

**Hamilton County Government Reform Task Force
Meeting Summary
July 29, 2010**

Conference Room 607B
Hamilton County Administration Building
138 East Court Street
Cincinnati, Ohio

Task Force Members Present: Margaret Cook, Cathy Doyle, Kevin Flynn, David Krings, Jim O'Reilly, Elizabeth Robinson, Rosemarie Sturgill, Stephen Wessels

Task Force Members Absent: Marilyn DeCourcy, Connie Hinitz, Nikki Johnson, Lamont Taylor

Invited Guests: Commissioner Dan Troy, Lake County Ohio; Jennifer Evans-Cowley, Ph.D., Ohio State University

Task Force Facilitator: Jerry Newfarmer

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:08 a.m. by J. O'Reilly who welcomed those in attendance.

Minutes of July 13, 2010

The minutes from the July 13, 2010 meeting were approved without correction.

Discussion with Ohio Commission on Local Government Reform and Collaboration

Lake County Commissioner Dan Troy, co-chair of the commission and Dr. Jennifer Cowley, consultant to the Commission each addressed members of the Task Force. The Commission on Local Government Reform and Collaboration is charged with developing recommendations on ways to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of local government operations to achieve cost savings to taxpayers and facilitate economic development. The 15-member Commission is comprised of local elected officials, and representatives from state and regional planning associations.

The Commission will issue a report of its findings and recommendations to the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Governor later this year.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

J. Newfarmer reviewed a memo to the Task Force regarding further work of the group, including the development of recommendations and a report for presentation to the Board of County Commissioners on September 8. J Newfarmer proposed the following additional meeting dates to complete the work of the Task Force:

- August 17 – 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.
- August 19 - 8:00 to 10:00 a.m.

- August 24 – 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Task Force members also reviewed a proposed report outline and previously developed framework for evaluating governmental effectiveness (see Attachment A memo dated July 29, 2010).

In preparation for the August 17 meeting each Task Force member was asked to develop and submit in advance a summary list of issues and ideas that: 1) reflect current operational and structural issues and problems that hinder or preclude efficient and effective County government service delivery, and 2) suggest changes to County government operations and structure, based on the identified issues and problems. The consolidated list of issues will be discussed at the August 17 meeting.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 a.m.



MANAGEMENT PARTNERS

INCORPORATED

To: Hamilton County Government Reform Task Force
From: Jerry Newfarmer
Subject: Task Force Report
Date: July 29, 2010

The Government Reform Task Force (GRTF) has nearly concluded taking testimony from persons with knowledge about Hamilton County Government and about the organization of county governments in Ohio. Management Partners is tasked with supporting the work of the Task Force by, among other things, helping to prepare your report to the County Commission. During its meeting of May 19, 2010 the County Commission amended its original resolution creating the GRTF to establish the target date for submission of its report at the staff meeting of the Board of County Commissioners after Labor Day (September 8, 2010).

In his email forwarding the amended resolution adopted by the Commission, a copy of which is attached, Commissioner Todd Portune wrote as follows:

“The primary operative elements in the edited Resolution are:

1. Rescinding the May 31, 2010 report date – extending the date of the report to the county to the Staff Meeting following Labor Day 2010;
2. Allowing for the recommended changes to the county structure to be presented to the voters at either a Primary or General election; and
3. Affirming in the Resolution our desire to receive a unanimous recommendation.”

The pertinent extract from the amended Resolution of the County Commission provides:

“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...”

To complete a report of the Task Force as directed by the County Commission will require increased work during the month of August. A realistic schedule would seem to be as follows:

July 29	Discuss structure of report, issues to be addressed
August 17	Review draft report with decisions highlighted
August 19	Continued discussion of issues and draft
August 24	Review of completed draft report

August 31 Report to final production

September 8 County Commission meeting

Report Structure

It would seem as if the sections of the report should be as follows:

- Transmittal Letter
- Table of Contents
- Background
- Task Force Methodology
- Framework for Evaluation
- Hamilton County Government Review
- Other Ohio County Models Reviewed
- Observations
- Conclusion
 - Will an altered form improve Hamilton County government?
 - If so, what are the Task Force's recommendations for an alternative form?

Comments about report elements. The first three sections will be a straight-forward rendition. The methodology will recap the materials reviewed by the Task Force, the persons interviewed and the general approach taken.

The Task Force had an excellent discussion about the factors that are important in governmental organization and created a framework for use in evaluating governmental effectiveness. An outline of that framework follows:

- Democratic Representativeness
 - All constituencies
 - Opportunity to participate
- Employee Competence
 - Professionalism
 - Political neutrality
 - Merit selection and retention (Civil service system)
- Accountability
 - Responsiveness to constituents and other elected leaders
 - Outcome oriented administration and operations
- Economics and Efficiency
 - Services provided in line with revenues
 - Allocation of resources in a balanced manner
 - Thoughtful reduction in County expenditures

I have comments about this formulation which are included as an attachment for your review and consideration.

