

## **Three Rivers Community Roundtable Communication, Cooperation, Collaboration, Consolidation (4C) Task Force**

Consolidation is a word with history and emotion in this community. Around it swirls the persistent question of whether our city governments should consolidate to create one larger city rather than the current four smaller entities. Discussions regarding consolidation are often based upon opinions and observations rather than facts – due in large part to the lack of an actual study on the impact of local consolidation.

One of the objectives of this Task Force was to disarm the word consolidation and begin a thoughtful, educated dialog around the topic of consolidation. And then, let an informed community make appropriate decisions.

As a Task Force, we have come to appreciate that even in our discussions we raised many more questions than answers. In looking at similar efforts – some which undertook consolidation and others which made the determination not to do so -- we have come to appreciate the uniqueness of our community with its complexity of governments and community personalities.

As a Task Force we have also come to appreciate ongoing efforts to work more efficiently as a region – many of which the community at large is unaware. There are numerous examples of successful and ongoing efforts of communication, cooperation, collaboration and even consolidation, all undertaken to improve services, increase programs and/or be more fiscally responsible. It is important to acknowledge these when successful and encourage additional efforts when appropriate.

We are encouraged that so many within the community are willing to seriously look at the issues surrounding consolidation and capture opportunities which are in the best interests of the entire community rather than protect self-interests.

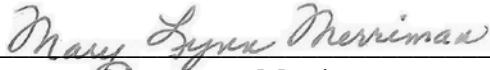
The Tri-Cities is a vibrant region with expanding potential for both economic development and quality of life for our citizens. It is important to create a climate in which we can move forward strategically to enhance our strengths and overcome our challenges together as a community what every shape that takes.

Through this report, we hope to provide a framework to create the next step toward answering the pervasive question: Should we consolidate?

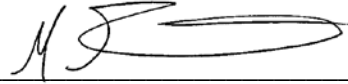
### **Task Force Members:**

Karen Blasdel, Gary Crutchfield, Calvin Dudney, Rufus Friday, Evangelina Galvan-Holt, Bob Gear, Bob Hammond, Ed Revell, Michelle Mann, Mary Lynn Merriman (co-chair), Matt Riesenweber (co-chair), Jim Toomey, Matt Watkins

## 4C Committee Members



Mary Lynn Merriman  
MLM Communications



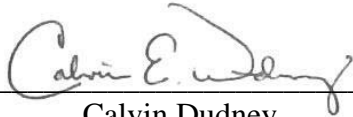
Matt Riesenweber  
Senior Financial Advisor  
Waddell & Reed



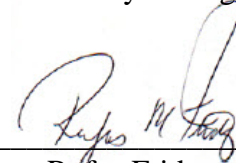
Karen Blasdel  
Manager, Community & Regional Outreach  
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Gary Crutchfield  
Pasco City Manager



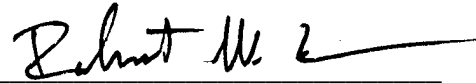
Calvin Dudney  
Manager of Community Programs  
Fluor Hanford



Rufus Friday  
President & Publisher  
Tri-City Herald



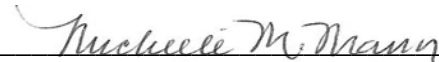
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Director of Community Partnerships  
University of Washington



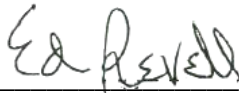
Bob Gear  
Fire Chief  
Benton County Fire District #1



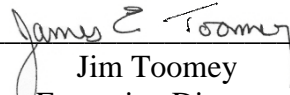
Bob Hammond  
Kennewick City Manager



Michelle Mann  
Executive Director  
Benton-Franklin Workforce Dev. Council



Ed Revell  
Mayor Pro Tem  
City of Richland



Jim Toomey  
Executive Director  
Port of Pasco



Matt Watkins  
Council member, City of Pasco  
Software Engineer, Lockheed Martin

# **Three Rivers Community Roundtable**

## **Communication, Cooperation, Collaboration, Consolidation**

### **(4C) Task Force**

#### ***Background:***

On March 8, 2007, a community summit was hosted by the Three Rivers Community Roundtable in order to explore big ideas for the future of the greater Tri-Cities region. A recurring theme among the breakout sessions was the notion of “consolidation.” In discussions among Roundtable members subsequent to the March 8 event, it was evident that the term “consolidation” had many meanings, could take many forms, and was largely undefined in terms of benefits or detriments. However, the Roundtable also recognized that the topic was of sufficient interest that it deserved to be explored in a disciplined manner.

In addition, in February 2007, the Tri-City Herald along with the Benton Franklin Dispute Resolution Center, held a two-day “Community Conversation” forum addressing the topic of consolidation of cities. It was attended by a wide spectrum of the community which determined that a broader, more in-depth look at the issue was appropriate.

Following these events, a special task force was chartered by the Roundtable to address the matter in a holistic way.

The 4Cs Task Force began meeting monthly in October 2007.

#### ***Mission:***

The purpose of the Communication, Cooperation, Collaboration, and Consolidation (4C) Task Force is to suggest ways to improve the various ways government, private business and non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) interconnect formally and informally to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes; relate those to the greater Tri-Cities region; and suggest actions to retain, amplify, add or discontinue any.

#### ***Tasks:***

- Catalog existing “4Cs” and the opportunities and issues they address.
- Map the opportunities and issues not currently addressed to the existing “4Cs” and identify gaps.
- Suggest alternatives for the gaps, the basis for the suggestion(s), recommend a framework for resolving the gap(s).

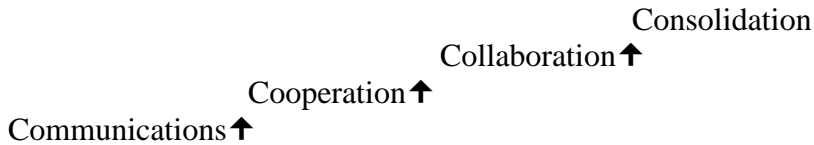
#### ***4Cs Defined:***

The work of the Task Force was based upon the following definitions:

- Communication -- Periodic regular discussions that include consistent and constructive dialogue between organizations. Communication is issue driven.
- Cooperation -- Doing things together, but separately. Organizations agree to work side by side, but operate separately.
- Collaboration -- Two organizations acting as one, having a joint strategy to meet a common goal. Doing things together...together; creating a partnership while continuing to operate separately.

- Consolidation -- Merging of two or more organizations, created by dissolution of existing ones and creation of a single new one.

These are, in essence, a continuum. It is assumed if organizations are deemed to be at the cooperation level, they are already communicating in order to achieve the next level and so forth up the continuum.



One level is not necessarily superior to another; in some situations cooperation is sufficient, in others, consolidation may be the ultimate goal.

Working together at any of the four levels is designed to:

- \*capture economies of scale,
- \*create greater efficiency and enhanced services/programs,
- \*achieve cost savings,
- \*and generate a unified voice and vision so that accomplishments can be achieved together that would be impossible individually.

**Task #1:** *Catalog existing “4Cs” and the opportunities and issues they address.*

A document (4C Mapping, attachment 1) was created to map and evaluate activities, programs and services which impact the Tri-Cities area. Each was assigned a “C” based upon the knowledge of Task Force members. The chart is a living document, as there continues to be movement in each direction. It provides a broad overview, and is not intended to be a comprehensive listing of all such activities within the community.

The 4C Mapping document is organized by identifying which of the 4Cs each organization/activity is involved in. It was determined that if there was collaboration or consolidation, additional information was important to provide. In those areas, we noted the parties involved.

By mapping and cataloging these efforts within the community, the Task Force determined there is a significant amount of “C” (at some of level) taking place within the community. These efforts range from the City Managers meeting monthly (communication) to the Benton County Fire Services collaboration efforts (outlined in attachment 4) to the Tri-Cities Regional Chamber which combined Richland and Kennewick Chambers (consolidation).

