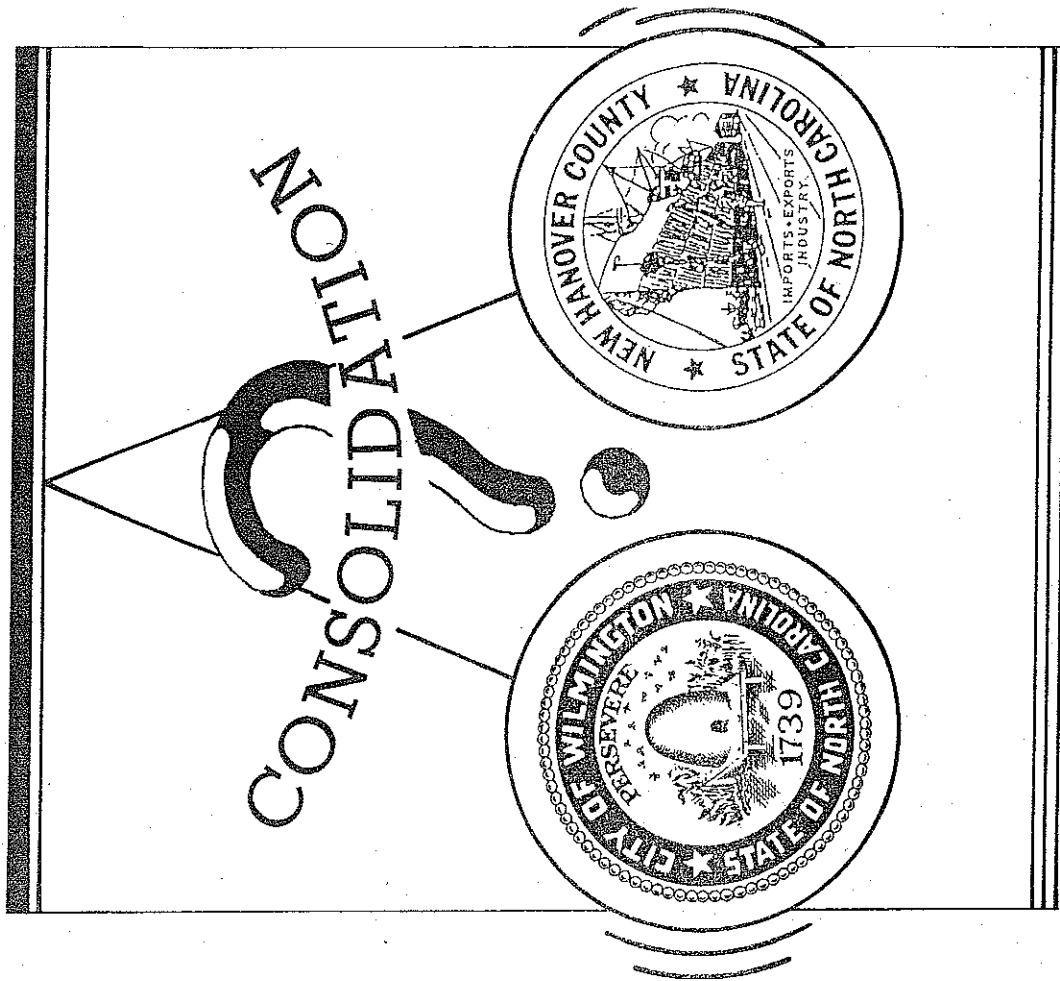


Questions
and
Answers
About



WHAT IS CONSOLIDATION?

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

On October 6, 1987, you, the citizens and voters will decide whether the City and County will consolidate to form one county-wide government to represent all the people of our community.

Your vote will be a significant factor in this important decision which will affect all of us and our children for years to come. You are urged to study this question and to cast an informed vote on October 6, 1987. We know that you want to have your questions answered, so let's talk for a few minutes about what consolidation is and how it may affect you as a citizen, voter, and taxpayer.

Q Who will vote on October 6?

A Every qualified voter of Wilmington, Carolina Beach, Kure Beach, Wrightsville Beach, and New Hanover County is entitled to vote and urged to do so.

Q Is consolidation something new?

A No, several governmental functions have been merged or consolidated for greater efficiency in the past. Departments which have already been merged include Purchasing, Inspections, Tax Administration, Department of Aging, Human Relations, and New Hanover County Library.

Q What will happen to duplicated city and county departments?

A They will be merged in such a way as to guarantee that services now provided will continue to be delivered. Departments affected include Parks and Recreation, Engineering and Facilities (including water and sewer utilities), Planning and Zoning, Personnel, Finance, Printing, Data Processing and Legal.

Q What do you mean by the term Consolidated Government?

A A consolidated city-county is simply a single local government covering the whole county that has the power to do within its jurisdiction what both cities and counties may now do. At the time of consolidation a single government with a single manager, governing board and administration absorb the previously existing local governments of Wilmington and New Hanover County.

Q

How will the Consolidated Government be administered and financed?

A

Through three (3) Service Districts.

The General Service District will be the current New Hanover County Boundary. Taxes collected from property in the General Service District will be used to fund only those services that are offered to all Consolidated Government citizens.

The Urban Service District boundaries will be the current boundary lines of the City of Wilmington. Higher levels of police protection, fire protection, water service, and trash pick-up are examples of services offered to Urban Service District residents for which an additional tax will be levied.

