

2026 Local Government Symposium

Looking Forward:
Local Government in an Evolving Landscape

Thursday, September 24, 2026
Streaming online: 9:30 am to 3:00 pm

Welcome to the 6th Annual Local Government Symposium

Hear from legislators, researchers, policy makers,
and practitioners on issues facing local
government today and into the future:

- ◇ Stormwater Management, post-*West Chester*
- ◇ Professional Municipal Management
- ◇ Data Center Planning
- ◇ Short Term Rentals

At no additional cost,
Attorneys can earn up to 4 CLEs

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION
of the PENNSYLVANIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Welcome to the 6th Annual Local Government Symposium

Municipalities provide the closest link between citizens and their government. The needs and expectations that citizens have are constantly evolving, and often that evolution creates a more complex environment in which local governments must operate. How have local governments adapted to these changes? What challenges do they still face? This year's Symposium aims to answer such questions.

Much like the overall mission of the Commission itself, today's event aims to provide a platform where practitioners, policymakers, and researchers can gather to connect, share research and policy proposals, spread awareness of local government issues and successes, and work towards increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of local government in Pennsylvania.

We're excited to have you join us online today and look forward to a great day!

Local Government Commission

The Local Government Commission is a bicameral, bipartisan legislative service agency of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, serving as a specialized local government resource for Legislators, caucus staff, committee staff and constituents on inquiries, issues and legislation, providing objective expertise in many facets of local government.

Commission Members, with the aid of staff, identify, draft and sponsor legislation to address local government issues, and review certain intergovernmental cooperation agreements as required by law.

2025-2026 Commission Members

Sen. Scott E. Hutchinson, Chair

Sen. Cris Dush

Sen. Dawn Keefer

Sen. Timothy Kearney

Sen. Patty Kim

Rep. Bob Freeman

Rep. Christina Sappey

Rep. Ismail Smith-Wade-El

Rep. R. Lee James

Rep. Brett Miller

Today's Schedule

9:30 *Opening Remarks*

Senator Scott E. Hutchinson, Chair, Local Government Commission

9:45 *Stormwater Management, post-West Chester*

Hosted by Senator Dawn Keefer

Emma Bast, Esq., PennFuture

Mary Jane Kuffner Hirt, Borough of Greenville

11:00 *Professional Municipal Management*

Hosted by Senator Patty Kim

Nicole Beckett, Associate Director for Public Service, Meyner Center at Lafayette College

Amy Farkas, Township Manager, Patton Township

Jonathan Altshul, Township Manager, Cheltenham Township

Nick Steiner, Assistant Township Manager, Upper Macungie Township

12:00 *Break for Lunch*

12:45 *Data Center Planning*

Hosted by Representative Christina Sappey

Scott Wyland, Esq., Salzmann Hughes P.C.

Dr. Andrea Matnyshyn, Penn State University

2:00 *Short-Term Rentals*

Hosted by Senator Tim Kearney

Zakary Pyzik, PA Restaurant & Lodging Association

Yvonne Hursh, Esq., Joint State Government Commission

Representative Mary Jo Daley, 148th District

Representative Lindsay Powell, 21st District

Stormwater Management

Post-*West Chester v. PASSHE*

Stormwater management has long been an important consideration for municipalities. In the wake of the *West Chester v. PASSHE* decision from the PA Supreme Court, municipalities are now facing significant uncertainty in handling stormwater management and funding.

Emma Bast is a Senior Attorney in PennFuture's Philadelphia office. Her work includes litigation and policy advocacy focusing on advancing clean water protection and water quality issues, restoring and protecting natural resources, moving Pennsylvania toward a clean energy future, and ensuring the rights of Pennsylvanians under Article I, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution. As part of PennFuture's legal team, she has worked on cases protecting Pennsylvanians' environmental rights, advancing grid-scale clean energy, fighting fossil fuel expansion, and enforcing environmental laws across the Commonwealth. She authored PennFuture's *amicus* brief for the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in the *West Chester v. PASSHE* case.