The mapping identified many more areas of cooperation/collaboration than commonly recognized within the community.

It was also determined that in some situations the best business model is not consolidation, but another solution. For example, a number of years ago the area’s three hospitals created a Shared Services organization which included kidney and laboratory services. Shared Services was dissolved in January 2008, when the last of the services was sold to a private business after it was determined this was a better business model. They continue to jointly own the Tri-Cities Cancer Center which offers radiation services to the community.

**Task #2:** *Map the opportunities and issues not currently addressed to the existing “4Cs” and identify gaps.*

The mapping process also helped to pinpoint areas within the community where additional opportunities of working together exist. These range from a general perception that the arts community would benefit from improved communication/cooperation/collaboration to potential opportunities in the area of single-service organizations such as utilities.

Three areas were specifically identified for additional study. They are:

- **Government.** An initial concept paper (attachment 3) was created which identifies questions related to a consolidation of the cities. As noted, it is not intended to be a complete list, but rather a starting point.
- **Health Care.** This community is quickly becoming a regional health care center. To continue to facilitate this growth, health care is an area which may benefit from additional study for potential cooperative efforts to help with seamless health care for our citizens, enhanced services and improved efficiency. We do not have a concept paper on this specific area because of the private component of the industry and the inability to impact results through this Task Force.
- **Regional Facilities Planning.** As the community grows, so does the need for large, often capital-intensive projects which serve the entire community. Separate, and sometimes competing, communities may potentially hold back such projects. A community-wide committee is currently studying these issues. An initial concept paper (attachment 4) addresses many of the issues associated with regional planning.

Through discussion and research, it was determined that the efforts of this Task Force would be best served by primarily focusing on government. It also appeared from earlier discussions that the community at large was primarily concerned with the question of the consolidation of the cities. However, as a part of the Task Force process, areas of communication, cooperation, collaboration and consolidation within private industry and NGOs were explored, and specific segments were identified which would benefit from additional work and study.

As we focused in on the area of government, it became clear that in addressing the opportunities and issues surrounding the discussion of consolidation, three questions should be considered:

- Does this effort reduce cost and/or increase services?
- Does it provide additional clout for the region?
- Does it help create a unified vision/accomplish larger projects for the region that could not be accomplished independently?

**Task #3:** *Suggest alternatives for the gaps, the basis for the suggestion(s), recommend a framework for resolving the gap(s).*

Would we be better off as a consolidated community? Would consolidation make life better for the citizens of the community? Can the greater good outweigh the difficulties? Clearly these questions continue to reverberate across the community.

It appears the community-at-large believes that consolidation will save taxpayers money through a reduction of duplication of services. It is important to understand that a larger city would not necessarily be more cost effective to operate and manage. For example, pay scales may vary within the independent communities, whereupon a consolidated community would have to address these inconsistencies.

Additional observations of the Task Force include:

- Community discussion often moves immediately to “consolidation” as the only alternative to the present. Task Force members have come to understand that it is important to look at changes at the functional level and not necessarily focus on form of government.
- The Task Force recognized the importance of capturing opportunities for increased communications, cooperation, collaboration and consolidation rather than protecting self-interests.
- It is also important to understand what the goal really is as outlined in the three questions in the section above. A strong will at various levels will be needed to accomplish additional movement forward – whether that is improved communication, increased cooperation, additional collaboration or complete consolidation – recognizing that it may be difficult and sometimes even painful.

As a Task Force, we believe that the Tri-Cities region is strong with the continuing potential for economic development, new jobs, new tax dollars and an improved quality of life. As a community it is important that we move cooperatively and strategically to ensure continued economic vitality in a highly competitive market.

It may be important to start deliberately and work at the services level, examining what areas can be more easily moved into some level of the “4Cs” while the bigger issues of actual consolidation are being studied. It is important to validate opportunities to move common issues through the 4 C’s continuum. The challenge of this approach may be creating the momentum necessary to drive the process.

**Recommendation:** Because of the complexity of the issues as well as the number of governments involved (potentially four cities and two counties), it is beyond the scope of this Task Force to undertake the next necessary step to thoroughly study the issue of the consolidation. In addition, it is difficult for representatives of the community to study the issues without the perception of bias.

**It is our recommendation that an independent study be commissioned to address the questions, challenges and opportunities identified throughout this report.**

***Attachments:***

**1. 4Cs Mapping**

An overview of organizations and activities identified as participating in one of the 4C's.

**2. Extended Cities Mapping**

**3. City Consolidation Concept Paper**

**4. Regional Facilities Concept Paper**

**5. Fire Collaboration Effort**

**6. Task Force Process Overview and Additional Observations**

**7. Additional Unanswered Questions Requiring Additional Study**

**8. Resources\***

- *Note: Tri-City Herald Community Conversations is located in Resources.*

Primary Category	Organization/Activity	4C's Mapping					Collaboration/Consolidation Effort	Potential Opportunity
		Communication	Cooperation	Collaboration	Consolidation			
Arts	Arts							x
Economic Development	Tri-City Chamber of Commerce				x		Richland, Kennewick Chambers	x
Economic Development	Work Source				X		Multiple organizations providing employment and training services utilizing state and federal funds and managed by a non-profit organization of business representatives.	
Economic Development	Tri-City Visitor and Convention Bureau			x			Cities, Counties, Business, State	
Economic Development	TRIDEC			x			Cities, businesses, Ports, membership driven	
Economic Development	Alliance of Chambers			x			Pasco, TC, Hispanic, West Richland	
Economic Development	Innovation Partnership Zone/Research District			x			Ports, Business, Counties, Cities	
Economic Development	Port of Benton		x					
Economic Development	Port of Kennewick		x					
Economic Development	Port of Pasco		x					
Economic Development	Pasco Chamber of Commerce		x					
Economic Development	Hispanic Chamber of Commerce		x					
Economic Development	West Richland Chamber of Commerce		x					
Education	Mid-Columbia Library District				x		Parts of Benton, Franklin, parts of Adams Counties	x
Education	ESD 123			x			Regional School Districts, State supported. Provides consolidated resources to all regional school districts.	
Education	Bridges (CBC and WSU-TC)			x			Shared Course Curriculum for Student Transfer	
Education	WSU Tri-Cities			x			WSU Pullman Campus, WSU Extension Facility and Legislators	
Education	STEM High School			x			Partnership of business and school districts to increase Science, Technology, Engineering & Math. School Superintendents, CBC, WSU-TC, Community, Battelle	
Education	Columbia Basin College			x			College, TRIDEC, private community members, WSU extension service, WSU Pullman, local legislators, State Director of Ag	

Education	TriTech Skills Center			x		Provides vocational educational for students from Burbank, Kennewick,, Pasco, Richland, Finley, North Franklin, Ki-Be School Districts (Prosser on occasion).	
Education	Tri-City Area Superintendents Council			X		Superintendents from all area school districts to discuss and coordinate academia and vocational issues	
Education	Tri-City Area Educational Cooperative			x		Staffed by Vocational Directors from all area school districts to plan district & Tri-Tech programs	
Education	Richland Library		x			Exclusively part of City of Richland	x
Education	Tri-City Educational Advisory Council		x			School Superintendents and area business representatives--Sponsored by TRIDEC	
Education	Pasco School District		x			Local School Board and Parents	
Education	Kennewick School District		x			Local School Board and Parents	
Education	Richland School District		x			Local School Board and Parents	
Education	Finley School District		x			Local School Board and Parents	
Education	Ki-Be School District		x			Local School Board and Parents	
Education	Prosser School District		x			Local School Board and Parents	
Government	Benton County Fire Master Cooperative Agreement			x		Kennewick Fire Department, Richland Fire Department, Benton County Fire District 1, Benton County Fire District 2 and Benton County Fire District 4	
Government	Benton County Emergency Services			x		Benton County Cities	
Government	Franklin County Emergency Services			x		Franklin County Cities	
Government	Tri-Cities Legislative Council			x		Chambers, TRIDEC, TCVCB	
Government	Joint Training Facility			x		City of Kennewick and Benton County Fire District 1	
Government	Tri County Incident Management Team			x		Kennewick Fire Department, Richland Fire Department, Hanford Fire department, Benton County Fire Districts, 1,2 3, 4, and 6, Franklin County Fire District 3, Walla Walla Fire Department, Walla Walla Fire District 4, 5 and College Place Fire Department, US Fish & Wildlife Service	

