

## ***A DYSFUNCTIONAL REGION***

-A Report by the Joint Task Force of The Cincinnati Association and Citizens for Civic Renewal on Government Cooperation in Greater Cincinnati (November 11, 2014)

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## Executive Summary

In 2011 the Cincinnati Association merged a newly launched government cooperation initiative with an existing government cooperation study by Citizens for Civic Renewal. This joint Government Cooperation Task Force adopted the mission of supporting a blue ribbon commission on shared government services that was widely expected to be created by the City, the County and the Cincinnati Business Committee (CBC). The commission never came to fruition, but the Task Force has continued to work independently for the past three years.

The established goal of the Task Force has been to champion the cause of regional cooperation and be a catalyst for local shared services initiatives by providing information about effective strategies and communicating success stories. This goal would be achieved by a variety of actions using social media, publications, economic and civic research, and regional benchmarking to identify successes elsewhere and inform and energize local citizens and civic leaders to consider adopting them.

Through its own investigations as well as conversations with and presentations from numerous community leaders (see Appendices B-1 and B-2), the Task Force has acquired an excellent understanding of promising initiatives locally and elsewhere. They include the Efficient Government Network (NE Ohio), Better Together St. Louis, Tri-County Economic Development Corporation (No KY), the Kenton County Mayors Group, and the Center for Local Government (ten Ohio counties in or near the Cincinnati MSA). A number of interesting collaborations have recently been announced that need more time to develop before they can be fairly evaluated. Among them are the State of Ohio's Local Government Innovation Program; a consolidated approach to economic development by the Port Authority, Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, REDI Cincinnati, the CBC and the Cincinnati Regional Business Committee (CRBC); and the agreement of Cincinnati's and Dayton's mayors to create an aerospace manufacturing corridor.

The Task Force, so far, has been unable to line up partners with which to execute the actions necessary to achieve its goal. Similarly, it has been unable to identify any viable paths to obtain the funding it would need to accomplish its goals if forced to go it alone. While there are several understandable reasons for these impediments to moving ahead, the more significant ones are:

- Our history of four major studies since 1997 that ended up on the shelf gathering dust -- Gallis Report, Metropatterns, The Government Cooperation & Efficiency Project (GCEP), the Hamilton County, Ohio Government Reform Task Force -- and another that never left the starting gate -- the 2011 blue ribbon City-County Shared Services Commission -- has resulted in a state of interest-fatigue that is simply insurmountable at this time.
- Different constituencies see the consequences of greater collaboration and increased shared services in starkly different ways. Some powerful segments (municipal employees, minority groups, political parties) of the community perceive the threat as greater than the opportunity.
- There is no current crisis large enough to capture the attention of the public and create a grass-roots demand for increased governmental efficiency. Neither our "low to middling" status among peer group urban regions nor our challenging fiscal status is powerful enough to create a compelling call to action.
- There is an incentive for more affluent communities to discourage an influx of residents who are less well-off and a disincentive to share resources with other communities that are composed

of disadvantaged residents. The result is that well-off communities can afford a high level of services for their residents without the burden of addressing the needs of disadvantaged populations.

- Unlike Northeast Ohio, we have no regional "no poaching" policy, so businesses can and do pit local jurisdictions against each other to obtain tax incentives for relocating (or not moving) from one local jurisdiction to another, thereby reducing overall tax revenues that would be available to maintain services.

The most significant reason for this state of marching in place is the lack of strong, visionary leadership that is credible across a broad spectrum of the community. At the most fundamental level our community is fractious and divided. The power base for Democrats is in the City, and the power base for Republicans is in the suburban cities, townships, and villages. African-Americans comprise about 45% of the City's population, which gives them more influence on electoral issues than they have in the County at large, where they comprise only about 26% of the population. Consequently, African-Americans have strong representation in the City administration but not in the County administration. People in the County do not want to pay for City problems, and don't see the benefit of what the City offers them. The suburban school systems want to remain separate from Cincinnati Public Schools. And the ranks of leadership that can build bridges across these large divides are rather thin and relatively weak. We simply do not currently have a leader who has the stature and public trust of a Jerry Abramson, who led the successful Metro Louisville campaign.

Over these past three years the Task Force has learned some important things about effective government cooperation that can benefit the Greater Cincinnati community. Its challenge now is to broaden the audience for this message beyond Cincinnati and Citizens for Civic Renewal. Our hope is to generate interest among others to move forward with implementing our business plan and obtaining funding.

## 1. Origin of Task Force

In 2011, the Cincinnatus Association approved the creation of a task force<sup>1</sup> to study and promote increased cooperation between local governments, particularly the City of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. This decision grew directly out of a strategic planning process that had been conducted over the previous six months.

With high participation of active (78%), service roll (50%) and even past (41%) members, a strategic direction survey was conducted by a team of researchers led by Dr. Larry Johnson, Dean of U.C.'s College of Education, Criminal Justice and Human Services. As a result of the survey, Cincinnatus' leadership concluded that its best opportunity for serving the community was to tackle the most important issues facing the community. Among a list of top community impact issues, government cooperation was viewed by Cincinnatus as the most important issue. It would be tackled first.

In parallel with Cincinnatus' sharpened strategic focus, there was an important political development. Throughout 2011, the Cincinnati Business Committee, through its Chairman, Tom Williams, did a lot to elevate the issue of government cooperation and shared services to the top of the political agenda. In the summer, news reports began to emerge that Hamilton County and the City would form a committee of top business leaders to study and recommend actionable ways to share services and thereby reduce the cost of government as the adverse economic effects of the recession continued. There were news reports naming the co-chairs of the committee. There was a high expectation that this "government collaboration" committee would be launched, given the breadth of support for it. Within Cincinnatus, we viewed this as a very timely development.

The strategic plan also highlighted a gap in member participation that could likely be closed by taking on issues that members care deeply about. Government cooperation met this criterion as well. A large, influential cadre of Cincinnatus members had been involved in past government efficiency and cooperation initiatives and was still highly interested in the subject. Among this group was John Frank, a past president of Cincinnatus and local businessman. When asked if he would lead the task force, John quickly agreed and suggested that Cincinnatus join with an existing task force of Citizens for Civic Renewal, which John chaired. With that we were ready to launch the joint task force with its mission being to support the anticipated City-County government collaboration committee.

Cincinnatus' leadership expected to learn three key things from the task force experience:

- a. Whether a stand-alone task force, rather than an existing Panel, was a more effective organizational approach to tackling current critical issues in the community.
- b. Whether Cincinnatus members who were not otherwise engaged in Association initiatives would take an active role in the task force because of their strong interest in the subject.
- c. Whether the task force could deliver significant, positive results in a reasonable amount of time.

## 2. Initial undertakings

After the Task Force was formed, delays in launching the City-County Shared Services Commission became apparent. While waiting for the Commission to get activated, the Task Force decided to get informed on the issues of government cooperation and shared services. This was done by inviting civic

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<sup>1</sup> Current Task Force members are identified in **Appendix A**.

leaders and consultants to address the Task Force over the past three years.<sup>2</sup> In addition, members of the Task Force met with various individuals who had involvement and knowledge about past/present efforts to promote government cooperation in our region or elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> Task Force members met with African-American leaders in Louisville who had been involved with the city-county merger there. A Task Force member visited with the Kenton County Mayors Group. Another member researched the “Voices and Choices Initiative” in Northeast Ohio. Another had discussions with the Executive Director of The Missouri Council for a Better Economy, which implemented the “Better Together” program in St. Louis. Yet another met with the Center for Local Government. Mark Silbersack provided a description of the prior County Reform Task Force’s recommendations<sup>4</sup>.

The Task Force also reviewed and summarized informative literature relating to the topic, including a review of:

- the Leadership Cincinnati Class 34, June 2011 report entitled “Consolidations & Shared Services: How Other Local Governments Got It Done and What Cincinnati Can Learn From Them”<sup>5</sup>
- the Pennsylvania Economy League’s 83 page report entitled “A comparative Analysis of City/County Consolidations” dated February 7, 2007<sup>6</sup>
- Bruce Katz’s and Jennifer Bradley’s, of the Brookings Institute, book entitled “The Metropolitan Revolution”<sup>7</sup>
- “Beyond Boundaries, a Shared Services Action Plan for Ohio Schools and Governments” completed in June 2012 by the Governor’s Office of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education<sup>8</sup>
- “Boundary Crossers-Community Leadership for a Global Age”, by Neal Peirce & Curtis Johnson.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. Identified Goal & Objectives to Promote Regional Cooperation & Shared Services

As it became apparent that there would not be a City-County Shared Services Commission sponsored by the City and County, the Task Force decided to define goals and objectives for its stand-alone mission. It composed and adopted the following statement:

*The Cincinnati metropolitan area shows many successes; however, our quality of life can be significantly improved through better collaboration among regional stakeholders.*

*The immediate crisis facing our community is fiscal. The lingering impact of the recent recession and the housing bubble burst has been the reduction of both income and property tax revenues. In addition, the elimination of the Ohio estate tax and the reduction in payments from the Local Government Fund have left local governments with the choice of reducing services, raising taxes, or both.*

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<sup>2</sup> Individuals are identified in **Appendix B-1**.

<sup>3</sup> These meetings are identified in **Appendix B-2**.

<sup>4</sup> See the Hamilton County, Ohio Government Reform Task Force Report to the Hamilton County Commission (Sept. 2010) in **Appendix C**.

<sup>5</sup> Authored by Beth Amyot, Kim Fender, Chuck Meyer, Jill Meyer, Tracey Puthoff, and Toby Rau.

<sup>6</sup> For a good executive summary of this report prepared by Task Force member Dick Adams, see **Appendix D**.

<sup>7</sup> For a good executive summary of this book prepared by Task Force member Bill Killen, see **Appendix E**.

<sup>8</sup> For a good executive summary of this report prepared by Task Force member Al Kanters, see **Appendix F**.

<sup>9</sup> For a good executive summary of this book prepared by Task Force Chair John Frank, see **Appendix G**.

*A more long standing challenge is jurisdictional fragmentation. Southwest Ohio is a patchwork of 130 political jurisdictions comprising four counties<sup>10</sup>, 80 cities and villages, and 50 townships, plus dozens of school districts, fire districts and other public service providers. Hamilton County itself has 49 political jurisdictions. There is duplication in physical facilities, equipment, and personnel, which in some cases leads to under-utilized resources in a myriad of services – such as safety (police, fire & EMS), infrastructure development and maintenance, regulatory roles such as building permits, and economic development activities.*

*The Task Force's goal is to champion the cause of regional cooperation and be a catalyst for shared service initiatives by providing information about effective strategies and communicating success stories. To be clear, the Task Force is not advocating the formation of a metro government, or doing away with local government entities, although these and other ideas can and should be considered.*

*The Task Force's objectives include:*

- a. Implement Promotion and Publicity Campaign:*
  - i. Issue press releases and publish articles (Newsletter?) on successful shared service initiatives and other collaborative efforts regionally and in other comparable cities.*
  - ii. Develop a speaker's bureau and solicit speaking engagements with local and regional chambers of commerce, business associations, service organizations, faith-based groups, neighborhood associations and others.*
  - ii. Create and maintain a presence on social media (Facebook, Twitter, blog).*
- b. Organize a Regional Cooperation Conference that brings together political and business leaders to be educated on regional cooperation and shared service strategies and provides a forum that encourages their implementation.*
- c. Sponsor research into the costs of the current fragmented approach to government and service delivery and develop projections on what efficiencies and savings could be realized through consolidation and shared service initiatives.*
- d. Sponsor research to identify and document successful shared service initiatives and local government collaborations and consolidations.*
- e. Be a repository/source for information and best practices on successful shared service initiatives and local government collaborations:*
  - i. Consolidate and disseminate publications, articles, studies and guides.*
  - ii. Identify funding sources for shared service initiatives.*
  - iii. Identify and be a referral source for consultants and organizations that can provide expertise and assistance to municipalities seeking to implement shared service initiatives.*
  - iv. Develop and maintain a website for these purposes.*

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<sup>10</sup> Butler, Clermont, Hamilton, & Warren.

*f. Develop strategic alliances with other like-minded organizations.*

*There is a lot at stake in this process, including:*

- *Maintaining and improving public safety in this region.*
- *Promoting economic development to make our region more competitive.*
- *Establishing a regional structure to review local government by function rather than by geographic boundaries.*
- *Improving our school systems and providing for those in need.*

*By looking past the fragmented approach presently taken to solve problems within individual jurisdictions, we can develop a more coordinated approach so that decisions made by one jurisdiction do not negatively impact other jurisdictions and undertakings that are too large or complex for one jurisdiction to undertake can be undertaken with the combined resources of many jurisdictions.*

To accomplish the above, the Task Force developed a business plan and two-year budget, a copy of which is attached,<sup>11</sup> containing ideas on structure and funding efforts to promote government cooperation. While the Task Force believes that cooperation between Northern Kentucky and the Ohio side of the river are important, we decided to focus on the Ohio side only. We also feel that there is more potential for greater cooperation in the context of the City and Hamilton County, and decided to focus our efforts there rather than including surrounding counties.

#### 4. Comparable Initiatives Studied

##### a. Louisville

In 2003, after many failed attempts, the City of Louisville and Jefferson County merged to become Metro Louisville, taking it from being the 65<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> largest city in America. It is led by a strong mayor and a 26-person Metro Council, most of whom come from suburban districts.

This transformation came about through an at large election involving both city and county residents, rather than having separate votes for city and county as occurred in other places in the country. Many African Americans were not in favor of merger as they were concerned it would dilute their influence, and 80% voted against it.

Task Force members Al DeJarnett and John Frank travelled to Louisville with City Councilman Wendell Young and Donna Jones Baker, CEO of the Urban League of Cincinnati, to meet with four African American leaders in Louisville to determine how the African American community in Louisville viewed the new metro government and whether the area benefitted overall. The four individuals, who had all previously supported the merger, were evenly divided in their opinions about whether the merger was a good thing or not. There was general recognition that African American voters had lost some clout. But there was also recognition that major economic developments had taken place since the merger, although there was no direct statistical correlation linking economic developments with the merger. With economic development comes improved job opportunities, a tide that should help raise

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<sup>11</sup> See Appendix H.

all boats. However, the experience in Louisville was that the “West End”, a predominantly African American residential area, has not realized much benefit from the merger.

There is the sense in our Task Force that efforts to promote government cooperation and shared services in our region clearly need to take issues of fair representation into account.

b.       Kenton County Mayors’ Group

Task Force member Judith Lewis attended meetings of Kenton County Mayors’ Group and provided the following feedback. The Kenton County Mayors’ Group is a paradigm strategy for cooperation and shared services by fostering an on-going discussion group of elected city and county officials. The mayors of the 19 cities of Kenton County, Kentucky meet each month as a forum, which actually grew out of opposition to a proposed consolidation of city-county services. The Kenton County Mayors’ Group evolved from that early origin to its present clout and influence in Northern Kentucky governance-without legal standing, taxing authority, or legislative power. It functions as an informal body defined by Articles of Organization and Bylaws and votes one of its members as president. Meetings are open and civil. Key administrators and other community thought leaders are welcome.

The Mayors’ Group accomplishes government efficiencies by its collaborative approach to common problem solving and provides members a platform for deliberating regional and statewide issues; it also networks through the Kentucky League of Cities. At the local level, Kenton County mayors find reduced operating budgets, aged infrastructure, public safety, economic development, and employee benefits are cross jurisdictional pressures. Collective action has succeeded in streamlining 911 services, unifying many subdivision regulations, and adopting cost per capita and other data-driven analyses. The Mayors’ Group has recognized research as a critical driver of better government; it has channeled financial and political support into a separate research fact-finding entity.<sup>12</sup>

Related to what is going on in Northern Kentucky, Task Force member Al Kanters met with Dan Tobergte, President and CEO of Tri-County Economic Development Corporation (TRI-ED). For more detailed information, go to [www.northernkentuckyusa.com](http://www.northernkentuckyusa.com). TRI-ED was formed in 1987 as a nonprofit entity to promote a regional approach to economic development for Boone, Kenton, and Campbell Counties. Its primary goals are: (i) create new, diversified job opportunities, (ii) retain and expand existing industries, and (iii) attract new businesses and industries, all within No. KY. TRI-ED is credited with attracting and later promoting the expansion of the Fidelity Investments facility in Covington, which now employs almost 4000 people at this location. Existing businesses are contacted on a regular basis through TRI-ED’s “NKY Boost” program to keep tabs on their progress, challenges, and needs to foster growth. “EZONE” was started in 2001 as a business start-up incubator, and provides support in the form of grants, loans, forgivable loans, and equity investments through the Kentucky Enterprise Funds and the Kentucky Dept. of Commercialization and Innovation.

