

Escambia County Consolidation Study
Commission

Status Report

November, 2009

This Status Report is presented pursuant to the mandate in Section 4 of CS/HB 1431, the Escambia County Consolidation Study Commission's ("Commission" or "ECCSC") enabling legislation. Section 4 requires the Escambia County Consolidation Study Commission to "compile and present by November 30, 2009, a status report on its **progress** and **tentative findings**." The presentation is to be to the Board of County Commissioners, the City of Pensacola, the Town of Century, and the legislative delegation.

The Commission's Secretary has routinely forwarded the Commission's minutes and other materials to these four interested public bodies, so the Chair will assume that the members of each are aware of most of the Commission's work to date. This material and much more regarding the Commission's work may be found on the Commission's website at www.eccsc.org. In light of this, the Commission's status report will be succinct.

Progress

The Commission has made remarkable progress toward accomplishing its purpose which, as stated in our enabling legislation (section 2, CS/HB 1431), is:

a. To "study and develop a proposed consolidation plan for local governments or unification of administrative services in the City of Pensacola, the Town of Century, and Escambia County, in whole or part."

b. To "specify how such a consolidated government or unification of services might operate."

To guide our accomplishment of this stated purpose, the Commission adopted the following vision and goals statement:

VISION: Improving our quality of life by improving our local government.

GOALS:

- 1. Unifying the vision and priorities of our local government;**
- 2. Improving policy making and policy implementation by:**
 - A. Attracting visionary leaders to public service;**
 - B. Assuring transparency and full accountability.**
- 3. Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of governmental services by eliminating unnecessary duplications and leveraging economies of scales.**
- 4. Improving job opportunities by unifying our economic development efforts.**
- 5. Improving the beauty of our area with broader and better coordinated planning.**

The Commission is on track to accomplish its purpose by the January 15, 2010 deadline provided in CS/HB 1431.

In June, the Commission divided itself into six (6) committees and began its work in earnest. These committees, their areas of responsibility and their tasks are listed in **Attachment 1**.

These six committees (as well as the three special advisory committees established by CS/HB 143) have met almost weekly since July, 2009. And, during the last 30 days, most of the committees have presented their final reports. These reports can be found on the Commission's website.

Tentative Findings

Until a final report is completed in January, 2010, the Commission's detailed findings are best reflected in the reports of the committees and special advisory committees. However, two important Commission votes recently were taken. After several months of intensively researching and discussing the relative advantages and disadvantages of the current governmental structures and consolidation, the Commission determined on October 27th that it would proceed with developing a consolidation plan.

Consistent with this decision, at its November 10, 2009 meeting, the Commission began voting on the major issues it must decide to draft a consolidation plan. These issues summarize what the committees had recommended to date. A copy of those issues is included as **Attachment 2**. And, a draft summary of the Commission's votes on these issues is included as **Attachment 3**. The matters noted as being "tabled" will be voted upon at the Commission's December 8, 2009 meeting.

The Forecasting and Economic Development Committee has yet to present its findings to the Commission. Chaired by Dr. Rick Harper, this committee's work will be a critical component to the Commission's ultimate work.

Conclusion

The Escambia County Consolidation Study Commission has worked very hard at objectively studying the relative advantages and disadvantages of the present governmental structures and any proposed consolidation or unification of administrative services.

The Commission looks forward to presenting its consolidation plan (or recommendation regarding unification of administrative services) and its report on or before January 15, 2005.

Kenneth B. Bell
Chair, ECCSC

Attachment 2

Commission Sub-Structure

Committees:

Administrative Services

Sharon Barnett
 Enoch Leatherwood (Sec.)
 C.J. Lewis
 Norm Ross
 Russell Tanner (Chair)

Public Safety & Council

Composition

John Veasley
 Gary Montee (Sec.)
 Michael Hardin (Chair)
 Charles Scott, Sr.

Planning & Permitting &

Environment

Clarry Ellis (Chair)
 John Gormley
 LuTimothy May
 Stephen Moorehead (Sec.)

Roads, Recreation, Utilities,

Special Districts &

Authorities

Tim Common
 Jimmy Cunningham
 Rick Finch (Chair)
 Gerald McKenzie (Sec.)

