

# **Committee on Form of Government Transition**

## **Final Report**

Please allow the following to serve as the Committee on Form of Government Transition's final report. As you know, the Board of Commissioners on December 3, 2024, passed Commissioners Order 278-24, which laid out the duties and responsibilities of the Committee on Form of Government Transition. The Committee's express role is to make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners for approval. On January 20, 2025, the Commission named the nine voting members and seven ex-officio non-voting members of the Committee.

The voting members, with their neighborhoods, are:

- Mayor Ron Washington, Lewisburg
- Michael Beeby, Licking Riverside
- Billie Mocabee-Kegley, West Latonia
- Angie Taylor, Latonia-Rosedale
- Lisa Desmarais, Licking Riverside
- Ginger Dawson, Old Town/Mutter Gottes
- Fritz Kuhlman, Westside
- David Davidson, Licking Riverside
- Ella Frye, Wallace Woods

The ex-officio, non-voting members are:

- City Commissioner/Mayor Pro Tem Shannon C. Smith
- City Commissioner Tim Downing
- City Commissioner Tim Acri
- City Commissioner James Toebbe
- City Manager Sharmili Reddy
- City Solicitor Frank Schultz
- City Clerk Susan Ellis

### **Preparation of Initial Findings**

In preparation of the initial recommendations outlined below, the Committee on Form of Government Transition conducted monthly meetings as well as a set of sub-committee meetings. Additionally, the committee interviewed Independence Mayor Chris Reinersman regarding the operations of his city.

Additionally, as directed by the Board of Commissioners, the committee sought public



feedback regarding key issues such as the prospective council's size, the method of election, and the potential infusion of partisanship in the elections. Such efforts took the form of an online survey as well as two in-person forums. The online survey received over 200 responses and the in-person forums resulted in feedback from over two dozen residents.

Furthermore, in addition to the comments received from citizens during the two in-person forums, the committee considered the following enclosed documents:

- Peer City Case Study Summary & Questionnaires;
- Online Survey Summary Results;
- In-Person Forum Survey Results;
- Kentucky League of Cities' 2024 Wage & Salary Report;
- Sub-Committee Reports; &
- Board of Commissioners: Salary & Benefits.

### **Initial Findings**

During a meeting of the Committee on Form of Government Transition held on March 27, 2025, the Committee elected to address the initial key issues described below:

i. Council Size

The Committee's recommendation that the future council consist of six members was adopted by the Board of Commissioners through Order 06-2025. Said recommendation was made based on the belief that six council members would facilitate swift and deliberate decision making.

ii. Method of Election

The Committee's recommendation that future city council be elected at-large was adopted by the Board of Commissioners which maintained the relevant ordinance. Said recommendation was made based on the recognition that the vast majority of peer cities employed an at-large method.



iii. Partisanship

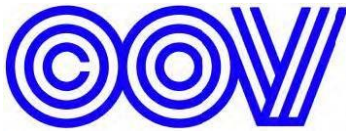
The Committee's recommendation that the City retain the non-partisan nature of the City's elections was adopted by the Board of Commissioners which maintained the relevant ordinance. Said recommendation was made based on the belief that avoiding partisan fueled confrontations was ideal for maintaining efficiency and decorum. Notably, this decision was overwhelmingly supported by the in-person and online survey data collected by the Committee on Form of Government Transition.

iv. Primary Elections

The Committee's recommendation was that the City continue utilizing primary elections in cases in which over double the number of candidates have filed for office. Said recommendation was adopted by the Board of Commissioners which maintained the relevant ordinance. Said recommendation was made based on the belief that primary elections encourage increased voter engagement and resulted in a batch of more serious candidates.

v. Council Salary

The Committee's recommendation that council member salaries amount to \$17,787.15 was adopted by the Board of Commissioners through Order 06-2025. Said recommendation was made based on a recognition that the role of council member is a part-time position and that the recommended salary amount was above the average salary offered by peer cities and that this amount would not increase the burden on the City's budget.



vi. Council Benefits

The Committee's recommendation that council member benefits be limited to access to a city owned laptop and phone was adopted by the Board of Commissioners through Order 06-2025. Said recommendation was made based on a recognition that the role of council member is a part-time position, and that the majority of peer cities do not provide said benefits to legislative body members.

vii. Mayoral Salary

The Committee's recommendation that mayoral salaries amount to the maximum allowable by the Kentucky Department of Local Government was adopted by the Board of Commissioners through Order 06-2025. Said recommendation was made based on a recognition that the role of mayor is a full-time position and that smaller peer cities provide their mayors with commensurate compensation.

