

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Q. What will be the structure of the new government?

A. The structure is designed to provide smaller, efficient and a more responsive government. The elected Charter County Executive (CCE) will take the place of the Mayor and County Judge Executive. A 12 member council will be elected - 9 Council members will be elected from districts and 3 members elected at large. The CCE and Council members will be limited to three 4-year terms and subject to a new code of ethics to be enforced by an independent ethics commission.

2. Q. What is it about the structure of the new government that will make it more responsive than the City Commission and Fiscal Court?

A. Nine of the twelve council members will be elected from districts of approximately 7,000 people each. The Council members will be required to live in the district they represent. Under the current system, City and County Commissions are elected at large. As a result Commissioners will represent fewer people and should be more attentive to their concerns and more informed of their problems.

3. Q. How will it be determined whether the City and County merge?

A. Following a series of public meetings, the Charter Commission will vote on a final plan which will likely be placed on the ballot in November, 2012. The voters of McCracken County will decide whether the merger should occur. If a majority of voters approve the Plan, elections will occur in 2014 for Charter County Executive and Council members. They will take office and the merged government will take effect on January 1, 2015.

4. Q. I live in the County; will I have to pay higher City taxes?

A. No. The Plan calls for the County to be divided into two service districts. A full services district consisting of the former City of Paducah and a general services district consisting of the rest of McCracken County. The rates in the full services district will be equal to those in the former City of Paducah and rates in the general services district will remain the same as the existing county rates.

5. **Q. Will laws pertaining to quality of life issues, such as outdoor burning, discharging firearms, dog leashes, be the same throughout the entire County?**

A. No. Existing ordinances pertaining to these types of issues will remain the same after consolidation of the City and County governments. In other words, if the conduct is allowed at the current time, it will be permissible after merger, unless changed by the new Council. Any conflict between the old City and County ordinances will be resolved in favor of the law prevailing in the respective geographic area.

6. **Q. Will the merged government cost less money to operate than the existing City and County governments?**

A. The operation of the new governments, including the establishment of budgets, spending, etc. will be up to the new Charter County Executive and the Council. However, the Commission believes efficiencies and savings will result from combining the two governments. For that reason, the Plan mandates a five (5) year freeze on tax rates imposed by the new government.

7. **Q. Will any City or County employees lose their job as the result of merger?**

A. The Commission did not want to impose hardship on any families resulting from the merger and, therefore, the Plan provides that no City or County employee will lose their job as the result of merger. However, the position and salary of employees will be determined by the new Charter County Executive and Council.

8. **Q. How does the merger of City and County governments affect the public school systems?**

A. The merger of City-County governments will have no impact on the public school systems. The schools are governed by the school boards and state law.

9. **Q. I have heard that the volunteer fire departments will be required to disband and the City fire department will provide fire protection to the entire County.**

A. This is not true. The volunteer fire departments will not be affected in any manner by merger. The full services district will continue to receive fire protection from a full time fire department. The remainder of the County will continue to receive fire protection from the volunteer

departments. In fact, the volunteer fire departments will be in even a stronger position post-merger since they won't face the concern of the city annexing portions of their territory.

10. Q. Will law enforcement be affected by merger?

A. The Commission seriously considered several alternatives, concerning law enforcement. However, the Commission determined that certain services are so important that they should not be consolidated merely to achieve financial savings. Since our current law enforcement system seems to work well, the Commission decided that the Police Department would continue to be primarily responsible for law enforcement in the full services district and the Sheriff's Office will provide law enforcement services in the general services district.

11. Q. If the City and County merge, will alcohol be sold in the entire County?

A. No. Merger will have no effect on the regulations pertaining to the sale of alcohol. This is controlled by state law.

12. Q. Should the City-County government merge?

A. While merger has been discussed for a long time, voters should look at the actual merger plan instead of relying on pre-conceived ideas of what some believe the merged government will look like. The plan proposes many changes to the current structure of our local government. Under merger, duplication and overlapping agencies will be eliminated. Based upon the experience of other merged governments, over time our local government could shrink by 20%. Elected officials and appointees to boards and commissions will be subject to ethical standards and term limits. Ultimately, each voter will have to make up his/her own mind as to whether the existing or the proposed government structure will provide the best government for the citizens of Paducah-McCracken County.