TRI-ED is governed by the 3 county Judge Executives, who meet monthly to support the 3 counties working together, with the understanding that what benefits one county benefits them all. TRI-Ed is funded by a 3% tax on all short-term auto rentals in the 3 counties, which currently generates about \$1.5 million annually and was made possible by state enabling legislation.

c.       Better Together – St. Louis

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<sup>12</sup> For an excellent report on this topic, see “Kenton County Together: A Call to Action” written by Mark Neikirk, executive director, the Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement at Northern Kentucky University.



The Missouri Council for a Better Economy ("MCBE") was formed in 2007 by local business and community leaders for the purpose of conducting research into ways of improving the metro St. Louis area and considering ways for reuniting St. Louis City with St. Louis County. The MCBE created "Better Together" in 2013 as a vehicle for getting the research done and educating the public about it. They put together an organization, established a budget of \$1,225,000 (funded primarily by the business sector), and developed a 16 month plan.

They set up a website as a means of storing data pertinent to the costs of services for the many jurisdictions within the metro St. Louis area, as well as the types and quality of services rendered. Better Together segregates its research data into 6 categories: Finance, Health, Safety, Economic Development, Parks & Recreation, and General Administration. They believe that when all the information is put together they will have a compelling case about the waste of taxpayer money, the incredible duplication of services, and in many instances the resulting poor quality of service delivery. Once they understand the data, they will research best practices for each government. From this, they can make recommendations on how to deliver higher quality services in the most efficient manner.

Once all the data is assembled, they realize that it will be a massive and costly undertaking to educate the public. They will make videos to demonstrate the results of their research and place them on their website. They will sponsor discussions throughout the region. They will use social media. They will work closely with their local daily newspaper. They're not expecting local governments to give up their power, but they are counting on getting the message across to voters who, in turn, can persuade politicians to effect change.

To learn more, go to their website: [www.bettertogetherstl.com](http://www.bettertogetherstl.com)

d. Efficient Government Network - *Voices and Choices* in Northeast Ohio.

Task Force member Bill Killen looked into efforts being made in Northeast Ohio to think and act regionally. The Efficient Government Network began in the early 1990's to promote a regional approach. It has brought together 868 government entities in 16 counties in Northeast Ohio. It partners with Kent State University on economic studies, receives support from numerous foundations in the region, works with Ideastream and WVIZ (a PBS station) to sponsor a statewide conference on shared services, and represents the region globally for economic development purposes.

Participating government entities have entered into non-poaching agreements. The organization is increasing efforts to retain and expand existing businesses. It has had success in developing new business in biotech and water quality. It works with universities to develop promising research into marketable products and business start-ups. Presenting the region to the global business community as an economic unit has helped attract new businesses. The organization has taken advantage of the state's Local Government Innovation Fund to help with some of their shared services efforts.

In line with the efforts promoted by *Voices and Choices*, there was a change from a commissioner form of government to a county executive form of government in Cuyahoga and Summit Counties. This change is touted for resulting in significant savings in the cost of government operations. For more information on comparative government cost data, go to the Center for Government Research's website at [www.govistics.com](http://www.govistics.com).

## 5. Searching for Partners

The Task Force sought out various organizations as potential partners in our endeavors and funding sources, including various nonprofit foundations, the Cincinnati Business Committee (CBC), the Cincinnati Regional Business Committee (CRBC), the Charter Committee, the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, UC, and XU. What we found was that, for the most part, they are already involved in various aspects of trying to promote government cooperation, as discussed below. The fact that they are involved in their own specific efforts made them less enthusiastic about partnering with us. The Charter Committee is focusing on making changes to the City Charter. The CBC/CRBC is fully behind the effort to restructure the way the City does business as discussed below. The Chamber clearly supports greater government cooperation and has been working to implement Agenda 360 initiatives. The Foundations have previously funded efforts that were perhaps less than successful. The universities have the same experience of having seen the issue of government cooperation come and go. While clearly supportive, they wonder how new efforts will be successful where others have not been, where the funding will come from, and whether the issue is “ripe” enough to gain traction.

To summarize, there is some involvement fatigue based on the fact that this issue never seems to go anywhere. There is the feeling that there is nothing imminent about to happen, and that there are other more pressing priorities. For Hamilton County Commissioners, that has included the so-called “Icon Tax”, sales tax/property tax swap, etc. The universities are more inclined to get involved with research if there is something on the ballot or about to happen. Since our Task Force does not have funding or the organization necessary to accomplish our goals by going it alone, the inability to hitch our wagon to other organizations makes it impossible for us to implement the initiative we had contemplated.

## 6. Some Good Things Happening

Through the Task Force’s information gathering process, we identified some existing efforts in our area to promote government cooperation and shared services, as follows:

- “Open Data Cincy” is sponsored by the Haile/US Bank Foundation, Code for America, and Soapbox Cincinnati. The Open Data Cincy website describes its purpose as follows:

***OpenDataCincy** is a portal that provides access to various data sets, applications, and APIs related to the Greater Cincinnati region. OpenDataCincy is based on the idea that providing free and easy access to data information encourages better and more transparent government and a more engaged and knowledgeable citizenry.*

*OpenDataCincy includes both municipal and non-municipal data and enables users to search for and locate data sets based on keyword and category searches. For each data set, application, or API, we’ve included accompanying information about the origins, update frequency, and other specifics of the data. The record for each data source also includes links for downloading the data or accessing the application or API.*

*Simply accessing data, however, is not the ultimate goal of OpenDataCincy. By connecting people with data, we’re hoping to encourage users to take the data and transform it into creative applications, projects, and visualizations that demonstrate the power that data can have in understanding and shaping our communities. These public uses of data are featured in*

*the OpenDataCincy Idea Gallery . Each data set, application, or API can also be rated and commented upon in order to provide feedback on the possible uses of a data source.*

The categories of data reported include: Arts/Culture, Budget/Finance, Demographics, Education, Elections/Politics, Environment, Fitness, Food, Health, History, Human Services, Parks/Recreation, Planning/Zoning, Public Safety, Real Estate/Land Records, Retail, Transportation, Uncategorized, and Utilities.

- “Facts Matter” is a portal sponsored by the United Way of Greater Cincinnati, The Greater Cincinnati Foundation, the Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati, the Haile/US Bank Foundation, Agenda 360, Vision 2015, UC, NKU, Strive Partnership and Health Landscape. It describes itself as: *a new online gateway to information about the Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky region. “Facts Matter” provides users with specific data about how our regional community is doing in the critical areas of population, the status of children and youth, educational attainment, health, the economy, and social relations. “Facts Matter” is designed to expand the Greater Cincinnati community’s access to data related to the ongoing activities of regional collective impact efforts.*
- The Center for Local Government (the “Center”): Task Force member Chuck Curran met with T.J. White, Executive Director of the Center. For a more in-depth description of its mission, history, and membership go to: [www.C4LG.org](http://www.C4LG.org) . The Center has existed for about 24 years. It has 53 members, who are chief administrative officers (not elected officials) of local government entities. The Center provides information sharing, training, and avenues for shared services. For example, it established a unified insurance program that covers about 15 communities and several hundred members. The Center is funded by members’ dues, and has an annual operating budget of \$200,000.
- In 2013, the City of Cincinnati adopted “Plan Cincinnati” and began to work on its implementation. A key component of the plan was entitled “Collaborate.” It said that the City could not “do it alone” but needed to partner with others to reach its goals, including “Hamilton County and other surrounding jurisdictions, counties and states.” The plan called for actively coordinating with regional efforts such as Agenda 360, Vision 2015, Hamilton County’s Community COMPASS, the First Suburbs Consortium, the Center for Local Government, and OKI. Unfortunately, little progress has been made to date on implementing this vision of inter-governmental collaboration.
- The business community throughout Ohio has been calling for local governments to enact cost-cutting efficiencies, including coordination of services. See, e.g., “Redesigning Ohio: Transforming Government into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” Ohio Chamber of Commerce (including Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber) (December 2012). This report recounted efforts in Cuyahoga County to promote collaboration by eliminating duplication of costly services in the County’s 57 municipalities, which were asked to contract with the County to purchase services such as sewer maintenance, phone support, health insurance, and employee training.
- The State of Ohio established the Local Government Innovation Fund (LGIF) to offer communities financial assistance to create more efficient and effective service delivery. Communities can apply to the Local Government Innovation Program for grants to fund feasibility studies for efficiency, collaboration, or shared services among political subdivisions; and loans for demonstration projects to implement results. Funds are also available for training

in and implementation of process efficiency programs such as Lean, Kaizen, and Six Sigma through the Local Government Efficiency Program.

- In June 2012, the Governor's Office and Office of Budget & Management released a report "Beyond Boundaries: A Shared Services Action Plan for Ohio Schools and Governments," recommending legislative changes to assist school districts and local governments to collaborate on services.
- The Hamilton County Government Reform Task Force issued its report to the County Commissioners in September 2010 expressing concern about the efficiency and effectiveness of County operations under its current structure, with administration divided between the Board of Commissioners and eight directly elected officials as well as the judiciary and various independent boards and commissions. The Task Force recommended moving to a Charter form of county government, with an appointed professional County Executive who would oversee county departments and be accountable for the work of the entire county government. These recommendations never went anywhere because most of the County's elected officials were not in favor of doing so for a variety of reasons.
- The Charter Committee and the charter reform committee established by City Council recognize the need to reform the City's charter and have made initial inroads to implementing changes in the structure of City government, how it is elected, and how it will operate.
- Local business leaders and the City of Cincinnati are looking at creating a new commission, which will involve executives from the area's large corporations stepping in to look at and give input into how various City departments and services could be reformed to be more effective. These efforts could one day spill over to the County.
- Agenda 360 and Vision 2015, together with a number of local officials and administrators as planning partners, convened a meeting of local government leaders in Sharonville last spring to discuss, among other things, how to encourage more dialogue among local governments. The meeting was well attended and the participants asked to have additional meetings scheduled. This project, called "Much in Common", is ongoing. Plans are underway for a 4-part series of meetings, focusing on community/economic development from the local government perspective, to be presented in 2015.
- According to a recent news article, Mayor Cranley announced that the City will use \$400,000 of unexpected surplus income to create a data analytics office within the City Manager's office to measure the City's performance on delivering services, including filling potholes, picking up trash and removing snow.
- Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley and Dayton Mayor Nan Whaley are seeking ways to bring together the two metropolitan areas as a single I-75 corridor area, promoting economic development, in areas like aerospace manufacturing, within the combined area.
- Five development organizations, including the Port Authority, Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, REDI Cincinnati, CBC, and CRBC are moving into the same building downtown so that they can work more closely together.

## 7. Key Take-Aways on Perceived Impediments to Change

- *Lack of political will.* This may be a combination of: (i) lack of a visionary political culture; (ii) lack of information about how bad things are or how much better they could be; (iii) a strong desire for, and a widely accepted political philosophy supporting, local control to the extent practical; (iv) recognizing the difficulty of structural changes, e.g., legal impediments.
- *Fiefdoms being protected.* Political control by a party or individual is an important issue. But another critical factor is the strength of public employee unions with collective bargaining agreements in place, where the “merging” employers recognize different unions and/or have different contracts. Another human factor also can come into play here: merging services usually means combining positions, and many people are sympathetic to those who may lose their jobs, particularly if they are long-term employees with community credibility/respect.
- *Skepticism of potential partners.* There are concerns within particular interest groups that government consolidation will cause a loss of clout, or will cause one jurisdiction to absorb a disproportionate share of the problems of another jurisdiction. African-Americans have achieved greater penetration into positions of power in urban areas, and do not want to have that influence dissipated. There is a converse concern in the “majority” suburbs, often expressed in words such as “We don’t want to take on the City’s problems.” In other words, there is a lack of trust in the good faith of potential partners whose political affiliation is different. Both City and outside-City residents are naturally skeptical and suspicious, and thus reluctant to consider collaboration.
- *Lack of strong leadership.* There is a natural inclination to believe that we need strong political leaders to accomplish the goal of promoting shared services and government cooperation. A good example is Jerry Abramson, the former mayor of Louisville, who led the campaign for adopting a metro government in Louisville consolidating much of Jefferson County with the City of Louisville. High profile individuals, who are not working with a political agenda in mind, could promote efforts to create collaboration by becoming “thought leaders.” We need to develop several energetic, credible, persistent thought leaders who will do the research, write the op-ed pieces, write articles or books, highlight best practices and their benefits, criticize wasteful spending and poor results, etc.
- *Partisan politics keeps people from collaborating.* Politics have become so polarizing that having a strong political figure take the lead could promote opposition and stand in the way of opening frank, objective dialogue. The demand for better government needs ultimately to come from an electorate that is informed about the issues and can reward politicians by voting for those elected officials who cooperate across the aisle regardless of party affiliations.
- *Need for substantial funding and an organization to take it on.* “Better Together” in St. Louis was formed and enlisted the help of community leaders on its board. It established an annual budget of \$1,225,000, and hired an executive director, some staff, and interns. While affiliations with other organizations is important, like with local universities to assist with research, there needs to be dedicated full-time personnel to run the efforts. Typical financial support has come from the business community and foundations.
- *There must be a demonstrated need.* This has multiple components, including: (1) no crisis, e.g., wide-spread corruption, like in Cleveland; (2) no recognition of the high cost of government – in

areas which are way out-of-line cost-wise – or a belief (perhaps mistaken) that the citizens are getting premium service and are willing to pay for it; (3) the difficulty in showing voters how quality could be improved via change.

- *A lack of provable, substantial, immediate cost savings.* “Economies” is a major reason cited by, e.g., politicians, in suggesting government mergers or collaborations. But our research has shown that it is difficult to support this argument, at least in the short term. Down-sizing may entail early buyouts, consolidation may require new equipment and re-branding, retraining on revised procedures may be needed, etc., creating major up-front costs.
- *A lack of provable, substantial, immediate service benefits.* Without a (costly) benefits study, the good to come from collaboration is speculative. And voters have seen too many predicted benefits (e.g., economic impact claims) which did not come true, and are skeptical.
- *A lack of incentives for elected officials.* At present, no one is accountable for promoting collaboration. No one is paid to do it. It is not in anyone’s job description. And nobody gets public recognition for it. This is something that Cincinnati could do something about. Why not make an annual award recognizing the local elected or appointed official who has done something significant in the last year to improve the quality or cut the cost of service via collaboration between local governments (ala Cincinnati’s annual Education Awards)? If Cincinnati can raise money and organize such an event, good partners (e.g., the Center for Local Government or the Hamilton County group of the Ohio Mayors Association) may emerge to help identify worthy awardees.
- *Past failures breed reluctance to spin wheels again.* In 1997, a group of business, education and community leaders formed the Metropolitan Growth Alliance (“MGA”) to be a catalyst for regional cooperation. A well-known consultant, Michael Gallis, produced the Gallis Report, which concluded, in one sentence, that “...only the Greater Cincinnati Region as a whole can compete going forward.” MGA disbanded in 2002. In 2001, the Greater Cincinnati Foundation and Citizens for Civic Renewal funded a study called “Metropatterns”. Again, a well-known consultant, Myron Orfield, studied the demographics of our region and issued a report, which again can be summarized in one sentence: “Pronounced social separation, inequitable fiscal policies and inefficient development patterns are threatening the long-term social and economic strength of the greater Cincinnati Region.” In 2006, Cincinnati City Council and the Hamilton County Commissioners, with the assistance of the CBC, formed the Government Cooperation and Efficiency Project (“GCEP”). Its steering committee was comprised of prominent political, business, and city leaders. GCEP hired Gerry Newfarmer, formerly City Manager of Cincinnati and an experienced consultant, to identify opportunities for cooperation. The cost of this study was paid for 1/3 by the City, 1/3 by the County, and 1/3 by the CBC. Although a number of potential sharing opportunities were identified, those backing GCEP decided to end it when they believed the City and County were going to form a high level task force which, as we have described in this report, never happened. In 2010, Hamilton County Commissioners created the “Government Reform Task Force” to look into ways for reforming an antiquated county government structure that dates back to 1851. A report containing recommendations for major change was published, but it got no traction because of controversial recommendations and opposition from a majority of elected county officials, including the Commissioners. Approximately three years ago, the City and County announced the decision to again form a

high level task force of political, business, and community leaders to tackle issues related to government cooperation. This task force never materialized.<sup>13</sup>

This history of failed attempts has created interest-fatigue for various otherwise would-be participants. Foundations are leery of extending funds for yet another study that is likely to go nowhere. Research partners are skeptical of assigning research tasks to interns when the results are not likely to foment current change. Potential partner groups back away from tackling these issues when so many prior efforts dead-ended.

