

RECOMMENDATION REGARDING ROW OFFICES
RESOLUTION NO. 2025-11

PENNSYLVANIA INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION AUTHORITY

Resolution No. 2025-11
March 18, 2025

WHEREAS, pursuant to the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority Act for Cities of the First Class (the Act of June 5, 1991, P.L. 9, No. 6, as amended) (the “Act”), the governing board (the “Board”) of the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority (the “Authority”) is empowered to make factual findings and recommendations to the City of Philadelphia concerning its budgetary and fiscal affairs; and

WHEREAS, on November 2, 2009, the Authority issued a PICA Issues Report entitled “A History We Can No Longer Afford: Consolidating Philadelphia’s Row Offices” (the “Row Offices Report”), which recommended the elimination and/or consolidation of certain independently elected “row offices”, including the Philadelphia Sheriff’s Office (the “Sheriff”), the Register of Wills, and the Clerk of the Court of Quarter Sessions; and

WHEREAS, on September 30, 2010 the Council of the City of Philadelphia (the “City Council”) enacted, and on October 12, 2010, the Mayor of the City of Philadelphia (the “Mayor”) signed, Bill No. 100360, an ordinance amending Title 2 of The Philadelphia Code to abolish the office of the Clerk of the Court of Quarter Sessions; and

WHEREAS, the Row Offices Report found that the consolidation of the offices of the Sheriff and the Register of Wills would “likely result in considerable cost savings through more effective use of personnel and information technology, use of centralized services, and greater coordination”; and

WHEREAS, no action has been taken to date to effect the recommendation of the Row Offices Report with regards to the offices of the Sheriff and the Register of Wills, which have remained in operation; and

WHEREAS, on May 12, 2022, the City Controller of the City of Philadelphia (the “Controller”) released a Performance Audit of the Philadelphia Sheriff’s Office Custodial Accounts for the period running from July 1, 2015 through December 31, 2020, and found many significant internal control and compliance deficiencies in the Sheriff’s management, operation

and use of its custodial accounts, including that the Sheriff's Office does not maintain "a comprehensive accounting system, or general ledger, to track the overall balance of the accounts or document complete records of financial transactions" or "adequate recordkeeping procedures for the fee revenue collected and maintained in accounts, nor the revenue that should be remitted to the City" and that full internal or external oversight over financial activities of the Sheriff's Office was therefore not possible; and

WHEREAS, according to reports in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, the office of the Sheriff has experienced major problems performing its basic functions over the past several years, including: (1) the failure to hold mandatory tax sales for several years (December 24, 2023), (2) years-long delays in returning excess proceeds from Sheriff's sales owed to former property owners (January 12, 2024), (3) a failure to deliver deeds to purchasers of foreclosed property bought at sheriff's sales (July 2, 2024), and (4) a shortage of sheriff's deputies causing trial delays and postponements and a rise in security incidents at the courthouse prompting a court order (September 23, 2024); and

WHEREAS, the Sheriff's office has declined to meet with this Authority to discuss its most recent fiscal year budget and continues to this day its practice of resisting attempts at accountability by the City Controller, this Authority, and other entities tasked with oversight over the City government;

WHEREAS, the ongoing and serious operational and financial mismanagement of the Sheriff's office have a detrimental effect on the budgetary and fiscal affairs of the City; and

WHEREAS, the Row Offices Report found that the office of the Register of Wills operates outside the City's civil service system, which "reinforces the stereotype of patronage and corruption"; and

WHEREAS, the flaws identified in the Row Offices Report persist, and the office of the Register of Wills has been sued by at least fourteen former office employees in the past several years alleging employment decisions were unlawfully made as a reward for political support and/or in retaliation for perceived lack of political support; and

WHEREAS, these lawsuits and alleged personnel mismanagement can cost the City of Philadelphia significant sums in legal settlements, compromise the quality of government services, and contribute to an undermining of public trust in government; and

WHEREAS, the Board reaffirms the findings of the Row Officers Report that the services provided by the offices of the Sheriff and the Register of Wills could be more effectively and efficiently provided by other City and court agencies; and

WHEREAS, the Board desires to recommend that the City Council and the Mayor take steps to eliminate the offices of the Sheriff and the Register of Wills as independently elected

offices;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. The Board hereby recommends that the Council of the City of Philadelphia and the Mayor of the City of Philadelphia take steps to eliminate the offices of the Sheriff and the Register of Wills as independently elected offices and to consolidate the functions of such officers into the appropriate agencies of the City or the First Judicial District, and, when necessary, to enact local legislation, petition the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for relief, and to take appropriate legal action against the Sheriff and Register of Wills to ensure compliance with applicable law.

2. The Authority hereby ratifies and confirms any and all prior actions taken by or on behalf of the Authority consistent with the intent of this Resolution.

3. All prior resolutions or parts of prior resolutions not in accordance with this Resolution are hereby repealed insofar as they conflict herewith.

4. This Resolution shall take effect immediately.

MOVED: Sutch

SECONDED: Karp

APPROVED: Yes

Qualified Majority Required: Y N X

Vote:	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>
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Burns	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
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Karp	<u>Y</u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
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Kessler	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
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Sutch	<u>Y</u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
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Vaughan	<u>Y</u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
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