Forecasting and Economic

Development

Jeremy Brown
 Rick Harper (Chair)
 Doris Harris (Sec.)
 John Peacock
 Richard Stone

Drafting

Ed Fleming
 Janet Lander (Chair/Sec)
 Kenneth Bell

Areas of Focus:

(COP, TOC, EC)
 Human Resources
 Mgmt. Info. Service/ I.T.
 Financial Services
 Public Information
 Purchasing
 S.A.C. Health Care
 Constitutional Offices

Law Enforcement
 Fire/Rescue/EMS
 Corrections
 S. A. C. Public Safety
 Council size & composition

Planning/Zoning
 Permitting
 Bldg. Inspections
 Code Enforcement
 Environment

Parks & Recreation
 Extension Services
 Roads
 Facilities Mgmt.
 Utilities (ECUA, ESP, Solid
 Waste Mgmt, City Sanitation)

S.A.C. On Economic
 Development

Cumulative Forecasting of
 Consolidation Impact

Commission Reports
 Proposed Legislation
 Proposed Plan

Tasks:

Determine:

1. Pros and cons of current structure

2. Pros and cons of consolidation/unification

- financially
- administratively
- delivery of services

E.g. Will consolidation:

-better unify our government?

- save taxpayer dollars by streamlining delivery of services?

- improve policy making and implementation?

- improve delivery of service?

- improve job opportunities?

- improve the beauty of our area?

- otherwise improve the quality of life in Escambia County?

Attachment 2

ECCSC's INITIAL PLAN VOTES

(November 10, 2009)

Having agreed (18-4) to go forward with the development of a consolidation plan, the Commission needs to vote on numerous matters so that the plan can be formalized. The order of voting is based on those matters presented to date to the Commission by its committees and special advisory committees.

Constitutional Officers

1. Constitutional Officers (excluding the Sheriff) unaffected (not within consolidated government): The Property Appraiser, Tax Collector, Clerk of the Court, and Supervisor of Elections, should remain as independent constitutional officers. In other words, these officials should not be included within the consolidated government.

Public Safety

2. Unified Law Enforcement: The Escambia County Sheriff's Office and the City of Pensacola's Police Department should be merged into one law enforcement agency.

3. An elected Sheriff as the Chief Law Enforcement Officer: The Sheriff should remain an elected position over the consolidated law enforcement agency.

4. Non-partisan election for Sheriff: The Sheriff should be elected in a non-partisan election.

5. Unified Fire Departments: The Escambia County and City of Pensacola Fire Departments should be consolidated into a combined system of professional and volunteer firefighters.

6. Unified Communications: The Communication Centers (911, etc) for Law Enforcement and Fire should be combined.

Administrative Services

7. Unified Administrative Services: Under the consolidated government, all "structural impediments" to a full merger of the administrative services of the County and municipalities (i.e., Human Resources, Finance, Public Information, Information Technology, and Purchasing) can and should be merged.

Planning and Permitting

8. Unified Planning and Zoning: The County and City of Pensacola Planning and Zoning Departments should be consolidated.

9. Unified Permitting and Building Inspection: The County and City Permitting and Building Inspection departments should be consolidated.

10. Unified Code Enforcement: Code enforcement should be consolidated.

11. Code Enforcement Officers to be certified law enforcement officers: Code enforcement officer in this area should be certified law enforcement officers under the Sheriff.

Utilities

12. One Utility Authority: All utilities services in Escambia County and the City of Pensacola should be consolidated under a single utility authority. The utilities operating under this Utility Authority would include the services of: Natural Gas, Water, Waste Water and Solid Waste Management.

13. Utility Authority Governing Board: The Utility Authority should be governed by a board of 7 members. Board composition should exist with five of the members being elected in the same manner as the present ECUA Board; one member should be appointed by consolidated government's Council; and, the remaining member should be appointed by the elected Mayor.

14. Powers and Duties of the Utility Authority Governing Board: Similar to the consolidated government's Council, the Utility Authority Governing Board should not be involved in directing the day-to-day activities of the Utility Authority. The day-to-day activities should be the responsibility of the Executive Director. The primary responsibility of the Board responsibilities will be to select and oversee the performance of the Executive Director, approve the budget and set major organizational policy. The members of the Board should meet once each month in a public forum to conduct the official business of the Utilities Authority.

