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# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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February 14, 1991

### MEMORANDUM

TO: PDC Executive Directors

FROM: Stanley S. Kidwell, Jr. 

Enclosed is an account of the year-long effort (1969-70) that went into delineating planning district boundaries.

This was a task I considered doing for a long time, and my decision to retire made it a now-or-never venture. Drawing from memory, from notes made at the time, from file material and from the recollections of other State Planning employees who were directly involved and are still around, I've put together a report which recalls the activity that went into drawing the boundaries. It doesn't get into the reasons why boundary lines were placed where they are, just the steps taken to fashion the planning district network.

When the project began, we had intended to publish the finished document. However, tight finances have put any thoughts of publication on hold for the time being. If you have comments or reaction to the report, let Rob Blackmore hear from you.

SSKjr:pd

Enclosure



**HOW VIRGINIA'S  
PLANNING DISTRICT  
BOUNDARIES WERE  
DRAWN**

January 1991

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## PREFACE

There are two basic approaches to delineating statewide planning districts: top-down and bottom-up.

Top-down occurs when state government imposes the boundaries and says to local governments: this will be the geographic framework for regional planning. If you want to organize a regional planning agency, you must use the regions we've delineated for you.

Bottom-up occurs when local governments develop the district boundaries and decide among themselves which jurisdictions will be invited to join.

Georgia's planning regions were created with a bottom-up approach -- not so much by design as by circumstance. Georgia is reputedly where the phenomenon of organizing regional planning commissions in rural areas originated in the early 1960's. It began in northwest Georgia as a grass roots movement that resulted in the formation of a rural 13 county regional planning and development commission. The success of this agency led to the concept spreading to other parts of Georgia and prompted the state to encourage the formation of new regional planning agencies by providing financial aid. By 1964 when Georgia employed a state-level regional planner to assist with this program, several regional planning and development commissions had already been organized.

Virginia, by contrast, used a top-down approach -- not so much by circumstance as by design. The top-down approach was written into state law in 1968 (§2.1-63.5 Code of Virginia). This statute directed the Division of State Planning and Community Affairs (DSPCA) to: conduct surveys and studies necessary to divide the state into planning districts; develop a "preliminary district plan" and hold at least one public hearing in each proposed planning district; develop a "final district plan"; and notify local governments which planning district they had been assigned to. The Director of DSPCA was given sole authority to make decisions on planning district boundaries. Neither the Governor nor the state legislature was authorized a role in the process.

Given a choice between these two methods of establishing planning district boundaries, most local governments would probably choose the bottom-up approach because it puts them in control of decision making. However, organizing planning districts from the bottom-up can be a painstaking process. Georgia's 21 regional planning and development commissions were ten years in forming, whereas planning district commissions (PDCs) were organized in 19 of Virginia's 22 planning districts in less than a year after the district boundary delineations were announced. And, within three years, PDCs had been organized in all 22 of the state's planning districts.

There were pitfalls in a top-down approach. If implemented in a heavy handed manner, it could have alienated local governments and made them reluctant to join a PDC. This possibility was a major concern of Virginia's state planning officials and influenced how they delineated planning districts. They decided to turn the process on

end -- to try to convert the top-down approach into a bottom-up approach by including local government officials and citizens in the delineation exercise. This report is an account of the approach that was used to delineate Virginia's planning district boundaries.

**Note:** The Division of State Planning and Community Affairs was abolished in 1976, the result of a state government reorganization. Its personnel and programs were disbursed among a number of other state agencies.

## BACKGROUND

Regional planning commissions have been around at least since the 1920's. But until the 1960's, they were generally confined to metropolitan areas where dense population concentrations created conditions that needed to be addressed through intergovernmental cooperation and planning. However, as previously noted, the formation of a non-metropolitan regional planning and development agency in rural Georgia in 1961 gave birth to a movement that resulted in the organization of regional planning commissions on a statewide basis throughout America.