Mary Jane Kuffner Hirt: Professor Emerita, Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), taught graduate and undergraduate political science and public administration courses for 28 years. She also has worked as a city manager (Forest Hills Borough and O'Hara Township) and local government administrator with Allegheny County and councils of government in the Mon and Steel Valleys. Dr. Hirt has a B.A. in Government and Public Service from IUP and master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public & International Affairs. Since 2006 she has been the Act 47 Coordinator for Greenville, Mercer County and has worked on behalf of Braddock Borough's Government Study Commission to draft a Home Rule Charter and the borough's Administrative Code. Dr. Hirt currently resides in Harmar Township.

The Role and Value of Professional Municipal Management in Pennsylvania

Many municipalities across Pennsylvania operate without the council-manager form of government, and many elected officials who govern them have had limited exposure to what professional municipal management is, how it functions, or whether it might serve their community well. The effectiveness and efficiency of local government, and the quality of life it delivers to residents, is directly shaped by how a municipality is organized, led, and managed.

Nicole Beckett built her 25-year career in Pennsylvania municipal management from the entry level through every tier of local government to municipal leadership, including 12 years as Borough Manager of Lehighton Borough, one of Pennsylvania's 35 public power communities, where she directed a full-service municipality with a \$20.5 million budget, led approximately 100 employees, and secured more than \$13 million in competitive grant funding. Her expertise spans public power administration, municipal finance, economic development, public safety management, public works, and quality-of-life programming. In her current role at the Meyner Center, Nicole leads executive recruitment searches, conducts administrative studies and organizational assessments,

performs management consultations and performance evaluations, and supports financial analyses, compensation studies, and strategic visioning for municipalities across the region. She also serves as the Meyner Center's primary staff lead for student engagement, directing the Municipal Internship Program and public service programming with a deep commitment to introducing the next generation of students and emerging professionals to the field of local government. She holds a Master of Public Administration and Bachelor of Arts from Kutztown University, is a member of ICMA and APMM, and has presented at PMEA, APMM, the Local Government Academy, and the Local Government Commission.

Amy Farkas is the manager of Patton Township, Centre County, Pennsylvania. Patton Township is a dynamic community of 16,000 residents, located adjacent to the main campus of Penn State University. Prior to joining the Township in 2023, she served for 17 years as the manager of Harris Township, a community of 6,000 residents located in the Centre Region. She is a past president of the Association for Pennsylvania Municipal Management, a member of the Pennsylvania Municipal League Board of Directors, a founding member of the Pennsylvania Chapter of Women Leading Gov and a past member of the ICMA Governance Task Force. In her

spare time, Amy runs Left of Centre Productions, a community oriented theatre group, volunteers at Centre County PAWS and enjoys spending time with her husband and their family.

Jonathan Altshul brings decades of distinguished municipal management experience across Pennsylvania and the broader region. He served as Township Manager of Westtown Township in Chester County from 2020 to 2024, directing a suburban Philadelphia municipality with a \$13.5 million all-funds budget and securing ten competitive grants from the Commonwealth totaling \$12.6 million for open space, stormwater, parks, and infrastructure improvements. Prior to Westtown, he served as Director of Finance and Assistant Township Manager of East Goshen Township in Chester County from 2012 to 2020, where he secured the township's first-ever AAA bond rating from both Kroll and Moody's, making East Goshen one of only seven Pennsylvania municipalities to hold that distinction. Earlier in his career he held roles in the Arlington County, Virginia Department of Management and Finance and as a Senior Analyst at the United States Government Accountability Office. Most recently he served as Town Manager of Newington, Connecticut, overseeing a municipal operation with 180

employees and a \$46 million budget. He holds a Master of Public Administration in Public Finance from Indiana University and has served as an Adjunct Professor in West Chester University's MPA program, bringing both practitioner depth and an investment in the next generation of local government professionals to this conversation.