15. Utility Authority Executive Director: There should be created a position of Executive Director of the Utilities Authority. The Executive Director should be selected and confirmed by the governing Board of the Utilities Authority. Serving at the pleasure of the Board, the Executive Director should be removed only by a majority vote of the Board.

16. Powers and Duties of the Executive Director: If necessary, the Consolidation Charter may describe the position(s) as follows:

- **Powers and Duties of the Executive Director of the Utility Authority:**
There shall be an Executive Director of the Utilities Authority who shall serve as the professional manager of the Public Utilities under the authority of the Board of Directors. The Executive Director shall be appointed and hired by the Utilities Authority Board and shall be responsible to the Board for the day-to-day management and operation of the utilities. The Executive Director shall have sole

authority to appoint, suspend, or remove all department directors, employees, and administrative officers of the Utilities Authority.

Roads

17. Unified Roads Department: The County and City Road Departments should be combined.

Parks and Recreation

18. Unified Parks and Recreation Department: There should be a consolidated Parks and Recreation department. This department would include Area Parks, Community Sports, Ball Fields, Community Centers, Osceola Golf Course, Libraries, the Civic Center, the Saenger Theatre and the Maritime Park.

Existing Special Districts and Authorities

19. Special Districts and Authorities: Existing special districts and authorities should be left "as is" under the consolidation plan.

Economic Development

20. Economic Development: (two choices): The Special Advisory Committee on Economic Development recommended that economic development under the consolidated government should continue with the private sector effort led by the Chamber of Commerce while modifying the public sector driven PEDC to take on additional roles and responsibilities similar to the Economic Development Commission in Jacksonville, Florida. The choice for the Commission is whether or not to specify this recommendation in the plan by making specific reference to an Economic Development Commission.

a. **No specificity in the plan:** The economic development plan should be left to the discretion of the new consolidated government; or,

b. **Specify in the plan:** The plan should make provision for an Economic Development Commission with the details of that commission to be left to ordinance by the council.

Office of General Counsel

21. Office of General Counsel: There should be an Office of General Counsel to help resolve legal disputes between the different elements of the consolidated government (including its independent agencies).

Taxing and Service Districts

22. Separate Taxing and Service Districts: Under a consolidated government, there should be separate taxing districts with taxation proportionate to services provided.

Existing Debt and Pension Obligations

23. Restrictions on existing debt obligations: The existing liabilities of the City (pension plans, Maritime Park, etc) should remain with the boundaries of the present city. More specifically, the repayment of debt service should be restricted to the same funding source or property which is subject to taxation for repayment to the source or property from which such debt service would be paid had consolidation not taken place and before the effective date of the Charter.

24. Pension Obligations: Current employees should be able to continue in their existing plans but future employees should be under the retirement system adopted by the Council.

Office of Independent Budget Analyst

25. Office of Budget Analyst: An Office of Independent Budget Analyst as an independent department whose role is to advise and inform the Council on fiscal matters should be included in the Plan.

Form of Government

26. Mayor-Council: The consolidated government should be a mayor-council form of government (i.e. a separation of powers between a legislative and executive branch). Except for the following two matters, the details of this form of government will be fleshed out and voted upon at the Commission's December 8th meeting.

a. **Executive Mayor:** The mayor should be the elected head of the executive branch, elected on an at-large, non-partisan basis.

b. **Professional City Manager:** The consolidated government should mandate a professional city manager. The exact duties/responsibilities of this position and any limits on the mayor's ability to hire and fire this professional manager will be determined at the Commission's December meeting (e.g., Mayor-Council-CAO or Strong Mayor-CAO-Council).

27. Council-Manager: The consolidated government should be a council-manager form of government. Legislative and executive functions should remain unified (i.e., no separation of powers between the council and an elected chief executive). The details of this form of government will be fleshed out and voted upon at the Commission's December 8th meeting.

Council Composition

This issue will be discussed and voted upon at the December meeting.

Council and Mayor Compensation

The Administrative Services committee will study and make recommendations on council member and mayor compensation at the Dec. 8th meeting.

Merit System

The Administrative Services committee will study and make recommendation at the Dec. 8th meeting, but the following model language is offered.