Today, there are more than 500 regional planning commissions serving metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas in 46 states. In the last 30 years, intergovernmental planning and cooperation has become a widely established concept largely because of the proliferation of regional planning agencies. And in Washington, D. C., the National Association of Regional Councils represents the interests of regional planning commissions at the national level.

### Setting the Stage for PDCs

In 1966, the Virginia General Assembly decided the time was right to study the state's six (at that time) metropolitan areas. They were Lynchburg, Richmond, Roanoke, the two sides of Hampton Roads and the northern Virginia suburbs of the Washington, D. C. metropolitan area. These six areas met the U. S. Census Bureau definition for

Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA's). They comprised 12 percent of Virginia's land area, 56 percent of its people and had experienced 85 percent of its population growth from 1950 to 1960.

In retrospect, the General Assembly's decision to study metropolitan areas was timely in 1966. These areas were undergoing economic and demographic transformation and they needed help to cope with constant change.

In accord with the General Assembly's resolution to study metropolitan areas, Governor Mills E. Godwin, Jr. appointed the Virginia Metropolitan Areas Study Commission. This body, which became known as the Hahn Commission after its Chairman, Dr. T. Marshall Hahn, Jr., President of VPI, (now VPI & SU), began its work in the summer of 1966. DSPCA assisted the Hahn Commission by participating in its deliberations, keeping records, preparing research documents and publishing three commission reports. After more than a year of intensive study, consultations, public hearings and staff work, the commission issued its final report -- Metropolitan Virginia: A Program for Action, November 1967.

This report contained seven recommendations. The two that address planning districts and service districts will be discussed in this document. The planning district recommendation has been successfully implemented; the service district recommendation has not. A critique of the service district legislation and speculation about why it has not been implemented is included in Appendix C.



The Hahn Commission recommended delineation of a statewide network of planning districts and creation of PDCs within each district. This seemed a curious recommendation to some, coming from a group that had been directed to study conditions in metropolitan areas, because planning districts would encompass all parts of the state -- rural as well as urban. But the Hahn Commission detected a relationship between what was happening in rural and urban areas and believed that a statewide planning district program would help both. The root cause of metropolitan problems resulted from people moving into rapidly growing urban areas at a rate that made it difficult to provide services, extend utilities, build streets and add schoolrooms fast enough to keep pace. And many of those who became metropolitan residents in the 50's and 60's were drawn from rural areas, lured by prospects for jobs. In effect, rural areas were losing tomorrow's leaders. Planning district commissions could provide the basis for area-wide planning throughout the state. And if, as the Hahn Commission concluded, the problems facing rural and urban areas were related, the existence of state-wide regional planning agencies could benefit both areas.

### **Planning for Delineation**

The 1968 Virginia General Assembly enacted legislation requiring the creation of planning districts, and DSPCA began to prepare for the task. The first step was to develop a strategy for delineating district boundaries. This resulted in the development of the flow chart in Appendix D. The chart shows the sequence of steps carried out in the course of

delineating planning districts. It served as a useful guide during the delineation process. After the process had been charted, the next order of business was to develop a delineation schedule.

### **The Timetable**

The General Assembly established an eighteen month deadline for delineating planning districts -- from July 1, 1968 to December 31, 1969. It also appropriated over half a million dollars for grants to PDCs for the two year 1968-70 biennium budget period. To be in compliance with state fiscal policy, this money had to be used for its intended purpose before July 1, 1970, or it would revert to the state treasury. But in order to be eligible to receive a share of the state appropriation, a PDC had to be chartered, organized and operating. This set of circumstances created a dilemma for those responsible for making the delineations. How much time should be spent drawing planning districts boundary lines?

The job of organizing PDCs, once the district boundaries were established, was a complex undertaking. First, someone or some group within the planning district had to convene a meeting of community leaders -- local government officials and private citizens -- to decide if there was enough interest to try to create a PDC. If the answer was "yes", a committee had to be formed to draft a charter agreement that would set operating rules for the commission. Drawing up a charter required reaching agreement on some sensitive issues such as the location of the commission headquarters. Many planning districts had

a number of communities that could serve as headquarters locations and this often presented a difficult choice to local decision makers. Another tough issue was apportioning representation on the commission among the member local governments? Should each locality be entitled to an equal number of representatives or should the populous jurisdictions have more? And what about voting rights? If each locality had the same number of representatives regardless of population, should votes of members from larger jurisdictions carry more weight?