Government	Tri-Cities Metro Drug Task Force			x		Benton County Sheriff; Benton County Prosecutor; Franklin County Sheriff; Franklin County Prosecutor; Pasco Police Department (contractor); Richland Police Department; Washington State Patrol; Kennewick Police Department	
Government	Pasco Airport Police Department			x		Port of Pasco, Franklin County	
Government	Hanford Communities			x		various cities, counties, other	
Government	Regional Facilities			x		Cities of Kennewick, Pasco, and Richland	x
Government	Pasco Airport Fire Department			x		Port of Pasco, City of Pasco	
Government	Hazmat Team			x		Kennewick Fire Department, Richland Fire Department, Yakima Fire Department, Pasco Fire Department, Benton County Fire District 1, 2 and 4, Franklin County Fire District 3 and Walla Walla County Fire District 5	
Government	BiPin			x		Cities of Kennewick, West Richland & Richland, Benton County (does not include Pasco or Franklin County)	
Government	City of Pasco			x		See attachment	
Government	City or Kennewick			x		See attachment	
Government	City of Richland			x		See attachment	
Government	City of West Richland			x		See attachment	
Government	Franklin County			x			
Government	Benton County			x			
Government	Animal Control			x		Pasco, Kennewick, Richland	
Government	Benton County Regional SWAT Team			x		Benton, Kennewick, Richland	x
Government	Franklin County SWAT			x		Pasco, Franklin	
Government	Quad City Water Rights		x			Cities of Kennewick, Pasco, Richland, and West Richland	
Government	Police Chiefs and Sheriffs		x			various	

Government	Interagency Single Engine Air Tanker Program					US Fish & Wildlife Service, Benton County Fire District 1, 2, 3, 4, & 6, Hanford Fire Department, Kennewick Fire Department, Richland Fire Department, Walla Walla County Fire District 5 & 6 and Port of Benton	
Government	CREATE					City of Pasco, Port of Pasco, Franklin PUD, Pasco School District	
Government	Benton Franklin Council of Governments	x					
Government	City Managers Monthly Meeting	x				Cities of Kennewick, Pasco, and Richland	
Government	Franklin County Emergency Management	x					
Government	Mayor's Meeting	x					
Government	Other Governmental					Irrigation, Mosquito, Fire, Library, Power, Cemetery, Water/Sewer, Etc.	
Health	Benton Franklin Health District				x	Benton and Franklin Counties.	
Health	Tri-City Cancer Center				x	KMC, KGH, Lourdes	
Health	Community Healthcare Alliance				x	KMC, KGH, Lourdes, Group Health, Public Health District	
Health	Benton Franklin Access to Care				x	Kadlec, Community Health Center La Clinica, Grace Clinic, Lourdes Health Network, Kennewick General Hospital, Benton-Franklin Public, Health District, Group Health Cooperative,, Benton Franklin Community Health, Alliance and Washington State Department of Social and Health Services.	
Health	Shared Trauma System				x	Kennewick General/Lourdes & Kadlec	x
Health	Bicounty Crisis Response Unit					Benton/Franklin County Commissions	x
Health	Hospital CEO meetings	x				KMC, KGH, Lourdes	
Health	Kadlec	x					X
Health	Lourdes	x					x
Health	KGH	x					x
Health	La Clinica	x					x
Health	Mirimar	x					
Health	S.E. Washington Hospitals Council	x					

NGO	United Way Community Solutions		x			Participating agencies	x
NGO	Community Roundtable	x				Community Leaders	
Recreation	Benton-Franklin County Fair			x		Benton and Franklin Counties.	
Recreation	Open Space Coalition		x			Organizations including Tapteal, Badger Mountain,	x
Safety	Columbia Basin Dive Rescue			x		multiple agencies, Benton, Franklin & WW Counties	
Safety	Safe Kids Coalition			x		multiple agencies in Benton, Franklin Counties	
Social Service	211			X			
Social Services	Franklin County Housing Authority		x				x
Social Services	Richland Housing Authority		x				x
Social Services	Kennewick Housing Authority		x				x
	*Because of the work on Community Solutions, we have intentionally not included more in the Social Services.						
Tourism	Three Rivers Convention Center			x		City of Kennewick, Pasco	
Tourism	Tri-Cities Rivershore Enhancement Council		x				x
Tourism	Reach		x			Kennewick, Pasco, Richland PFDs	
Transportation	Ben Franklin Transit			x		Counties, Cities	
Utility services	Tree Trimming Program management			x		Benton/Franklin/Richland	
Utility services	Work/Public Safety Program			x		Benton/Franklin/Richland	
Utility services	Power Management Services			x		Benton/Franklin	
Utility services	Energy NW(Generation Projects)			x		Benton/Franklin/Richland	
Utility services	Bulk Bill Printing and Mailing (Discontinued in '04)			x		Benton/Franklin	
Utility services	Customer Communication		x				
Utility services	Utility Industry Coalitions		x				
Utility services	Procurement Specifications Development		x				

**EXTENDED CITIES MAPPING**

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**Public Works Department**

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Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Monthly Public Works Director meeting</li> </ul>
Cooperative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Storm Water Grant Project – Four City Outreach Project</li> <li>▪ Ten-Cities Agreement on Storm Water (periodic meetings of all agencies and on-going dialog on any issues)</li> <li>▪ Geographical Information System peer groups</li> <li>▪ Engineering Services (value engineering, review of designs, common design specifications)</li> </ul>
Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Quad-Cities Water Right Cooperation Agreement</li> <li>▪ BFCOG Committees (transportation)</li> <li>▪ Public Education for water conservation and stormwater</li> <li>▪ Joint Road Projects (Kennewick &amp; Richland)</li> <li>▪ Emergency Water Interties (Kennewick &amp; Richland)</li> </ul>
Consolidation	

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**Administrative & Community Services Department**

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Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Finance Officers Peer Meetings</li> <li>▪ Customer Service Employees Peer Meetings</li> <li>▪ Records Management (Kennewick/Richland)</li> </ul>
Cooperative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Highway Cleanup</li> <li>▪ Earth Month</li> <li>▪ Senior Picnic</li> <li>▪ Recreation Programs</li> <li>▪ First Night Tri-Cities</li> <li>▪ Heritage Trail – Tri-City Rivershore Enhancement Council (TREC)</li> <li>▪ Sports Council</li> <li>▪ Cooperative Purchasing (Kennewick/Richland)</li> <li>▪ Ambulance Billing (Kennewick/Richland)</li> <li>▪ Human Resources Hiring Panels</li> </ul>
Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Animal Control</li> </ul>
Consolidation	

