

CUMBERLAND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
JUNE 12, 2007, 7:00PM
SPECIAL MEETING – JOINT MEETING WITH THE
CITY OF FAYETTEVILLE
FTCC HORTICULTURE CENTER

PRESENT: Chairman Kenneth Edge
Vice Chairman Breeden Blackwell
Commissioner Jeannette Council
Commissioner Ed Melvin
Commissioner Billy King
Commissioner John T. Henley, Jr.
Commissioner Diane Wheatley
James Martin, County Manager
Juanita Pilgrim, Deputy County Manager
Amy Cannon, Asst. County Manager
Grainger Barrett, County Attorney
Marsha Fogle, Clerk
Mayor Tony Chavonne
Council Member Keith Bates
Candice White, City Clerk
Karen McDonald, City Attorney
Dale Iman, City Manager
Other City and County Staff

The purpose of the meeting was to receive a draft report from the Carl Vinson Institute of Government about consolidation of Cumberland County and Fayetteville City governments.

Chairman Edge called the meeting of the Board of Commissioners to order. There was no quorum present for the City Council.

Vice Chairman Breeden Blackwell introduced the team from the Carl Vinson Institute of Government in Georgia, Harry Hayes, Karen Baines and John O'Looney.

Mayor Chavonne spoke and noted that the consolidation could be an effective/efficient way to deliver government services. He noted some positive comments from Columbus, Georgia about its consolidation.

Harry Hayes and John O'Looney, Carl Vinson Institute of Government, reviewed the report via a power point presentation. The full report was given to the elected officials and will be available on the County and City websites. For the first phase of the report, department heads in city and county government were interviewed as well as other community leaders; their comments and perceptions are part of the report. Provided below is a brief overview of some of the information in the power point presentation:

Types of Governments

Special Purpose Local Government (school board, water/sewer utility boards);
General Purpose Government (city and county governments).

Local Government Consolidation Options

Functional – consolidation of services, existing governments remain;
Full – all services combined, new elected body.

Full Government Consolidation

Only 36 in the United States

Why So Few Consolidated Governments

Limited functions for county governments especially in the New England area;
Legislative impediments limiting the ability to bring the issue to the voters;
When it comes to a vote, only about 25% pass.

Pros/Cons

Pros: One stop for economic development;
Benefits of economy of scale;
Additional revenue source from franchise fees;
Being both a city and county;
Efficiency by eliminating coordination problems.

Cons: Bigger is not always better;
Dealing with the known is better than the unknown;
Costs associated with transition;
Competition between local governments is good;
If it's not broke don't fix it.

Why Consolidation Attempts Fail

It only takes one reason to vote no;
Change – fear of the unknown;
Political agendas;
Feelings that one government is taking over the other;
More study needed.

Functional Consolidation Opportunities

Geographic Information Systems
E-911
Community Development
Fleet Management
Emergency Management
Fire Marshal Services
Telecommunication Services
Transit Services
Long-range Planning

Legal Issues

Consolidated City-County Act of 1973;
Steps in Consolidation – establish a study commission, prepare legislation & call for a referendum, approved through local legislation (referendum is required if there is GO debt).

Revenue/Expenditures

Will urban services area be considered a new or existing city;
How will consolidation affect telecommunication franchise fees;
Will Street Aid Revenues/franchise fees adequately fund street maintenance;
How will PWC inter-fund transfer be allocated;
Cost to integrate financial and HR systems.

Identified Benefits of Consolidation

Improved economies and efficiencies in government operations;
Better service delivery;
Improved citizen access;
Better planning;
Improved Emergency Management;
Benefit to economic development.

Identified Challenges

Overcoming government cultural differences;
Protecting minority representation;
Integrating departments/programs;
Maintaining employee morale (need to equalize salaries);
Managing public confusion, anxieties.

Perceived Disadvantages of Consolidated Government

Less citizen access because of larger government;
Little immediate cost savings;
Employees may leave rather than work for new government;
City lacks capacity to maintain roads;

Public Perceptions

Public wants more efficient government;
Public may be risk adverse;
Dissatisfaction with both governments;
Public lacks strong desire for change;
Difference between City & County governments (different services provided)
Public may expect equalized services (may not be the case if urban service districts are set up);

Conclusions

Significant staff time could be saved;
Consolidation will take time to achieve;
Strong leadership necessary to build interest for consolidation;
Long term cost savings;
Short term costs to merge should be relatively low;
Different service levels based on the urban service districts;
Education of public is critical;
Few consolidated governments would return to being non-consolidated

A full report may be found on-line at the City and County websites.

Vice Chairman Blackwell pointed out that neither the City or County has budgeted any money for Phase II of this study. He estimated that the Phase II portion could cost about \$30,000.

The floor was opened for comments/questions.

Wade Fowler – recently annexed, not currently receiving city services; will new government abstain from taxing for the higher level of services until services are in place;

Phil Edge – thinks there should be a separate vote (city & county) on consolidation; thinks consolidation will only benefit the urban area.

Davie Wilson - how will zoning issues and ordinances be resolved.

Sharon Valentine – cost of Phase II. (Cost will depend on how much information is wanted)

Charles Asbornjen – minority voting power issues.

Speaker (unidentified) – how will consolidation affect 2030 Plan.

Dale Iman (City Manager) – questions about council-manager form of government and specific successes in other post consolidation communities.

Theodore Debose – why have so few governments consolidated.

Lisa Sheridan – process/procedure questions, next step, effective date.

Rollin Shaw – confident in the two Institute of Government entities (Georgia and North Carolina) to guide us through the process

George Furst – what was significance to success of consolidation of large military presence in Columbus, GA.

Wayne Riggs – supports consolidation; concerned that we do things on the “cheap”.

Myron Pitts – will jobs be lost and will there be real savings over the long-term

Wheatley – concerned about lack of confidence in government and what will happen to annexation powers after consolidation (for other municipalities that have opted out) (she noted all commissioners were present).

John Malzone – excited about the possibility of community coming together to talk about this issue

Karl Merritt – comments about district vs. at-large seats (noted set-up in Georgia)

Adam Beyah – Open forum should be held to discuss all issues

Commissioner Blackwell noted that commissioners, city council members and managers will have three weeks to respond to the report. Upon receipt of the responses, the IOG will finalize its report.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 9:20PM.