

12.12.11

After listening to the testimony of the stakeholders and public, the Cape Cod Chamber now believes that it is timely that we present our recommendations for restructured county government. As we articulated in our original statement, the issues such as the waste water litigation, future revenue streams, and the advent of OpenCape enabling more regionalization opportunities demand immediate attention.

The Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce supports centralized, effective county government in order to address these issues. In response to the request for specifics, we offer these comments.

NAME:

We recommend we refer to county government as Cape Cod Regional Government in order to reduce confusion with Barnstable County vs. the Town of Barnstable and one of its seven villages, also called Barnstable, where county offices are located. This also underscores the regional nature of the entity.

LEGISLATIVE BODY:

We support electing a 5 or 7-member body referred to as the Board of Cape Cod County Supervisors/Cape Cod County Legislators/ or some other appropriate name. We support changing the name from “Commissioners” in order to differentiate this role from the Cape Cod Commission’s appointed Cape Cod Commissioners.

These County Legislators could comprise two “at large” and five from areas that represent “one person/one vote”. The five areas could mimic the existing districts for Massachusetts State Representative, with some amendment in order to include all of Falmouth. Currently the recently redrawn districts include:

1. 4th Barnstable: Provincetown, Truro, Wellfleet, Eastham, Orleans, Chatham, Harwich and part of Brewster to the east.
2. 1st Barnstable: part of Brewster to the west, Dennis and part of Yarmouth to the east and Barnstable village.
3. 2nd Barnstable: essentially what is Cotuit, Osterville, Centerville, Hyannis & West Yarmouth.
4. 5th Barnstable: West Barnstable, Sandwich and part of Bourne to the north.
5. 3rd Barnstable: part of Bourne to the south, Mashpee and most of Falmouth, with a western portion that falls in the Barnstable, Dukes & Nantucket seat – shifting this population back would alter the lines somewhat.

A mechanism would need to be created to decide who leads the meetings of the Board of Legislators.

Transition Recommendation:

We recommend that in order to populate this initial Board of Legislators prior to the first elections, that, in addition to the existing County Commissioners, leaders be drawn from the current Assembly of Delegates.

ADMINISTRATION:

We support appointment by the Board of Legislators of a strong County Manager or Executive Manager with a background in municipal and organizational management, proven financial, legal and leadership skills. We would set no term limit on this appointment, but require an annual performance assessment against clear goals and objectives. A job description should include the duties of day to day operations, with authority to hire and fire county employees including a chief financial officer and general counsel and assistant manager.

ADVISORY COMMITTEES:

We recommend the creation of a number of advisory committees to help inform, guide and provide input to the Board of Legislators.

First, as we recognize the criticality of coordination with the 15 towns on Cape Cod, we support the idea of empowering town managers in county decision-making. This could be accomplished by creation of a Comprehensive Financial Advisory Council of the County – populated with town managers (not their designees.) A primary role could be seeking areas for consolidation or cost-sharing .

Transition Recommendation:

Second, as we recognize the knowledge, dedication and experience of the delegates on the Assembly of Delegates, a body which would be dissolved under this proposal as the legislative function is mapped to the new Board of Legislators, we support drawing members of this body to help populate the various advisory committees that are created to support the county government in its work.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SYNERGIES AND REGIONALIZATION:

We could envision a consolidation of other regional activities and services into the umbrella of the Cape Cod Regional Government in order to better align mission, programs and resources. The opportunities for cost saving, efficiency, expanded financial resources and greater effectiveness in addressing the challenges facing our region mitigate in favor of continuing this process of evaluation of regionalizing services.