

Durham – Durham County I (1971-1974)

Summary of proposed consolidation plan

Governing board

The proposed charter would have established a 16-member Board of Government, with each member elected by and from one of sixteen electoral districts. (The charter set out the boundaries of the 16 districts.) All elections were nonpartisan and on the municipal election cycle; the board members were to be elected to four-year, staggered terms, and the mayor was to be elected to a two-year term. The proposed charter also directed that in each decennial census year the Board was to establish a Districting Commission, with each Board member appointing a resident of his or her district to the

Commission

Any post-census redistricting was the sole responsibility of this Districting Commission rather than the governing board.

Form of administration: The proposed charter would have retained the manager system in place in both the county and the city.

Law enforcement

The proposed charter did not attempt to choose the method of providing law enforcement after consolidation. It specifically left the sheriff with the full range of law enforcement powers given sheriffs by general law. But it also authorized the Board of Government to provide for the appointment of law enforcement personnel and provided that if it did so, those law enforcement officers had countywide jurisdiction.

Initiative and referendum

The proposed charter would have given the county's voters the right to initiate or repeal ordinances and to require a referendum on ordinances adopted by the Board of Government. There were no comparable provisions at that time applicable to the city or to the county.

Removal and recall

The proposed charter would have given the Board of Government the power to remove the mayor or one of its own members by a vote of at least 12 members, and would have given the consolidated government's voters the power to recall the mayor, sitting members of the Board, sitting members of the county school board, and the register of deeds. The existing city charter permitted removal and recall of the mayor and council members, but there were no comparable provisions for the county school board or register of deeds.

Discrimination

The proposed charter would have prohibited the consolidated government from discriminating in its own employment practices and given the Human Relations Commission authority to hear complaints of alleged discrimination and to initiate its own investigations into possible discrimination. In addition, the proposed

charter would have enacted broad prohibitions on discrimination in private employment, in public accommodations, and in housing, generally following existing federal law. It would have mandated creation of the Durham Human Relations Commission and given it authority to enforce the anti-discrimination provisions.

Planning Commission

The charter would have required creation of a Citizens Planning Commission and mandated that it have seventeen members, with at least one member from each of the Board of Government electoral districts. The Commission was to have the powers of a standard county or city planning board.