## 8. Recommendations

As a Task Force, we recommend that we remain involved as follows:

- a. Meeting quarterly rather than monthly
- b. Writing op-eds and meeting with editorial boards
- c. Taking other public positions or making representations in the name of Cincinnatus or CCR
- d. Disseminating copies of this report to people of influence in our community

## 9. Advice on Future Task Forces

Our experience with the Task Force over these past three years has enabled us to draw the following well-informed conclusions:

*Forming a task force to tackle major public policy issues, like government cooperation, is an excellent approach and should be the preferred approach for the future.* By virtue of not being an established panel, this work team was able to create a joint effort with Citizens for Civic Renewal and to draw in independent expertise that added a great deal of intellectual heft and experience to the group. With a well-respected leader and membership, the task force was able to obtain the direct participation of local leaders in business, government, academia, and politics.

The Task Force tackled an issue of very high interest in the community and a legacy issue within Cincinnatus. Accordingly, there were ten Cincinnatus members on the Task Force. Eight of them participated regularly throughout the three-year period. Importantly, five of the Cincinnatus members were only active on the Task Force and likely would have been inactive within Cincinnatus otherwise. *So, our expectation that taking on the most important issues facing the community would attract additional member participation seems to be borne out by this experience.*

*Finally, we wanted to know if the Task Force could deliver significant positive results in a reasonable amount of time. The conclusion here is not as definitive.* Measured against the hope that we would be able to catalyze a broadly-supported investigation of the ways governments can cooperate that delivered an action plan, we came up short. On the other hand, when measured against the political realities of a community that has only taken fledgling steps

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<sup>13</sup> For a more comprehensive report, see Chair John Frank's "Government Cooperation in Greater Cincinnati and the Obstacles it Faces" attached as **Appendix I**.

toward cooperation over the past few decades, the conclusion is much more positive. The alignment of support that factored into our decision to tackle this issue fell apart soon after the Task Force was launched. Nevertheless, the Task Force was able to make meaningful progress as is discussed elsewhere in this report.

*The judgment of what is a reasonable amount of time in which to get results will depend on the nature of the issue.* On an issue as far-reaching and challenging as government cooperation, five to eight years might be required to get tangible results on the ground. Other issues could come to fruition sooner. There is no one-size-fits-all for these complex issues that will have varying levels of support and opposition as well as different price tags and benefits.

#### 10. Concluding Remarks.

Despite various efforts underway to promote government cooperation in Southwest Ohio, and some good things being done, we as a region are woefully behind. How can we effectively compete with other regions without a comprehensive plan for modernizing our patchwork system of governing, which derives from the 1800's? Every time this issue comes up, studies are made and some conclusions drawn, and then nothing happens. It is an indictment of our local political leaders that they cannot work across the aisle in non-partisan ways to promote local government cooperation.

There is pressing need for strong public involvement in forming a regional organization consisting of non-elected officials, who have diverse standings, clout, and a lot of funding, to make positive change happen. This organization needs to run a campaign, using social media, op-eds, advertisements, speakers, videos, and whatever it takes to get the message across to voters that there are better ways of doing things by working together. The mistaken notions that a particular community is best served by "going-it-alone", or that suburban areas are not benefitted by what goes on in the City, need to be debunked. There are lots of impediments to change, as recognized in this Report. No light-hearted effort will push through them. We need to have a strong organization formed, with appropriate funding.

We can look to successes in Charlotte, Indianapolis, St. Louis, Northeast Ohio, and Louisville as examples of how others are getting things done. But Cincinnati is unique, and poses challenges that must be addressed in ways that work for us. There are various local groups, as identified in this report, which are pushing in the right direction. We need to channel these efforts, and make changing how we govern our region one of our highest priorities. We can do it if the right people get behind it!

The future of our region is at issue. The real danger is that layers of redundant government are the built-in brakes on progress. Current conditions appear benign. Things appear to be "OK". It's difficult to measure good things that don't happen, or opportunities that are lost. But there are subtle symptoms... like regional challenges constantly labeled as being caused by the other guy (substitute community, school district, county, state etc.). "Finger-pointing" runs rampant. It dominates discussion and masks the ability of the community at large to take responsibility for getting things fixed. So, there's no collective will to address real issues and move ahead. It's like trying to drive with the emergency brake on. As a result, things stay the same. That's not "OK" - - - especially in today's fast-paced world. Long-term, we will pay the price for not acting now!



## **Appendix A**

The Task Force was chaired by John Frank and includes the following active members:

Dick Adams  
Chuck Curran  
Al DeJarnett  
Chuck Downton  
Kim Fender  
John Frank  
Tom Huenefeld  
Gerard Hyland  
Al Kanters  
Bill Killen  
Judith Lewis  
Chuck Meyer  
Bren Ryan  
Mark Silbersack  
John Slauson

and the following Advisor/non-active members:

Steve Johns  
Bill Scheyer  
Jeff Stec

## **Appendix B-1**

Individuals who addressed the Task Force:

- Milton Dohoney (former Cincinnati City Manager, was assistant city manager in Louisville when county/city merger occurred)
- Roxanne Qualls (while Vice-Mayor of Cincinnati-Democrat)
- Greg Hartmann (Hamilton County Commissioner)
- Tom Williams (CEO North American Properties, Chair CBC and REDI), Gary Lindgren (CBC Exec. Dir.), and Scott Robertson (Pres. of CRBC)
- Mark Neikirk (Exec. Dir., Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement-NKU)
- Gerry Newfarmer (Principal, Management Partners, and former Cincinnati City Manager)
- Laura Brunner, CEO, Port Authority of Cincinnati & Hamilton County
- Eric Kearney (Ohio Senator-Democrat)
- George Vredveld (retired Director of the Economic Center and Professor Economics at University of Cincinnati)
- Eric Rademacher (Co-Director, Institute for Policy Research-University of Cincinnati)
- Tim Burke (Chairman, Hamilton County Democratic Party)
- Alex Triantafilou (Chairman, Hamilton County Republican Party)

## **Appendix B-2**

Individuals having one-on-one meetings/conversations with Task Force members:

1. Greg Hartmann, Hamilton County Commissioner
2. Wendell Young, City Council
3. John Pepper, former P&G CEO
4. Tom Williams, Cincinnati Business Committee (CBC)
5. Gene Beaupre and Liz Blume, Xavier University
6. Eric Rademacher, University of Cincinnati
7. Kathy Merchant, Greater Cincinnati Foundation
8. Tim Maloney and Eric Avner, Haile Foundation
9. Louisville Group: Al DeJarnett and John Frank invited Cincinnati Councilman Wendell Young, his administrative assistant, and Donna Jones Baker, CEO of the Urban League of Cincinnati to meet with four African-American leaders in Louisville: Ben Richmond, CEO of the Urban League of Louisville; Blaine Hudson, history professor at University of Louisville; Darryl Owens, a Kentucky state representative and former County Commissioner of Jefferson County, and Bill Summers, former deputy mayor of Louisville.
10. Mary Stagaman, Agenda 360
11. Colin Groth and Sean Comer, Charter Committee
12. Dan Tobergte, TRI-ED
13. Nancy Rice, Exec. Dir. of Missouri Council for a Better Economy

14. T.J. White, Exec. Dir. of the Center for Local Government
15. Jerry Abramson, former Louisville Mayor
16. Chris Thompson, director of Efficient Government Network
17. Terry Grundy, United Way & University of Cincinnati

## Appendix C

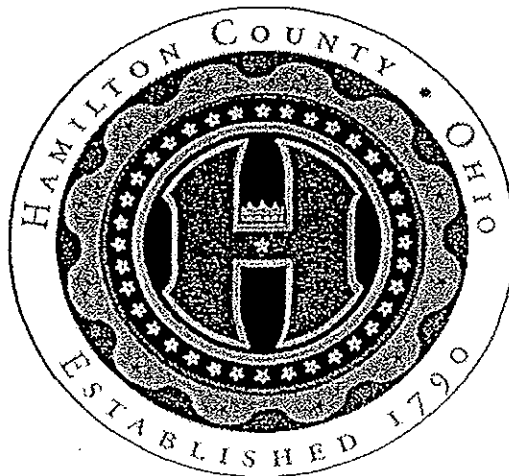
# **HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO**

## **GOVERNMENT REFORM TASK FORCE**

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**Report to the Hamilton County Commission**

**September 2010**



September 3, 2010

Board of County Commissioners  
Hamilton County, Ohio

Honorable Members of the County Commission:

The Government Reform Task Force that you established herewith submits its report in accordance with the direction set forth in the resolution adopted by the Board. The Task Force worked hard to learn about the current structure of Hamilton County government and to study alternative approaches. We heard presentations from those with knowledge bearing on our assignment and carefully evaluated their testimony and the consequences of alternative approaches to governance.

We were concerned throughout about the effectiveness and efficiency of County operations, as was the Board in creating the Task Force. These were major considerations leading to the recommendations in this report. We understood that the functions of county government are set forth in state and federal law and were not our focus. Our goal was to identify reforms that would increase accountability and help taxpayers get the best bang for our buck.

The structure in use today dates from 1851 and contains many opportunities for improvement. Even so, we were impressed with and have the utmost respect for the talent and commitment of all of the elected and appointed officials who serve Hamilton County today and with whom we met.

We recommend that the County Commission implement a staged approach to reform. The first stage, which can be directly placed on the ballot by the Board, draws on the option in Chapter 302 of the Revised Code of the State of Ohio. The second stage, as described in our report, will take up the option of a more refined Charter approach.

These recommendations were developed with unanimous support by the Task Force at the conclusion of its six-month study of the current government and the options for reform. We appreciate this opportunity to be of service to Hamilton County.

#### **Task Force Members**

Margaret Cook, co-chair  
Cathy Doyle  
Nikki Johnson  
Elizabeth Robinson  
Stephen Taylor

Jim O'Reilly, co-chair  
Kevin Flynn  
David Krings  
Rosemarie Sturgill  
Stephen Wessels

Marilyn DeCourcy  
Connie Hinitz  
Mark Quarry  
Lamont Taylor

Facilitation Assistance Provided by:



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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The Board of County Commissioners unanimously created the Government Reform Task Force to study the structure of Hamilton County today and the alternatives permitted under Ohio law with the charge to recommend reform that would improve the operation of the government. Task Force members worked hard during the past six months learning about the workings of Hamilton County government and studying alternatives.

The Task Force was unanimous in its conclusions. There was agreement with the premise of the Board's resolution that the current form of government (which dates from 1851 in Ohio) is antiquated and that there are opportunities for improvement.

The Task Force notes that the County has been well-served by the elected officials who currently hold office and that Hamilton County should be proud that it remains untainted by recent scandal or corruption.

Under the current structure the Board of County Commissioners has limited authority to determine policy or administrative direction for the County. Indeed, with responsibility for County administration divided between the Board and eight row officers, as well as the elected judiciary and independent boards and commissions, nobody is accountable for the performance of Hamilton County government as a whole.

There are two options for reform. One option is that the County Commission could propose to the voters that they approve the creation of a Charter Commission and elect 15 citizens to draft a Charter government. Once this is accomplished a draft Charter could then be submitted to the voters.

A second option is provided in the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) called the statutory Alternative Form of government. Under this option, the Board can obtain home rule, which it does not now have, and become the official policy body for the County, accountable for the County as a whole. In accordance with the ORC the Board can streamline many functions that are now dispersed under separate elected officials, such as finance, personnel and purchasing, resulting in savings in the cost of County operations.



The Task Force recommends a staged process to reform Hamilton County government, implementing the statutory Alternative Form immediately, then creating a Charter form within five years thereafter, drawing on the experience of the first transition.

This alternative form of government will be a moderate transition plan for Hamilton County, enabling improvements without radical change in the core way the County is structured to do its business. Under this alternative form, the Task Force recommends that this new statutory plan have a County Commission with three members elected at-large, as at present, and that it appoint a professional County Executive to operate the government. Indeed, although the Commission will be empowered to centralize key staff functions and thereby reduce costs, the existing elected row officers remain in place. Subsequently, the County can tailor further refinements in the government structure to suit local needs with a Charter.

## **INTRODUCTION**

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Hamilton County has evolved from a mostly rural community to an area that is predominantly urban and suburban in character. In 1851, the year that the present structure of county government was developed in Ohio, the population of the state was 1,980,329, which included 156,844 persons in Hamilton County. Since then, the County population has increased to 851,494.

The Board of County Commissioners determined that the changes over time have been so significant (in both the area and population served by county government as well as in the services it provides and the service delivery techniques available in the modern era), that a review of improvement opportunities would warrant the creation of a Task Force to study the structure of the government. Additionally, the County's current revenue base has been shrinking and the budget of Hamilton County, like state and local governments everywhere, is stressed by the current economic recession. Without change, Hamilton County could be at a disadvantage in addressing the challenges and opportunities of an increasingly competitive 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

The Board of County Commissioners unanimously adopted a resolution creating the Hamilton County Government Reform Task Force (see Attachment A). Fifteen residents from Hamilton County were appointed by the Board of County Commissioners to serve as a Government Reform Task Force to examine the structure of county government. Members of the Task Force were broadly representative of Hamilton County residents and employment sectors. One of the original members subsequently resigned.

The Task Force selected James O'Reilly and Margaret Cook as Co-Chairs, and Management Partners, Incorporated, was selected to serve as facilitator for the Task Force. During six months of regular meetings the Task Force conducted an exploratory process to examine the options for restructuring and reforming County government to be more effective, efficient, and productive.

### **Task Force Charge**

The Resolution (included in full as Attachment A) adopted by the Board of County Commissioners created the Government Reform Task Force and

charged it to bring forward a report with recommendations for reform that results in a government that is:

Streamlined and narrowly tailored to work effectively and efficiently with, for and on behalf of the 49 political subdivisions; Hamilton County's immediate neighboring jurisdictions; Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana officials and federal authorities.

The County Commission was clear with its direction to the Task Force that the scope of the review includes the current Hamilton County government and excludes county judicial operations as well as the possibility of merging Hamilton County with another local government within the county. The focus was to be exclusively on the basic structure of Hamilton County government.

Specifically, members of the Task Force were charged with "making recommendations about a proposed and reformed Hamilton County government structure as permitted under the authority of Chapters 301, 302, 305, and 307 of the Ohio Revised Code and the Ohio Constitution."

## Methodology

To develop a common base of knowledge among members the Task Force embarked upon a process to review topical information about county government structures within the State of Ohio. The multi-faceted strategy included:

- Discussions with Hamilton County elected officials and administrators. Attachment B provides a list of individuals who provided input to the Task Force.
- Review of information pertaining to the structure of county government in Ohio and nationally by subject matter experts such as the National Association of Counties, the League of Women Voters, the County Commissioners Association of Ohio, Public Policy Reform, Hamilton County administrative staff, and others. Attachment C contains a bibliography.
- Comparative review of Ohio county government structures.
- Public input from representatives of local and state organizations.

The Task Force applied this strategy to review the current organization and functions of Hamilton County government and to assess the alternatives available to the County Commission for implementing reform to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of how county government serves its residents.

## **FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION**

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Task Force members identified filters that were used to sort through important dimensions of governance prior to advancing recommendations. The filters represent important values when evaluating the effectiveness of self-government. They are:

- Democratic Representativeness
  - All constituencies
  - Opportunity to participate
- Government Competence
  - Leadership
  - Staff Professionalism
  - Political neutrality
  - Merit selection and retention
- Accountability
  - Responsiveness to constituents and other elected leaders
  - Outcome oriented administration and operations
- Efficiency
  - Services provided in line with revenues
  - Allocation of resources in a balanced manner

The filters assisted Task Force members in sorting and prioritizing the current and desired aspects of Hamilton County government as it sorted through issues and information pertaining to the current structure and options for reform. The process used by the Task Force was deliberative and oriented toward finding a government structure that would best fit the unique qualities of Hamilton County in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **CURRENT HAMILTON COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

Ohio law prescribes the current form of County governance, including the form of organization, allocation of duties and responsibilities and the powers and duties of the component entities. The original Constitution of Ohio gave very little guidance for the provision of governance for local political subdivisions; therefore in 1851 the Constitution was revised to include the creation of counties to serve as administrative units of state government. Hamilton County operates under a statutory form of government which includes three county commissioners elected at-large for four year terms of office. As an agent of the state, Hamilton County officials may administer and enforce state laws, collect taxes, assess property, record public documents, conduct elections, and issue licenses. Other primary duties of the County Commissioners include:

- Approving an annual county budget
- Establishing department budgets
- Determining tax levies and bond issues
- Appointing members of various boards and commissions
- Approving municipal annexations and incorporations
- Managing real and personal property owned by the county
- Appointing the county administrator and department directors of offices for which they have responsibility
- Implementing state regulations pertaining to physical needs of the county (sewers, zoning, etc.)
- Entering into agreements with municipalities, special districts and other counties, as needed to carry out projects or programs
- Taxing, appropriating, and purchasing
- Serving ex-officio on certain boards and commissions

The County Commissioners have created the position of County Administrator to lead the professional staff of the county administration. The County Administrator has been selected on the basis of professional merit in recent years and leads a staff also selected on the basis of merit to administer the functions that are the direct responsibility of the County Commission. The County Administrator and his/her staff also assist the Commission in discharging its other duties, notably the creation and adoption of an annual budget that includes the entirety of county government. The functions within Hamilton County government that are the administrative responsibility of the County Commission and its professional county administrator are:

- Adopt the County Budget
- Communications Center

- County Facilities
- Environmental Services
- Human Resources
- Jobs and Family Services
- Planning and Development

Appointed officials and members of boards and commissions are responsible for providing county residents with services such as parks, libraries, emergency management, family and job assistance, and hospitals/medical care facilities, in some cases.