28. Personnel System: Language similar to the following provision taken from the National Civic League's *Model City Charter*, 8th Edition should be included in the plan:

Section __ Personnel System.

(a) Merit Principle: All appointments and promotions of city officers and employees shall be made solely on the basis of merit and fitness demonstrated by a valid and reliable examination or other evidence of competence.

(b) Consistent with all applicable federal and state laws, the Council shall provide by ordinance for the establishment, regulation, and maintenance of a merit system governing personnel policies necessary to effective administration of the employees of the city's departments, offices and agencies, including but not limited to classification and pay plans, examinations, force reduction, removals, working conditions, provisional and exempt appointments, in-service training, grievances and relationships with employee organizations.

Attachment 3

Summary of Voting in the November 10, 2009 Meeting of the Escambia County Consolidation Study Commission

Constitutional Officers

1. **Constitutional Officers (excluding the Sheriff) unaffected (not within consolidated government):** VOTING: 18 in favor, 1 opposed

Public Safety

Motion was made to table the voting on #2, 3, and 4 until the December meeting, when the issue of whether the Sheriff will be a constitutional or charter officer will be addressed. The motion was seconded and approved.

2. **Unified Law Enforcement:** VOTING: Tabled
3. **An elected Sheriff as the Chief Law Enforcement Officer:** VOTING: Tabled
4. **Non-partisan election for Sheriff:** VOTING: Tabled
5. **Unified Fire Departments:** VOTING: passed unanimously
6. **Unified Communications:** VOTING: passed unanimously

Administrative Services

7. **Unified Administrative Services:** VOTING: passed unanimously

Planning and Permitting

8. **Unified Planning and Zoning:** VOTING: passed unanimously
9. **Unified Permitting and Building Inspection:** VOTING: passed unanimously
10. **Unified Code Enforcement:** VOTING: passed unanimously
11. **Code Enforcement Officers to be certified law enforcement officers:** Motion was made to table the voting until the December meeting, when the issue of whether the Sheriff will be a constitutional or charter officer will be addressed. The motion was seconded and approved. VOTING: Tabled

Utilities

12. **One Utility Authority:** Motion was made to add the language “with the exception of pending utility authority”, and the motion was seconded and approved. After the motion, the issue of One Utility Authority was put to a vote. VOTING: passed unanimously
13. **Utility Authority Governing Board:** VOTING: passed unanimously

14. **Powers and Duties of the Utility Authority Governing Board:** VOTING: passed unanimously
15. **Utility Authority Executive Director:** VOTING: passed unanimously
16. **Powers and Duties of the Executive Director:** VOTING: passed unanimously

Roads

17. **Unified Roads Department:** VOTING: passed unanimously

Parks and Recreation

18. **Unified Parks and Recreation Department:** Motion was made to delete the second sentence of the language, and the motion was seconded and approved. After the motion, the issue of a Unified Parks and Recreation Department was put to a vote. VOTING: passed unanimously

Existing Special Districts and Authorities

19. **Special Districts and Authorities:** VOTING: 16 in favor, 4 opposed

Economic Development

20. **Economic Development: (two choices):**
 - a. **No specificity in the plan:** VOTING: 3 in favor
 - b. **Specify in plan:** VOTING: 17 in favor

Office of General Counsel

21. **Office of General Counsel:** VOTING: 18 in favor, 2 opposed
22. **Separate Taxing and Service Districts:** VOTING: passed unanimously

Existing Debt and Pension Obligations

23. **Restrictions on existing debt obligations:** VOTING: 19 in favor, 1 opposed
24. **Pension Obligations:** VOTING: 18 in favor, 1 opposed

Office of Independent Budget Analyst

25. **Office of Budget Analyst:** VOTING: 17 in favor, 3 opposed

Forms of Government

Motion was made to table the vote on #26 and #27 until the next meeting, when the vote on the city charter will have been completed. The motion was seconded and approved.

26. **Mayor-Council:** VOTING: Tabled

a. Executive Mayor:

b. Professional City Manager

27. **Council-Manager:** VOTING: Tabled

Council Composition

This issue will be discussed and voted upon at the December meeting.

Council and Mayor Compensation

This issue will be discussed and voted upon at the December meeting.

Merit System

28. **Personnel System:** VOTING: 18 in favor, 2 opposed