

Assembly Bill 494- Consolidation Report

August 4, 2010

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AB 494- Consolidation Report

Passed during the 2009 Legislative Session

- Requires the Board of County Commissioners of Clark County and Washoe County and the governing body of each city in those counties to submit a report on consolidation efforts to the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau
- Report Due: September 1, 2010 to the Legislative Council Bureau



AB 494- Consolidation Report Outline

- I. Executive Summary- Written by Mesquite
- II. Introduction- Written by Clark County and Las Vegas
- III. Summary of Consolidated Efforts- Written by Henderson
- IV. Narratives of Government Functions per Jurisdiction- Written by individual entities
 - I. Public Safety
 - II. Public Works
 - III. General Government
- V. Seven Feasibility Studies- Written by all jurisdictions
- VI. Conclusion- Written by Boulder City



AB 494- Consolidation Report Outline

City of Las Vegas Narrative Section includes:

- Position on consolidation
- A brief description of functions related to Public Safety, Public Works, and General Government as required by AB 494



AB 494 – Past Timeline/Next Steps

- **August 19th- Final presentation to the SNRPC**
- **August 4th- Final presentation to the Mayor and Council**
- **July 15th- Presentation to the SNRPC to approve a draft report**
- **July 1st- Presentation to the SNRPC Technical Committee**
- **June 16th- Presentation to the Mayor and City Council**
- **May 20th- Presentation to the SNRPC**
- **May 4th- Presentation to the SNRPC Technical Committee**
- **April 7th- Presentation to the Mayor and City Council**
- **March 18th- Presentation to the SNRPC**
- **March 4th- Presentation to the SNRPC Technical Committee**



Introduction

The city of Las Vegas was founded on May 15, 1905, when a land auction, in what is now known as downtown Las Vegas, resulted in the purchase of 110 acres of land. The City incorporated on March 16, 1911, and until 1944, operated under a "commission" form of government with each commissioner having administrative control over certain operating departments of the city. Since January 1, 1944, the City has operated under what is commonly known as a "council/manager" form of government. This form of government was approved by a vote of the people with subsequent Las Vegas City Charter adoption by the Legislature in 1983.

The City provides a full range of services from fire and life safety and building permitting and inspections to parks and recreation services. Due to the downturn in the economy, the City has made every attempt to balance its general fund while at the same time preserving critical services for our community. To date, the City has been successful in its efforts and is positioned well to face the months and years to come.

City of Las Vegas Position on Consolidation and/or Reorganization

The subject of consolidation has been the topic of discussion and the subject of intense scrutiny for several decades and yet we continue to struggle with the appropriate response. The Legislature, via AB494, required a report detailing the capacity for and willingness to consolidate or reorganize public safety, public works, and general government functions. The report provided is a compilation of work provided by each of the entities, but does not necessarily reflect the full intent of the Las Vegas City Council.

The city of Las Vegas is committed to working through the recommendations made within the report from the Southern Nevada jurisdictions, but believes that we should enhance the dialogue needed to ensure a more thorough review of the capacity for additional functional consolidations and/or reorganizations up to a full consolidation of Southern Nevada (Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, Clark County, Henderson) local governments. ¹

The city of Las Vegas believes it is worth discussing why consolidation and/or reorganization is a solution to not only the financial problems plaguing the Southern Nevada region, but a solution to creating a more efficient and effective service delivery system for our constituents. A few of the examples that are most critical to the region include:

- Continuity of Regulations, Licensing, and Business Practices
- Collective Bargaining Negotiations
- Emergency Management Planning and Response
- Building a sense of community amongst our residents
- Bridging interests to enhance opportunities for economic diversification

¹ It is Mayor Goodman's position that time is of the essence. The Legislature should effectuate the means to full scale consolidation immediately.

The city of Las Vegas supports functional mergers and opportunities of consolidation where they make sense. Those efforts will not be possible without intense scrutiny at the local level. It is widely documented that most full-scale consolidation efforts fail. The city does not support any substantial change efforts where there is not significant analysis documenting the need for change and the expected outcomes. Furthermore, the city is willing to dedicate the time and energy to working with the state and other local jurisdictions during the review period so that appropriate recommendations can be adopted and implemented.

The City Council supports a comprehensive and thoughtful approach to consolidation and/or reorganization based on the following advantages:

Efficiency: There are a number of efficiency opportunities through the use of consolidation and/or reorganization. Local government departments that serve the same function, such as business licensing, fire services, parks and recreation, public works, municipal/justice courts, human resources and corrections, could be merged or reorganized. Duplicative or parallel positions could be eliminated (the new local government or department would only need one public works director, one human resources director, etc.) and the workforce would be gradually pared down through attrition and early retirement packages. Proponents of consolidation contend that eliminating the overlap and duplication between two governments that serve practically the same population produces cost savings.

