Our Mission: to maintain and enhance the quality of life in Berks County by helping our municipal leaders meet the changing needs of their communities.

Upcoming Events:

- May 3, 10, 17 “Subdivision and Land Development Review Course”
- May 22 “Land Use – Transportation Coordination” Workshop

Developing Skills for Effective Leadership

- PA Land Use Institute – the program was attended by 22 officials and focused on two current topics—recent court decisions on planning, zoning, and other land use issues and innovative approaches to funding economic development projects.

Community Planning Course – Nine officials participated in the course, which included in-depth instruction on the PA Municipalities Planning Code and the technical components of land-use planning and regulation to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities and understanding the land-use planning process.

Flexible Zoning Techniques for Achieving Community Goals – Fourteen local officials attended the workshop, which discussed how a municipality can use its zoning ordinance to build more flexibility into the use and development or redevelopment of its land and buildings through provisions regarding design, density, transition of uses, performance standards, site location and adaptive reuse.

Determining Community Character – Twenty-one officials learned that while growth and change in their communities is inevitable, the destruction of their community character is not. The workshop focused on approaches to not only preserving community character but also restoring character and upgrading the community’s sense of place—by design. The issues and considerations addressed in one community’s (West Bradford Township) Manual of General Design Guidelines was shared with the participants.

Fostering Intergovernmental Cooperation

Berks Municipal Officials Dinner – One-hundred fifty-four officials attended the dinner and heard Ellen Horan, president and chief executive officer of the Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce and Industry, discuss the chamber’s initiative to coordinate with other chambers in the Commonwealth and state municipal associations to address two key issues facing local governments: pension requirements and arbitration. Center Director John Kramer received the first annual Richard C. Trostle Award for intergovernmental cooperation.

Berks County Cooperative Purchasing Council - Council members agreed to jointly purchase gasoline, composting, and line striping services, in addition to other current contracts for fire extinguishers, heating oil, diesel fuel, rock salt, furniture, bond paper and road signage.

Berks Municipal Partnership – The partnership discussed opportunities for cooperation in conservation projects, storm water management and ongoing regional communication on issues of common interest.

Governor Mifflin Area Coordinating Council – The council discussed opportunities for regional cooperation on economic development activities, initiated their peer study on recreation, began planning an electronic citizens academy and selected a joint road project for this summer.

Municipal Roundtable – Six officials participated in a roundtable that discussed how local communities provide for one specific form of housing—group homes—and their compliance with the requirements of the Federal Fair Housing Act. The discussion focused on the elements of local zoning ordinances that address the definitions of family and group homes, the siting of the homes and other procedural requirements.

Enhancing Citizen Involvement

“Local Government in Berks” Program on BCTV – Center Director, John Kramer, hosted two programs during which local officials discussed the progress made in implementing Reading’s Act 47 Plan, a citizen education program on local government in the Governor Mifflin area, and plans to revitalize the Fifth Street Highway Corridor in Muhlenberg Township.

Albright College Community Conversations – Center Director, John Kramer, participated on a panel of college officials that involved 85 students in a discussion on citizenship.

Discussion Series – Center Director, John Kramer, facilitated a discussion group of 16 persons sponsored by the World Affairs Council on promoting democracy.

For more information, please contact Andrea Weist at 610-929-6503 or aweist@alb.edu.