Nicholas Steiner served as the first Township Manager of Moore Township, Northampton County, where he led the township's transition into the council-manager form of government, modernizing operations, implementing internal controls, and directing all fiscal and administrative functions. He subsequently served as Interim Finance Director for the Borough of Ambler and as Finance Director for Plainfield Township before joining Upper Macungie Township as Assistant Township Manager. He holds a Master of Public Administration in Public Budgeting and Financial Management from Penn State Harrisburg and previously served as an Executive Budget Specialist with the Governor's Budget Office.

Data Center Planning for Local Government

This panel is a comprehensive discussion of key data center planning considerations for local governments, including electric supply, grid connection and “bring your own power” options, water and wastewater issues, cooling approaches, zoning and ordinances, noise concerns, community benefit agreements, and the national versus local perspective.

Scott T. Wyland, Esq., is a Shareholder at Salzmann Hughes, P.C., where he concentrates his practice in municipal, environmental, and public utility law. He serves as Solicitor to Swatara Township, Dauphin County, a Township of the First Class currently processing two large data center campus development projects, and as General Counsel to Capital Region Water. He also serves as Special Counsel to municipalities in Franklin County in electric transmission-line proceedings before the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission. Mr. Wyland's data center work spans the full range of issues confronting host communities. He has drafted Community Benefits Agreements and data center zoning ordinances, advises municipalities and authorities on the zoning, energy, utility, and water infrastructure questions that accompany large-load

development, and has moderated public forums addressing community opposition to proposed data center projects. His broader practice includes representation of municipal and authority clients before the PUC, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the courts on matters involving utility regulation, environmental compliance, and water and wastewater services. A graduate of the Dickinson School of Law (1988), Mr. Wyland has represented municipal and institutional clients across Pennsylvania for more than three decades.

Dr. Andrea M. Matwyshyn is an academic and author whose work focuses on the intersection of technology design, innovation policy, ethics, and law. In particular, her work engages with questions of information security/ cybersecurity and engineering safety history; artificial intelligence/machine learning, ethics, and developmental psychology; health tech and technology fraud; legal rights in information, privacy, and technology competition; and technology workforce pipeline policy. Professor Matwyshyn is a full professor in both the law school and engineering school at Penn State. She was the senior anchor hire for the Penn State interdisciplinary initiative in Law, Policy, and Engineering, and the founding faculty director

of both the Penn State PILOT Lab (Policy Innovation Lab of Tomorrow), an interdisciplinary technology policy lab, and the Anuncia Donecia Songsong Manglona Lab. She has served as a member of the steering committee of the Penn State Center for Socially Responsible Artificial Intelligence, a faculty affiliate of both the Bioethics Program at Penn State and the Penn State Institute for Computational Data Sciences, as well as an affiliate scholar of the Center for Internet and Society at Stanford Law School. Between 2019 and 2025, she served as the Associate Dean of Innovation at Penn State Dickinson Law. She teaches technology law and policy courses in both law and engineering, as well as professional ethics and an introductory business law course in the law school.

Short-Term Rentals: Balancing Lodging & Tourism, Local Government and Community Needs

Drawing on findings from the PA Joint State Government Commission's recent study of short-term rentals, the discussion will explore state policy proposals and other issues including regulation, local tax collection, public safety, housing impacts, and the prevalence of short-term rentals within Pennsylvania's broader tourism economy, and will also highlight emerging state policy considerations seeking to balance economic development, community character, and resident concerns.

Zakary Pyzik is currently the Senior Director of Public Affairs at the Pennsylvania Restaurant & Lodging Association, where he's been since April of 2021. Before joining the team at the PRLA, Zak spent seven years in the Pennsylvania State Senate where he most recently served as the Director of Communications for State Senator Daylin Leach. Zak grew up in the Poconos, graduated from the University of Michigan with a degree in Political Science, and now lives in East Norriton, PA, with his wife, Jenna, and his two children, Zoe and Jack.