In addition to the three Commissioners, eight other elected officials serve the residents of Hamilton County. Each elected official has executive authority with duties assigned to them under state law. Each heads a separate department of county government and operates independently from the Board of County Commissioners. They are sometimes referred to collectively as "row officers." The following summary describes the functions of Hamilton County elected department heads or row officers.

**Auditor** - Serves as chief fiscal officer for the county; conducts regular real property appraisals; issues warrants to county treasurer for county expenses.

**Clerk of Courts** - Enters all orders, decrees and judgments; collects and distributes court costs; keeps records of court dockets and journals; issues and transfers automobile title certificates.

**Coroner** - Determines the cause of any death not clearly due to natural causes; conducts autopsies, issues death certificates, supervises the county morgue and laboratory. The coroner must be a state licensed physician for at least two years.

**Engineer** - Responsible for the county road and bridge system and is engineer for unincorporated townships. The county engineer must be a registered professional engineer and surveyor.

**Prosecuting Attorney** - Prosecutes all complaints, suits and controversies in both Common Pleas and Municipal Courts in which the state is a party; serves as legal advisor to all county officials and boards, and is the county's chief legal officer. The prosecuting attorney must be an Ohio licensed attorney.

**Recorder** - Records deeds, mortgages, plats, powers of attorney, proceedings of annexation and municipal incorporation and liens.

**Sheriff** - Serves as the county's chief law enforcement officer; administers county detention and correctional facilities; provides full police protection to townships which do not have their own police departments.

**Treasurer** - Collects county, local government and certain state taxes; invests county funds; disburses funds from treasury on warrant from the county auditor.

Table 1 shows the budget and staffing for Hamilton County based upon current budget accountability.

**TABLE 1: ALL FUNDS BUDGET AND STAFFING**

Department	All Funds Budget	FTE** Staffing
County Commission and Administration	\$762,966,644	1,348.28
Auditor	10,602,739	105.00
Clerk of Courts	14,186,616	219.13
Coroner	4,243,061	42.33
County Engineer	26,728,637	181.19
Prosecutor	12,726,805	181.70
Recorder	1,682,664	26.00
Sheriff	77,615,020	803.00
Treasurer	2,691,307	33.50
Court of Appeals	58,439	0
Court of Common Pleas	13,492,770	85.75
Court of Domestic Relations	3,885,637	59.00
Court Reporters	2,491,395	40.50
Juvenile Court	32,738,570	396.26
Municipal Court	9,421,148	103.36
Probate Court	3,419,524	40.00
Probation	13,147,339	180.50
Board of Elections	8,128,624	45.40
Developmental Disabilities Services	106,802,575	619.41
Emergency Management	1,641,179	9.03
Family and Children First Council	6,703,263	14.50
Law Library	997,266	7.00
Mental Health and Recovery Services	115,296,599	41.14
Multi-County Systems Agency	12,713,807	0
Public Defender	12,962,000	109.50
River City Community-Based Corrections	5,771,840	94.61
Soil and Water Conservation District	0	10.00
Veterans Service Commission	1,527,272	10.15
	<b>\$ 1,264,642,741</b>	<b>4,806.24</b>

\* The County Commission and Administration budget includes 21 county agencies overseen by the Commission, including the Metropolitan Sewer District (\$196.8M); Job and Family Services administration of federal and state funding (\$150M); property tax levies for indigent health care, senior services, the zoo, museum center and law enforcement computerization (\$71.1M); stadium debt and operating (\$57M); and countywide healthcare and workers compensation programs (\$44.7M).

\*\*FTE is full-time equivalent staffing

Budget accountability generally includes the independent ability to operate within the adopted budget, appoint officers and employees, determine the allocation of staff time between duties, determine how each assigned function is carried out, and be accountable for performance. Elected officials are accountable to the voters of Hamilton County, while appointed officials are accountable to those who appoint them.

The total all funds budget for Hamilton County is approximately \$1,265,000 with 4,800 full-time equivalent employees.



## **OPTIONS FOR REFORMING COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

In addition to the basic statutory county government currently used by 87 of the 88 counties in the State of Ohio including Hamilton County, there are two optional forms for structuring county government. The first option is a statutory Alternative Form, the terms and characteristics of which are set forth in Chapter 302 of the Ohio Revised Code. The second option, permitted under Section 301 of the Ohio Revised Code, is to adopt a County Charter that spells out the details of the structure and operating rules for a county. Summit County has operated with a Charter since 1980, and Cuyahoga County has a new Charter that will take effect on January 1, 2011.

### **Alternative Form**

Under this statutory alternative, the Board of County Commissioners can, within the parameters of the statute, set forth a new plan of government for the County and ask the voters to approve it by majority vote. A plan submitted under this approach must specify the size of the County Commission, whether Commissioners are elected at-large or from districts, and whether the County Executive will be elected or appointed.

The Alternative Form of county government grants home rule or limited legislative powers to the county, unlike the current form. With home rule, the county board is the designated policy-making body for the county government and is given the authority to act on any matter unless specifically prohibited by state law or the Ohio Constitution. However, only taxes authorized by state law can be levied. The Alternative Form of county government does not allow for abolishment of any elected county officials.

### **County Charter**

Proposals for the adoption of a County Charter can be submitted to the voters by one of three methods:

- Resolution by the Board of County Commissioners asking the voters to approve the formation of a county charter commission. If approved, the voters will also be asked to elect 15 members of the Commission. This group will then have the responsibility to

actually write a proposed charter, which in turn will be submitted to the voters for approval.

- County commissioners may be petitioned with signatures of eight percent of the electorate to submit the question to voters about forming a county charter commission, as in Option 1.
- Or a petition with signatures of at least ten percent of the electorate may be submitted to the County Commission to submit a proposed charter to the voters for approval.

In the recent example of Cuyahoga County, a petition with a proposed Charter was submitted for placement on the ballot, and the County Commission responded by placing its own proposal to create a Charter Commission on the same ballot (the petition version won). In Ashtabula County, a petition for a new Charter was circulated this year but did not obtain enough signatures to qualify for the ballot in November.

Appendix 1 provides a comparative summary of county organization and structure for counties having adopted or considering a Charter form of government.

## **THE OHIO COMMISSION ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM AND COLLABORATION**

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In 2008, the 127th General Assembly established the Ohio Commission on Local Government Reform and Collaboration (HB 562). The Commission is comprised of 15 members: three of whom were appointed by the Governor, three by the Speaker of the House, three by the President of the Senate with the remaining six members appointed by the following organizations: County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO), Ohio Library Council (OLC), Ohio Municipal League (OML), Ohio Association of Regional Councils, Ohio School Board Association (OSBA) and the Ohio Township Association (OTA).

The Commission is required to develop recommendations on ways to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of local government operations, to achieve cost savings for taxpayers and to facilitate economic development in the state. It has been supported with state funding by the John Glenn School of Public Affairs at The Ohio State University and is charged to report to the Governor and the Legislature by September 1, 2010.

The Commission considered the organization of county government among many topics that it has examined. An extract from the draft of the Commission's report relating to Counties follows:

The Commission recommends amending current law to allow for the expansion of alternative forms of county governance. County government is operated under a government structure that the General Assembly developed approximately 150 years ago. The size of Ohio's counties and their government structure is generally attributed to the belief that no citizen of Ohio should be more than one day's horseback ride away from the county seat. This government structure, which likely made sense when it was created given the technology of the time, may no longer hold the same relevance for some counties.

The factors that drove the structure of county government have changed, the Ohio Revised Code legislates that three structures of county government are possible, two of which are used. The two utilized county structures are the statutory form of government, used by 87 of Ohio's 88 counties (soon to be 86), and the county charter form of

government, adopted by Summit County in 1980 and Cuyahoga County to be effective in 2011. There is a third alternative, a county statutory government that allows the number of county commissioners to be up to 21, allowed under Chapter 302 of the ORC. However, no county has enacted this alternative form.

To increase the options available to any particular county and its citizens, the General Assembly should amend ORC Chapter 302 to expand the forms of alternative county governmental structures that may be placed before the voters of that particular county. That chapter currently permits an alternative statutory structure (if voter ratified) of the Board of Commissioners; this recommended change could, for example, permit structural alternatives to any aspect of county governance structures. This statutory change would enable any individual county governmental structure to be reformed while avoiding the extensive restructuring associated with enacting a charter. Any proposed change to the county structure would require placement on the ballot under the provisions of current law by a majority vote of the Board of Commissioners, or through the initiative petition process. Its enactment would require approval by a majority of those voting in a county-wide election.

The State Commission remains at work even as the Hamilton County Government Reform Task Force is finalizing its recommendations to the County Board. Therefore, it appears as if the State Commission is coming to the conclusion that originally inspired the Hamilton County Commission to adopt its resolution creating the Government Reform Task Force: that the structure of county government is antiquated and that there are opportunities for improvement at the local level.

Once the State Commission has submitted its recommendations for reform, any changes must be enacted by the State Legislature and approved by the Governor before they may affect the course of action currently under consideration in Hamilton County.

## **OBSERVATIONS**

The structure of government in Hamilton County has not been modernized or updated in anyone's lifetime. It is the same basic structure that the State of Ohio used to establish county government in 1851. Government and the society of which it was a part in those pre-Civil War days was by modern terms extraordinarily small and unsophisticated. There was no such thing as trained professionals in public service and the primary means of communication was travel by horse and buggy.

Indeed, in 1851 there was no trained professional law enforcement or fire department, public roads were largely dirt or gravel, there was no social safety net and public waste was dumped into the Ohio River. There was, of course, no way other than by hand to communicate ideas and information since the telephone and modern computer had yet to be invented. Indeed, the Western Union Telegraph Company was just formed in 1851 and it did not even have transcontinental telegraph service until ten years later. It was a different era.

In studying the current structure of Hamilton County government the Task Force obtained information from a variety of sources. Task Force members reviewed data about the services that are currently provided and about the scale of the agencies that are part of the current government including budget and staffing data. Additionally, each of the County's elected officials were invited to meet with the Task Force, to inform members about the work of the agencies for which they are responsible and to express their views about structural reform. Every member of the County Commission met with the Task Force as did every one of the elected department directors except the Prosecutor, who declined the opportunity.

The most basic observation of the Task Force is that while the Hamilton County government structure is antiquated, the residents of the county are served by elected office-holders who are competent and have the best interest of the county at heart. Hamilton County is blessed with government that has not suffered from recent scandal or corruption. Everyone involved with the government states that participants work effectively together on behalf of county residents.

In addition to having elected office-holders who work hard to do their jobs well, the county has been well-served by high quality professional management at the staff level. The County Commission has effectively relied on a professional administrator to lead the professional staff of

county agencies under the jurisdiction of the Board, and the staff positions within those agencies have been filled and managed on the basis of merit.

Nonetheless, the Task Force is of the opinion that there are opportunities for improvement, as detailed below.

- **Policy Leadership.** Although the County Commission has informally taken it upon itself to serve as the policy-making body of the county government, that is a role that is not explicitly sanctioned by state law. The independent elected department directors of the county operate independently of the Board of County Commissioners which does not have the power to set policy for the government as a whole.
- **Internal Cooperation.** Although the county has developed capacity within the government to provide some back-office services on an efficient centralized basis for the government as a whole, there is no requirement that the eight departments headed by row officers or the judiciary use those services. Purchasing, personnel, information technology, and facility management are all services that can be provided on an efficient centralized basis. While some of the separate departments not under the County Commission use centralized services, others do not. Cooperation is voluntary. To understand the extent to which centralized support services are used by individual county agencies, County Administration prepared a matrix chart. Each county department had the opportunity to review the chart to assure its accuracy. It is included in this report as Appendix 2, Matrix of Support Services.
- **Accountability.** Accountability for government performance is dispersed among the separate office-holders in Hamilton County and no one is ultimately accountable for the performance of Hamilton County government as a whole. The three County Commissioners and the eight elected department directors are separately accountable to the voters for the performance of just their part of the government. Thus, in a real sense there are nine separate county governments with separate accountability to voters plus an independent judiciary with separate electoral accountability.

The Task Force members value direct accountability to voters and believe that it is consistent with the tradition of American democracy. Yet, there is concern among Task Force members that limiting accountability for technical department operations to an up or down vote every four years is inadequate. Several of the departments headed by elected row officers have duties that are essentially ministerial in nature, requiring professional competence to execute well rather than independent judgment available to any voter.

Accountability in our representative democracy has two important and related dimensions:

- Accountability of the office-holder to the voters for government performance, and
- Accountability of office-holders and government employees who are appointed to their jobs on the basis of merit to elected officials.

The accountability chain is direct in both cases; the elected official is accountable for the work of his/her entity and the appointed official is accountable to the elected official with authority to hire and fire.

- **Efficiency.** Task Force members value efficiency and believe that every opportunity should be taken to improve efficiency and reduce the cost of government to taxpayers. Streamlining the internal operations of Hamilton County government should serve the goal of improving efficiency and should seek to reduce duplication and therefore waste. At the same time, however, Task Force members recognize that there may be a trade-off between efficiency and the other democratic values of self-government such as electoral accountability.

The Task Force examined the internal functions of county government as part of its effort to assess the opportunities for improving the efficiency of county administration. At its request, the County Administration prepared a summary matrix showing the internal services that support the entire government and which separate agency within the existing government structure use those services and which support services are separately maintained. That matrix is included as Appendix 2 to this report.

The Task Force members considered all of these factors during the course of its six month effort to develop recommendations for the Board of County Commissioners. In doing so, Task Force members came to appreciate the complexity of the enterprise and the trade-offs that occur between different values when they are applied to individual decisions about structure.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

During deliberations, Task Force members have sought to find an approach that will improve the ability of Hamilton County government to operate as a whole. In doing so, Task Force members recognize that the importance of the quality of the individual office-holders, something with which the county is currently blessed, is at least as important to effective governance as is the government's structure. Nonetheless, the current structure appears to be antiquated and there are opportunities for improvement.

In coming to its conclusion, Task Force members considered the three choices, as well as combinations of these choices, among which it had to choose in formulating a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners,

- Take no action.
- Propose to the voters that they create a Charter Commission to develop a Charter with a new form of County government.
- Propose to the voters that the alternative form of government presently authorized by statute be adopted for Hamilton County.

The alternative of recommending no action flies in the face of the evidence considered by the Task Force. The current form is well into its second century and both its responsibilities and the techniques for executing those responsibilities have changed radically since it was created in 1851. The opportunity to improve on this antiquated structure is simply too important to ignore and pass up.

Serious consideration was given to the option of recommending that the county take the approach of creating its own Charter. This course is attractive because it would allow the County to design a governmental structure that would be tailored specifically to the needs of Hamilton County, with terms and conditions designed locally. Moreover, this approach would bring home rule to the county government giving it some independence from lawmakers at the state level in Columbus.

In the immediate term, however, there were several drawbacks to the Charter approach. Since the existing statutory structure has been in place for so long, a change to a Charter form could be perceived as too complex to county voters to make at once. Secondly, while the Task Force could suggest governance elements that could be addressed by a Charter Commission in developing Charter language, the Board of



Commissioners can only put a measure to create such a commission on the ballot, leaving the content of a new Charter entirely up to the members of such a commission. At this point, that reality served to reinforce the perception that moving directly to a Charter form of government might be too large of a step to take initially.

In considering the many dimensions of fashioning an approach to reform to recommend, the Task Force developed a staged approach melding the idea of using Options 2 and 3 above – first the statutory alternative provided in ORC Chapter 302, followed by subsequent consideration of a Charter.

The Task Force sees the alternative form of government currently provided by statute in the Ohio Revised Code as an appropriate choice to adopt as a major first step in reform. Once this reform is in place and the county has established overall accountability for Hamilton County operations with its County Commission and Executive Officer, it will be appropriate to consider the option of a more tailored set of reforms that can be included in a county charter (discussed further below). This approach will modernize Hamilton County government and take advantage of the tools and techniques of local government best practices in 2010, while retaining the good features of an underlying statutory structure (including, importantly, the incumbent office-holders) that are known and comfortable for voters.