The Rural Fire Tax District encompasses the area outside the beach municipalities and outside the Urban Service District which use the services of Volunteer Fire Departments for fire protection. A tax is levied on the property in the rural fire tax district to pay for this service.

In addition, other revenues from the State of North Carolina and the Federal Government which support certain activities of the government will be allocated to the budget of the service district to which they pertain. (Example: Revenues from North Carolina for school programs will go to the General Services District budget, to be then placed in the school budget.)

Q

What services will one have to pay for under the new government?

A

If any service or function is provided for an urban service district (incorporated area of the County) to a greater extent than for the rural service district (unincorporated area of the County), the costs of providing it at a higher level for the district shall be charged to that particular district.

Q

How does consolidation affect my taxes?

A

The Charter states:

Chapter 8, Article 2, Section 8-16, Paragraph (b):
"The tax rates of the Government shall be adjusted to the levels of service provided."

Chapter 10, Paragraph 1: "the consolidating governments may be operated as one governmental entity in the interest of efficient, economical, responsive and responsible democratic government."

Q How will present debts be handled?

A

Provision has been made in the Charter that current existing indebtedness of the city or county governments will be paid out of taxes levied within the area where the benefits from the debt is realized. Those bonds being retired from water or other special revenues will continue to be retired from such revenues.

Q Are there other services which are not consolidated?

A

Yes, all county fire districts and volunteer fire departments continue to operate without change.

Q What will happen to Fire Protection under consolidation?

A

The Volunteer Fire Departments will continue to provide fire protection to the areas outside the urban service district and beach municipalities' boundaries now within the Rural Fire District.

A paid, professional Fire Department shall provide fire protection to the urban service district. It will be supervised by a Fire Chief hired by the Board of Commissioners.

The Beach Municipalities will offer fire protection to their citizens either by contractual arrangement with the Consolidated Government, or by providing the services themselves.

Q How will reduction in the number of employees be accomplished?

A

Where duplication exists, current employees with five (5) years' employment with the City of Wilmington or New Hanover County will be assured employment with the Consolidated Government, either in a similar job or through reassignment. The charter states that reduction of the total number of positions will be accomplished through normal attrition. Those with less than five (5) years' employment may be terminated with severance benefits. The Manager, Clerk to the Board, and Attorney not hired by the Consolidated Government will continue as consultants to the new government for a six months' transition time.

Q What will happen to the employees' benefit programs?

A

All employees sick leave and vacation leave accrued will be retained by the employee under the new government.

A new personnel plan will be implemented under the Consolidated Government which will encompass all employees.

Police and Fire Department employees will be under the jurisdiction of a Civil Service Commission.

Q How will I be represented in the new government?

A The new Charter provides for a Mayor-Board of Commissioners-Manager form of government. Eight commissioners elected county-wide for four-year terms make up the Board of Commissioners. As the governing body, the Board adopts ordinances, determines the budget, and makes policies for the Consolidated Government.

The Mayor is also elected county-wide for a four-year term. He or she presides at Board Meetings, has a vote, and is a full-time official of the government.

The Manager is a professional who is appointed by the Mayor and Board of Commissioners. He or she assists the Mayor or Board in supervising the day-to-day administration of this enlarged Consolidated Government.

The Mayor and eight commissioners will all be elected directly by the voters of the entire county and are therefore responsible and accountable to them.

Q What is the status of Wrightsville Beach, Carolina Beach and Kure Beach under the Consolidated Government?

A They continue as municipalities with their own elected boards, service delivery systems, and tax rate. Their citizens, as county residents, are also part of the Consolidated Government, will vote in Consolidated Government elections, and will continue to receive current county services provided to them such as public health, mental health, welfare, schools, solid waste disposal, airport, etc.

Municipalities will not be allowed to annex lands under the jurisdiction of the Consolidated Government, except as allowed by resolution of the elected officials of the Consolidated Government.

Municipalities desiring to consolidate with the Wilmington/New Hanover Consolidated Government may do so by referendum vote of their citizens.

Q What will happen to Law Enforcement under consolidation?

A The SHERIFF will continue to be elected by the people. He will perform his constitutional duties of managing the

courts and the jail, and will coordinate the law enforcement function with the Police Chief.

The Police Chief will be appointed by the Board of Commissioners. He must have law enforcement background and training. His duties are to enforce criminal laws and regulations of North Carolina and the Consolidated Government and to supervise patrol and criminal investigations.

Q How will I be asked to vote on October 6?

A Each voter in the City and County will vote for or against the Consolidation on October 6.

Approval of consolidation of the governments of the City of Wilmington and New Hanover County will require a favorable vote county-wide and a favorable vote inside the City of Wilmington.

Q How can the Consolidated Government Charter be amended?

A Changes to the Charter can be made by referendum election.

Q When would the Consolidated Government take effect?

A If the Charter is approved, the first consolidated election would be held on May 3, 1988. The new government would take office on the first Monday in June, 1989. In the interim period those elected to the Consolidated Government would act as a Transition Committee making the plans necessary as well as formulating the budget for the Consolidated Government.

Q How may I find out more about the Charter?

A We have attempted in this folder to answer a few of the important questions which you might have about consolidation. Copies of the entire proposed Charter, which has been approved by the N. C. General Assembly, are available in public libraries throughout the city and county and are on file with each of the governing bodies. We urge you to obtain a copy and to study it. Members of the Study Commission, among others, are also available to answer your questions and to speak to interested groups throughout the city and county.

After you have studied the Charter and discussed it with your friends and neighbors, we urge you to vote on October 6, 1987.