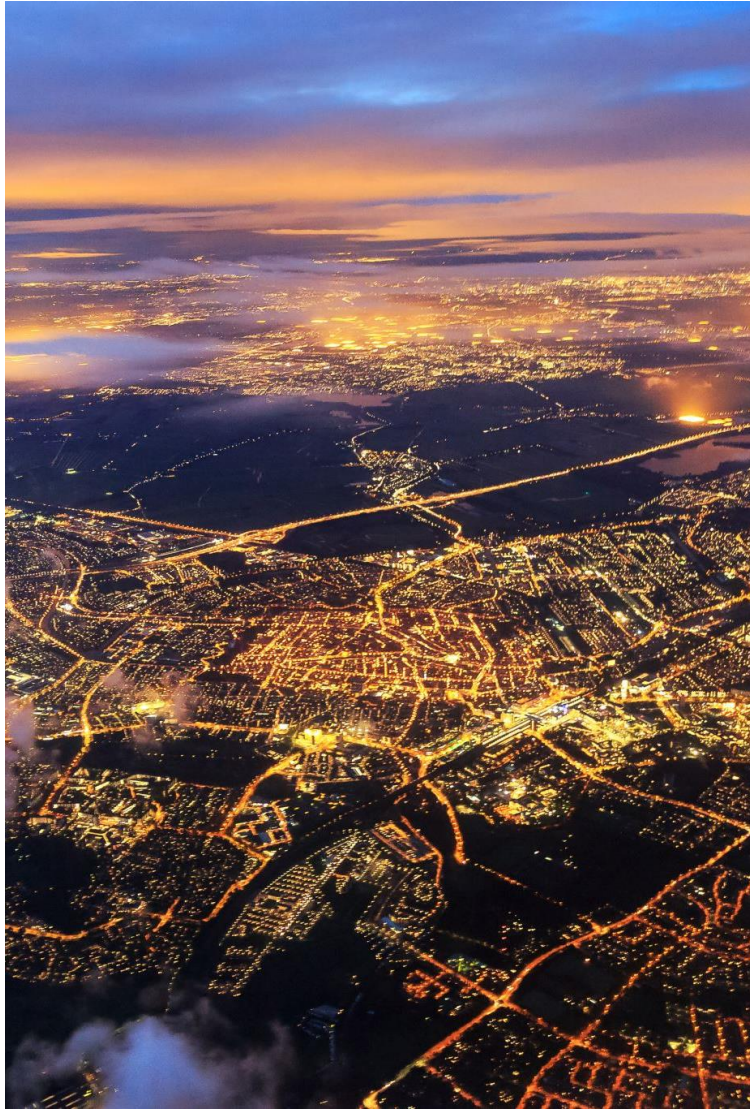
Flexibility



REGIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY: WHAT ARE THE LEGAL CHALLENGES AND PITFALLS?

Paul Lalley, Attorney
CDB Law

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION ACT



- Applies to all local governments other than the City of Philadelphia
- Permits two or more local governments to cooperate jointly in the performance of functions, powers, or responsibilities
- Requires a written agreement that sets forth the terms of the cooperation
- Agreement “shall be deemed in force” when “adopted by ordinance or resolution by all cooperating local governments”

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION AGREEMENT

- Ordinance or resolution must provide the following:
 - Primary terms of agreement
 - Duration
 - Purpose and objectives, inc. powers and scope of authority delegated
 - Manner and extent of financing the agreement
 - Organizational structure
 - Manner in which real property is acquired, managed, licensed, and disposed of
 - Provision that entity created is empowered to enter into contracts for policies of group insurance and employee benefits, including social security

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR REGIONAL DEPARTMENTS

1

How other municipalities may join in the future

2

How members can drop out without disbanding the entity entirely

3

Representation & voting rules on governing entity

4

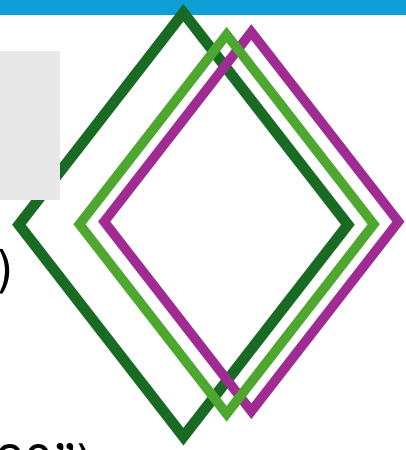
Process for adoption of annual budget

5

Legal authority for the agency to enforce the law

Remember – THESE CONTINUE TO APPLY

- Policemen and Firemen Collective Bargaining Act (“Act 111”)
- Pennsylvania Labor Relations Act (“PLRA”)
- Municipal Police Officers’ Education and Training Act (“Act 120”)
- Act 57 of 2020
- Workers’ Compensation Act
- Heart and Lung Act
- Sunshine Act
- Right to Know Law
- Ethics Act
- Local Agency Law



WHAT ABOUT DISCIPLINE?

- Unionized officers will have the right to challenge discipline through arbitration
- Municipal civil service requirements, and the Police Tenure Act, do not apply, meaning that officers can be appointed and removed from a regional police force without reference to civil service
 - However, it is still advisable to adopt merit-based hiring procedures
 - Can create a civil service commission or “borrow” the commission from a participating municipality





CONTRACTING OR REGIONALIZING

- There is no managerial right to unilaterally replace existing unionized police force with a regional department or contracted services
 - This is not a permanent and complete cessation, but a subcontracting scenario
 - Must bargain
- Municipalities should seek the right to regionalize well in advance of doing so
 - Waiting until the issue is on the table gives the Union a great deal of leverage

COMMON COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ISSUES



Service time/
seniority
issues



Pensions



Paid leave
balances



Current
personnel
files



Future
discipline



Questions - Comments