**Recommendation: The Board of Commissioners place a new plan of government on the ballot for voter adoption based on the alternative authorized by Chapter 302 of the Ohio Revised Code.**

With this action, voters can approve a form of government that clearly establishes accountability for the functioning of Hamilton County as a whole by lodging that responsibility in the County Commission as the official policy-making body of the government. In addition, the new plan will give the Commission and its executive the authority commensurate with that responsibility, including control of county personnel and finances.

Under the Alternative Form of government, the County Commission must adopt the basic terms of the new Hamilton County government plan to be placed on the ballot. After evaluating the alternatives, The Task Force recommends that the new plan contain the following balanced elements:

- **County Commission.** The County Commission under the new form should continue with three members elected at-large.
- **County Executive.** The plan should create the position of County Executive to be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the County Commission.

- **Accountable Departments.** The plan should create the three departments under the County Executive and Commission with duties enumerated in ORC Chapter 302: Finance, Law and Personnel Departments, and such other departments as will make the operation of the government more efficient.

This new plan for Hamilton County government is similar to the structure that voters are familiar with now. However, this plan will have the effect of creating Hamilton County governance accountability that does not now exist for the County as a whole government and establishing the basis for streamlining and modernizing its operations.

In recommending these elements of the new Hamilton County plan, the Task Force considered a number of factors in balancing the elements of the Commission, the Executive and the Departments that comprise its recommendation.

**County Commission.** ORC Chapter 302 grants home rule powers to the County Commission, along with specific enumerated powers set forth in the code (see Appendix 3). Those powers will give the new County Commission both the responsibility and the authority for the overall performance of the government.

In adopting a plan for the new structure, the current Commission must determine the size and method of election for the Commissioners. Under the alternative form of government authorized by ORC Chapter 302, the new plan may provide for a legislative body with between 3 and 21 members and affords the opportunity to have some of the members elected by district instead of under the current at-large method. The Task Force recommends continuing with a small, three member Commission selected on an at-large basis.

A small legislative body can function more easily than can a larger group. Additionally, an individual member of the County Commission plays a more significant role in the work of the Commission as a whole with fewer members.

**County Executive.** Chapter 302 of the Ohio Revised Code spells out explicit duties of a County Executive not currently applicable to Hamilton County (see Appendix 3). In formulating its new plan for Hamilton County government, the Board of County Commissioners must recommend either an elective County Executive or an appointive County Executive. The Task Force recommends the appointive County Executive plan because that approach will continue to guarantee that the county administration will be headed by a professional manager selected on the basis of established professional credentials. With an elected executive the government would be led by a partisan politician rather than by a neutral professional executive of proven professional executive competence.

It is noted that the powers and duties of the appointive executive are the same as those of the elective executive with two exceptions: the elected executive would have veto power over acts by the County Commission, which the appointive executive would not, and the elected executive has the appointing power for county employees, which is retained by the County Commission with an appointive executive. Of course, a Commission with an appointed professional executive can choose to effectively delegate its appointive power to its executive as does the County Commission under the current statutory form of government.

Hamilton County has made excellent use in recent years of a professional administrator, employing a person with professional credentials based on a nationwide competitive process. This practice has served the county well and can and should be continued under the new Hamilton County plan. We note that the statute calls for the appointed executive to be an elector of the county; we do not believe this requirement precludes the current practice of conducting a nationwide search because all a prospective appointee from outside the county need do to qualify is to register to vote prior to assuming office. The experience with recent county administrators is clear evidence that this can work.

**Accountable Departments.** The statutory alternative form gives the Board of County Commissioners the power to establish county departments under the jurisdiction of the County Executive. The departments of finance, law and personnel have specific duties enumerated in ORC Chapter 302, no doubt so as to avoid an interpretation of conflict with elected department directors who will continue to exist. This section in addition empowers the Commission to establish departments of Purchasing, Health, Public Works and Detention/Corrections or such other departments as are appropriate. Importantly, departments established by the Commission under the County Executive in the new Hamilton County form of government will be directly accountable for the work of the whole of Hamilton County government, unlike the present system where no one has overall accountability.

The power given under the Alternative Form to the County Commission to create accountable departments carries with it the expectation that the county will streamline its operations, using the new power to take advantage of streamlining opportunities to avoid duplication. The ability of the Commission and Executive to control the budget and personnel under the alternative form assures that there will not be duplication between consolidated staff departments and pre-existing row officer departments. In other words, creating these new accountable staff departments cannot risk duplication with functions previously performed by elected department heads. And, of course it should not.

The Task Force takes note of the work of the Ohio Commission on Local Government Reform. That work supports the Task Force's conclusion that there is opportunity for improvement in the structure of Hamilton County government and that the statutory Alternative Form can serve as a good next step for improvement.

It will take time to submit a ballot measure for a new Hamilton County government plan to the voters of the County and some time to implement the approach we recommend. Task Force members believe this approach is an excellent transition step to improve the operation of Hamilton County government. Once the new Hamilton County government structure has been implemented, we believe it will be appropriate for the Board of County Commissioners to consider the creation of a structure that is carefully tailored for the county by a Charter Commission. The flexibility of the Charter alternative will be attractive to county leaders and voters alike over the long term going forward.

**Recommendation: The Board of County Commissioners should act to implement a Charter within five years of implementation of the statutory Alternative Form of government recommended in this report.**

As discussed in this report, the Charter option offers the opportunity to tailor the specifics of the governmental structure to local needs. After establishing a solid structure based on home rule and centralized accountability for administration, consideration of the Charter option will be a natural transition.

We believe that these recommendations taken together are a reasonable, measured approach to keeping the best of current Hamilton County government while modernizing its structure and strengthening its efficiency and effectiveness for the years ahead.

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## **ATTACHMENT A – THE RESOLUTION CREATING THE TASK FORCE**

### **AMENDED RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING A COUNTY GOVERNMENTAL REFORM TASK FORCE**

This **RESOLUTION** establishing a County Governmental Reform Task Force is adopted this 19TH day of May, 2010 at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners.

**WHEREAS**, Hamilton County Government is established under authority of Volume Three of the Ohio Revised Code and the Ohio Constitution; and

**WHEREAS**, the exact structure of county government may be altered and amended under provisions detailed in Chapter 302 of the Ohio Revised Code and the Ohio Constitution; and

**WHEREAS**, Hamilton County contains 49 separate political jurisdiction made up of 37 municipalities and 12 townships with Hamilton County government working in a collaborative manner with all 49 jurisdictions and further providing services for the direct and indirect benefit of, or managing and/or supervising services for, all 49 political subdivisions in Hamilton County; and

**WHEREAS**, Hamilton County is a mostly urban and suburban, built-out county, notwithstanding pockets of rural operations; and

**WHEREAS**, due to the practical nature of how Hamilton County has evolved over time and the kinds of issues and challenges Hamilton County faces in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that include, without limitation, the need to be able to be streamlined and narrowly tailored to work effectively and efficiently with, for and on behalf of said 49 political subdivisions; Hamilton County's immediate neighboring jurisdictions; Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana officials and federal authorities; and

**WHEREAS**, Hamilton County's revenue base of operations is shrinking due to reductions in the state of Ohio's budget; the economy and the actions of other political jurisdictions that work to reduce the availability of funding to Hamilton County; and

**WHEREAS**, it is the desire of the Hamilton County Commission to reform the structure of Hamilton County government in a manner that reflects the consensus will of the People of Hamilton County and that will position Hamilton County in such a manner as to be a more effective, efficient, productive and economical body of government and partner to others;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED** that the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners does hereby authorize the creation of *the Hamilton County Governmental Reform Task Force* that shall be constituted, devised, created, formed and tasked as follows:

1. The Task Force shall be comprised of a body of 15 individuals who shall possess such qualifications as are hereinafter set forth:
  - A. Each Member shall be an "Elector" in Hamilton County, Ohio ; and
  - B. The makeup of the task force shall reflect the diversity in Hamilton County; including political, racial gender, age, and socioeconomic diversity; and;

- C. Members selected shall represent Villages, Cities and Townships and reflect the division of urban, rural and suburban makeup of the Hamilton County; and
  - D. Members appointed shall reflect the five relative geographic areas of the county in the context of north, south, east west and central.; and
- 2. Such Electors shall be appointed by the Board of Hamilton County Commissioners upon Motion of the President of the Board with the advice and consent of the Board. A Unanimous Vote shall be required to appoint each Member of the Task Force; and
  - 3. The Members of the Task Force shall each serve at the pleasure of the Board until the work of the Task Force as hereinafter described shall be completed or until such time as the Board shall otherwise determine; and
  - 4. The task Force shall convene at such times and in such fashion as required by law until their work is completed and a unanimous recommendation delivered in writing and presented to the Board at the next regularly scheduled Board Staff Meeting following Labor Day, 2010; and
  - 5. The Task Force shall receive staff and administrative support from the Hamilton County Department of the County Commissioners and County Administration; and
  - 6. The Task Force shall make such recommendations about a proposed and reformed Hamilton County Governmental structure as are permitted under authority of Chapters 301, 302, 305, 307 of the Ohio Revised Code and the Ohio Constitution and any amendments thereto that may be adopted by the Ohio General Assembly at any time up to and including the final presentation of the Report and Recommendations of the Task Force; and
  - 7. It being anticipated that the Board of County Commissioners shall convene Public Hearings upon the recommendations of the Task Force, the Task Force shall remain an empowered body capable of reconvening at any time up to and including the final date of action by the BOCC to advance a recommendation to the ballot at either a General or Primary Election.

**ADOPTED** at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2010.

Mr. Pepper \_\_\_\_\_ Mr. Portune \_\_\_\_\_ Mr. Hartmann \_\_\_\_\_

#### CERTIFICATE OF CLERK

IT IS HEREBY CERTIFIED that the foregoing is a true and correct transcript of a resolution adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, Hamilton County, Ohio, in session this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2010.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the official seal of the Office of County Commissioners, Hamilton County, Ohio, this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2010.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jacqueline Panioto, Clerk  
Hamilton County Commissioners  
Hamilton County, Ohio

## **ATTACHMENT B - INDIVIDUALS PROVIDING INPUT AND COMMENT TO THE GOVERNMENT REFORM TASK FORCE**

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Commissioner Todd Portune

Commissioner David Pepper

Commissioner Greg Hartmann

Dusty Rhodes, County Auditor

Simon Leis, Sheriff

Bill Brayshaw, County Engineer

Wayne Coates, County Recorder

Patricia Clancy, Clerk of Courts

Robert Goering, County Treasurer

Andrea Hatten, Administrator, Coroner's Office

League of Women Voters of the Cincinnati Area

Chris Finney, Coalition Opposed to Additional Spending and Taxes

Tim Burke, Chairman Hamilton County Democratic Party

Alex Triantafilou, Chairman, Hamilton County Republican Party

Dan Troy, Co-Chair, Ohio Commission on Local Government Reform and Collaboration

Jennifer Evans-Cowley, Ph.D., consultant to the Ohio Commission on Local Government  
Reform and Collaboration

Larry Long, Executive Director, County Commissioners' Association of Ohio

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## **ATTACHMENT C - BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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## APPENDIX 1 - OHIO COMPARATIVE COUNTY GOVERNMENT SUMMARY

Jurisdiction	Form of Government	Executive System	Size of Legislative Body	How Legislators are Elected	Term of Office	Other Elect
Hamilton County	Statutory	Appointed County Administrator	3 County Commissioners	All Commissioners elected at-large	4 year terms	Auditor, Treas Recorder, Cl Courts, Coro Engineer, Pr Sheriff
Summit County	Charter	Elected County Executive	11 County Council members	8 Council members elected by district 3 Council members elected at-large	County Executive - 4 years Council members - 4 years	Clerk of Court Engineer, Pr Sheriff, Fisca
Cuyahoga County (old form - through Dec 31, 2010)	Statutory	Appointed County Administrator	3 County Commissioners	All Commissioners elected at-large	4 year terms	Auditor, Treas Recorder, Cl Courts, Coro Engineer, Pr Sheriff
Cuyahoga County (effective January 2011)	Charter	Elected County Executive	11 County Council members	All Council members elected by district	County Executive - 4 years Council members - 4 years	Prosecutor
Ashtabula County (currently)	Statutory	Appointed County Administrator	3 County Commissioners	All Commissioners elected at-large	4 year terms	Auditor, Cler Coroner, Eng Prosecutor, f Sheriff, Treas
Ashtabula County (proposed Charter - did not qualify for ballot)	Charter	Appointed County Executive	7 County Council members	5 County Council members elected by district 2 County Council members elected at-large	Council members - 4 years Prosecutor - 4 years	Prosecutor

Source: Management Partners, Inc.

## **APPENDIX 3 – POWERS OF COUNTY COMMISSION AND EXECUTIVE UNDER ORC CHAPTER 302**

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### **302.12 Board to be policy-determining body - powers and duties.**

The board of county commissioners is the policy-determining body of the county. Except as otherwise provided by sections 302.01 to 302.24, inclusive, of the Revised Code, it has all the powers and duties vested by law in boards of county commissioners. All powers and duties which may be vested by law in counties or in county officers or agencies, or which may be transferred to the county by action of a township or municipality under authority of Section 1 of Article X, Ohio Constitution, and which are not assigned by law to any department, office, or body existing under the alternative form of government in force, shall be exercised or performed by the board or by the department, office, or body designated by resolution of the board.

Effective Date: 01-23-1963

### **302.13 Specific powers of board.**

Pursuant to and in conformity with the Constitution of Ohio and without limiting the powers and duties otherwise vested in the board of county commissioners, the board may:

- (A) Establish a department of finance, a department of human services, a department of health which shall exercise the powers and perform the duties of the general health district according to policies established by the board of county commissioners notwithstanding Chapter 3709. of the Revised Code, a purchasing department, a department of public works, a department of law, a department of personnel, a department of detention and correction, a department of water and sewers, and such other departments, divisions, and sections under the supervision of the county executive, as it determines to be necessary for the efficient administration of the county's business, and may provide for the merger of such departments, divisions, and sections;
- (B) Determine the compensation of appointive heads of departments and divisions under the supervision of the board of county commissioners and adopt by resolution a classification plan and schedule fixing the rates of compensation of all classes and grades in the county service. Such schedule shall provide uniform compensation for like service, and may establish minimum and maximum rates for any grade of position within which the compensation shall be fixed by the appointing authority.
- (C) Determine what officers and employees shall file bond, and fix the amount and form thereof and approve the surety of the bond given;
- (D) Provide for the borrowing of money in anticipation of the collection of taxes and revenues for the current fiscal year;
- (E) Acquire, construct, maintain, administer, rent, and lease property including buildings and other public improvements as provided by law;
- (F) Cooperate or join by contract pursuant to section 302.21 of the Revised Code with any city, county, state, or political subdivision or agency thereof, or with the United States or any agency thereof, for the planning, development, construction, acquisition, or operation of any public improvement or facility, or for a common service; and may provide the terms upon which the county shall perform any of the services and functions of any municipality or political subdivision in the county;

- (G) Accept, in the name of the county, gifts, devises, bequests, and grants-in-aid from any person, firm, corporation, city, county, state, or political subdivision or agency thereof, or from the United States or any agency thereof;
  - (H) Request periodic or special reports by the county executive, elected officers, and administrative officers and bodies, and may require their attendance upon its meetings;
  - (I) Designate the maximum number of assistants, deputies, clerks, and other persons that may be employed in each of the offices and departments of the county;
  - (J) Authorize the county executive to employ experts and consultants in connection with the administration of the affairs of the county;
  - (K) Establish procedures governing the making of county contracts and the purchasing of county supplies and equipment by competitive bidding;
  - (L) Exercise control over expenditures by all county officials and promulgate and execute an allotment schedule allocating annual appropriations for any county government purpose by item on either a monthly or quarterly basis;
  - (M) By ordinance or resolution make any rule, or act in any matter not specifically prohibited by general law; provided that, in the case of conflict between the exercise of powers pursuant to this division and the exercise of powers by a municipality or township, the exercise of power by the municipality or township shall prevail, and further provided that the board may levy only taxes authorized by general law.
- Effective Date: 12-23-1986

### **302.17 County executive responsibilities.**

The county executive shall be responsible for the proper administration of the affairs of the county placed in his charge, and, by resolution of the board of county commissioners, may serve as the head of any county department created by the board pursuant to sections 302.01 to 302.24, inclusive, of the Revised Code, provided he has the qualifications required by law.