Effectiveness: Consolidation and/or reorganization may improve the coordination and compatibility of service delivery systems. A single management entity may also make it simpler for citizens to report problems or complaints.

Accountability: By eliminating the confusion about responsibility among elected officials, consolidation and/or reorganization may improve the public policy process as the decision making chain of authority is narrowed.

For this joint report, staff for the city of Las Vegas has briefed the Mayor and City Council multiple times and on three separate occasions has provided updates on the report during regularly scheduled City Council meetings. Below are comments and concerns made by our Mayor and City Council on April 7, and June 16, 2010, as it relates to consolidation:

Continuity of Regulations, Licensing, and Business Practices

The case for expanding the dialogue about consolidation and/or reorganization is best made by business owners attempting to conduct their business in Southern Nevada. A local landscaper recently described his frustrations to the Las Vegas City Council as he attempted to secure a business licenses from four different jurisdictions. The landscaper explained his frustration and his feelings about the bureaucratic system in which he must obtain a business license in each jurisdiction (Las Vegas, Clark County, North Las Vegas and Henderson) to perform the same function. Each jurisdiction has different rules and regulations to which he must adhere, which is contrary to a business friendly local government.

Collective Bargaining Negotiations and Competition

In a time when each jurisdiction is intensely involved in union negotiations to which the fate of the current service delivery systems are dependent, local governments are finding their negotiations are more difficult. The state of financial decay in Nevada has caused each local government jurisdiction to focus inward and directly upon their union contracts while paying little attention to the effect their union negotiations have on the other local government negotiation efforts.

Emergency Management Planning and Response

Southern Nevada has been fortunate in that the region has had very few major man-made or natural disasters, but the potential always exists. Concerns have been expressed that if a natural or man-made disaster were to occur in Southern Nevada, there is a likelihood that chaos would ensue. Southern Nevada has the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department Sheriff, a city of Las Vegas Chief of Detention and Enforcement, a city of North Las Vegas Police Chief and a city of Henderson Police Chief. Each of the local governments has Public Information Officers and their respective management chains. The response to a disaster is difficult enough without confusing the lines of authority and responsibility as the result of invisible jurisdictional boundaries.

Building a Sense of Community amongst our Residents

When tourists travel to Southern Nevada, they do not intend to land in Clark County and they do not intend on spending their money in North Las Vegas, they tell their friends and family they are vacationing in Las Vegas. That same sentiment can be said of our residents as well. It was aptly described in the June 24, 2010 City Council meeting, "a lot of people don't understand the differences in jurisdictions." The city of Las Vegas fields many calls for service, complaints and other questions related to the services provided by government and we often times refer them to the appropriate jurisdiction. Undoubtedly, each of the local governments face this challenge. The response to the constituent is a breakdown in the level of service expected. Citizens expect to make one phone call, one Internet submission, or write one letter. The fact that they may be redirected is a deficiency that deserves attention.

A History of Success

The past functional consolidations in Southern Nevada lay the groundwork for success. The recent consolidation of the housing authorities in Southern Nevada is a prime example of successful collaboration amongst the various entities. Other consolidations in Southern Nevada, such as the Metropolitan Police Department, Southern Nevada Health District and the Las Vegas Valley Water District, to name a few, are examples of successful integrations of business practices. Each of those mergers began with some visionary leadership and a lot of work to make them successful. The consolidation and/or reorganization, in part or in whole, of Southern Nevada local governments is the next logical step.

Time is of the Essence

The Las Vegas City Council expressed encouragement by the progress of the report and subsequent actions related to AB494, but feels that time is of the essence and the process should start immediately. We have spent a considerable amount of time talking about the prospect of consolidation and/or reorganization, but we cannot afford to continue the discussion about the possibility, we need to start the serious application of appropriate efforts now. The current AB494 report provides baby steps in the right direction. The Council supports a high degree of caution and a methodical approach in moving forward.

Conclusions

The path to consolidation and/or reorganization is not easy and the methods are difficult to implement, but the end result may very well mean a more efficient, cohesive, and economically sound government organization that can provide services in the best interest of the Southern Nevada community.

The city of Las Vegas has been aggressively working toward expanding the scope of the AB 494 report. At the June 16, 2010, City Council meeting, the City Manager was directed to reach out to the county and other cities in Southern Nevada to discuss the potential of consolidation and/or reorganization. The city of Las Vegas stands ready to work with the Nevada State Legislature and any other local governments to make Southern Nevada a place where the residents, visitors and business partners feel confident that their government is providing the most efficient, effective and responsible services to the community.

This endorsement of further review should not be construed as an endorsement for full consolidation without significant study and analysis. The City recognizes the opportunity and potential that may be realized in further discussions but is cognizant of the fact that a majority of consolidation efforts throughout the country fail and increase costs to the taxpayer. Bigger is not always better. The city of Las Vegas supports critically analyzing the potential for consolidation and/or reorganization of Southern Nevada local government and will support appropriate legislation to expand this scope of study.