

MEDIA RELEASE

BOROUGH OF WHEATLAND – CITY OF HERMITAGE

Merger Discussions

February 4, 2020

At the request of the Borough of Wheatland, the City of Hermitage and the Borough are preparing to study a potential merger whereby Wheatland would become part of the City of Hermitage. Both municipalities desire to thoroughly investigate any advantages and disadvantages that would be created by a merger, with the plan to move forward only if the study reveals that both municipalities would benefit. To assist in the process, both Wheatland and Hermitage will engage the services of the Governor's Center for Local Government Services (GCLGS) of the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development (PA DCED). Each municipality will enact a resolution to authorize engaging the services of the GCLGS.

The Borough, on behalf of both municipalities, will seek a PA DCED grant to fund the study, which includes the assistance of a consultant to work with both municipalities and the GCLGS. The study will develop the terms of a merger including, in part, disposition of existing assets, retirement of existing indebtedness, handling of existing liabilities, establishment of a new municipal boundary, creation of a schedule for the transition and development of provisions for the existing Borough employee. The terms will be contained in a Joint Agreement that would then be submitted to the governing bodies of both municipalities for their review and consideration.

After completion of the Joint Agreement and its adoption by each municipality, the question of whether to merge shall be placed on the next primary or general election ballot that occurs no less than 13 weeks after the date of the Joint Agreement. Each municipality's voters shall vote on the same question, and a majority of each municipality's voters must vote in the affirmative for the merger to be adopted.

Hermitage currently provides police and street maintenance services to the Borough along with administration of housing rehabilitation programs. In the 2017 census Hermitage had a population of 15,535 and Wheatland 591.

It is anticipated that the process could take 12 to 18 months to implement, if approved by the voters in both municipalities. A merger of the municipalities would not affect their respective school districts. The Borough of Wheatland is part of the Farrell Area School District.

Ron Viglio, Mayor, Borough of Wheatland, stated "The study will enable us to make the best decisions going forward for both of our municipalities."

William J. Moder III, President, City of Hermitage Board of Commissioners, commented, "Currently Hermitage provides police protection and street services to Wheatland by agreement and that has worked efficiently. It makes sense to conduct a study to explore if a merger would offer further advantages."