Effective Date: 10-16-1961

### **302.18 County executive - powers and duties.**

(A) The county executive shall be the administrative head of the county and shall have all powers and shall perform all duties of an administrative executive nature vested in or imposed upon the board of county commissioners by general law or by agreement with any municipality or other subdivision of government of Ohio and such additional powers as are granted and imposed by the board, and the county executive shall administer the resolutions of the board of county commissioners and the laws of the state relating to or required to be enforced by the county executive's office. The county executive shall supervise the departments established pursuant to division (A) of section 302.13 of the Revised Code. All authority of the board of county commissioners under general law with respect to the adoption of the county budget and the submission of any matter to the electors shall be exercised by the board of county commissioners provided for under Chapter 302. of the Revised Code. Contracts between the county and other agencies of government shall be approved or authorized by the board of county commissioners.

(B) The county executive, under the elective executive plan, shall exercise all authority of the board of county commissioners to appoint, suspend, and remove all county personnel whose appointment, suspension, and removal was a function of the board of county commissioners under general law, except for the clerk of the board of county commissioners, the clerk's

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clerical assistants, and the appointments listed in division (C) of Chapter 302.18 of the Revised Code. Under the appointive executive plan, the board of county commissioners shall have the power to appoint, suspend, and remove all county personnel whose appointment, suspension, and removal was a function of the board under general law, upon the recommendations of the county executive.

(C) Appointment of officers, which by general law in sections 303.04, 303.13, 305.29, 306.01, 306.02, 329.01, 329.06, 5153.39, and 5155.03 of the Revised Code is required to be made by the board of county commissioners, shall be made by the county executive, under either plan, with advice and consent of the board of county commissioners. The county executive, under either plan, also shall appoint with the advice and consent of the board of county commissioners, all officers and members of boards and commissions, other than officers of a court or employees or other persons advisory to or subject to the supervision of a court or judge thereof, which by general law in sections 331.01, 339.02, 1545.02, 1545.03, 1545.04, and 1545.05 of the Revised Code are to be appointed by a judge or judges of the probate or common pleas court of the county.

(D) The county executive, under the elective executive plan, shall have the power to veto any ordinance or resolution adopted by the board of county commissioners. A veto by the county executive may apply to all or any items of an ordinance appropriating money. Certification of a veto must be made by the county executive within ten days of its adoption by the board of county commissioners, and the board of county commissioners may override the veto by a two-thirds vote of all its members. Under the elective executive plan an ordinance or resolution shall become effective upon approval by the county executive, expiration of such ten days without approval or veto, or overriding of a veto.

(E) The county executive shall promote the coordination of all county functions and for this purpose shall make an annual public report on the state of the county.

Effective Date: 10-01-1997

### **302.19 Additional duties.**

In addition to other powers and duties provided in sections 302.01 to 302.24, inclusive, of the Revised Code, the county executive shall:

- (A) Prepare and recommend to the board of county commissioners the annual tax budget and county appropriation resolution;
- (B) Keep the board advised of the financial condition and future needs of the county;
- (C) Prepare and submit to the board such measures as he deems necessary for the conduct of the county's business;
- (D) Attend meetings of the board of county commissioners and take part in the discussion of all matters before the board;
- (E) Prepare and submit to the board of county commissioners such reports on the operations of any departments, offices, and bodies under his control as may be required by the board.

## Appendix D

# A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CITY/COUNTY CONSOLIDATION

## PENNSYLVANIA ECONOMY LEAGUE (PEL)

(Report summarized by Richard Adams)

### Executive Summary

Many markets across our country have investigated consolidation of city/county responsibility over the past 200 years. The largest markets (New York, San Francisco, Denver, Boston, Philadelphia, New Orleans) were consolidated by legislative process by the early 1900's. For the first forty years of the last decade, there was no consolidation activity. Since the late 1940's, there have been 13 major city/county consolidations, most significant relative to our area are, Baton Rouge, Nashville, Jacksonville, Indianapolis, Lexington, Kansas City and Louisville. Most of the successful consolidations have come after unsuccessful previous attempts.

From the analysis done by PEL, ( focusing primarily on Indianapolis, Jacksonville, Lexington, Louisville and Nashville), there are some important learnig experiences helpful to communities considering consolidation:

- No "one size fits all". This is true for the approach used to accomplish the consolidation objective as well as the structure of the consolidated entity.
- “City” in name, but provides both city and county services.
- Use two-tier service/tax districts. Common is use of a general service district (GSD) and a urban service district (USD).
- Service delivery is consolidated and rationalized.
- Consolidation did not affect independent suburban municipalities, school districts, or volunteer fire districts.

- Use of elected mayors and adequate sized legislative representation, elected by district and at large.
- Adequate minority representation is ensured. Minority representation has improved versus pre-consolidation experience at the county level.
- Special state legislation has typically been needed.
- Voter approval is required.
- Ballot question should be simple to get approval.
- Most consolidations did not succeed on the first attempt.
- Federal assistance has been stable versus pre-consolidation support.
- Residents have generally been happy with their new form of government.

The most frequently stated goals of city/county consolidation have been improving service delivery, promoting economic development, raising the size ranking of the city, coordinating planning and improving governance and image. Cost reduction has not been the express focus of any of the consolidations. Studies have shown that the key element of success was an active, unified civic sector that focused the community discussion on economic development. City/county consolidation was placed on the civic agenda by civic elites who identified lagging economic development as an underlying community problem and turned to consolidation as a means of unifying plans, approaches, aid requests and marketing.

### **MAJOR ISSUES AND CHOICES ASSOCIATED WITH CITY/COUNTY CONSOLIDATIONS**

- The need for enabling legislation from the state.
- Dual or single-majority approval threshold.

- Ballot question wording.
- Type of jurisdiction, Census Bureau designation, and name.
- Executive and legislative structure.
- Ensuring adequate minority representation.
- Two-tier service districts.
- Segregation of city and county debt.
- Effect on suburban municipalities, volunteer fire departments and school districts.

## **EVALUATION OF CITY/COUNTY CONSOLIDATIONS**

### **Financial Implications**

Cost savings have not been primary motivation for consolidation but in most cases there have been advantages. Operational economies through coordination of delivery of services have improved services without increasing costs. Federal transfer funds have not been less than received by the two entities.

### **Service Performance**

Among cited benefits are more effective, efficient government; ability to attract top talent for key government posts; impetus to reengineer government; a bond rating upgrade; and improved services and ease of doing business. It is felt that there is a significant savings of time in dealing with one versus two government entities. The community benefits from a comprehensive strategic planning process, coordinated economic development plans and better accountability to the citizenry. In more than one community, African Americans indicated no reduction in their political power.

### **Economic Competitiveness and Jobs**



A wide held view is that city/county consolidation coordinates planning and creates a more coherent, focused, and effective approach to economic and community development and sends the message that the region is vibrant and innovative and a solid location for investment. This often is seen as having eliminated competing agendas and creating a unified voice and plan for development. The economic vitality and future of the community is tied to a unified plan and a unified voice to speak with prospective businesses and state and federal legislators.

## **CONCLUSION**

A number of large city/county consolidations have occurred across the country since WWII. All have followed differing processes and faced circumstances unique to the times and places of their occurrence. To that extent, there is no “model” city/county consolidation that others can or perhaps even should emulate. On the other hand, all of the city/county consolidations faced similar challenges and issues, and all resolved them one way or another. In most cases, by a number of measures, these issues were resolved to the satisfaction of many, if not all, stakeholders. This analysis, if it has shed any useful light on the issue at all, shows that the various concerns that are common to all of these instances can be addressed, with significant effort and perhaps with great difficulty, successfully.

## Appendix E

## Meyer, Charles M

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**From:** Albert Kanters <akanTERS@zoomtown.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 17, 2013 1:55 PM  
**To:** 'Frank, John Jr.'; 'Al Dejarnett'; 'Al Kanters'; 'Bill Killen'; 'Bren Ryan'; 'Chuck Curran'; Meyer, Charles M; 'Dick Adams'; 'Gerard Hyland'; 'Jeffrey Stec'; 'Jim Crowe'; 'John Slauson'; 'Judith Lewis'; 'Kim Fender'; 'Mark Silbersack'; mdownton@aol.com; 'Steve Demar'; 'Steve Johns'; 'Tom Huenefeld'; 'William Scheyer'  
**Subject:** Beyond Boundaries, A Shared Services Action Plan for Ohio Schools and Governments, June 2012 (Summary)  
**Attachments:** BeyondBoundaries-6.14.12released.pdf; BeyondBoundaries-Exec Summary.pdf

At Monday's meeting I agreed to review this report and give a summary of its findings.

"Beyond Boundaries , a Shared Services Action Plan for Ohio Schools and Governments" was completed in June 2012 by the Governor's Office of 21st Century Education, assisted by the Office of Budget and Management, who conducted a shared services survey of Ohio schools, other educational service providers and local political subdivisions. This information was to be used to prepare legislative recommendations improving government cost savings. The reason for the study is that Ohio's local schools and governments have reached a critical juncture. Service expectations continue to grow and costs are rising faster than the economy. Our school systems and government entities must find ways to reduce costs and improve efficiency. The status quo simply can't continue. Shared services provide hope.

A fairly comprehensive Executive Summary is provided in the report and I have extracted it and attached it here along with the entire report. I encourage you to read the entire report. For a government document it is rather concise, to the point and easy to read (took about 30 minutes) . What follows are some highlights from the report that pertain to the mission of our organization and may help us focus on developing objectives and creating an action plan to promote more shared services initiatives in Hamilton County.

**Definition:** Shared services is a collaborative strategy that is fundamentally about optimizing staff, equipment and facilities and other corporate or public resources across jurisdictions to improve operational efficiencies and related outcomes. A shared service initiative may not yield cost savings; however, it provides the mechanism for an efficient delivery of a required service or allows for an improvement in the quality of service delivery.

The report revealed what we have learned firsthand: that one of the main barriers to shared service initiatives is resistance by the people involved. "The Commission, as a whole, concluded from testimony and research that the citizens of Ohio, in numerous cases, already enjoy some of the benefits of collaboration currently permissible under current law. It also determined, however, that in many cases, it wasn't the 'rules of the game' that inhibited cost saving collaboration, but rather the 'players in the game.'" — Building a Better Ohio: Creating Collaboration in Governance, Ohio Commission on Local Government Reform and Collaboration, 2010.

Resistance to change and thus lack of knowledge of the tools available was seen as a major barrier to initiation of shared services initiatives. For example few local government leaders seemed aware of the existence of a new section of the Ohio Revised Code, section 9.482, created to clearly allow intergovernmental shared service. Through the Jobs Budget (Am. Sub. H.B. 153), the State's operating budget for fiscal years 2012 and 2013, it allows any local government or school in Ohio to enter into an agreement with another political subdivision to provide a service. In one broad stroke, H.B. 153 significantly reduced the largest reported barrier to shared services. However, 39.8 percent of survey respondents indicated that legal and policy barriers were the main obstacle to sharing services.

It is important for stakeholder associations, county prosecutors, school legal counsels and local government legal teams to familiarize themselves with the new statute and to utilize it in the broadest terms possible. In addition, those same groups should reevaluate local ordinances and policies that may remain barriers to expanding the use of shared services.

Three important steps are necessary for this effort to succeed.

First, the administration and legislature must continue making the statutory and policy changes needed to expedite the use of shared services across Ohio.

Second, information and tools are needed by local leaders to realize the shared services opportunities available to them. Local leaders need state-level comparable data to help them determine where shared services opportunities make sense.

Third, local leaders have to take immediate, broad action. This requires leadership and vision from all. The overriding objective of this plan is to provide leaders a roadmap for taking these next steps.

It is recommended that [www.skinnyOhio.org](http://www.skinnyOhio.org), a website designed by Ohio Auditor of State David Yost to help local leaders seeking innovative ways to do business, be expanded and better utilized to provide more examples of successful shared services initiatives and provide templates for implementation. This website offers examples, templates, reference documents and other resources to help Ohio communities that are looking for ways to jump-start sharing services with other entities. It also includes a searchable database of best practices and recommendations from performance audits – all of which could lead to greater efficiencies. The website is regularly updated with the latest news and information concerning performance audits, shared services and cost-saving initiatives.

The Auditor of State's Office and the Center for Public Administration and Public Policy have collaborated in identifying hundreds of examples and case studies of successful collaborative projects. Many of the projects can be found via the web in the Auditor of State's Shared Services Idea Center, which is within SkinnyOhio.org.

More than technology, processes, laws or policies, people and their way of thinking have to change. The way governments do business needs to evolve with changing times and must be brought up to modern efficiencies. The private sector has made process improvements a priority for decades. Now is the time for governments to put aside "the way it has always been done" and, at long last, make way for better, more modern and cost-effective alternative.

Examples where a shared services model seems to be working are provided at

: <http://beyondboundaries.ohio.gov/toolkit.aspx> This resource guide provides a summary of shared services initiatives across the state and also provides contact information that local leaders can utilize to find out more about duplicating or participating in existing initiatives.

Our committee has often focused on the economic development benefits of consolidated governments. The report discusses 3 examples of consolidation around economic development, only one of which relates to business attraction and retention.

- In 2009, Summit County and City of Akron entered into an agreement to consolidate Akron's building department into the county's Division of Building Standards. In 2011, the City of Cuyahoga Falls, City of Tallmadge and Village of Silver Lake followed suit. As a result, Summit County reports that it now performs building permit and inspection services in 25 of the county's 31 communities and estimates an accumulated savings of nearly \$1.2 million. At the same time, Akron, Cuyahoga Falls and Tallmadge report they have been able to save money by not funding separate operations.

- The Regional Income Tax Authority (RITA) started as 38 communities in northeastern Ohio looking to achieve efficiencies of scale and uniformity in the collection of municipal income taxes in Ohio. Today, RITA encompasses 187 member communities in 59 counties throughout Ohio. RITA reports they have achieved efficiencies that allow them to operate at a cost to members of just three percent of their revenues.

- The State of Ohio has begun a significant collaboration and coordination effort through the development of the "JobsOhio Network." This network creates the catalyst for local government collaboration in the area of economic development through a partnership with six regional organizations; Columbus2020, Team N.E.O, Regional Growth

Partnership, Ohio Appalachian Business Council, Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, and the Dayton Development Coalition.

One guiding principle behind the recommendations in this report is seeking out “centers of excellence” and/or “leading providers” to serve as examples for the most efficient expansion of the shared services concept across Ohio. An important element to success will be the development of a public sector marketplace among shared service providers, supported by informed local government decision makers. Through creativity, innovation and choice, the shared services concept will lead to continuous improvement, not just substituting one way of doing things for another. By sharing services, we are being smart with taxpayer monies, thus saving funds that can be used elsewhere. Sharing services is fundamentally a matter of sharing savings.

The report states that three important steps are necessary for this effort to succeed.

First, the administration and legislature must continue making the statutory and policy changes needed to expedite the use of shared services across Ohio.

Second, information and tools are needed by local leaders to realize the shared services opportunities available to them. Local leaders need state-level comparable data to help them determine where shared services opportunities make sense.

Third, local leaders have to take immediate, broad action. This requires leadership and vision from all. The overriding objective of this plan is to provide leaders a roadmap for taking these next steps.

**Now all we have to do is find those “LEADERS” .**

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## Appendix F

This is a brief overview of a book by Bruce Katz and Jennifer Bradley of the Brookings Institution, **“The Metropolitan Revolution”**.

The book advances the thought that federal and state governments are so dysfunctional and cannot be looked to as the “adults” anymore. So cities and metros are taking control of their destinies by taking action themselves. Since the majority of people on the planet now live in metropolitan areas, and in the developing world, 1 million people move to metropolitan areas every week, three quarters of the world’s population will live in urban areas by 2050. Metropolitan areas must take action.

The Great Recession was a wakeup call and the durable reshaping of the economy is taking place led by networks of cities and metro areas; mayors, other local elected officials, heads of companies, universities, medical campuses, business association, labor unions, civic organizations, environmental groups , cultural institutions and philanthropies. They are not looking to be the next Silicon Valley, but building on their distinctive strengths as starting points. The advantage of thinking regionally, in collaboration and cooperation among jurisdictions, and projecting themselves nationally and globally as a unified economic entity is taking hold.

The book cites examples from four metro areas to illustrate the point. New York chose to focus on innovation as an area of concentration to diversify from financial services after the Lehman Brothers collapse. Using existing structures from the universities, economic development, and other interested parties, they pulled together to build an applied science cluster to foster innovative thought and bring those ideas into being. Applied Sciences NYC is the result.

Denver chose to focus on creating true regionalism in it’s metro area. The city and county were already combined under state law but the suburban areas were still thinking parochially. The breakthrough came when a neighboring county agreed to let Denver annex land for the new airport. What started over beer and steaks with the mayor and the county commissioners developed over time into a metro area built on trust among the jurisdictions and the realization that they are all dependent on the core city and each other for a viable economy and quality of life. Local networking, a bold vision, and energetic leadership were keys to bringing this about. We should look at Denver.