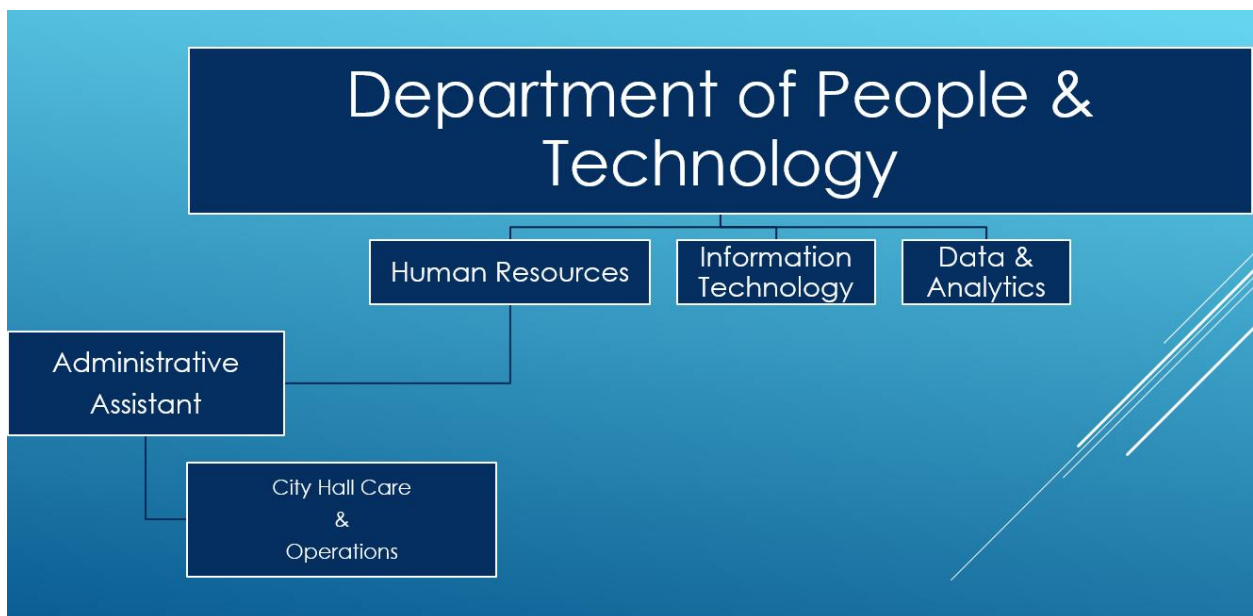
viii. Mayoral Benefits

The Committee's recommendation that mayoral benefits include a healthcare and retirement plan consistent with full-time employees was adopted by the Board of Commissioners through Order 06-2025. As was the recommendation that mayoral benefits should include access to a city owned laptop, phone, and vehicle (or stipend). Said recommendation was made based on a recognition that the role of mayor is a full-time position and that smaller peer cities provide their mayors with commensurate benefits.



