

# Milledgeville-Baldwin County, Georgia Unified Government Charter

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*revised*

1/22/13

rev.

### **Governing Board**

The proposed charter establishes a governing board, called the Commission, with seven members, the chair (who shall be called & function as “Mayor”) elected at-large and six elected by and from six electoral districts in Baldwin County. New districts (3 majority & 3 minority) will be redrawn by Georgia Reapportionment Office. The members will be elected to staggered, four-year terms after initial elections which call for some members to be elected for a two-year term. Elections for commissioners will be non-partisan.

#### *Powers of the Mayor*

- Appoint a **County Manager, Commission Clerk, and County Attorney**, who must be confirmed by a majority vote of the entire commission. Removal of any or all of those serving in these positions shall be with the concurrence of a majority of the entire commission.
- Additional powers: setting the commission agenda; presenting an annual budget; and preside over commission meetings. The Mayor may vote on any issue, and must vote in the event of a tie.

### **Form of Administration**

The Charter Commission’s draft charter calls to continuation of the manager plan for the merged government.

County Manager will administer the day-to-day operations of the county; set the qualifications and salary, and shall have those powers appointment and removal of department heads.

### **Law Enforcement**

The elected Sheriff of Baldwin County will serve as the Chief Law Enforcement Officer for Milledgeville-Baldwin County, Georgia.

### **Service Districts**

The county will be divided into 2 taxing districts called Service Districts.

- A **General Service District** representing the entire geographic area of the County and
- An **Urban Service District** which shall include the corporate limits of the City of Milledgeville.
- **Special Service Districts** may be established by future commissions (if needed).

### **Revenue & Finance**

The Unified Government shall assume the debt obligations of both the City and the County. New franchise fees will be used to defray expenses incurred as a result of unification. After two years revenue from those fees may be used to lower Urban District taxes.

### **Schools**

The proposed charter did not make any change in the relationship between the county and the school administrative unit or board of education.

*Georgia Military College*

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By assuming the debt obligations of both city and county, the Urban District would still pay the one mil GMC tax. The GMC Board of Trustees shall be elected from six Urban Service District voting districts.

### **Transition Team**

The proposed charter calls for the creation of a transition team composed of 10 citizens including 2 current commissioners, 2 municipal elected officials, and 6 community members (3 appointed by current city council and 3 appointed by current county commissioners to assist the new commission with the transition and consolidation of services. The transition team will assign budgetary and reporting responsibilities upon the passage of the charter and will have the authority to resolve all transition-related issues through the completion of the transition timeline.

### **Transition Timeline**

- **2014** - The Charter submitted to the State Legislature requesting that they pass local legislation allowing a vote on the Milledgeville-Baldwin County Unified Government Charter. Vote on Unification to take place as part of November 2014 general election.
- **2015** - Merge city/county building departments, Fire Departments and request the State Legislature to pass local legislation authorizing the formation of a Milledgeville- Baldwin County Water and Sewer Authority.
- **2016** - Merge city and county tax collection departments, garbage collection functions, E-911. Transition the Milledgeville Police Dept. to the Office of the Sheriff of Baldwin County. Elect Commissioners for Milledgeville-Baldwin County Unified Government
- **2017** - On January 1, 2017 the transition will be completed as the new Unified Government Elected Officials take office.

### **Referendum**

The Charter Committee has formerly requested that both city council and county commissioners approved forward a request for a referendum to the state legislature which would allow the citizens of Baldwin County to vote for or against unification.

If city council and/or county commission do not make such a request, the Charter Committee that the Senator and/or Representative for Baldwin County make the request without their approval.

### **Advantages of Unified Government**

- One governmental body serving all of Baldwin County
- Negates duplication of services (law enforcement, fire protection, water, sewer, 911 service, etc)
- Opportunity for increases revenue from franchise fees
- Qualification for all state and federal grants are based on the population of entire county
- Eliminates potential confrontation between city and county governments
- Adjust Urban (city) taxes to be more equitable with services received
- Fewer elected officials reduces polling costs, salaries, and fringes
- Allow more nimble, quicker response and provide better resources to prospective business or industry clients - reducing the red tape of two or more jurisdictions. Services can be provided through one point of contact, easing the ability of businesses to deal with local government

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### **Commitment to Fairness**

Protect jobs, pensions, seniority, benefits, tenure, and retirement benefits of *all* City and County employees. Potential saving will occur from attrition.

The revised charter along with this executive summary of the document is available for public viewing at [www.mbcunification.com](http://www.mbcunification.com).