Northeast Ohio had a different crisis with the loss of thousands of manufacturing jobs. Again, collaboration on a broad regional level with existing structures networked together were enlisted to find a way forward. Foundations were brought together and encouraged to pledge a part of their funds to the Fund for Our Economic Future. But that didn’t come before a strong regional identity was formed. One of the earliest projects was called Voices and Choices; a two year effort to develop a regional economic competitiveness agenda. More than 20,000 one-on-one interviews, town meetings, and workshops were held getting ideas from a wide range of people about the regions assets challenges, and priorities. This had a galvanizing effect on the population, helping them realize the

potential power of acting as a region. Two results of this effort are BioEnterprise, focusing on new technologies in the medical research area and NorTech working on energy and water technology clusters.

Houston was the fourth metro highlighted. They used the regional networking approach to address the pressing issue there of immigration. They built on the existing structure of Neighborhood Centers to deal with the needs of large numbers of foreign born families coming into the Houston metro area. The question was to embrace and welcome or reject and shut out these immigrants. Houston chose the former and through a chain of six Neighborhood Centers surrounding the core area found ways to bring the needed services to a poor population. They have created a large network throughout the Houston metro area and continue to listen to residents to learn what they can give to the community and what they want from the community. They work at keeping Houston “a place of opportunity”.

These stories did not focus on combining governments but working instead with the existing structures to achieve regional solutions to regional problems. Networking, collaboration, trust, listening, and being open to change were common threads throughout the book. There are many other examples and ideas discussed from Portland’s development of it’s own export economy to Boston’s “innovation districts” in the South Boston Waterfront. Many of the things mentioned we have done in some way in Cincinnati, but we don’t seem to have the fire in our bellies to really act regionally. We still think of economic development as stealing business from the neighboring town or state with incentives and other enticements.

The authors point out that they can tell in 15 minutes of conversation with community leaders if the metro is open or closed. If they talk about networks they are organizing or participating in and talk up their fellow partners you have entered an open functioning metropolis. If they talk about what they themselves are doing and talk down other players, you have a closed competitive zone. Let’s encourage the former.

Respectfully submitted,  
Bill Killen



## Appendix G

### **Pertinent Comments Taken from a Reading of this book by John Frank July 2013**

Gardner- “at the time of the fierce urban riots of the late 1960s, the cities were the subject of intense national interest and attention. But when the riots ended, the interest died and was followed by two decades of neglect. Then, a few years ago, new signs of life began to appear. Cities in many parts of the country showed an inclination to take command of their own fate such as Charlotte, Chattanooga, Cleveland, Portland and others. ...the dispersion of initiative and responsibility downward and outward through our federal-state-local system, the cities are making it happen. ...the key is to get people talking and working together across the boundary lines that traditionally divide a community – people from government, corporations, social agencies, ethnic groups, unions and neighborhoods and so on. These people have usually had little experience in talking with one another, much less collaborating. We found that building healthy communities is less about structure and more about building relationships. Relationship building is the key to breaking political gridlock and being able to take action in the public interest.

Chattanooga had all kinds of racial challenges. Thus civic intervention began.

There is a withering of federal government funds. Multi-national corporations are showing less willingness to pay for the trappings of a nation state. City state regions and neighborhoods are increasingly on their own. Regional and local leadership- shared across business, civic and government sectors by people willing to cross the old and familiar boundaries is more critical than ever. The new model of leadership is collaborative, requiring widespread participation and collective decision making. It accepts the inevitability of conflict, but encourages consensus. It searches for win-win solutions.

Atlanta had a breakthrough because of the Olympics. Cleveland had crises requiring new leadership as did Denver. Some regions like Portland OR started making changes because they saw a crisis coming. Charlotte is also ahead of the curve. Both areas seem to have learned something systemic about being ahead of the crisis curve. Each demonstrates that a few committed people can lead their region to attempt something, that if it works, to build on it. Leadership needs to come from the top and from engaged citizens, in ordinary neighborhoods, who move to take real responsibility.

“Yet for each city with a revived center, a set of gnawing questions remain: Has the lot of the poor been improved? Has downtown revival reduced poverty in any appreciable way? Have racial and ethnic tensions been relieved, minority entrepreneurship expanded? The answer is almost uniformly “No”. The revival impact is simply not apparent; indeed neighborhoods of extreme poverty have increased in most U.S. cities.” How do you bring the many unemployed black males back into the mainstream?

Can local civic leaders do anything to reverse these trends, the culmination of decades of inner-city (and now inner ring suburban) decline? The large center cities of America are today the caretakers of the nation’s poor and immigrants, with significant shares of their budgets already going to cover the costs of poverty- costs most suburban governments share in dramatically lesser share. Only the national government can afford to redistribute wealth. But there is little sign higher governments are willing, under the political conditions of the times, to undertake any kind of redistribution. American’s metropolitan regions have compartmentalized their poverty- at the very time that globalization is accentuating the income gulf between skilled and unskilled workers. Regions are left with a deepening social overburden that clearly increases public costs and threatens to undermine the economic competitiveness of individual regions and communities. This is why the agenda for regional leadership has become so much more demanding. The cynics may say that efforts to share taxes, distribute

burdens and break up pockets of intense poverty are too idealistic, doomed to failure. But responsible government, business and civic leaders will keep returning to the agendas: How do we create a region that is not just economically and environmentally, but also socially sustainable?

What is clear in today's politics is that the core task of reforming public systems, rejuvenating older communities, and introducing new opportunities for low-income neighborhoods must be undertaken on a local basis. And since local municipal lines and rivalries are so often hindrances and the true human and fiscal resources for reform are regional, the task for initiating, encouraging, and driving change will fall to regional leaders.

Not every American region may be as perplexed by race as others but there is not a single American metro area where it's not, to some extent, a very real problem. Part of the solution, clearly is in identifying non-political leaders- in business, civic groups, academia, who can start, in practical and non-confrontational ways, to bring people of varying racial background together to address problems which they confront in common.

How does the leadership mix get expanded beyond government and business? Universities and colleges are arguably the biggest, least tapped, most strategic new leadership sector for America's regions. In an information age, they are the information specialists. Each year, they receive hundreds of billions of dollars of the national wealth, either through tax or philanthropic dollars. And they have crept up on, in many instances replaced, private firms as the biggest players in town. In region after region today the "eds" and "meds" are the largest non-governmental employers.

The book gives a number of examples of universities playing key roles in some regions.

Faith communities are in a position, through their members, through informal networks, to exercise significant influence.

Media also plays an important role. Newspapers, television and radio are a critical link between citizenry and government, and the creation of healthy civic processes.

Government needs reforming but all the reforms need government. It is the only instrument to affect the public's will in a fully democratic way. Only government has the power to assure true equity in a society. And government, eventually, can lend legitimacy to many vital public efforts. Often government- through planning departments, through mayors and council offices- is able to provide the missing communications link. Government's ally in providing the missing links is a group of intermediaries – civic entrepreneurs- such as chamber of commerce vice presidents, heads of citizens leagues and directors of community foundations.

Liberals often defend large-city governments because the cities are home to many minorities and poor. Conservatives tend to react viscerally to criticism of small, suburban jurisdictions. Lost in the shuffle are needed spirited debates about benchmarks and standards that large urban governments should be expected to achieve. Another challenge: clear evaluation of the hundreds of hyper-fragmented local governments in many regions. The hard questions need to be posed: How well do they actually perform? Would increased consolidation effect true economies of scale?

Regions are the organic, most important economic and environmental entities of the post-Cold War world. Communities across regions breathe the same air, use the same transportation systems, share the same water and impact the same natural systems. Their workforces are thoroughly intermingled. Suburbanites use- and in fact own, through various financial institutions-major parts of center city properties. Suburbs are far more likely to prosper when the inner cities are doing well.

Political leaders recognize the region by their councils of governments and other metropolitan coordinating mechanisms. But they rarely talk the language of regionalism in public, fearing retribution at the ballot box. The contrast with business could hardly be more startling. With real markets to confront, business executives typically get the "regional" message right away. Their market or a workforce is regional. If they sell locally, "local" is regional. If they're in the international game, it's the regional platform that launches everything they do.

Citizen leagues have become leading exponents of regionalism in multiple communities across the country. The precise degree of regional consciousness appears to relate, in a loose way, to the degree that regional leaders have begun serious debate on the components of a healthy region-education (including workforce preparedness), the problems caused by sprawl and unwise land uses that drive up regional costs for everyone, the disparity between rich and poor, and the importance laid on the health of the downtown for the whole citistate.

Neighborhoods need to be organized to come to the table and be effective in partnerships involving their larger cities and regions. Unless a community is organized, it will always be left out. Neighborhoods rarely have found a need or a way to connect to the regional agendas. Yet the neighborhood-region connection is becoming ever-more important.

Across the U.S., reductions in center-city poverty lead to more rapid income increases spread across the whole region. It is smart business for regional business and political leaders to try to deal with poor people and neighborhoods, through job training and connections, into emerging economic projects." Doing good and doing well go hand in hand.

## Appendix H

# **BUSINESS PLAN FOR A SOUTHWEST OHIO LOCAL GOVERNMENT COOPERATION INITIATIVE**

1. **Executive Summary:** The Cincinnati metropolitan area shows many successes; however, our quality of life can be significantly improved through better collaboration among regional stakeholders. We are facing an immediate fiscal *crisis*. The decline in both income and property tax revenues from prior levels, the elimination of the Ohio estate tax, and the reduction in payments from the Local Government Fund, have decreased revenue available to local governments. Generally, their response has been to reduce services, raise taxes, or both, rather than exploring ways to share services with other local governments.

A joint task force formed by Cincinnati Association and Citizens for Civic Renewal is commencing a Southwest Ohio local government cooperation initiative. The purpose is to provide objective, non-partisan, research and support to facilitate the process of building awareness amongst local government leaders of some of the problems we face and what other communities are doing to address them in a more cooperative manner.

Part of the challenge in developing a comprehensive approach is jurisdictional fragmentation. Southwest Ohio is a patchwork of 130 political jurisdictions comprising four counties<sup>1</sup>, 80 cities and villages, and 50 townships, plus dozens of school districts, fire districts and other public service providers. Hamilton County itself has 49 political jurisdictions. There is duplication in physical facilities, equipment, and personnel, which in some cases leads to under-utilized resources in a myriad of services – such as safety (police, fire & EMS), infrastructure development and maintenance, regulatory roles such as building permits, and economic development activities.

To be effective, we need to address (i) public apathy and (ii) government officials operating in silos. We are adopting a “carrot and stick” approach by finding and publicizing both the benefits of consolidation of services and the costs of not doing so. We will research and give examples of projects already undertaken that have yielded improved services or lower costs. We will analyze costs of existing services in our area, both at the micro-level (individual municipalities, villages and townships) and at the macro-level (Cincinnati and Hamilton County) to try to determine whether, for example, services are being delivered poorly or cost more than they should. Think, for example, of fire department response times and costs per incident. The idea is to create public awareness of problems that need to be addressed, like “why do we pay so much more for police protection in our village than our neighbors do?” Or “why does it take so much longer for snow removal from our streets than from the city next-door?”

By looking past the fragmented approach presently taken to solve problems within individual jurisdictions, we can develop a more coordinated approach so that decisions made by one jurisdiction do not negatively impact other jurisdictions and undertakings that are too large or complex for one jurisdiction to undertake can be undertaken with the combined resources of many jurisdictions.

2. **Mission Statement:** Our *goal* is to champion the cause of regional cooperation and be a catalyst for shared service initiatives by providing information about effective strategies and

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<sup>1</sup> Butler, Clermont, Hamilton, & Warren.

communicating success stories. To be clear, we are not advocating the formation of a metro government, or doing away with local government entities, although structural consolidations and other ideas for promoting collaborative governance can and should be considered.

### 3. **Objectives:**

a. Implement Promotion and Publicity Campaign: (i) issue press releases and publish articles (Newsletter?) on successful shared service initiatives and other collaborative efforts regionally and in other comparable cities; (ii) develop a speaker's bureau and solicit speaking engagements with local and regional chambers of commerce, business associations, service organizations, faith-based groups, neighborhood associations and others; and (iii) create and maintain a presence on social media (Facebook, Twitter, blog).

b. Organize a Regional Cooperation Conference that brings together political and business leaders to be educated on regional cooperation and shared service strategies and provides a forum that encourages their implementation.

c. Convene a meeting of mayors and other elected decision-makers from local governments, to occur quarterly over the next two years, to discuss issues concerning shared services.

d. Sponsor research into the costs of the current fragmented approach to government and service delivery and develop projections on what efficiencies and savings could be realized through consolidation and shared service initiatives.

e. Sponsor research to identify and document successful shared service initiatives and local government collaborations and consolidations.

f. Be a repository/source for information and best practices on successful shared service initiatives and local government collaborations:

(i) Consolidate and disseminate publications, articles, studies and guides.

(ii) Identify funding sources for shared service initiatives.

(iii) Identify and be a referral source for consultants and organizations that can provide expertise to municipalities seeking to implement shared service initiatives.

(iv) Develop and maintain a website for these purposes.

g. Develop strategic alliances with other like-minded organizations.

4. **Organization & Management:** (a) This initiative will be an ongoing project. We do not recommend creating a separately incorporated entity. The initiative should instead align itself with one or more regional organizations, which in turn will (i) serve as a fiscal agent and (ii) provide a physical work space. The organization that serves as fiscal agent will be a non-profit, able to receive deductible charitable contributions. It will facilitate with banking, accounting, payables, and related financial services. The same (or another organization) will provide minimal office space and technical support.

(b) *Management:* (i) A policy committee will be formed consisting of 25+ individuals with diverse backgrounds, all of whom share a willingness to work toward meeting the initiatives' objectives. It will be non-partisan. Committee members will include members of the existing task force who want to participate, and individuals associated with funding sources and strategic alliance partnerships who want to be involved. It is not contemplated that elected officials or government employees would be on the policy committee, although we would certainly be in contact with them. The policy committee will provide strategic guidance and community connections to assist in accomplishing the objectives. (ii) A steering committee of 3 to 5 members will be formed to meet more frequently than the policy committee, and will implement policy and strategic initiatives established by the policy committee. The steering committee will be more hands-on, and serve as liaison between the policy committee and the executive director and staff. (iii) Through its fiscal agent, the initiative will contract with a full-time or part-time independent contractor to serve as executive director. The executive director will be responsible for day-to-day operations and implementation of the objectives. In addition to the executive director, there may be an administrative assistant and possibly 2 research interns, all of which would be independent contractors. An alternative is to contract with a third party organization to complete the required research.

5. **Budget:** We are looking at a minimum two year budget term, starting with the date of funding. The following is an estimated budget for two years.

#### **Two Year Budget**

<u>Professional Services:</u>	
Executive Director Fees	\$200,000
Accounting/Legal Fees	\$5,000
<u>Research/Admin. Staff</u>	
Admin. Staff	\$80,000
Research (Faculty & Student Interns or Sub Contract)	\$100,000
Office Facilities, Equipment Supplies and General Overhead	\$65,000
Web Development & Marketing	\$50,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>

#### **6. Potential Funding Sources**

- (i) Foundations
- (ii) Cincinnati Business Community ("CBC") & Cincinnati Regional Business Community ("CRBC")
- (iii) Seansongood Good Government Fund



- (iv) Financial Institution trust funds
- (v) Local Government Innovation Fund (State of Ohio)

**7. Potential Strategic Alliances**

- (i) Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce
- (ii) Port of Greater Cincinnati Development Authority
- (iii) Charter Committee of Greater Cincinnati
- (iv) CBC & CRBC
- (v) XU Community Building Institute
- (vi) UC Institute for Policy Research

**8. Return On Investment:** There have been unsuccessful attempts in the past, by well-intentioned groups, to undertake similar endeavors. But their work efforts and research results are largely un-documented or not readily accessible. They failed to create a readily accessible resource bank for other interested groups involved in promoting shared services to access now and in the future. The return on investment for this initiative will be the creation of a robust and enduring data bank containing the results of research projects, statistical analysis, articles, and other supportive materials. This data bank will be available both online and catalogued at The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County.

