

## **Extract – Minutes of the Durham City Council – March 1, 1999**

### **APPROACH TO CITY/COUNTY CONSOLIDATION**

**JOINT COMMITTEE:** Form a joint City Council and County Commissioners Steering Committee by March 15, 1999 to clarify issues necessary for a merged government. The structure will be a body composed of a fixed number of City Council Members and County Commissioners set and appointed by the respective governing body.

**PURPOSE:** The committee will be charged with guiding a study to determine the feasibility/advisability (costs and benefits) of consolidating city and county governments in Durham County. The Durham City Council and Durham County Commissioners recommends the committee's work may include but is not limited to the following:

- \* Develop a list of questions and issues to be resolved.
- \* Develop a communications strategy to obtain public input and keep the public informed. This strategy could include citizens forums, public hearings, focus groups, surveys, a special newsletter, and other outreach techniques.
- \* Recommend, for governing body approval, the composition of citizen task forces that will investigate the details of issue areas including: administration/general government; public works; community services and development; health and human services; public protection; taxation and finance; governmental structure. The committee's recommendation for composition of the task force should include broad community representation. Appropriate staff from city and county governments and specific outside resource expertise would be made available to the citizens committees.
- \* As soon as possible, determine a budget for appropriate committee and task force support, report that to the governing bodies for approval, and select service providers (consultant and/or facilitator) within the budgeted amounts.
- \* Access additional resources, as appropriate, to assist the committee's efforts (i.e. the Institute of Government, League of Municipalities, North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, assistance from local universities, and information from consolidated governments in other areas).
- \* Submit a report to the governing bodies by December 1, 1999, regarding the feasibility/advisability of merger. The report should include the task force reviews evaluating the costs and benefits of merger including efficiency, effectiveness, equity, accessibility and accountability.

\* Other activities deemed necessary to gather information and guide the process.

After receipt of the joint committee report regarding the feasibility/advisability of consolidation, the Durham City Council and the Durham County Board of Commissioners would determine whether to proceed to create a formal Consolidation Study Commission. If the Commission is formed, it will begin its work by January 15, 2000 with a report, including a proposed Charter, due by May 15, 2000. The Consolidation Study Commission would report on the form of governance and all other issues as called for in Article 20, Chapter 153A of the North Carolina General Statutes regarding consolidated government. With this time frame, a referendum on merger would be possible in November, 2000.