



Centre Region Council of Governments OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATION

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Centre Region Council of Governments Announces Hiring of New Executive Director

Benjamin Estell to Begin Role with the COG on August 26

The Centre Region Council of Governments (COG) today announced that it has selected its next Executive Director. The organization's governing body, the General Forum, voted to hire Benjamin Estell at its Monday, June 24 meeting.

"The Search Committee received strong applications and after a meticulous review of materials, interviews, and discussions, we were excited to recommend Ben Estell to be the next Executive Director," stated Ferguson Township Manager and Search Committee Chair, Centrice Martin. "I am excited to share that all members of the Search Committee are thrilled to welcome Mr. Estell. We are confident that Mr. Estell will hit the ground running to serve the CRCOG based on his wealth of experience and successes in his 20 years of managing municipal services."

"His commitment to professional leadership with a demonstrated approach to relationship and consensus building will support sustainable partnerships and decision-making," Martin added. "On behalf of the Search Committee and municipal managers, we extend a warm welcome to Ben Estell and are excited about the prospect of working alongside him in his soon-to-be new role."

Estell has served as the borough manager/secretary of the Borough of Dormont in Allegheny County since July 2015. During his nine years at the borough, he oversaw a complete zoning rewrite, moving to a form-based code with transit-oriented development; established a regional glass recycling program; helped craft a Family Leave Policy; created a publicly accessible budget process; oversaw multiple conservatorship projects that transformed dilapidated properties into high quality homes; and developed a strong presence and reputation for Dormont throughout western Pennsylvania.

"On behalf of the Centre Region Council of Governments, we are looking forward to welcoming Ben to be its next executive director" stated COG Chair Ron Servello. "We look forward to his success in his new role and his leadership of the COG staff to provide excellent service to the municipalities in the Centre Region served by the COG."

In this new role, Estell will be leading the planning, coordination, and administration of all COG programs and operations. The Centre Region COG provides Regional Fire Protection Services, Emergency Management Services, Regional Refuse/Recycling Services, Code Administration Services, Local, Regional, and Transportation Planning, Parks and Recreation, and operates the Schlow Centre Region Library. Estell will be

responsible for the overall direction, guidance, and financial management of the organization.

"After nine wonderful years in the Borough of Dormont, I am thrilled to continue my professional journey with the Centre Region Council of Governments," said Estell. "Partnerships have been a cornerstone of my career, and the COG has been a national leader in cooperative governance. I look forward to becoming a part of the Centre Region team and finding new ways to provide superior service throughout our communities."

Estell's hiring began following the announcement that the current Executive Director, Eric Norenberg, intended to retire in June. A six-member search committee was formed in January that worked with GovHR USA-MGT to assist with recruitment. The COG received 23 resumes from 10 states, including 14 applications from Pennsylvania residents. The search committee screened 14 candidates in April, virtually interviewed 4 candidates in May, and invited Estell to a final, in-person interview with COG's Executive Committee, as well as a presentation exercise and meet and greet opportunities with key staff and stakeholders in June before presenting his candidacy to the General Fourm at Monday's meeting.

Estell holds a Master's in Business Administration from the University of North Carolina and earned his bachelor's degree from The Ohio State University. Prior to joining Dormont, Estell was the Service-Safety Director, and Assistant to the Service-Safety Director, for the City of East Liverpool in Ohio. He is an active member of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) serving as a speaker and presenter at the organization's conferences and is part of the 2024 Conference Host Committee. He is a member of the Association of Pennsylvania Municipal Managers (APMM) Vice President (West) and has previously served on the APMM conference host committee, and as a conference speaker and presenter. He has been a multiyear internship host and presenter for the Local Government Academy's Newly Elected Official Courses and Educational Series and is a multiyear member of the Western Association of Pennsylvania Municipal Managers (WAPMM).

Estell will begin his role with the COG on August 26, 2024.

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About the Centre Region Council of Governments (COG):

The Centre Region Council of Governments (COG), established in 1969, is a voluntary association of the State College Borough and the Townships of College, Ferguson, Halfmoon, Harris and Patton. The COG's service area covers about 150 square miles with a population of 95,679 residents including 48,535 University students. The Centre Region COG is the oldest and most successful COG in the Commonwealth, celebrating 55 years of service in 2024.