## Department Structure

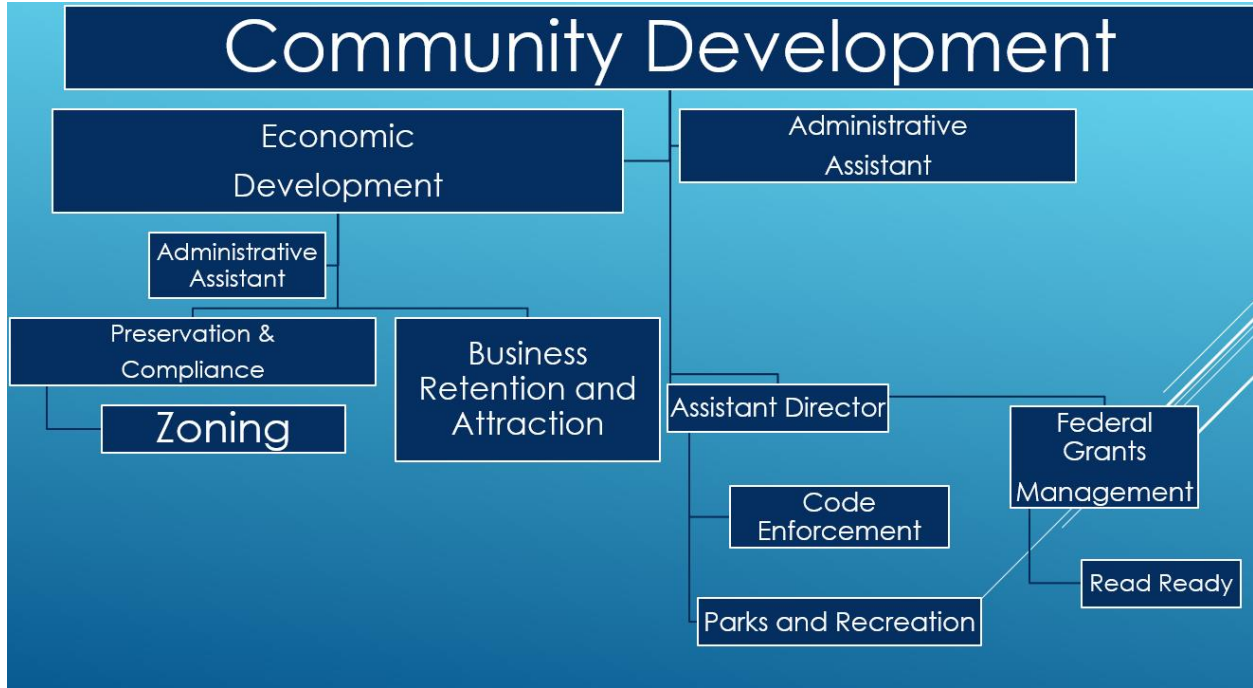
Following the initial findings and recommendations being forwarded to the Board of Commissioners, the Committee on Form of Government Transition undertook a structural review of city government. This process included meeting with every department head to conduct interviews regarding the effectiveness of their departments, potential opportunities for improvement, and operational challenges.



Following these interviews, a recommendation was forwarded to the committee regarding the internal reorganization of several departments. First, the recommendation called for the Economic Development Department, led by a director, and Neighborhood Services Department, led by a director, to be placed under a single overarching Community Development Department, led by an executive director. Second, it recommended the pairing of Human Resources, Information Technology, and Data & Analytics under an overarching People and Technology Department, also led by an executive director. Third, it recommended reformatting the Communications Division by separating it from the formal City Manager's Office and placing it



under an External Affairs Department, led by an executive director.

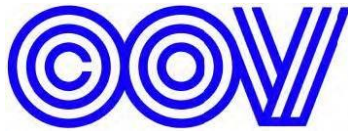


These recommendations were ultimately endorsed by the Committee, recommended to the Board of Commissioners which has since enacted said changes through the budget process.

### **Code of Ordinances**

Beginning in the fall of 2025, the City of Covington’s Legal Department began reviewing the Code of Ordinances to identify changes necessary to conform to a mayor-council form of government. As part of this process, the department also incorporated recommendations from various department heads regarding changes they believed would improve departmental efficiency and overall governmental operations.

These recommendations were developed into draft ordinances, which were periodically reviewed and voted on by the Committee on Form of Government Transition throughout 2026 prior to the publication of this report. The Committee’s votes served as recommendations for



potential action by the Board of Commissioners. All such enclosed recommendations remain subject to final approval by the Board of Commissioners.

### **Boards & Commissions**

As part of its efforts to examine the City government's efficiency, the Committee on Form of Government Transition also created a subcommittee to review the City's boards and commissions. Through questionnaires and interviews with staff members, the subcommittee identified the need for additional analysis of certain boards and commissions, particularly as it relates to their efficiency, structure, and ongoing role within City government.

It is the recommendation of the Committee on Form of Government Transition that the subcommittee continue its work through December 2026, prior to the expiration of the original order establishing the Committee. At its final meeting, the Committee on Form of Government Transition should provide an addendum to this report for consideration by the Board of Commissioners based on the findings of the sub-committee.