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## **Police Department**

Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Weekly Chiefs and Sheriffs' Meetings</li> <li>▪ Gang Intelligence Communication (electronic sharing and monthly meetings)</li> <li>▪ Regional Police Captain's Meeting</li> <li>▪ Monthly Investigator Meetings</li> <li>▪ Benton Law and Justice Council</li> <li>▪ Franklin Law &amp; Justice Council</li> <li>▪ Benton-Franklin Safety Task Force</li> <li>▪ Attorneys meet to consult on prosecution and charging issues</li> </ul>
Cooperative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ STOP Grant Committee</li> <li>▪ Justice Assistance Grant Committee</li> <li>▪ Multi-Jurisdictional Crime Investigations</li> <li>▪ Richland Bomb Squad</li> <li>▪ DOC Work Release Screening committee</li> <li>▪ Major Crimes Response Team</li> <li>▪ Crime Stoppers</li> <li>▪ Swat</li> <li>▪ Tri-Cities Regional Law Enforcement Training Consortium</li> <li>▪ Sex Offenders Screening and Tracking</li> <li>▪ CPS Cases</li> <li>▪ Community Resistant Crime Living Programs (Kennewick/Richland)</li> </ul>
Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bi-PIN</li> <li>▪ I/LEADS Records Management System</li> <li>▪ I/LEADS Users Committee</li> <li>▪ METRO Drug Task Force</li> <li>▪ Computer Crimes</li> <li>▪ Kids Haven</li> </ul>
Consolidation	

## **Community & Economic Development Department**

Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ED Managers Meeting (bi-monthly) West Richland, Kennewick, Richland, Pasco</li> </ul>
Cooperative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ TRIDEC Committees (economic development)</li> <li>▪ TRIDEC Recruitment</li> <li>▪ HOME Consortium</li> <li>▪ Joint Kennewick / Richland Council Committee</li> </ul>
Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Master Planning for West End of Columbia Park (Kennewick/Richland)</li> <li>▪ Young Professionals of the Tri-Cities</li> <li>▪ Tri-Cities Research District</li> <li>▪ Business Development and Entrepreneurial Web Portal (Proposed)</li> </ul>

Consolidation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Economic Gardening (Proposed)</li> <li>▪ Regional Open space Planning</li> <li>▪ Kennewick/Richland Prospector – combined site based on Kennewick Prospector (Proposed)</li> <li>▪ Retail recruitment/trade show participation – West Richland/Richland/Kennewick (Proposed)</li> </ul>
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**Fire Department**

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Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Monthly Benton Chiefs Meetings</li> <li>▪ Quarterly Tri-Counties Chiefs</li> <li>▪ Monthly Joint Labor/Management Meeting (4 Fire Agencies)</li> <li>▪ Quarterly Public/Private Ambulance Services meeting</li> </ul>
Cooperative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Monthly Emergency Medical Services and Trauma Council</li> <li>▪ BCES Strategic Advisory Team (Law and Fire Chiefs)</li> <li>▪ Single Engine Air Tanker program (9 fire agencies: federal and local)</li> <li>▪ Columbia Basin Dive Rescue Participant (RPD included)</li> <li>▪ Ambulance Billing Services</li> <li>▪ Pre-determined Strike Teams/Task Force for wildland fire response (3 counties)</li> <li>▪ Tri-County Mutual Aid Agreement</li> <li>▪ Permissive Use Agreement for Apparatus and Equipment (in development)</li> <li>▪ Regional Foam Cache (3 Counties)</li> <li>▪ Southeast Washington Fire Defense Coordination (7 Counties)</li> <li>▪ Benton County Community Wildfire Protection Plan</li> <li>▪ BCES/RFD Shared Fiber Network for the Fire Administration Center</li> <li>▪ Regional Fire Investigation Agreement and Team</li> <li>▪ Joint Apparatus and Equipment Specifications</li> <li>▪ Standardized CAD Resource Deployment System</li> <li>▪ BCSO Patrol Boat and Hazmat/Fire/EMS Interlocal Agreement and Operating Plan</li> </ul>
Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Joint Fire Master Collaborative Agreement</li> <li>▪ Joint Fire Administration Center: Admin, Prevention, EMS, and Training</li> <li>▪ Joint specifications and purchasing of Uniforms</li> <li>▪ Joint specifications and purchasing of Personal Protective Equipment</li> <li>▪ Joint Breathing Apparatus Purchasing and Maintenance Program</li> <li>▪ Joint Records Management System</li> <li>▪ Joint EMS Training and Certification System</li> <li>▪ Fire Station Location Study (5 Agencies and the International Association of Fire Fighters)</li> <li>▪ Tri-County Hazardous Materials Team</li> </ul>

Consolidation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Joint Training Officers Consortium</li> <li>▪ VHF Radio System Management</li> <li>▪ Fire Coordinator/ Expanded Resource Ordering Coordinator</li> <li>▪ Life Safety House Program</li> <li>▪ Type 3 Incident Management Team</li> <li>▪ Shared administrative duties for Support Staff and Chief Officers</li> <li>▪ Coordinated Incident Cost Recovery Service</li> <li>▪ Regional Master IFSAC Test Bank Database (8 Counties)</li> <li>▪ Richland Fire Department/Kennewick Fire Department Medical Supplies Consortia</li> <li>▪ Medical Program Director and Support Staff</li> <li>▪ Joint Collapse Search and Rescue program</li> <li>▪ CAD Interface with RMS (5 agencies designed and funded)</li> <li>▪ Master Automatic Aid Agreement</li> <li>▪ HAMMER Training Agreement</li> </ul>
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**Executive**

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Communication	▪ City Manager Monthly Meetings
Cooperative	▪ Regional Performance Measures Consortium
Collaborative	▪ Hanford Communities
Consolidation	

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09.22.08 tlz

# **Concept Paper**

## **City Consolidation**

### **For: Community Round Table – 4C’s Committee**

#### **I. Background:**

For over two decades and possibly more, the idea of consolidating the cities in the Tri-Cities region into a major city with one governing body has been an undercurrent of discussion. All efforts to move it to the mainstream of community awareness and action have failed, in this author’s opinion primarily because of the strong identity and pride that each jurisdiction carries. The 4C’s committee has been formed as part of the Community Roundtable and is tasked, along with other areas of regionalism, to address how cities might strengthen existing partnerships for the common good of the greater regional community. Consolidating the cities is of course the ultimate extreme of this intellectual concept; however there are many assumptions that are necessary to establish in order to perform even a cursory assessment of the pros and cons of city consolidation.

#### **II. Purpose:**

This paper is intended to identify some basic framework around which the idea of full city consolidation might be evaluated. For example, it might be helpful to know what questions to ask of the present City governing bodies and the area’s citizenry as a beginning point of meaningful discussion regarding consolidation. This is not meant to provide any comprehensive opinions regarding the merits of consolidation. It does not reflect any official position of any of the cities involved.

#### **III. Approach:**

Under each categorical area are listed specific questions to be answered in order to establish some base assumptions. These questions are not intended to be the complete list but rather a starting point. This section is followed by a two perspectives from city CEOs.

#### **IV. Categorical Areas and Questions:**

##### **A. Purpose / Policy**

- Do you expect taxes and fees for city services to decrease in the consolidated city?
- Do you expect to accomplish more with existing taxes and fees in the consolidated city?
- Do you expect to leverage more benefit throughout the state, northwest or nationally by being a larger city?
- What benefits do you expect from living in a larger city?

- Are you willing to pay more in order to live in a larger city?
- What services are desired from the consolidated city?
- What levels of services are desired from the consolidated city; e.g., highest or lowest of the forming cities?
- Certain services are unique to each city, should these services be expanded to serve the consolidated city or eliminated?
- Do you want to expand or decrease the regulatory role of the consolidated city?
- What will be the process for bringing forward a consolidation vote? If one or two cities vote against will the remaining cities still be consolidated?

## **B. Governance**

- What level of identity of the forming cities do you wish to maintain through design of the governing body for the consolidated city?
- Do you want to form a strong mayor type or city manager / city council form of government?
- Do you want Council members elected by wards? How large?
- What role do you want from Boards and Commissions? What geographical representation and diversity do you want to establish for participation on those Boards and Commissions?
- Certain Boards and Commissions are unique to each city, should these Boards and Committees be expanded to serve the consolidated city or eliminated?
- What roles are expected from the existing elected officials of the forming cities during transition to the consolidated city with a newly elected Council?
- Do you want the governing body for the consolidated city to act on quasi-judicial issues such as land use decisions or do you want a separate Hearings Examiner?

