**PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION SEEKS TO GROW REGIONAL ACCOUNTING PROGRAM**

*Hopes to Replicate Successful Franklin County Agency’s Model*

CHESTERFIELD---When Chesterfield officials entered into talks with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) last year, they asked one seemingly straightforward question - how can the town’s government maintain an accounting operation that is as professional and consistent as their taxpayers deserve, while remaining within their limited municipal budget?

What emerged from those initial discussions is a fee for service program administered by the PVPC who has taken on the task of procuring and managing a private accounting firm to handle Chesterfield’s bookkeeping at a fraction of the cost of hiring a full-time town employee.

“Chesterfield tried unsuccessfully for over two years to replace our Town Accountant who retired after 25 years of service,” said Chesterfield Town Administrator Sue Labrie. “The PVPC Regional Accounting program has finally returned quality, reliable, full-service, municipal accounting to the Town of Chesterfield. “

The results thus far have been encouraging for all parties involved and now the PVPC is hoping to attract other communities facing similar challenges in their accounting department to consider joining Chesterfield in this cost-saving, professionalization of a critical municipal function.

Modeled off of an increasingly successful Regional Accounting program run by PVPC’s neighbors to the North - the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), who already has over a dozen participating towns - the hope is to attract comparable communities in Hampshire and Hampden counties to achieve greater economies of scale.

“Our regional accounting program is all about giving our member communities the best possible financial services available for their often increasingly tight municipal budgets,” said FRCOG Executive Director LINDA DUNLAVY. “We have been fortunate to have local leaders who recognize the value of regionalization here in Franklin County, and wish the PVPC's emerging Shared Accountant program similar success moving forward.”

Unlike FGCOG’s program, which hired accounting personnel centrally to service their communities, PVPC’s program has sought out the services of Eric A. Kinsherf, CPA, who was selected after the PVPC conducted a competitive formal bidding process.

"The key to our success is the fundamental understanding that developing strong relationships with our clients and nurturing a team atmosphere on all levels will yield the greatest results. We strive to provide our clients with exemplary accounting and financial services accomplished through excellence, integrity, diligence and respect." Eric A. Kinsherf, CPA

By engaging in the Shared Accounting program, Chesterfield has not only enjoyed professional and qualified accounting services, but have furthermore experienced savings through fewer human resource, health insurance and retirement costs.

“At the end of the day, a huge part of PVPC’s mission is to help our member communities get the biggest bang for their municipal buck, while ensuring critical government functions are being fulfilled in the most professional manner possible,” said PVPC Spokesman Pat Beaudry. “The PVPC is uniquely positioned to help smaller towns in Hampden and Hampshire counties benefit from a regional approach to common challenges and we are really excited about the possibility of more communities joining Chesterfield in our Shared Accountant program.”

The Shared Accounting program is one of several services the PVPC provides its member communities in Hampden and Hampshire counties to help them realize costs savings and future success through strategic planning and regionalized approaches.

The open enrollment period for the Shared Accounting program is September 1st to October 31st. Local officials interested in participating in the program are encouraged to reach out to PVPC’s Municipal Services Manager Joshua Garcia at jgarcia@pvpc.org. Visit <www.pvpc.org/projects/regional-municipal-accounting-0> for more information.

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