

CUMBERLAND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
AND
FAYETTEVILLE CITY COUNCIL JOINT MEETING
APRIL 12, 2007, 2:00PM
FTCC – HARRY SHAW VIRTUAL COLLEGE CENTER

PRESENT: Chairman Kenneth Edge
Vice Chairman Breeden Blackwell
Commissioner Jeannette Council
Commissioner Ed Melvin
Commissioner Diane Wheatley
James Martin, County Manager
Amy Cannon, Asst. County Manager
Grainger Barrett, County Attorney
Marsha Fogle, Clerk
Mayor Tony Chavonne
City Councilman Charles E. Evans
Dale Iman, City Manager
Kyle Sonnenburg, Asst. City Manager
Stanley Victrum, Asst. City Manager
Doug Hewett – Asst. City Manager
Karen McDonald, City Attorney
Candice White, City Clerk
Press: Andrew Barksdale and Tim White

The purpose of the Special Meeting is to participate in a teleconference with the Vinson Institute of Government in Georgia and with the Columbus-Muskegee Board of Commissioners to discuss government consolidation.

The Board reviewed the consolidation process, noting it took two referenda to get it to pass. A charter commission was formed which wrote the Charter for the consolidated government. This Charter governs the operation. A copy of the charter will be forwarded to Cumberland County. In response to a question concerning how consolidation has improved services especially with the military, the following comments were made:

- the military base can deal just with one government;
- the government speaks with one voice, one clear authority;
- a military liaison was appointed to attend meetings, etc.
- a Civilian Military Council meets once a month to brief everyone on what is going on in the community and in the region;
- the working relationship between the military and the local government is good;
- conflicts have been eliminated;
- resources have been combined;
- duplication of services eliminated;

- equity in the distribution of taxes (services paid for services received).

Some issues discussed during the teleconference include:

Law Enforcement: There is a police department that patrols 220 square miles. In addition, there is a Sheriff's Office, with an elected Sheriff, which handles the court system and the county jail. In addition the Sheriff's Office serves summons, warrants, etc. The office has a small patrol and investigative unit also. In addition there is a Marshall's Office (elected position). It serves warrants for the magistrate and municipal courts.

Consolidation savings: Savings have occurred over time; however, hard to quantify because of the growth in Columbus.

Tax rate: It was noted this is a complicated tax system. Taxes are assessed based on the level of services received. For instance there is a general service district tax in which all citizens will pay. In addition districts have been set up and taxes are assessed according to your district and the level of services provided. In addition there is an elected Board of Education which has its own taxing authority. Columbus had to ask the Georgia Legislature for authority to form multiple taxing districts. The tax rate is figured at \$1,000 as opposed to a \$100 value. It is figured at "mils" as opposed to "cents". For instance, the tax rate in the general service district is 17 "mils" per \$1000 valuation, which brings in about \$3.4 million, it is 13 mils in district 2 and 11 mils in district 4. It was also noted there is a "property tax freeze". Taxes are assessed on 40% fair market value. In addition there is a homestead exemption in the amount of \$13,000 and another exemption in the amount of \$8,000.

Size of the governing board: 10 members (8 elected by district and 2 elected at-large). The School Board has 9 members.

Transit system: The County acquired a private system (Metra System). System goes to Ft. Benning. Does not go into the rural areas.

Ft. Benning Base: Payroll - \$110 million/month. \$4.3 billion in contracts annually. No annexation of the base.

Water/Sewer Services: Water is provided. Gas and electricity is provided via franchise fees, as is telephone service and cable service.

Zoning issues: Difference zoning classifications based on your district.

Social Equity – Mr. Iman, City Manager, noted that generally those less likely to be able to pay taxes generally live in the downtown area in which more services are provided. He asked if there was a mechanism to adjust for social equity in the inner city area. It was noted that since the value is based on 40% of the fair market value and with the

exemptions that are allowed, those in the inner city area generally do not pay much tax. While the tax system is very complicated it is a benefit to the citizens.

Other fees – fees are required for different services – you pay if you use them.

Public/private partnerships - \$860,000 is paid to the Chamber for economic development purposes. There are a lot of public/private partnerships in the community – they work together to improve the quality of life.

Everyone is happy with the consolidation which took place over 30 years ago.

The next step in our process is for the two Boards to receive a draft of the information from the Georgia Institute of Government. It was suggested that a meeting be called at which the draft document would be distributed. Both boards would be given an opportunity to review the document and then another meeting would be held to discuss and clarify the report.

MEETING ADJOURNED.

Clerk