## **C. Operational / Budgetary**

- How long do you think would be reasonable in order to replace the comprehensive plans (and all sub level plans) for each of the forming cities with a new comprehensive plan for the consolidated city?
- Would policies from each of the comprehensive plans (and all sub level plans) of the forming cities be followed until such time as a comprehensive plan for the consolidated city is adopted?
- Do you expect the consolidated city to incur the debt service of each of the forming cities?
- Do you expect the budgetary commitments made by the forming cities to be transferred to the consolidated city?
- What level of bond rating do you expect for the consolidated city?
- Do you expect the capital improvement plans of the forming cities to be merged? If so, how will priorities be set; e.g., decisions of which grants to apply for, concurrency provisions of GMA, etc.
- Each city's tax structure/levy rate is based on differing municipal services; i.e. Richland's rate includes a city-owned library, West Richland's rate does not include fire services, how will tax rates be equalized across a consolidated city?

- What development standards are expected including impact fee / infrastructure mitigation fee determination?
- Will the consolidated city be responsible for payment of claims / lawsuits stemming from previous actions / decisions of each of the forming cities?
- Will contract commitments of each of the forming cities be transferred to the consolidated city?

#### **D. Staffing**

- Do you expect the employees from the forming cities to continue employment with the consolidated city?
- Will employees maintain existing wage levels or change to the highest or lowest of the forming cities?
- What will the role of the unions be in the consolidated city? How will existing union contracts be combined?

### **V. One CEO Perspective**

Realizing that the questions above are only a few of those that would have to be answered in order to implement successful consolidation, it would seem an almost impossible task to complete. Possibly the most complicated and most important requirement would be to determine what role the larger community would want from its consolidated city. This would include a need for citizens to clearly understand options for varying levels of service with associated service level costs.

While private industry certainly provides many examples to help understand the logistics of successful consolidations, there are two primary differences that make public entity consolidation much more complicated. Cities provide many independent services to its citizens who have a wide range of opinions regarding the value of each of those services. In addition, if you accept that Council members are acting as an extension of their citizen constituents, then the ultimate owners of the city businesses (taxpayers) are also its customers. Consolidations in private industry would probably not be as common place or successful if its customers were responsible for determining the clear set of objectives and parameters for that consolidation?

Having noted the above, I for one still believe that consolidation of the Tri Cities is imminent. I believe that it will not take place suddenly but will slowly transition through a series of successful collaborations and functional consolidations, first in Benton County and then expanding across the river. The primary driver will be citizen's unwillingness to pass any new taxes or accept increased fees for service until substantive drops in levels of services occur. Then the community discussion will take place about what is desired from its cities at which time the merits of having one larger city will prevail.

### **VI. A Second CEO Perspective:**

My observation is that there is much more local government cooperation and collaboration going on than the public, and some governance, bodies realize. However, out of necessity, much of it

has occurred from the bottom up (and that is good because there is much less resistance to the emerging changes). Many community leaders now think more “regionally”.

One dynamic that has changed dramatically since the public voted on consolidation in the mid 80’s is local demographics have changed significantly. Many people who voted on the issue 20 years ago are no longer here. Each city has seen an extended period of economic growth and expansion. The population of the Tri Cities has increased by almost 70% since the mid-80’s. Additionally, in the last few years transportation and “access” have improved considerably throughout the Tri Cities resulting in a blur or less concern over “boundaries”. In the last 3 to 5 years there appears to be a fundamental shift in identity and pride to a broader community over a jurisdiction.

Other dynamics that will drive future change/consolidation are:

- Recent state 1% property tax cap (Less revenue thus need for more efficiency)
- Current failure of our national financial system - However, it is too soon to determine how this issue will play out (Borrowing capacity, interest rates etc.)
- Higher public interest in regional facilities

More pressure on the Tri Cities to become regional center for SE Washington.

## **VII. Another CEO Perspective - Myths of Tri-Cities Consolidation**

### **“It will save taxpayer dollars by eliminating waste and duplication”**

On the surface, of course, this presumption is compelling, especially when one looks at three city halls, three city managers, three police chiefs, etc. There can be little doubt that some of the triplicate management positions could, indeed, be eliminated over time. But many of those positions would more likely be converted to senior managers (such as a precinct captain in each of the three neighborhoods of the consolidated city, as none of the existing “neighborhoods” will likely be willing to forfeit a local police station presence and the mere economics of all officers coming/going from a single station in a geographic area of 80 square miles makes it highly unlikely). Even if all the triplicate management positions were in fact eliminated, however, the savings would be small in comparison to the additional cost imposed indirectly by current state law.

Take the police function, for example. If you eliminated two chiefs, six captains and two secretaries (representing the presumed duplication in the administration function) the total savings would approximate \$1 million per year (though some of the positions would likely remain and the savings actually would be less). State law requires uniformed police (and fire) employees to be compensated in a manner consistent with “like departments”; and the law grants to the bargaining units the right to binding arbitration to assure reasonable fulfillment of that obligation (if it cannot be obtained via negotiations). In the case of the Tri-Cities, the police departments each have a similar number of officers and, due to the eastern Washington rural economy, generally compare to cities outside the Puget Sound area. This reflects a compensation package lower than that found in departments of “like-size” in the Puget Sound

area. The police department of a consolidated Tri-Cities would then be required to compare itself to cities the size of Vancouver, Bellevue, Everett, Spokane and Tacoma, and would certainly no longer avoid the Puget Sound affect; indeed, it may be influenced by other major metropolitan areas (such as Portland or even California cities). The consequence of this comparison/arbitration requirement would undoubtedly increase the cost of all uniformed police employees by an estimated factor of 10% (perhaps more). Given a total present level of police salary and benefit expenditures exceeding \$18 million/year, the additional cost imposed by state law (for existing service levels) would approach \$2 million/year (more than double the presumed maximum savings). One must also expect the same effect in the fire budget. Over time, the upward push on uniformed employee costs would have a similar (if somewhat lower) effect on the other half of municipal employee cost; thus, one can virtually double the effect. As personnel costs represent at least 70% of a typical city's operating expenses, this factor would cause a broad and probably substantial increase in operating expense – with no improvement in service levels (indeed, the additional cost may actually lead to service level erosion).

While public employees should be appropriately compensated, the taxpayer should be appropriately informed of the probable financial consequences of consolidation, not just the superficial presumption.

### **“Consolidation will give us more clout in Olympia”**

Legislative strength can be measured in two ways: quality and quantity. In terms of quantity, the number of state legislators is determined by population; each state district contains a similar number of citizens. The Tri-Cities is currently divided between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Districts. If consolidated, nothing would change until the population of the Tri-Cities were to grow to the point that part of the urban area would be included in a third district. This would happen, however, regardless of consolidation. So, the actual driver of legislative “quantity,” is population growth – not city boundaries.

Legislative quality is much more subjective to measure. Not only is it influenced by the individual who is elected to represent a district but it can be greatly influenced by the partisan circumstances in Olympia from year to year. For example, a Republican representative might find it more difficult to advance an issue in a House with a Democrat majority – and vice versa. Consolidation, however, would not appear to be of any influence on legislative quality.

There can be little debate about the notion that a consolidated city would improve the opportunity to focus lobbying efforts in pursuit of state financial assistance for the region's list of priorities; however, it should also be recognized that the list of priorities necessarily becomes shorter and, in so doing, some efforts pursued by existing jurisdictions are necessarily abandoned to accommodate the more narrow focus. In short, what is labeled as “more clout” is, perhaps, more accurately labeled “more control” or “focus” by fewer elected representatives.

### **“Consolidation will maintain adequate local representation”**

This depends on what one defines as “adequate.” Presently, each of the three cities are individually governed by seven elected councilors; that represents a combined 21 elected local

councilors. A consolidated city would likely have seven councilors. Simple math reflects that each councilor currently represents about 7,600 residents; under a consolidated city, each would represent 23,000 residents. Certainly, that change could occur and business still be conducted. But one should contemplate the ability to have one's voice heard if it is one of 23,000 rather than one of 7,000.