When the organization committee was satisfied with the proposed charter agreement, it had to be reviewed by the governing body of each county, city and town eligible for membership. If it was found to be acceptable, the governing body had to enact a resolution ratifying it at a board of supervisors or council meeting. Getting a charter agreement drawn up and ratified could prove to be time consuming, especially in areas without a history of formal regional cooperation. In addition, the representatives of member local governments had to be appointed; a name for the PDC had to be agreed upon; an office had to be established; an organizational meeting of the PDC had to be held; a director had to be recruited; and the process of developing a work program had to be started.

With this in mind, state planners decided to delineate planning district boundaries in the 12 month period from July 1, 1968 to June 30, 1969 instead of taking the 18 months authorized by state law. A 12 month schedule would give localities trying to organize PDCs a full year to meet eligibility requirements for a state grant before any

unused funds had to be returned to the state treasury.

### The Criteria

Once the deadline for delineation had been set, attention turned to identifying criteria for grouping localities into logical planning regions. The following concepts were developed to aid in drawing planning district boundaries.

1. Groupings of localities classified as SMSA's by the U. S. Census Bureau should not be split up, but the delineation process could "build upon" such areas. In each of Virginia's six metropolitan areas (Northern Virginia, Richmond, Lynchburg, Roanoke and the two sides of Hampton Roads), regional planning commissions existed before 1968. It would have been a mistake not to recognize these associations of local governments that were already engaged in regional planning. However, if an adjacent non-member local government had significant social and economic ties with other local governments in one of these metro-area regional planning commissions, it was considered for inclusion in the planning district.
2. A planning district should include several local governments and have a land area large enough to make it a bonafide region planning, but at the same time it should be small enough to keep travel distances reasonable for commission members to attend meetings and for the staff to work with member local governments. Travel time from the periphery to a central point in the district should not exceed one hour.
3. A planning district should contain at least three independent local governments -

cities or counties or a combination of them. Under state law, a PDC cannot exist unless it has at least two independent member local governments. A PDC with only two member localities would have to shut down if one decided to withdraw.

4. A planning district should contain at least 100,000 people. State grants to PDCs are related to population. In 1969, state grants for PDCs were 20 cents per capita annually. A 100,000 population would make a PDC eligible for \$20,000 a year. The median salary for regional planning commission directors at that time was around \$17,000. If member local government contributions to a PDC matched state contributions, a PDC with 100,000 population would have a base budget of \$40,000 -- a sum sufficient in 1969 to hire an executive director, professional planner and secretary, to rent an office and to pay operating costs. However, if achieving a targeted number of people meant delineating a district that appeared to be too large geographically, politically unworkable or that would bridge boundaries formed by natural landforms, total population became a secondary consideration.
5. Several other factors were considered in delineating planning district boundaries, including: political compatibility, natural land forms, and economic indicators.
  - a. political compatibility -- the relationships that local governments have with one another can be vital in deciding whether to participate in a planning district commission. If local governments are unwilling to work together, they may be unwilling to organize a PDC. With this in mind, a decision was

made to seek the counsel of local government officials during the delineation process. Information gained in this way proved valuable in delineating planning districts.

- b. natural landforms -- where landforms such as mountains, rivers, or bays are barriers to interaction between adjoining local governments, these natural barriers were considered for planning district boundaries.
- c. socio-economic considerations -- where possible a proposed planning district was a group of local governments that formed an identifiable socio-economic unit tied together as an employment, trade and communication center with common economic interests. But this combination could not always be achieved, and other factors, such as those mentioned above, proved to be more important to the formation of PDCs than socio-economic considerations.

