

## Highlights of Meeting One

**Charge: Undertake an in depth review of the history, formation and operation of the consolidated government, including a full examination of all departments, divisions, board, commissions, and independent authorities. Study the relationship between the Beaches and Baldwin and the Consolidated City of Jacksonville.**

Presentation and reading material on the history of Consolidation

### **1. What prompted a change in the form of local government?**

A series of crises including racial unrest, dis-accreditation of high schools, indictment of local officials on charges of corruption; and a significant change in property tax assessment (to fair market value, putting many more citizens on the rolls) were the primary factors. Other local challenges such as inadequate infrastructure in the City, poor land planning, significant air and water quality issues, overlapping and inefficient services, the need for pension reform, and voter apathy and perceived inability to influence outcomes were also contributing issues and integral to the choice of structure.

- The apparent inability of the city and county governments to properly address significant local issues and the problems in those governments, created the public will to consolidate and try something different.

### **2. Why was a consolidated city/county government utilizing a strong mayor/city council structure the chosen solution? (all of the following taken from 1966 Blueprint For Improvement)**

Consolidation was intended to address the following needs:

- A structure which is easily understood by the citizenry.
- A government that can provide necessary governmental services at a minimum burden to its taxpayers, e.g. a streamlined administrative structure with emphasis on economy and efficiency.
- A structure with built in capabilities and flexibility to plan for and meet the needs of the present and future (Municipalities had more flexibility to raise revenue and provide services than county governments).
- Elimination of costly, inefficient, overlapping, duplicated functions.

The strong mayor/city council form was intended to address the following needs:

- A governmental structure that is responsive to the needs of the TOTAL local citizenry.
- A structure which is easily understood by the citizenry [separation of powers between legislative and executive branches mirrors other levels] and which encourages citizen participation in the local government process.
- A structure which simplifies the pinpointing of responsibility by the electorate thus increasing the value and effectiveness of the citizen's vote.

### **3. What were the identified solutions/goals of consolidation? (from Blueprint for Improvement)**

- Eliminate existing outmoded, inadequate governmental structures, both city and county.
- Create a new single countywide local government based on a check and balance “Mayor/Council” governmental structure
- Provide a structure with the legal capabilities and flexibility to meet LOCAL needs with a minimum of outside interference.
- Provide a structure that allows easy electorate pinpointing of responsibility, thus leading to greater citizenry understanding and participation.
- Provide high quality general governmental services countywide: police protection-fire protection-streets & highway-planning-traffic control-zoning-recreation and parks-library services-building codes, etc.
- Provide adequate urban governmental services in densely populated area: sewers-water-street lights-paved curb and gutter-street drainage-refuse collection and disposal-sidewalks, etc.
- Work towards reduction of ad valorem taxes through efficiency, new revenue sources and elimination of tax inequities.

### **4. What was omitted/changed from original study recommendation prior to adoption and implementation?**

- Beaches/Baldwin allowed to remain as urban service districts, but structurally had to be part of consolidated City
- Sheriff elected rather than appointed- recommended to serve as Director of Public Safety over both police and fire
- Supervisor, Clerk, Property Appraiser, Tax Collector remain elected and distinct
- City Council comprised of 14 district and 5 at-large members rather than 21 members elected by Districts

### **5. Discussion points from Meeting One**

- A distinction should be made between **policy** (that may drive or influence action and choices), **structure**, which is the form or framework within which we operate, and the **people** who serve in various capacities at various times.
- As to the Independent Authorities: comments were made regarding the merits of professional management and businesslike boards, the business enterprise concept funded primarily from their own revenues, and the importance of independence to avoid political pressure on issues like tolls, however the lack of common vision or direction with the City as a whole was also noted as was the fact that the staff basically runs the authorities and “empathy overcomes objectivity” with respect to staff recommendations

## **6. Policy Comments from Meeting One Panelists**

- Re-examine elected Sheriff, forget consolidating other elected Constitutional offices
- Don't bother with Beaches, Baldwin- leave as is
- Concerns over deferred maintenance
- Pension reform still major issue
- Downtown still a major issue
- Don't ignore parks and quality of life
- Are incentives necessary or desirable?
- The gas tax should be extended
- Infrastructure in urban neighborhoods, especially Northside, still an issue