Why is that ratio of concern? Because cities not only provide a myriad of different services (from water/sewer to recreation and cemeteries) but "govern" citizens via legislative action. While common service activities can be candidates for consolidated effort/delivery, legislative authority ("governance") is intended to be exercised with respect to distinctions and differences. Indeed, the Tri-Cities as a whole represents a broad spectrum of socio-economic characteristics. The three larger cities reflect those differences in their respective demographic profile; as individual cities, legislation can be (and is) designed to respect those distinctions. At present, there are many issues dealt with differently in each of the three cities (zoning regulations, animal regulations, development rules, recreation programs, jurisdiction partnerships, and so on...). Under a consolidated city, many of the laws/rules would necessarily change so as to assure equal application of the law within the consolidated city. As a single consolidated city (constitutional requirement), many of those distinctions would disappear, as would the current sensitivity to localized issues. What is a problem to be solved today in a city of 50,000 may well be simply regarded as "a fact of life – live with it" in a city of 150,000.

### **Another perspective**

Asking the typical citizen (voter) to predetermine answers to a host of detailed (sometimes complicated) questions about local government and finance is a laudable goal, but not very practical. Indeed, such an effort should first be made by those most involved in the details and with the opportunity (and obligation) to provide the most factual data.

A dispassionate analysis of those questions will lead one to conclude that consolidation is not the simple solution often offered for regional problems. Rather, regional problems can (and should) be best resolved via commitment of regional collaboration (not just cities, but any local agency with a defined role in solving a particular regional issue). We have witnessed such collaborative effort in the recent completion of the Heritage Trail, which reflects the voluntary commitment of three cities, two counties and three ports (aided greatly by the Visitor and Convention Bureau and Bechtel Corporation) to plan, finance and construct respective portions of the 23-mile trail that passes through each of the participating jurisdictions. Additional examples include: lighting of the Cable Bridge; a single, jointly operated police information system in Bi-PIN; a single, jointly funded animal control system servicing most of the Tri-Cities urban area.

Rather than spend scarce community energy and resources on a three-cities consolidation effort with questionable benefits, that energy should be directed toward collaboration of the cities and other local agencies to resolve known regional shortcomings (like a performing arts center, a regional aquatics center, a fourth river crossing...). Doing so will help to realize regional improvements without forfeiting local autonomy or identity

## **Regional Facility Planning Concept Paper: A Potential Collaboration Project In Progress and Lessons Learned**

**September 15, 2008**

**For: Community Round Table – 4C’s Committee**

### **I. Background:**

As the cities of the Tri-City area grow they face the question of what kinds of facilities citizens want to add or replace. At the same time the collective Tri-City area continues to become a more metropolitan community with increased tourism and recognized as a regional destination.

In the late 90’s state enabling legislation authorized Public Facility Districts (PFDs) for the purpose building and operating convention, conference or special events center serving a “regional” population. Various centers have been built and managed successfully around the state including most recently the Three Rivers Convention Center—which was a collaborative effort amongst multiple local entities.

Various community groups have lobbied cities to build facilities to service perceived community needs—most notably and vocally proponents of a large aquatic center. These projects typically are capital intensive and not within the available budgets of individual cities.

Simultaneously, the effects of I-965 decrease the availability of discretionary spending. Most likely, for any of these types of facilities to be built would be after the affirmative vote of taxpayers to fund capital costs, articulated plan to maintain them, and governance structure to operate them most efficiently.

This combination of forces has led to Kennewick, Pasco, and Richland to collaborate and enter into an interlocal agreement in 2006 to perform a joint study identifying and evaluate potential regional center concepts, outline a project and site selection process, gather stakeholder perspective, and recommend future steps. Representatives from each city council were appointed and they began to meet in 2006 with the help of city staff to facilitate the study.

The study was completed in early 2007 with identification of 18 possible projects with two projects being stand-out candidates for first consideration. They included an aquatics center and performing arts facility as the two top considerations.

The study also included what likely was a first for the Tri-Cities. On three consecutive nights “community meetings” were held in Richland, Pasco, and Kennewick....with each night having more participants, more attendees from each city, and an evolving conversation that proved individual city residents also were Tri-Citians.

Through the study public interest in facilities was validated and a possible process for collaboration was outlined the study results illustrated there wasn’t a single “magic bullet” for

making a particular facility happen. Governance models and funding strategies were not clear for even the top two projects.

The committee evolved and found itself realizing that the collaborative effort was going to take longer and would be larger in scope and vision than just building a facility or two. Also, a subsequent study phase would have to be undertaken to nail down a process for voter consideration on the projects. It also was required that Public Facility Districts would have to be engaged as core stakeholders in at least one of the projects.

In early 2008 the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the study was started with the draft results presented in June. Details included a model interlocal agreement. It included specific details of governance, financing, and operation could work.

Also provided was a revised recommendation that still considered Public Facilities Districts as viable means to an end, but recommended a Public Development Authority as a preferred mechanism. This was after observing the PDA concept successfully used in the similarly Vancouver, WA area.

It is hoped that a specific plan will materialize and the three cities can move to the next steps of planning a facility for presentation to voters.

## **II. Purpose:**

This paper is intended to highlight the background, challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned of evolving process of city collaboration on pursuing the identification, selection, and possible implementation of regional project plans.

## **III. Challenges:**

### **Timing**

Individual cities seemingly never have the same facility need or priority at the same time. What may be regionally needed isn't necessarily needed or perceived to be needed by each city.

For example, Pasco pool decks are crumbling with immediate need for pool replacement while Richland is focused on the large Hanford Reach Interpretive Center project. Although Kennewick has need for increased pool space it does not appear to be as high a priority.

### **Policy Maker Meetings**

Amazingly one of the single biggest challenges faced by the Regional Oversight Committee has been one of meeting logistics. It's just plain hard to get two councilmembers from each city, key senior staff, and representatives from PFDs in a room together on a consistent basis. Although e-mail and meeting minutes mitigate this, project effectiveness is often measured by sustained attention.

### **Perception**

Again as example it has been viewed by some that Pasco's effort to put an aquatics facility on its ballot for consideration may be it going on its own when, in fact, the crumbling decks of old pools are such a priority that it can't wait for a regional facility to be built, and will likely even need replacement capacity for its "neighborhood pools". Although it would design a newer pool in West Pasco that's more "aquatic center" in nature at \$10 Million it would be more focused on local use.

### **Parallel Projects and Perception**

Also in 2008 confronted with crumbling pool decks the City of Pasco put before the voters a bond measure to rebuild one of its current pools and add a new "aquatics facility" to the growing city area in the western part of the city. The \$10 million project would have been paid by \$5M in new property taxes and \$5M in reserves and cost savings.

One option to the measure that was considered included enclosing the facility for year round use and regional draw. This was ultimately rejected by a majority of councilmembers as being too large an expense (\$14M) for Pasco citizens to bear and noted that such a facility would be regional in nature and better paid by the larger community. It was noted that the initial proposed facility was designed so that it could be enclosed later, and additional adjacent property purchased or optioned for a regional facility if future efforts were realized. The initial \$10M investment by Pasco to the community pot could be added to by all three jurisdictions later to become more regional in nature—perhaps \$25-\$50M ultimately.

Also an example of misperception, this was editorialized by the Tri-City Herald as missing what the Pasco public wanted and urged reconsideration to have both options on a ballot. As a vocal proponent of consolidated community efforts the Herald had missed the larger perspective of combined regional efforts. Although when it came time for the vote the Herald revised its position and endorsed the project, but this illustrated that the subtleties of regional strategies can be easily lost amongst the immediacy of local needs.

