



## **Task Force on Consolidated Government**

Jacksonville City Council  
Council Member Lori Boyer, Chair

September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013

### **HIGHLIGHTS OF MEETING THREE**

#### **City of Jacksonville Organizational Overview**

The administrative structure was fairly unchanged from consolidation in 1968 to the late 1980s, with the exception of the creation of a Planning Department, Planning Commission and Economic Development Council 1981. More substantial changes began to be made in the early 1990s with departments being created, deleted and substantially reorganized, which continues to the present. The number of appointed boards and commissions, some with substantive authority, others purely advisory, has grown substantially over the years.

#### **Topics for Future Meetings**

- Hearing from several former General Counsels
- Hear from citizens about how they feel consolidation is working for their neighborhoods.
- Receive information on whether and how other comparable city councils do continuing budgetary oversight after their budget adoption process is completed.
- Find academic research on consolidated governments around the county to see what it can tell us about how Jacksonville could improve.
- Looking at consolidated governments that are known for doing a good job of planning their growth and development to see what lessons can be applied to Jacksonville.
- Invite Authority board members to attend the meetings at which the authorities are making a presentation, to provide a different perspective from the CEOs.
- Research what Jacksonville was doing during its high growth periods
- Look for ways to highlight and leverage the river and the port
- Look at economic development incentives

#### **Current Executive Branch Organization**

Phase 1 elevated several functions and divisions to cabinet level offices (the charter makes no reference to a cabinet) and the administrative hierarchy was flattened. The number of Departments was reduced to 7 and the number of Divisions reduced to 28. The stated goal was to become more efficient and effective.

Originally, it was reported that Phase 2 would identify the associated cost savings of reorganization, however as budget constraints and reductions in force intervened, the focus

shifted to stabilization of the workforce. The most recent proposal groups Departments into Employment Services, Citizen's Services and Intergovernmental Services.

The administration is focused on metrics-driven performance and on producing a "data dashboard" that will be available to the general public to view. Fact-based budgeting and clear indicators of operational performance are needed to drive better performance.

How consolidated the city's services are varies by service – legal services are very consolidated in the General Counsel's office, but items like information technology and personnel are less so because constitutional officers and independent authorities want more control of their own resources. Five impacts of unconsolidated functions were noted:

- Less transparency
- Splintered mission
- Loss of economies of scale
- Territory fights
- Overspending on duplicative services.

Task Force member Dwain Senterfitt said that the JSO is completely technology-dependent and can't do its job without full-service IT available at all times, which is sometimes not the case when they are dependent on City IT. He stated that the JSO, like other departments, has been unable to understand what City central services actually cost to provide. They are only told what the provider departments bill, which apparently includes overhead and other charges that the user departments cannot control and cannot dispute. Paul Tutwiler stated that he works with City agencies and sees the effects of continuing budget cuts and poor employee morale.

### **Mayoral Panel**

#### **Mayors Jake Godbold and John Delaney**

Mayor Delaney stated that neighborhoods have not gotten the attention they deserved from the consolidated government, and Mayor Godbold suggested consolidation was oversold to the voters, with promises made about the extension of water and sewer service, paving of roads, improved storm drainage, etc. that never came to pass. Also, the low tax aspect of consolidation was oversold. Consolidation isn't a way to reduce taxes, but to use those taxes to provide services more effectively and efficiently.

As to qualification of employees, they noted that Council should exercise greater responsibility with respect to approving appointments. The use of Assistant Management Improvement Officers had grown exponentially over the years and needed to be reined in.

Mr. Godbold especially cautioned against allowing agencies to hire their own legal counsels, urging a strong, centralized Office of General Counsel.

Mr. Delaney acknowledged that the practice of mayors including "lollipops" in the form of district bond funds under the direct control of council members in order to curry votes for bond issues has contributed to the problem of council members acting as the "mayors" of their districts with favors to dispense. Both speakers stated that if an administration is doing its job properly, there won't be many complaints that need to go to council members because citizens don't feel like they are getting an appropriate response from the executive branch.

Council members are within their rights to communicate constituent problems to the Mayor and the departments through proper channels, but have to be reminded that they shouldn't interfere in the administrative workings of the government. Jacksonville's General Counsel is an extremely unusual and extremely powerful position in any context, public or private, and there will always be natural tensions on the part of city council members, independent authorities and constitutional officers over the powers and role of a General Counsel who is ultimately hired and fired by the mayor.

Long-term stability and continuity in the Council Auditor's Office is an important factor in keeping the City on line and in good order.

The mix of district and at-large council members is valuable in combatting parochialism and ensuring broad representation around the community, with citizens having multiple council members with whom to communicate. Mr. Delaney urged that the city elections remain in the spring so that local issues and candidates aren't swamped by the tides of the presidential, Senatorial and gubernatorial elections in the fall election cycle. Both urged no change in the number or election timing of Council.

### **Mayoral Staff Panel**

**Richard Bowers, Kerri Stewart, Sam Mousa and Derek Igou**

Jacksonville is envied by other cities for its form of government, but the City is a very large and complex organization and its management is a very big undertaking. The occasional hiring from outside the government provides a useful injection of new perspectives. The reversion rights and the bumping system for civil servants is an unavoidable fact.

The mayor should be able to appoint whomever he/she feels will do the best job, but that the City Council has an obligation to carefully review those appointments and not be a rubber stamp to anyone the mayor proposes. Loss of institutional knowledge during administrative change-overs is problematic, but hard to overcome since each mayor naturally wants a full team of his/her own personal appointments. Some personnel should carry-forward across the transition for at least one or two quarters in order to provide continuity and to keep the wheels of government turning.

Centralization of services is very valuable in that a great deal of professional expertise can be assembled and brought to bear in central services functions. Some "super users" (Sheriff's Office, Fire and Rescue Department) may have very specialized needs that the central service operations have trouble recognizing or serving. The rigid centralization of all services may not work for everyone, and perhaps a hybrid system with some decentralization might be developed where necessary. Cost allocation among users and the total cost of providing a central service are two very different things. The concept is good, but it is hard to get everything to work correctly in practice.

If department heads and the Chief Administrative Officer aren't doing their jobs effectively, however, the problems can become much worse. An agency only does what the boss follows up on, so management ultimately drives service provision standards and citizen satisfaction. Commitment to service provision and follow-up by management are vital. When management establishes clear priorities, the line agencies know what the expectations are. There is a need for

an easy referral system for complaints and issues from council members to the mayor since many citizens are going to start with their councilperson anyway. A computerized tracking system that can pinpoint complaints that have not been resolved after a week, a month or a quarter can help management identify problem areas and find remedies.

Bond issue “lollipops” for district council members helped to erode the boundary between the executive and legislative branches, giving council members the power to do capital projects in their districts without regard to the needs of the rest of the city and without much administrative oversight. Mayoral administrations need to “hold the line” against attempted encroachments by the legislative branch, but noted that if the administration is doing its job properly, there likely won’t be too many occasions for problems to arise. There is a need for a strong CAO to follow up on the implementation of legislation adopted by the City Council.