

MEMORANDUM

May 13, 2010

TO: County Council

FROM: Roger Berliner 

SUBJECT: Montgomery County Organizational Reform Commission

Over the course of the past several months almost everyone on the Council has expressed frustration over the lack of progress in restructuring our county government. We have all noted areas of redundancy – including the delivery of recreational services, public safety, procurement, and after school programming, to name just a few. The need to provide government services in the most efficient manner possible becomes even more imperative in the midst of a fiscal crisis that could last for years.

I share this frustration and have met with the County Executive to explore a path forward that seeks to address the institutional barriers that stand in the way of achieving the degree of progress we all seek. The County Executive and I are in agreement that the approach reflected in the attached proposed resolution gives us our best chance for meaningful reform.

Under the terms of the resolution, the County Executive and the County Council would jointly appoint an 8 person Montgomery County Organizational Reform Commission. This Commission, composed of Montgomery County residents with experience and expertise in efficient service delivery systems, would be briefed by executive branch staff, council staff, workforce representatives, and other stakeholders on a range of restructuring options. The Commission would then forward its findings and recommendations to the County Executive and the Council by January 31, 2011.

Unlike past efforts, these recommendations would not “sit on the shelf.” Under the terms of the resolution, the County Executive would forward to the Council those recommendations he supports pursuant to Sec. 217 of the County Charter. Under that provision, the recommendations would become law unless the County Council affirmatively rejects the recommendations within 90 days of the Executive’s submission. The resolution also calls upon the Council to introduce, in bill form, any of the other Commission recommendations that were not endorsed by the County Executive, to hold

public hearings on all of the recommendations, and to vote up or down on all of the measures prior to adoption of the FY 2012 operating budget.

This approach recognizes reality -- it is almost impossible for a government to effectively reorganize itself given what is at stake for our workforce, their managers, and their respective organizations. A carefully chosen expert Commission, staffed by the Council and Executive branch, that listens carefully, discerns clearly, and then presents their findings for an up or down vote provides a constructive, objective, and timely path to progress.

This proposal and resolution is not intended to suggest that we, as a government, should not take immediate action -- in this budget -- wherever we can to restructure our services to minimize duplication and increase efficiencies. We can and we should move forward on discrete reforms that are ripe and compelling. However, it is clear that our efforts over the course of the next month will mark the beginning, not the end, of a serious restructuring effort, and that the work of the Commission would allow the Council to make significantly more progress in FY 2012.

2. The Commission must be composed of County residents who are experienced in government, business, or non-profit service delivery, or who otherwise have experience and expertise in creating efficient models of providing services and operations. A person appointed to the Commission must not be employed by County government or any County-funded agency.
3. The Commission must solicit suggestions for potential reorganization or consolidation of functions performed by County government and County-funded agencies from: elected officials; County residents; business and community leaders; County and agency employees; bargaining unit representatives; and other stakeholders. The Commission must draft and adopt written criteria to evaluate which suggestions merit further consideration by the Commission. The criteria must include:
 - a minimum level of potential cost savings (for example, \$1 million per year);
 - a standard for ease of implementation; and
 - a measure of acceptable service level impact.

[Based on the adopted criteria, the Commission must evaluate the suggestions received and develop a short list (e.g., 5-10 items) of suggested reorganizations and consolidations with the greatest potential to increase government efficiency and effectiveness.]

Not later than September 30, 2010, the Commission must submit a status report of its progress to the Council and the Executive outlining its progress to date and its work plan through January 31, 2011. [, including a description of each suggestion selected for the short list.] Executive staff and Council staff must provide support to the Commission.

4. The Commission must submit its final report to the Executive and Council not later than January 31, 2011. The report must contain the Commission's recommendations to reorganize or consolidate functions performed by County government or County-funded agencies. For each recommendation for reorganization or consolidation, the Commission's report must include the rationale and estimated cost savings associated with implementing the recommendation. Any organizational proposal for County government in the Commission report must take the form of a reorganization plan that the Executive could submit to the Council under Charter §217.
5. The Executive must, not later than February 28, 2011, either present to the Council under Charter §217 the reorganization plan recommended by the Commission or an alternative reorganization plan that the Executive concludes will produce at least the same level of cost savings, or inform the Council in writing why no reorganization plan is necessary.

6. If the Executive does not present to the Council any reorganization plan or other proposal contained in the Commission report, the Council President must introduce each plan or proposal that can be implemented by County legislation as a Bill before the Council.
7. The Council must, not later than March 31, 2011, hold one or more public hearings on the reorganization plan, if any, presented by the Executive, and each Bill introduced under paragraph 6, and must vote on each plan submitted under paragraph 5 and each Bill introduced under paragraph 6 before the FY2012 operating budget is adopted.

Approved.

Isiah Leggett, County Executive

This is a correct copy of Council action.

Linda M. Lauer, Clerk of the Council