### **Applications of Lessons Learned**

The Pasco measure ultimately failed in August of 2008. Although it received a majority at 54% it did not receive the statutory supermajority of 60%. Pasco will have to reconsider their plans and may consider a more modest remodel of existing facilities and ironically further reduce the available pool space per capita that the public also seemingly wants increased.

The question also arises whether Pasco's efforts have an impact on regional efforts. It is illustrative that the public does not appear to be supportive of property tax measures at the required 60% threshold, but may be more supportive of sales tax derived funding that targets potential users of the facilities.

## **IV. Categorical Areas and Remaining Questions:**

### **A. Purpose / Policy**

- Do people want to pay for regional facilities? If so, what mechanism? Sales, property, use tax?

- Where should facilities be located? Process to choose a location?
- If there are multiple facilities and the first one is built in one city should subsequent facilities be rotated around the cities?
- How do you coordinate and synchronize individual city interests through time? If one city doesn't have the need for a particular facility do you include it or leave it out?

#### **B. Governance**

- How are regional centers accountable to the people they serve including taxpayers that fund them? Public Development Authority or Public Facilities District, Metropolitan Park District, or other?
- Will a newly formed entity operate a facility? Will they be appointed or elected?

#### **C. Operational / Budgetary**

- If a facility is considered who underwrites debt if operational costs exceed projections?

### **VI. Path Forward**

The Regional Facility Oversight Committee has committed to completing the second phase of a study. This study is expected to be completed in 2008 and will detail a specific strategy and course for cities to proceed.

## Appendix A – Regional Facility Concepts

- Aquatics Center – A multi-purpose facility to include completion pool, zero-depth wave pool, lazy river, tot pool, warm water therapy pool, and other wet and dry amenities.
- Performing Arts Center – a 2,000 seat theater to accommodate touring performers as well as local and regional groups for audience chamber and stage performance, rehearsal and warm-up for music; 500 seat small theater, and possibly a 250 seat black box theater.
- Amusement park – with long-standing interest expressed over the years in this type of a facility for the Tri-Cities.<sup>12</sup>
- Auditorium at CBC – with an 800-seat capacity if developed as a stand-alone project (a current priority of CBC) or a 1,500-seat capacity (if developed to meet the needs of the regional performing arts center groups).
- Dog parks – identified as a potential community need through the stakeholder interview process.
- Downtown Pasco “Little Mexico” Redevelopment and Performance Venues – promoted by the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.
- Equestrian park – based on interest expressed primarily by citizens in West Richland.
- Handicapped sports facility – raised in several stakeholder interviews.
- Indoor field house – designed to accommodate local use and provide a venue for regional indoor sports activities (a high priority of the Tri-Cities Sports Council).
- Outdoor amphitheater – a longtime interest, particularly in Richland.
- Outdoor sports tournament facilities – with Kennewick’s Southridge Ballfield Complex specifically identified as one potential future major tournament complex and with Richland considering added Babe Ruth fields at Horn Rapids in North Richland.<sup>13</sup>
- Regional parks land acquisition & development – tied to former Kennewick Mayor Vic Epperly’s well publicized proposal for a Metropolitan Park District (MPD).
- Railroad museum – primarily an interest in Pasco and among railroad enthusiasts.
- Three Rivers Convention Center expansion (a larger multi-purpose arena and new exhibition hall) – being considered mostly in concept form at this time by the facility management company for the Kennewick PFD, with no planning work conducted to date.
- Trash to energy facility – suggested as another potential MPD project but more generally considered as a utility project.
- Science, agriculture & transportation museum – a general concept with no specific details to date.
- Transportation museum – a concept first promoted by antique car enthusiasts, to provide a place for old cars and other forms of transportation other than rail.

Regional zoo, aquarium or planetarium – a general concept without much detail (though it is noted that there is already a small planetarium at CBC).



# MEMORANDUM

## Fire administration

### Fire Collaboration Effort

#### Agencies Involved:

- Benton County Fire Protection District #1
- Benton County Fire Protection District #2
- Benton County Fire Protection District #4
- Kennewick Fire Department
- Richland Fire Department

#### Beginnings of current effort and approach:

- There has always been an effort to communicate between fire agencies in this area but it was limited to regular meetings and sporadic joint actions.
- In 2004/2005 the Chiefs of the fire agencies listed above felt that we had an opportunity to make a much more concerted effort to improve our cooperative effort, with a thought to collaborating on as many aspects of our service as possible. Early thoughts considered the journey all the way to a consolidation of the five fire agencies in some form or other, probably as a fire authority.
- The Chiefs met and discussed whether we could make the commitment to this effort with open minds and a clear commitment to explore all of the possibilities.
- There was a sense that our agencies had made a conscious effort to be different from each other in almost every practical way, including operationally.
  - The core mission of each agency was similar, along with the structural elements of each organization.
  - The differences become much more evident when you look a little deeper. Breathing Apparatus were all different, engines and equipment were different, medic units were different, training and drill evolutions were different, record management systems were configured differently, radios and channel templates were different, and so on.
  - We were so different for no other reason than that we could be.

- This caused us to work very hard to be interoperable while staying different and begged the question “why?” followed by the more obvious question “why not do things the same?”

### **Reasons to Pursue the Approach we have taken:**

- **Major priority:** To serve the citizens of this community with the fire service resources networked in order to provide the best possible service.
- Make the distinction between the fire agencies working very hard to be interoperable while staying different versus remaining separate while doing as much collaboratively as possible.
  - We want to eliminate every difference that impedes the service we can provide with a goal of seamless response between all agencies.
  - Collaborate to make the best use of our staffs’ skills and to avoid replication of effort between agencies.
  - Doing this while retaining our own political structure in the short to medium term. “Regional service with local control”
- Improve communications between the agencies, day-to-day and for joint project/program work.
  - Improve “cost avoidance” opportunities and reduce time lost at and spent between meetings off task.
- There are obvious financial benefits of joint purchasing power with standardized specifications and greater volume.
  - Stored inventory can also be consolidated and reduced without compromising availability.
- Increased political clout at the local, regional, and state level on discipline related issues for: funding, programs, emergency response and incident mitigation, and interdisciplinary efforts.

### **Accomplishments:**

- All five agencies use:
  - The same Breathing Apparatus
  - The same Protective Clothing and uniform program
  - A single radio system and system management/funding program
  - The same Records Management System with consistent codes and data entry protocols.
- A Master Interlocal Agreement (MIA) was written as the “umbrella” document to enable future collaborative activities. The MIA will contain Exhibits that spell out the details of either the Scope of Project or Scope of Program for these activities and are added to the MIA, as needed.
- Now in a single Fire Administration Center (FAC) building for the agencies’ administrative and day staff positions on the corner of Gage and Pittsburg in Kennewick.

- Expanded Automatic Aid Agreements and deployment models based on getting the right equipment and crews on scene as quickly as possible. Note: there is a distinction between the “closest” and the “quickest” available unit. We recognize the different turn out times between staffed stations and unstaffed stations that rely on staff responding to a station to respond.

**Other considerations:**

- There is a temptation to see these efforts as a series of technical changes but the need to enable all of the key players (citizens, staff, governing bodies, and so on) to make the necessary adaptive changes to get true understanding and commitment is critical.
- Resistance to the degree of change anticipated throughout the process is expected and must be managed. Progress ebbs and flows, with incremental changes inching us toward the milestone marks.
- “Turf” is real. The threat to one’s sense of identity can be a huge impediment and the need to change has to be well understood and accepted. We have seen a tendency for people to fall back into debate about the “technical” rationality of the change rather than an expression of unwillingness to do the work necessary to make the adaptive change. It can lead to frustration as the battle to make a practical argument against the change very quickly degenerates into “feelings”.
- Protection of turf also extends into concerns for job security, tenure, loss of independence, takeover, and so on. The fire agencies’ leadership is committed to engaging other groups, including our Union and Volunteer leaders, in much more inclusive discussion than is required by contract or law. We have a strong faith in their ability to enhance our effort not just resist it.
- There have been, and will continue to be, unintended consequences; large and small, good and bad. The strength this approach offers is a consistent and broader support structure to overcome the tough ones and maximize the benefits of the good ones.