## Appendix I

# Government Cooperation in Greater Cincinnati and the Obstacles it Faces

## Introduction:

I was on the board and active with Citizens for Civic Renewal (CCR) starting in the early 1990s. That organization became interested in government cooperation probably after the Metropolitan Growth Alliance, a group of business leaders hired a national expert, Michael Gallis, to study this area. This report concluded that only the region "as a whole" could compete effectively in the new world economy. CCR, in 2001, helped co-sponsor bringing Myron Orfield, another national expert, to this area to study local demographics. In his "Cincinnati Metropatterns" report, he wrote his concerns about the social separation and fiscal inequities in this area. This prompted CCR to form a committee named BEST (Building Economic Strength Together). I served on this committee for approximately 8 years and chaired it for the last two of its existence. We met with perhaps 25 business and political leaders over a period of 6 or 7 years trying to learn and trying to encourage leaders to think about government cooperation and all its benefits. Then in 2006, mostly because of the leadership of Cincinnati City Council member, Chris Bortz, and Councilman and then Hamilton County Commissioner, Pat DeWine, combined with the leadership of the CBC, a project was formed named GCEP (Government Cooperation and Efficiency Project). A Steering Committee was formed, and I was on it as CCR's representative. It was chaired by two CBC appointees and had on it a number of key political leaders from both major political parties. A consultant was hired and paid a large sum of money contributed by the city, the county and the CBC. The consultant worked hard to identify sharing opportunities. But GCEP faded away because it was believed that the city and the county were going to appoint a high level task force to start studying government cooperation. This task force never got off the ground, and I will cover the reason for it later in this paper. At about this time, the Cincinnati Association asked me to chair a Task Force on Government Cooperation, and we merged the CCR Best Committee into this task force. For nearly the past two years, we have been meeting and talking to leaders and discussing various ways that we could help get some important efforts started.

## Background Information:

Although we are a region of three states, 13 counties and more than 300 local governments, many believe the most important first step in strengthening the region is to bring the city of Cincinnati and Hamilton County together optimally as one governmental entity or at least working very closely together. Such a merged government can have a great impact on economic development and creating jobs by making the local government easier to conduct business with. That being said, there are still many ways that various governments can save money by sharing services with others. With local governments losing income partly because state and federal funds are shrinking, the need to share is greater than ever. The State of Ohio, through the Ohio Controlling Board, an arm of the Office of Budget and Management, has released a comprehensive plan called "Beyond Boundaries: A Shared Services Action Plan for Ohio Schools and Governments". It provides local officials with a road-map to achieving the cost-saving efficiencies of shared services. The state believes that school boards, like governments, must find ways to save money. Our Task Force is going to study this plan. The Executive Summary of the Plan states that there are three steps necessary for the Plan to succeed. "First, the administration and legislature must continue making the statutory and policy changes needed to expedite the use of shared services across Ohio. Second, information and tools are needed by local leaders to realize the shared services opportunities available to them. Local leaders need state-level comparable data to help them determine where shared services opportunities make sense. Third, local leaders have to take immediate, broad action. This requires leadership and vision from all."

Excellent information about city/county consolidations was compiled by the Pennsylvania Economy League (PEL) in 2007. Since the late 1940s, consolidations most relevant to our area are Baton Rouge, Nashville, Jacksonville, Indianapolis, Lexington, Kansas City and Louisville. Each one was unique and each had very different circumstances. No one size fits all.

## Background Information (continued)

Other really good information has been obtained from the Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement at Northern Kentucky University where they recently completed a three year study for Kenton County Kentucky regarding the benefits of consolidation. The Director of the Center, Mark Neikirk, told our Task Force that current academic consensus is that consolidation improves economic development prospects. But also that consolidation rarely saves money. "Shared Services" sounds good but the experience of many consolidations is that there are not enough savings, particularly in the short term, to justify the efforts. Bringing governmental entities together to promote economic development is where many believe the real financial benefits lie. Most stated goals of consolidation have been improving service delivery, promoting economic development, raising the size and ranking of the city, coordinating planning and improving governance and image. Studies have shown the key element of success was an active unified sector that focused the community discussion on economic development.

There may be savings by the City of Cincinnati sharing services with other comparable cities in the region such as Dayton, Middletown and Hamilton with similar financial problems. Another very creative idea is for the City of Cincinnati and Cincinnati Public Schools to share functions.

Most consolidations have two-tier tax districts. Common is the use of a general service district and an urban service district. Consolidations did not bring in independent suburban municipalities, school districts or volunteer fire districts. Many consolidations required separate votes for the city and for the county. This would more than likely happen if Cincinnati and Hamilton County were ever to have a vote for merger. But selling the citizenry on a merger would take much time, effort and money.

Race is more of an issue in Greater Cincinnati than in many comparable cities, and specifically it is a racial issue (or rather we should say a political issue caused by the different constituencies of the two major political parties) that is making it difficult to bring the city of Cincinnati to the table with Hamilton County to even begin talking about cooperation. African Americans in the city of Cincinnati make up close to half the population. At this time their leaders are opposed to even talking about city/county cooperation in any way. The city has AA leaders in many positions and in administrative jobs. The county does not have much inclusion both amongst elected officials and their administration. The city uses civil service and the county makes political appointments. Hamilton County is perceived therefore as not practicing inclusion. This is a political issue. Most African Americans are Democrats and most of the Republicans are white. It also should be pointed out there are many in the county outside of the city who view the city as a place with much poverty and all kinds of problems, and they want nothing to do with joining up with the city. To solve these differences, strong political leadership and massive public relations will be needed to get the support of citizens in the city and county.

Another major regional problem is the competition for attracting new businesses, where Ohio and Kentucky compete and where even one small jurisdiction may offer incentives to lure a business away from a neighboring community. Solving this problem could lead to a more productive allocation of resources. The Partnership for Greater Cincinnati brings local governments together to market the region and then steps back and the individual jurisdictions compete with each other using whatever incentives are at their disposal.

It might take a dramatic change in the structure of the Hamilton County Government, including creating a charter for the first time, before discussions about merger could even begin.

A very wise local elected official said a merger would have to be sold as making us all stronger. Twenty four per cent (24%) of the citizens of the city live in poverty today. A merger would have to make "all boats rise".

## History:

Over a period of years, leaders in Greater Cincinnati have begun various initiatives to study what must be done to make this area economically vibrant.

In 1997, a group of business, education and community leaders formed the Metropolitan Growth Alliance (MGA) whose goal it was to be a catalyst for regional cooperation. There was much studying and discussion. In 1999 they hired a well-known urban consultant, Michael Gallis, a professor from North Carolina, who produced what was known as the Gallis report. Cutting through all the problem issues raised regarding urban sprawl, population loss, and so forth, was the conclusion of the report that in one sentence said it all: *"only the Greater Cincinnati Region as a whole can compete going forward"*. In September 2002, the MGA disbanded saying that they were turning over their efforts to the Partnership for Greater Cincinnati (a consortium of economic development agencies put together to market this area) and to the Ohio River Corridor (an organization with a specific goal of creating development and recreational opportunities along the riverfront in all the communities on the Ohio River).

In 2001 the Greater Cincinnati Foundation and Citizens for Civic Renewal decided to fund a study called Metropatterns. They hired a company from Minneapolis, Metropolitan Research Corp., run by a well-known urban consultant, Myron Orfield, to study the demographics of the area. I have a copy of this report with its many disturbing statistics. Again one sentence in the report says it all: *"Pronounced social separation, inequitable fiscal policies and inefficient development patterns are threatening the long-term social and economic strength of the greater Cincinnati Region"*.

In November of 2006, Cincinnati City Councilman Chris Bortz and Hamilton County Commissioner, Pat DeWine announced the coming formation of a task force to recommend how local governments could share services and find ways of working together. The Task Force was called the Government Cooperation and Efficiency Project (GCEP) and a Steering Committee was formed and began meeting in early 2007. It was chaired by former President of the Ohio state senate, Richard Finan, and President of the Cincinnati Branch of PNC Bank, John Taylor. I was on the Steering Committee representing CCR. Some of the others on the Steering Committee were Chris Bortz, Pat DeWine, Eric Kearney, Todd Portune, Mark Policinski, and Louise Hughes (representing P&G). Later, David Pepper became active. The Steering Committee hired Management Partners, represented by its owner, Jerry Newfarmer, former Cincinnati City Manager, and his partner, Amy Paul, to conduct a \$150,000 study examining ways to share services. The study was funded 1/3 each by the city, county and CBC. Shortly after, John Taylor resigned because he moved from Cincinnati, and George Schaefer, former Fifth Third Bank CEO, took his place. Although the study was well done and identified many potential sharing possibilities, little was accomplished. The Steering Committee began to lose steam, George Schaefer left town and James Schwab, then local market President for US Bank, took his place briefly, but when talk of the high level task force to be formed by the city and county began to firm up, GCEP quietly slipped away.

In 2010 the Hamilton County Commissioners unanimously created a Government Reform Task Force to deal with the fact that the county government's structure dated from 1851. The Task Force unanimously agreed the county government's structure was antiquated and came up with recommendations for major change. The report is excellent and well worth reading. Because David Pepper left the County Commission, and because the politically elected leaders of the many different county departments were very much opposed to giving up their authority, the report was tabled. Currently, modernizing Hamilton County's government is a dead issue.

## **Racial/Inclusion Issues**

My personal history is important. I have always had a passion for fighting prejudice, since growing up in Cincinnati, I experienced too much of it, and I saw how unfairly African Americans (AF) were treated. I have become good friends with wonderful AF men and women through my community activities and personal social friendships. I have heard specific experiences related to me about unfair treatment towards not just AF but Asians and other ethnic minorities as well. And I know Cincinnati can be worse when it comes to these circumstances than Dayton, Columbus and other cities of our size and geographic location. And although I know circumstances are much better today than when I was young, too much prejudice and a lack of inclusion still exists. And what I am setting forth with my comments is ingrained in the minds of many AF today in Cincinnati, creating a lack of trust that is going to make it difficult to bring the city and county together. And the fact, as pointed out above, that Hamilton County has little inclusion both with elected officials and in hiring for the many county jobs, just exacerbates the problem.

I think all citizens will have better lives throughout the entire county with better jobs and more personal prosperity if we can bring the city and county together so that all citizens can work together to share the burden of poverty and scarcity of resources but it must be done in a way where African American citizens feel confident there will be fairness and inclusion in every aspect of government.

## **Citizen Support and Leadership**

Great plans can be created, the will to bring the entities together by the leaders in the community might exist, but any plan that ultimately recommends a change in the forms of government in the area will have to be taken to a vote. It will require legislation from Columbus that will probably be the easy part. But citizens will have to be educated and enthused about the benefits that must be sold to them. And almost assuredly, the city and county will have separate votes both requiring approval. In Louisville, the entire county had one vote, but only 20% of AF voted for the new government. Also a complicated tax structure will have to be created, as was done in Louisville, where a two-tier service district system was created. And the disproportionate debt that the city is burdened with will have to be dealt with. If CCR still has the structure to do it, they could organize town meetings throughout the county to educate citizens. However, in my opinion, strong leaders will have to come forward to lead the way, and the leadership must come from both the city and the county. All political parties must support proposed changes. And not just political leaders but business leaders, religious leaders, community leaders and educators must all be involved. Cincinnati needs a strong leader at the top comparable to Jerry Abramson who almost singlehandedly led Greater Louisville forward.

## **Current Support for Bringing the City and County Together**

It is encouraging there are leaders in the area who understand how important it is to simplify government by bringing the city and the county together. Citizens for Civic Renewal worked for a number of years to study and support efforts to move towards merged governments. The Cincinnati Association selected "government cooperation" as perhaps the most important issue to concentrate its efforts on. The business community in Cincinnati, starting way back with the Metropolitan Growth Alliance 20 years ago, tried to find ways to make government more efficient. More recently, the Cincinnati Business Committee (CBC) has understood that the area can't have the economic growth it needs to benefit all citizens without getting the city and county to begin finding ways to work closely together. Tom Williams of North American Properties has been a strong supporter, and when he chaired the CBC, he strongly promoted the formation of a high level task force. The CBC provided funds for the study conducted by GCEP and was ready to support the proposed new task force. Greg Hartmann, a Hamilton County Commissioner, understands the need to do this, and is willing to work across party lines to find ways to move forward. Roxanne Qualls, current Vice Mayor of the City of Cincinnati, who is a former mayor of the city and a candidate for Mayor once again, also understands the importance of working across party lines to bring the city and the county closer together. Former Cincinnati Councilman Chris Bortz and former city councilman and county commissioner, and now Hamilton County Judge, Pat DeWine, deserve credit for the energy they put into trying to make government cooperation take place.

## **Other Metropolitan Areas**

As pointed out above, each metro area has its own individual characteristics and set of issues. However, we can learn from the experiences of other places. The cities closest to Cincinnati seem to get the most attention. Indianapolis has a metro government. One of the former mayors of Indy, Richard Hudnut, told me a number of years ago that the citizens never would have voted to approve their merged government. Strong city leaders were able to convince the state government to force the change of their governmental structure. The city of Columbus has a large portion of Franklin County in the city limits, and that is because years ago, the city used the availability of its water supply to force smaller towns and cities in the county to be annexed into the city. Columbus' city government includes 69% of Franklin County (Cincinnati has only 37% of the county's population). In Louisville, dramatic circumstances, where the area lost major employers and many jobs, leaders believed they had to do something. It took a number of votes and a very charismatic mayor, and Republicans and Democrats working together to get it done. Cleveland and Cuyahoga County were rocked with scandals to the point where local leaders came together and decided to start from scratch and create an entirely new governmental structure. Lexington first merged their city and county schools systems and then merged their city and county law enforcement agencies paving the way for a city/county government. Charlotte merged most of the city and county departments, and now its dynamic mayor is pushing towards creating a merged government. Every situation was different and although we can study other areas, it will be necessary, if we move forward in this area, to do so in a way that best fits the circumstances here.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations:**

There are many road blocks in the way of having a unified city and county government in this area. Race, politics, the lack of a strong charismatic leader, and the need to educate voters are just some of the issues standing in the way. Even bringing Cincinnati and Hamilton County together would create a government encompassing less than 40% of the citizens in the Metropolitan Area. But if this happens, it then would pave the way to go beyond county and state lines for all types of government cooperation. I am hopeful that leadership will come forward to begin to dismantle the road blocks.

The task force the county and the CBC tried to get the city to jointly form would have been able to start grappling with all these issues. I think the task force should be formed and be inclusive and representative of the demographics of the city and the county. I believe the racial issues can be dealt with but with great sensitivity and candor. I believe the two major political parties must have leadership that will buy into the need for bringing the city and the county together. There must be efforts to begin to create a convincing message describing the benefits for all citizens that would accrue from a merged government. The leadership of the task force must think outside the box and work towards creating a dynamic inclusive government that will bring more prosperity to all citizens.

I also believe that it may take a long time, maybe years, before the necessary leadership comes forward and surmounts all the obstacles. So in the meantime, there are many things a high level task force could do to make government more efficient in Greater Cincinnati. Efforts must be made to promote sharing at all levels. And there is no reason that sharing can't be done across state lines. Cincinnati should be encouraged to sell some of its existing capabilities to other jurisdictions. Cincinnati should explore how it can work together with similar large cities in the area. Hamilton County should get its act together and create a modern charter. And it must alter its hiring practices and encourage AF to run for the important elected offices. School systems should be encouraged to share services. And Cincinnati's government should work with Cincinnati Public Schools to find ways to share. And there are other creative approaches that should be explored. As an example, in Northern Kentucky, mayors from a number of jurisdictions meet regularly to find ways to learn from each other and help each other. This should be a way of life throughout the region because sharing just doesn't mean finding ways to save money, but also a means of governments helping each other finding solutions to problems and dealing with difficult issues.

If the high level task force is formed in 2014, the Cincinnati/CCR Task Force can be extremely helpful in providing input to this new task force, sharing our knowledge with it, and insuring it is sensitive to the racial and political issues that must be dealt with if the city and county are ever going to merge or even just work together more closely.



## **Additional Comments August 2013**

Whether or not a city/county high level task force is formed to deal with these issues, what I believe must be done is for there to be the creation of a regional leadership group to begin tackling the tough issues that must be dealt with to enable greater Cincinnati as a region to prosper going forward. This requires participation by key business leaders, non-profit leaders, the local universities, religious leaders, the legal community and others all of whom will then create the motivation for politicians and political parties to become involved. And in the group must be prominent people such as CEOs of CBC companies, Presidents of Universities, CEO's of major non-profits and foundations, CEO's from major healthcare organizations, leaders from minority communities, and geographic representation from the entire metropolitan area.

The challenges are many but include getting the leadership group organized, finding ways to make center city citizens and suburban citizens of all races and backgrounds believe that change is needed and would be in their best interests, The leadership group must find ways to educate the citizenry, and ways to make opposing political parties work together. They must find a way to end the dysfunctional government structure in Hamilton County. They must educate all citizens of the area as to how important it is to have a strong urban core. They must take on the serious problems of poverty, and the unemployment rate of African American males. Most importantly they must educate the citizenry to understand that if the region tackles these problems as a region, everyone will benefit.