

Task Force on Efficiencies and Consolidations
Wednesday, January 25, 2010
Minutes

Approved – February 1, 2010

Present: Bradford Cook, Chair; Robert Blaisdell, Vice Chair; Sean Owen, Clerk; Tammy Simmons; Dan Pinard; Bill Skouteris; Hector Velez

Bradford Cook called the meeting to order at 5:30pm and called the roll.

Member Simmons made a motion to adopt the minutes and it was seconded by Member Skouteris. The motion was adopted unanimously.

Chairman Cook handed out several reports produced by past Mayors relative to efficiencies and consolidations and called on Rich Girard, 218 Reed Street, to present.

The following remarks were made by Mr. Richard Girard:

Several administrations have attempted to consolidate the Parks and Recreation Department – unsuccessfully for the most part due to political reasons.

Mayor Wieczorek attempted to consolidate OYS and Senior/Elderly Services under the Health Department; from an administrative point of view this was sensible.

Personality conflicts are usually an issue when it comes to consolidations.

Other consolidations that were made under Wieczorek were: Assessors Office with the Buildings Department. There appears to be a disconnect between the two offices who should have a close working relationship with one another.

Another proposed consolidation is Economic Development with the Building and Planning Department. To date the Building and Planning Department has been combined – the Manchester Economic Development Office (MEDO) continues to stand on its own.

The city used to have a City Coordinator that would facilitate development for businesses throughout the city departments. At some point, the position was eliminated. Who is the go to person in Manchester?

Wieczorek created the Recreation Enterprise; for example The Derryfield Country Club. The reason at the time was to take liabilities off the books.

Another proposal that did not go through was a public safety dispatch.

Wieczorek tried to centralize purchasing; this initiative was particularly successful when it came to motor pools.

The street sweeping contract was put out to bid. The city won the contract and the service was better and more efficiently. The competitive bidding process proved to offer better services to the taxpayer.

Mr. Girard would suggest consolidating Parks and Recreation with Highway and the Economic Development Office with the Building Department.

The following remarks were made by former Mayor Robert Baines:

A recycling program has the potential to save the city millions of dollars. Former Highway Director Frank Thomas submitted several proposals. We need to incentivize residents for recycling in order to see real savings.

There's not gridlock between departments – in fact they work well with one another.

There were several restructuring plans submitted but this proves difficult in bureaucracy - one consolidation would be to merge Senior Service and OYS with the Health Department. Welfare was also part of this conversation but because the Welfare Commissioner is elected that added a different dynamic.

There was also a proposal to merge Planning and MEDO; this also had the support of Department Heads but never passed.

During his tenure Mayor Baines asked the question, how could we look at services in the city and share? This was very contentious. Departments that were looked at were:

- Legal Services: this was complex because of the specialized services the city offers.
- Payroll
- Should the City and the School District share services?

Member Owen inquired about the prospect of biennial budgeting. Mayor Baines explained that this is a good idea however it's difficult because our revenues are hard to predict. As a matter of practice the budget process is not efficient.

Mayor Baines also noted that the Mayors Office does not have adequate staffing for the functions required of it.

Mayor Baines concluded his remarks.

Member Simmons noted that Economic Times are on the side of the committee.

Member Velez stated that he wanted to know where the synergies existed.

Member Owen noted that the city needs to be more creative.

Chairman Cook noted that Department Heads may be asked to participate in the Task Force deliberations. Requests will be made through Ms. Piatt in the Mayor's Office.

Chairman Cook envisions a report with several sections: 1) Possible consolidations, 2) What services are we offering that we no longer need to and 3) What savings has the committee identified.

Member Pinard inquired as to where the various departments were located and was it sensible. Specifically, are all departments in city owned buildings?

Member Skouteris inquired about the possibility of professional grant writers to maximize opportunity.

Member Owen stated that he sees challenges with the Board of Mayor and Aldermen.

Chairman Cook adjourned the meeting at 7:31pm.