**End Goal and target Date:**

- Unknown and likely “Never”!
- Some type of consolidation is likely, as is some expansion of the participating fire agencies.
  - Benton County Fire Service?

## 4C's process steps:

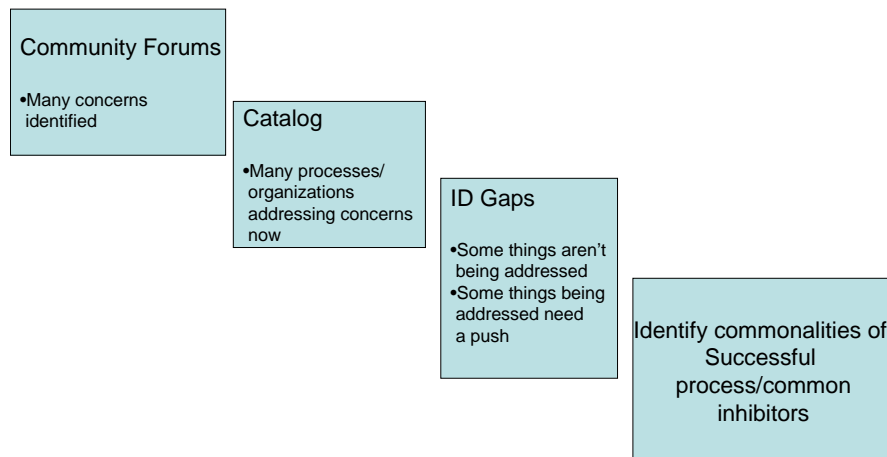
The 4C's group was formulated primarily as an outgrowth and a response to the Community Forum assembled by the Community Roundtable when numerous groups at the event articulated concerns relating to the issue of consolidation in this community. Those desires and concerns were broad and various and included obvious brick facilities available to the community, but in many cases included services, infrastructure, and open spaces, as well as processes to achieve a greater degree of regionally based clout, consensus, government processes or forms of government that were felt to be necessary to achieve that desired community.

The 4C's Task Force determined a key role it could play would be to catalog what was currently being done in the community that had a connection to the issues and needs identified in the community forum. The primary objective of this effort was to determine if there were any obvious gaps in the current community activities, in other words, to ask the question of whether there was a major, vocal, or key expressed concern out in the community that is not being addressed. An obvious component of the "gap analysis" would be to potentially identify any efforts or outcomes that were identified as vitally important to the community that were in need of assistance, or emphasis.

This process of catalog, match, and identifying gaps, applied on a community-wide basis brought its own set of observations to group members. A key, and common, observation was the depth and breadth of processes that currently exist which cut across geographic and politically drawn boundaries.

Particular efforts were evaluated in more depth to enhance the understanding of group members of the presence of any magic formula for success in this set of currently active efforts. That activity resulted in the listing of what the group felt were a few Common Principals of Success. That list is provided and broken down into three areas. The first being "Humanity" which obviously points to people-to-people components that successful groups seem to share particularly when they are dealing with issues that cut across functional, governmental, or interest boundaries. The second area of the list is the process itself, and the third being what is described as "Success Criteria". The final category was listed as general observations of the group as it went through the process.

## 4C's Process Steps



# Observed Common Principles of Success

<u>Humanity (H)</u>	<u>Process (P)</u>	<u>Success Criteria (C)</u>	<u>Additional Observations</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Egos at the door</li> <li>•Don't point fingers</li> <li>•Humanity 101/ Relationship 101</li> <li>•Open-minded communications</li> <li>•Leadership group leading by example</li> <li>•Moving clients and employees to ask "why not" rather than pushing solutions to eliminate defensiveness to a new idea</li> <li>•Developing strong relationships</li> <li>•Leaving ego at the door during discussions</li> <li>•Carefully studying the human side and reactions to ideas in addition to facts and figures (rumor mill suppression)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Common Broader public issues need community alliances to address "you can't solve someone else's problem"</li> <li>•Bottom up for solutions/top down "leadership"</li> <li>•Small success builds trust, momentum</li> <li>•Pay attention to process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Forget quick fixes</li> <li>•Develop sustainable long term solutions</li> <li>•Community-wide alliances/cooperation</li> <li>•Business as usual can't be ignored, shouldn't be acceptable</li> <li>•Technology helps/people solve</li> <li>•Start with small changes</li> <li>•Allow those with hands on to solve the problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Enhancement/improvement of public service/safety/infrastructure</li> <li>•Focus on "efficiencies" or problems /service delivery w/o jumping to a solution</li> <li>•Make problem and issue at hand clear to public in order to give guidance on what needs to be solved</li> <li>•Crisis of some sort, which is often economic, will expedite cooperation and collaboration, and consolidation.</li> <li>•Usually driven/focused by public issue (i.e. crisis, common thread – tax capacity constraint, etc. ); permission to take to next level</li> </ul>

***Additional Unanswered Questions Requiring Additional Study:***

What is in the best interest of the greater community? And why?

What is the risk involved?

What drives the process? Who drives the process? Where will the resources come from for future work?

What impediments are there?

Is there a way to make progress seamless?

What are the realistic expectations of the community as well as employees impacted?

What assumptions are accurate? What are not?

What impact does community identify have in the process?

Identify the barriers – fears/emotions; governmental barriers; loss of jobs; taxes; etc.

Is there sufficient benefit to drive the process?

Are there unintended consequences of moving “up” the 4Cs scale?

What do we know and what do we need to know about the process?

Has it worked in other areas? Is there a framework already in place to move forward?

**Resources:**

**Tri-City Herald Community Conversations** (documents and raw data posted to Community Roundtable website) <http://www.my3rivers.org/document>

**Is Municipal Consolidation the Answer?**

Municipal News; Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington  
Research Summer 2003  
<http://www.mrsc.org>

**Forming One City in the Grand Coulee Dam Area.**

Cooperative Extension Agency, WSU, 1993

**Consolidation for Towns and Villages**

James Coon; Local Government Technical Series; New York State Department of State; Division of Local Government Services  
Written in 1998, updated in 2007. Provides a framework for looking at consolidation, including areas where consolidation of services may be considered.  
<http://www.dos.state.ny.us/lgss/pdfs/consolid.pdf>

**Merging City and County Governments**

Written by Brian Gongol. An overview of the possible pluses/minuses of consolidation. Focuses on city/county. Also includes links to successful mergers in Indianapolis and Miami-Dade County  
<http://www.gongol.com/research/economics/citycountymergers/>

**Towns consolidating government services**

By Theodore Kim, USA TODAY  
A USA Today article on towns consolidating services. December 2005.  
[http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-12-14-town-governments\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-12-14-town-governments_x.htm)

**Is School Consolidation a Good Idea?**

Focuses on school consolidation.  
<http://www.wpaag.org/Consolidation%20Studies.htm>

**Intermunicipal Cooperation and Consolidation; Exploring opportunities for savings and improved service delivery.** New York State Comptroller

<http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/pubs/research/cooperation1.pdf>

**Mayor's Message**

Craig A. Stough 4/28/2005  
<http://www.cityofsylvania.com/Mayor/Message/2005/MM042605.htm>

**"Sylvania Consolidation of Services Study"**

[http://www.wmbb.com/gulfcoastwest/mbb/news/special\\_reports/nov07/city\\_consolidation.html](http://www.wmbb.com/gulfcoastwest/mbb/news/special_reports/nov07/city_consolidation.html)

**Time to Consolidate**

Written by J Brown for WMBB in Panama City, Florida  
<http://www.jaxhistory.com/consolidation.html>