No one believed it would be possible to devise planning districts that met every criterion, but having a list of desirable characteristics helped direct the delineation process.

## DRAWING THE BOUNDARIES

The year long experience of delineating planning districts was divided into four phases: data gathering; the road show; public hearings; and delineation. During this year, the map of Virginia's planning districts was produced in three stages. The initial version, the "draft" map, was based upon information gained from the data gathering phase of the delineation exercise. The second version, the "preliminary" map, was a revision of the draft map incorporating information obtained during the road show phase of delineation. While the draft map had not been released to the public, the preliminary map was released and presented for discussion at the public hearings. The third version, the "final" map, was a revision of the preliminary map based upon testimony at the public hearings. The "final map" was the blueprint for setting up PDCs.

### Data Gathering

At the beginning of the data gathering phase, the first of five news releases on delineating planning districts was issued. It announced the start of a one-year effort to delineate a network of planning districts for Virginia.

Gathering information needed to prepare the draft planning district map was a fast-paced, four-month exercise during the summer of 1968. Here's what occurred:

1. Five of DSPCA's operational offices - economic opportunity, federal programs, local and regional planning, research and special programs - had employees who

traveled the state regularly, who were familiar with Virginia's local government structure and who worked with local governments on a daily basis. Collectively, these employees had a wealth of knowledge about local governments. Each office head was asked to delineate a planning district map drawing upon the knowledge of staff members. Ideas from these maps were considered in drawing the draft planning district map.

2. An undated map of Virginia from DSPCA's files identified 18 "regional planning commissions." Four proved to be inactive. Three others were confined within the boundaries of a single county and two more were staffed on a part time basis by volunteers. In one instance, the boundaries of two adjoining commissions overlapped. The other nine were active, operating regional planning organizations. But all 18 commissions had been created for a specific purpose and each had a story to tell. This information could have a bearing on the placement of planning district boundaries. Each was visited during the data gathering phase. Finding someone to talk with from the defunct commissions was a problem, but former commission members from these four organizations were identified and interviewed. Insights gained from visits with representatives of the 18 regional planning bodies provided useful background information for delineating the draft planning district map.
3. In the course of visiting regional planning commissions, a meeting was also held with each of the 15 members of the Hahn Commission in their home communities



- to bring them up-to-date on the work being done to delineate planning districts.
4. Sixteen state agencies were identified that used substate districts in the administration of their programs. A meeting was held with each agency to learn about the activities it carried out on a regional basis. During these sessions, the agency head was informed of the emerging planning district program and how it might affect state government. When this round of meetings was over, a composite map was developed by superimposing each agency's substate districts on a state base map to see how well the boundaries of districts delineated by that agency matched up with those delineated by other state agencies. No consistent pattern existed among the boundaries of districts that were being used by the various agencies.
  5. Meetings were held with a number of other organizations which seemed likely to interact with PDCs once they were established. Included were the Virginia Municipal League, the Virginia Association of Counties, the State Chamber of Commerce, the Virginia Electric Power company's economic development office, the Institute of Government of the University of Virginia, (now incorporated into the Center for Public Service), and the Cooperative Extension Division of VPI & SU. Each agency was given an opportunity to provide information which it thought could be pertinent to the delineation process.
  6. Meetings were conducted with five Washington, D. C. based organizations. Three were involved extensively in the workings of substate regional planning agencies.

The Economic Development Administration of the U. S. Department of Commerce and the Appalachian Regional Commission were engaged in funding substate agencies in a number of states. The National Service to Regional Councils (now the National Association of Regional Councils) represented the interest of substate regional planning agencies with Congress and agencies of the federal government. The fourth was the Brookings Institution which at the time was engaged in a study of planning districts in several states. The fifth was the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments, a regional planning body which served Washington, D.C. and the metropolitan portions of Maryland and Virginia. Each of these agencies provided insights on substate districting that were useful in the delineation process.

