

DRAFT MINUTES
Commission on Local Government
Public Hearing
City of Bristol – Smyth County
Voluntary Settlement Agreement
7:00 p.m., May 12, 2014
Holiday Inn Bristol
Conference Rooms D & E
3005 Linden Drive
Bristol, Virginia 24202

Members Present

John T. Stirrup, Jr., Chairman
Bruce C. Goodson, Vice-Chairman
Cole Hendrix
John G. Kines, Jr.
Victoria L. Hull

Members Absent

Staff Present

Zachary Robbins, Local Government Policy Manager
Edward Lanza, Senior Public Finance Analyst
J. David Conmy, Senior Policy Analyst

I. Call to Order

A. Welcome

Commission Chairman John T. Stirrup, Jr. called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on May 12, 2014 in Conference Rooms D and E of the Holiday Inn in Bristol, Virginia. Mr. Stirrup explained that the Commission is present to review a proposed voluntary settlement agreement between the City of Bristol and Washington County. He further explained that the proposed agreement provides for the waiver by the City and the County of their legal rights for a number of issues; for the sharing of certain revenues by the City and the County; for the waiver of annexation rights by the City for the Trammel Property for a period of one year; and for other matters.

B. Introduction of Commission Members and Staff

Next, Mr. Stirrup introduced the members of the Commission and provided biographical information on each member. He also introduced the Commission staff.

II. Commission's Review

Mr. Robbins explained that the Commission on Local Government is directed by law to review proposed annexations, petitions for partial county immunity, other local boundary change and transition issues, as well as negotiated agreements settling such matters prior to their presentation to the courts for ultimate disposition. He further stated that, upon receipt of notice of such proposed action or agreement, the Commission is directed to "hold hearings, make investigations, analyze local needs and make findings of facts and recommendations" regarding the issue to the affected local governments. With respect to a proposed agreement that is negotiated under the authority of Section 15.2-3400 of the *Code of Virginia* – such as the one proposed here – Mr. Robbins said that the Commission is required to report, in writing, its findings and recommendations as to whether the proposed settlement is in the best interest of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Robbins indicated that the public hearing is intended to afford the public an opportunity to comment on the proposed agreement. He also announced that the Commission has agreed to keep its record open for the receipt of additional citizen comment through May 30, 2014 and will close its record as of that date and that the Commission will endeavor to render its report to the affected local governments prior to the end of July 2014.

III. Receipt of Testimony

Of the approximately 37 persons who attended the public hearing, 13 citizens addressed the Commission during the public hearing.

Ms. Sarah Williams of Bristol stated that improved cooperation between the City and the County is essential to the local economy and requested that the Commission approve the agreement.

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Mr. Pat Callebs from the Washington County Industrial Development Authority stated that the City and the County need to move forward and that those who worked on the agreement exhibited great courage. He asked that the Commission approve the agreement.

Mr. Bill Gibson, a member of the Washington County Board of Supervisors, stated that local constituents want the City and the County to work together and settle their differences. He asked that the Commission affirm the agreement.

Ms. Ellen Leach of Bristol indicated that she is generally supportive of the agreement, but noted a concern related to increased traffic volume in the Exit 5 region.

Mr. Jim Clifton of Bristol stressed the need for economic development within both the City and the County based upon median household income data in the region. He asked that the Commission support the agreement.

Mr. John Sanslow, Vice-Chairman of the Washington County Industrial Development Authority, stated that local residents have been responding positively to the cooperation between the City and the County.

Mr. Jim Swartz, representing the Washington County Chamber of Commerce, indicated that joint efforts such as this voluntary settlement agreement are beneficial to the City and the County as well as the Commonwealth. Additional tax dollars from the revenue sharing agreement would be vital to improving the quality of education within the County. He asked that the Commission approve the agreement.

Ms. Catherine Brillhart, vice-mayor for the City of Bristol, stressed the importance of the cooperation between the City and the County.

Mr. J. Walter Buss, a visitor to the region, mentioned concerns with increased traffic due to The Falls development.

Ms. Nancy Marney of Bristol indicated that she had concerns with the details within the agreement. She did not recommend support of the voluntary settlement agreement.

Mr. Jim Bowie indicated that he has a vested interest in both the City and the County. He noted that the Trammel Property is essential to the County and the voluntary settlement

agreement provides the incentive for its development. He asked for the recommendation of the agreement to the special court.

Mr. Michael Pollard of Bristol believes that the legislation in Tennessee is a threat to the City and the County. The agreement is necessary in order to keep businesses in Virginia. He also noted that the addition of retail does not preclude the future recruitment of manufacturing businesses to the region.

Mr. Henry Snodgrass, Chairman of the Washington County Industrial Development Authority, stated that there is a need for further retail development within the region. He asked that the Commission recommend approval of the agreement.

IV. Closing Remarks

Mr. Stirrup expressed the Commission's appreciation to the speakers for the comments they provided.

V. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

John T. Stirrup, Jr.
Chairman

Zachary Robbins
Local Government Policy Manager