The Task Force also devoted significant effort to examining Hamilton County government, including hearing testimony from most of the current elected officials and the County



Administrator. Additionally, specific attention was given to the internal support functions within the County government with regard to the potential for duplication.

The Task Force has reviewed materials about alternative governmental structures, including the government of Summit County, the new structure about to be implemented in Cuyahoga County, and the proposal that is on the ballot in Ashtabula County.

During the course of its work, Task Force members have discussed topics that are beyond the scope of its review as established by the County Commission. The Task Force has heard opinions about intergovernmental cooperation as well as ideas for consolidating functions such as prosecuting misdemeanor crimes occurring within the City of Cincinnati. The Task Force may have observations it wishes to include (or not).

The conclusion of the report is the key element. Based on the direction from the County Commission that the work of the Task Force must result in a unanimous conclusion, the threshold issue would seem to be whether the Task Force can agree on a unanimous recommendation for change.

The specific substantive charge to the Task Force from the County Commissioners is as follows:

“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...”

Under the Ohio Revised Code “a proposed and reformed Hamilton County government structure as permitted under ... the Ohio Revised Code and the Ohio Constitution,” are of two types, an alternative form of government spelled out in the Ohio Revised Code and a Charter form of government. According to Chapter 2 of the Ohio County Commissioners Handbook, the greatest power granted under either of these alternative forms of government is that of home rule or limited legislative powers.

The alternative form of government permitted under Ohio law is prescriptive. According to the Ohio County Commissioner’s Handbook:

“The alternative form of county government concentrates on the enlargement of the board of county commissioners, the appointment of an appointed or elected executive, and the establishment of a series of departments. Under this form of government, county commissioners become the policy making body of the county and the executive performs those administrative and executive functions that are the responsibility of county commissioners in a general statutory form of government.”

No Ohio County uses this alternative form of government. If, however, the County Commission wished, it could place this alternative form of government on the ballot.

To develop a Charter government for the County, the County Commission may submit to the voters the question, “Shall a county charter commission be chosen?” The resolution creating



the Government Reform Task Force would seem to be a precursor to a decision to submit such a question to electors.

Discussion

To date, the Commission has received testimony from the following ten of the eleven current elected officials in Hamilton County government, as well as representatives from county organizations:

- Commissioner Todd Portune
- Commissioner David Pepper
- Commissioner Greg Hartmann
- Dusty Rhodes, County Auditor
- Robert Goering, Treasurer
- Simon Leis, County Sheriff
- Bill Brayshaw, County Engineer
- Wayne Coates, County Recorder
- Patricia Clancy, Clerk of Courts
- Andrea Hatten, Coroner's Office
- Chris Finney, COAST (Coalition Opposed to Additional Spending and Taxes)
- Tim Burke, Democratic Party
- Alex Triantafilou, Republican Party

Guidance

Guidance from the Task Force would be useful in regard to the preparation of the report. Several questions would seem to require attention:

- Is the time schedule set forth above generally satisfactory?
- Is the framework for the report acceptable to the members of the Task Force?
- Does the Task Force conclude that an alternative structure for County government should be recommended to the County Commission? If so, what facts support this conclusion?
- What are the elements of an alternative structure that the Task Force recommends?



To: Hamilton County Government Reform Task Force
From: Jerry Newfarmer
Subject: Framework for Evaluation
Date: July 29,2010

The following framework was developed by the Task Force in its work to evaluate the components of both the current governmental structure of Hamilton County, as well as in evaluating alternative forms of government.

- Democratic Representativeness
 - All constituencies
 - Opportunity to participate
- Accountability
 - Responsiveness to constituents and other elected leaders
 - Outcome oriented administration and operations
- Employee competence
 - Professionalism
 - Political neutrality
 - Merit selection and retention (Civil service system)
- Economics and Efficiency
 - Services provided in line with revenues
 - Allocation of resources in a balanced manner
 - Thoughtful reduction in County expenditures

This is a useful framework and is distinctly a product of the collaboration of the Task Force members.

There is one other value that is not represented on this listing that the Task Force may consider worth calling out separately and that was a part of the conversation: overall County **leadership**.

This value was touched on in discussion in two ways. First, as Task Force members considered the structure of County government they discussed the value of the executive, whether elected or appointed. Underlying this discussion was concern that the current structure does not allow for leadership of the County government *as a whole*, since power is dispersed to nine separate power centers (excluding the judiciary). The County Commission is entrusted to make budgetary policy for the County, but County row officers are entrusted to make policy within each of their eight separate departments. Overall County leadership is dispersed among those separate entities.

I believe additional discussion about the framework may be useful.