7. Other states with active planning district programs were asked about criteria used to group local governments and about how their districts had been delineated.
8. During the data gathering stage, an information brochure on planning districts was printed and distributed.
9. The draft planning district map was a blend of the delineation criteria and information gained during a summer of research and discussions about the planning district concept. It was an inhouse, academic exercise but an exercise based upon perceptions, advice and recommendations of knowledgeable people. What it lacked was input from local government officials and citizens, those who would be directly affected by the placement of planning district boundaries on a state map. And this missing ingredient, local input, was acknowledged to be a

crucial deficiency, a deficiency that had to be overcome before the process was completed.

### The Road Show

By and large, localities were not consulted during the data gathering phase which culminated in the delineation of a draft planning district map. But now it was time to involve local leaders. Unless they were satisfied with the way delineation was handled, the groups of localities that were designated as planning district might not evolve into PDCs.

Three alternatives were considered for getting local participation. One was to prepare a report and a questionnaire about the planning district concept and distribute them to local government officials and community leaders in each jurisdiction eligible for PDC membership. A response to the questionnaire would reveal how individuals felt about the new program and what their preferences were in terms of being aligned with other localities in a planning district. This alternative was rejected because it seemed unrealistic to expect local officials and citizens without prior knowledge of the subject to read and fully understand a report on planning districts and then respond perceptively to a questionnaire. Also, it would not provide the personal touch of public meetings.

Alternative two was to hold public meetings in eight to ten strategic locations around the state and to invite all local governments in the vicinity to attend an information session on the planning district concept. This seemed better than alternative one, but it was rejected because it might discourage representation from distant localities. Round-trips of 75 to 100 miles would not be uncommon for those who wanted to attend. Also, some participants might be reluctant to discuss their ideas on planning district boundaries freely in front of representatives from neighboring jurisdictions.

Alternative three (the one selected) was "the road show" -- a public meeting in each of the 96 counties, 38 cities and 25 towns eligible to join a planning district commission in 1968.

At the time, conducting individual meetings with 159 local governments was said to be an unprecedented undertaking among state agencies. All 159 meetings had to be conducted within a six week period to meet the delineation schedule. However, there were good reasons for the road show. First, it would provide the maximum opportunity for citizens and public officials to gain information on the planning district concept. No one would have to travel beyond the border of his or her local government to attend a public meeting. There would be time to discuss the planning district concept and to answer questions about it. And those who presented ideas on district boundary alignments for their locality could do so without wondering how citizens from neighboring jurisdictions might react. It was a major effort but the personal touch of individual meetings was worth the energy it required.

To carry out this exercise, the state was divided into quadrants, each with approximately 40 eligible localities. Four teams of DSPCA staff members were selected. Each team was assigned one quadrant. Major participants in the delineation of planning districts are listed in Appendix A.

A five-week trip calendar was developed for each team, scheduling meetings from mid October to mid November 1968. To stay on schedule, a team had to spend at least three consecutive days each week away from Richmond. A typical road-show day consisted of three two-hour meetings beginning at 9:30 am, 2:30 pm and 7:30 pm. Each meeting was held with a different local government. Teams had to move quickly to eat lunch or dinner between meetings and arrive at the next session on time. Some weeks, because of travel distances from Richmond, a team might spend four consecutive days on the road.

When the master schedule for the road show was ready, letters were sent to local officials notifying them when DSPCA staff members would be in their community to hold a public meeting on planning districts. Notices went to all county supervisors, county administrators, board clerks and clerks of circuit courts; to all city and town mayors, council members and managers; and to local planning commission chairmen in each of the 159 eligible localities. The letters explained that while DSPCA would have preferred to let each locality schedule its own meeting, this was not possible because of time constraints. In addition each General Assembly member was invited to the meetings in his or her district, as was the chairman and director of each active regional planning

commission. News release number 2 announced the up-coming meetings with local governments throughout Virginia.

Letters were followed up with telephone calls to each community to identify someone who would arrange for a meeting site. Local governments were also given the option of holding a joint meeting with one or more adjacent localities if they desired. There were few joint meetings, and those that occurred were county-town sessions.

