

Covington City Council
City Hall
333 W. Locust Street
Covington, VA 24426

March 16, 2009

Board of Supervisors
Alleghany County
Winterberry Ave
Suite C
Covington, VA 24426

Re: Proposal for Consolidation of Governments

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Alleghany County Board of Supervisors and Covington City Council were petitioned on Oct 24, 2008 to consolidate the City and County into a single governmental entity. The response to that petition by the Board of Supervisors and the City Council in a series of joint meetings has been timely. However, the time available for developing a plan for consolidation is limited by law. After receiving, analyzing and discussing a considerable volume of pertinent information relating to consolidation of governments, the Covington City Council believes that now is an appropriate time to move forward with a series of important decisions that would lead to a plan for consolidation. With the goal of contributing to a fair and equitable plan for a single unified and effective government, we respectfully submit the following Proposal for your consideration.

1. Structure of consolidated government
 - A. The unit of consolidated government shall be a City
 - B. The Governing body shall be a City Council consisting of 7 elected members, 4 of whom shall be elected from districts, 2 at large and a Mayor (who shall be the presiding member of the Council) elected at large
 - C. The internal structure of the consolidated government shall be the "council-manager form"
2. There shall be Commissioner of Revenue and Treasurer
3. The Law Enforcement function shall be performed by a Police Department
4. The Sheriff shall be responsible for courtroom security, jail, service of civil process and other constitutional duties of the office

5. Streets and highways within the consolidated locality shall be owned and maintained via a combination of municipal and VDOT arrangement:
 - A. Initially, the streets in what is now the City of Covington shall be maintained by the consolidated government and the streets and roads in what is now Alleghany shall be maintained by VDOT
 - B. The consolidated City shall have the option of taking over streets and roads from VDOT at some future date

6. Schools:
 - A. There shall be an elected School Board consisting of 7 Members, 3 at large and 4 from districts corresponding with the newly created Council-manic districts
 - B. There shall be 2 high schools, one East and one West, using present facilities
 - C. Existing elementary and middle schools shall remain in operation
 - D. Salary scales for teachers and non instructional personnel:
 - a) Initially, the existing salary scales for the respective employees of Covington and Alleghany School Districts shall remain in effect for those employed at the time of consolidation, and a third salary scale shall be developed for employees hired after consolidation occurs
 - b) Within a reasonable period, not to exceed 7 years, all employees shall be placed upon a unified salary scale

7. Existing joint services:
 - A. The Community Services Board (CSB) shall become a department of the consolidated government
 - B. The Department of Social Services (DSS) shall become a department of the consolidated government
 - C. The Library shall become a department of the consolidated government
 - D. Other joint services will be consolidated under a unified management organization consistent with the council-manager form of government

8. Utilities:
 - A. There shall be a single department to operate and maintain the various water and sewer utilities
 - B. Each utility system shall be self-supporting with a rate structure based upon user fees sufficient to generate revenue for operations, maintenance and debt service related to the respective utility systems

9. General governmental services (such as parks, recreation, art and cultural activities, fire protection, rescue services, etc)
 - A. It shall be determined which governmental services will be provided and funded by general fund revenues
 - B. It shall be determined which governmental services will be funded by special fees or levies

10. Special Districts for services, debt or other purposes shall be established as required to satisfy considerations of fairness, equity and needs of the consolidated government. There will be need to determine:
 - A. Whether service districts shall be established within the consolidated government, and what services shall be provided within each service district
 - B. How such services within service districts will be financed and what will be the cost in terms of taxes or fees

11. Debt (General Obligation, Revenue and other bonds, loans and leases). There will be need to determine:
 - A. How existing debt will be allocated
 - B. How future debt will be incurred and allocated

12. After the above and related issues are resolved, projected staffing, tax rates, utility rates and other fees will need to be calculated, along with how much existing and projected debt will be apportioned to each service/special district.

It is acknowledged that this proposal does not address every issue or detail needed to complete a comprehensive plan for consolidation. However, it is intended to be a constructive step toward the goal of proposing a consolidation plan agreeable to the County and City in order to preclude having the Court appoint a citizens group for that purpose. While there may be other potential approaches to consider, the strategy of submitting a proposal that would satisfy shared interests of Allegheny and Covington residents is a positive step. It is anticipated that this proposal will lead to resolution of key issues and constructive progress on related matters. This proposal is of a general policy nature, and it is recognized that it will be necessary to address legal, technical, fiscal and other subsidiary issues and details after the basic framework is considered.

We look forward to your response.

Covington City Council

Signed by:

Mayor Clark	_____
Vice-Mayor Bennett	_____
Councilman Brown	_____
Councilman Bryant	_____
Councilman Zimmerman	_____