Yvonne Llewellyn Hursh, Esq. has been counsel for the Joint State Government

Commission, the Pennsylvania General Assembly's central research agency, since 2015. She has served as assistant counsel, staff attorney and law clerk for the Commission at various times since 1982. In addition to her duties as legal counsel, she serves as project manager on multiple studies and was principal author of the Commission's March 2025 report on *The Short-term Rental Industry in Pennsylvania*. Ms. Hursh received her J.D. from the Dickinson School of Law in 1984, and received her B.A., *magna cum laude*, in Economics and Political Science from Bucknell University in 1981. She and her husband live in Middletown and have four children.

Mary Jo Daley: First elected to represent Montgomery County's 148th Legislative District in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in 2012. Her election to state office continues a deep commitment to community service, the environment and social justice. Daley is committed to focusing on the needs of her constituents through the assistance provided by a capable district office staff and a lot of community outreach. As a representative, she believes strongly that it is possible to practice the politics that are about getting things done and delivering services that people want and need. Keeping her promise to be a strong voice for her constituents, Daley is leading efforts in Harrisburg to stop further

erosion of women's rights, fighting for non-discrimination in Pennsylvania, and advocating for investing in Pennsylvania public schools to ensure funding that is adequate, equitable and sustainable. Daley serves as the Majority Chair of the House Tourism & Economic & Recreational Development Committee and is a member of the House Rules Committee. In addition, Daley co-chairs the bicameral, bipartisan Women's Health Caucus and is one of five co-chairs of the Irish American Caucus. Daley's public service began with 20 years as a member of Narberth Borough Council, including 10 years as council president starting in 2001. She often cites her years on Borough Council as invaluable experience for serving as a state representative and why she believes so strongly in supporting local governments, no matter how small the municipality.

Lindsay Powell was elected to the House in 2023 to represent the 21st Legislative District in Allegheny County. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from Wheaton College and a Master of Science degree in Public Policy Management from Carnegie Mellon University Heinz College. She also won CMU Heinz College's Otto A. Davis Award, which recognizes a graduate's commitment to racial and social justice. Powell has worked for progressive officials such as U.S. Sen. Chuck

Schumer and U.S. Rep. Hakeem Jeffries and, upon proudly receiving a Fulbright Scholarship, taught English in Malaysia to rural high school students. Powell served as a city of Pittsburgh assistant chief of staff for almost half a decade and directed legislation and policy for city departments. Powell oversaw the creation of the first citywide digital equity initiative and the implementation of Avenues of Hope, a catalyst for small businesses to open on city main streets. She served as director of workforce strategies for InnovatePGH, with a focus on creating employment opportunities for underrepresented technologists in the Pittsburgh tech ecosystem. Powell currently serves as the City Vice Chair for the PA House of Representatives Allegheny County Delegation, as Secretary for the Pennsylvania Legislative Latino Caucus, and serves as a board member on the Urban Redevelopment Authority. Key issues for Powell include safe and dignified housing for all, helping working families, assisting small businesses and strengthening the local economy, and increasing the number of community assets. Powell resides in Troy Hill with her beloved dog, Willow.

Thank you for attending the 6th Annual Local Government Symposium

Today's presentations will be made available on our website, lgc.state.pa.us, for review, with the full recording available on our YouTube channel. Be on the lookout for follow up emails to all presenters and attendees to garner feedback and suggestions for future events. To stay informed on our work, you can subscribe to our email list via our website.

The next Monthly Business Meeting of the Local Government Commission is scheduled for Wednesday, October 21, 2026, at 9:00 am in 515 Irvis Office Building. It will also be streamed live through Zoom.

Commission Staff:

David Greene, Esq., Executive Director

Kristopher Gazsi, Esq., Assistant Director/Legal Counsel

Martin Toth, Esq., Associate Legal Counsel

Julia Frey, MPA, Senior Research Analyst

Rex Burman, MPA, Research Analyst

Karen Bear, Executive Assistant

Sonya Ebersole, Fiscal Administrator