

CITY-PARISH ALIGNMENT COMMISSION

December 8, 2021

Kevin Blanchard

WHAT I WILL TALK ABOUT:

How We Got Here

Two Big Points

Two Recommendations

Questions?

Various Perspectives on City-Parish Charter

1999-2008 Reporter for Acadiana Advocate Bureau

Volunteer:

2012 Appointed by Mayor-President Joey Durel to chair the Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee

2013 Chamber of Commerce task force on City-Parish Charter

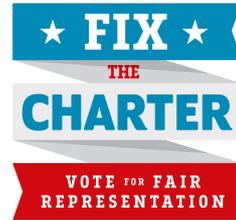
LCG employee:

Late 2013-2015 Chief Development Officer, later Public Works Director

Volunteer:

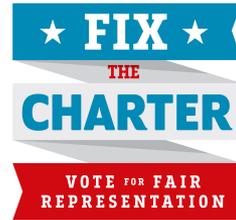
2018 Volunteered for Fix the Charter PAC

This is the SEVENTH Effort Since 2011



- 2010** - LCG Committee to make recommendations on Charter
- 2011** - Charter Commission that recommended Deconsolidation
- 2013** - Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce task force - made up of 2011 Charter Commission members - recommended “council within a council” - failed vote at Council
- 2014** - City-Parish Council - Parish Needs Committee
- 2018** - City-Parish Council proposed Charter amendments
- 2021** - Protect the City Committee recommendations
- 2021-22** - City-Parish Alignment Committee

2019 Transition Committee did not address the most pressing issues

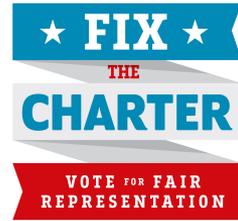


Blue Ribbon Committee, but few members with LCG experience - lot of time spent “learning” about consolidation

MISSED OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS TRANSITION ISSUES:

- What is a “City” vote? What is a “Parish” vote? What is a “Joint” vote?
- How do the councils settle disputes when there is a disagreement on who should vote?
- Procedure for Joint meetings.
- Budget Procedure
- Last City-Parish Council could have “pre-adopted”

2018 Charter Amendments were an attempt at “Marriage Counseling”



Compromised between “city” and “parish” councilmen and leaders on both sides of the 2011 Deconsolidation Vote

2011 Deconsolidation was seen as a rush to judgment - Charter Commission couldn't agree, so they went straight to “divorce”

2018 Charter Amendments were good faith effort to improve consolidated government rather than dismantle it, recognition that problems did not go away in 2011

Successful Marriage requires BOTH SIDES to listen and learn

TWO BIG POINTS:

#1 - Our Form of Consolidation is Rare, Inherently Unfair and Full of Conflicts

- 29 of the 41 City-County consolidations nationwide are **FULLY CONSOLIDATED** (out of 3,143 counties in U.S.).
- Of the remaining **PARTIAL CONSOLIDATIONS**, the biggest city in the county has overwhelming percentage of county population.
- Main **city maintains effective political control**, which means they can **hold their elected officials accountable**.
- **ONLY IN LOUISIANA** are there partial consolidations where the city can easily be outvoted. **Baton Rouge and City of Lafayette only 50%**. Houma just 30% of Terrebonne Parish.

#2 - The FUNDAMENTAL FLAW in Charter: City of Lafayette Lacks Autonomy

JUST LOOK AT THE RESULTS. IT'S SIMPLE MATH:

- First 10 years of LCG, the annual Parish Contribution to the City General Fund averaged **\$3.2m**; last 10 years = **\$5.5m**
- 1996 City General Fund = **\$40.5m**; 2019 = **\$92m**
- **City has put up an additional \$50m since 1996, Parish only \$2m** — even when most growth has taken place outside of the City of Lafayette.
- Difficult for City of Lafayette voters to hold elected officials accountable - City of Lafayette vote is only worth $\frac{1}{2}$.
- Ask yourself - are city voters ok with this result? If not, what can they do about it?

TWO RECOMMENDATIONS:

#1 - Replace Political Consolidation with Functional Consolidation

The Parish can recognize the efficiencies of consolidated government services without the City of Lafayette sacrificing its political autonomy.

SEPARATE THE POLITICS; CONSOLIDATE THE FUNCTIONS.

- City of Lafayette mayor elected only by city residents
- Adopt **intergovernmental agreements** for shared functions
- Only 5% of LCG budget is “consolidated” anyway - we are 95% of the way there - Cost Allocation is Not Transparent
- Parish has strong drainage and roads funding, can take over those functions and contract with City of Lafayette
- **The Parish Needs Services; the City Needs Autonomy**

#2 - If We Keep Political Consolidation, then Let's Better Manage the Conflicts

- Let the City Council get a **second opinion** - Charter has always allowed for hiring of special council by either council for a “specific purpose”
 - LCG's charter features inherent, unavoidable conflicts so get a second opinion, rather than letting conflicts fester
 - SPECIFIC PURPOSE - **Budget Process** - City Council sole authority over City-funded line items - clear intent of voters
 - SPECIFIC PURPOSE - **IGAs** between the City and Parish should be as “arms length” as possible
- Explore split executive inside consolidation - seems difficult

QUESTIONS?

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opinions.*

Thank you for volunteering to serve.

Feel free to reach out - 337-303-7066

* All opinions are my own. To confirm, you can ask my wife and kids — they've had to hear me pontificate on the City-Parish Charter for years.