Of all the activities undertaken during the delineation of planning districts, the road show turned out to be the most valuable. People in local governments genuinely appreciated having state officials from Richmond make personal visits to seek their advice and counsel on the delineation of planning districts. Give-and-take among state and local representatives answered questions and cleared up misunderstandings about the planning district program. These meetings were a major factor behind general acceptance of planning district boundaries that were established in July 1969. News release number 3 said that meetings with local governments had concluded and that a preliminary planning district map would be presented at public hearings early in 1969.

### **Public Hearings**

When the road show had ended, the agency's director and the four team leaders met to develop the preliminary map that would be presented at public hearings. Using information gained from the meetings with local governments, adjustments were made to the draft map drawn up a few months earlier.

News release number 4 contained the preliminary map showing 22 proposed planning districts and announced that a public hearing would be scheduled in each district beginning in February 1969.

Public hearings were conducted during a ten-week period from mid-February to mid-April. All were held in the evening to encourage attendance. At least two hearings were scheduled each week. The hearings produced considerable discussion about the planning district concept, but little dissent over the proposed boundaries. Testimony at the hearings recommended boundary changes that affected only four of the proposed 22 planning districts.

Proposals were made to move Alleghany County and the Cities of Covington and Clifton Forge from planning district 6 (Central Shenandoah PDC) to planning district 5 (Fifth PDC), and Madison and Orange Counties from planning district 10 (Thomas Jefferson PDC) to planning district 9 (Rappahannock-Rapidan PDC).

#### **Delineation**

News release number 5 announced that hearings were completed and that delineations would be revealed by July 1, 1969. The final map was produced by revising the preliminary map to include the proposed changes to the four planning districts discussed above. Governor Godwin was briefed on the planning district boundaries shown on the final map and on the rationale for delineations.

A press conference was held to announce the planning district delineations and a letter was sent to officials in each of the 159 localities eligible for PDC membership notifying them which planning district they had been placed in.

## CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions to this report will focus on the efficacy of the delineation process and the planning district boundary lines that resulted from it. When it was completed, delineation was regarded as a success. It was announced six months ahead of the statutory deadline, there was remarkably little opposition to the proposed alignments and local governments responded by creating 19 PDCs between July 1969 and June 1970, the first year of the program. But how do planning district boundaries measure up after 21 years? Are they still valid or is it time to rethink them?

Planning district boundaries were drawn to fit conditions that existed in 1968-69. Conditions change with time and therefore the boundaries should always be under study. Furthermore, Section 36-140 of the Code of Virginia requires assessment of planning district boundaries on a continuing basis. But any attention to redrawing planning district boundaries should consider the following points:

- \* for the first 20 years (1969-89) there were no boundary changes.
- \* during the first 20 years, there was only one earnest attempt to change the boundaries. In the early 1970's, a large metropolitan area county invited another county from the same planning district, a county from an adjacent district and a city from a third district to join it in forming a new planning district. This attempt fell short when the three smaller localities declined the offer. The proposal never got far enough along to be presented to DSPCA, the state agency with authority to approve or deny it.



- \* there have been fewer than a dozen inquiries by individual jurisdictions asking about the procedures for moving to an adjoining planning district, and there was no serious follow-up to these inquiries by any of the localities that initiated them.
- \* Some localities withdrew from PDCs during the first 20 years, but all rejoined the commissions they left.
- \* the first boundary change occurred in 1990 during the 21st year of this program, but it was a major revision -- the merger of the Peninsula PDC and the Southeastern Virginia PDC to form the Hampton Roads PDC. This action reduced the number of PDCs from 22 to 21. The merger was implemented because local governments in the two planning districts determined it would be in their best interest to combine into a single district. This action did not actually split up a planning district. Every eligible locality in the two districts became a charter member of the Hampton Roads PDC.

During the first 20 years, planning district boundaries were stable. But what lies ahead? Future mergers of other planning districts seem unlikely. In tidewater the two PDCs developed ties - economic, social, physical and political - that made merger a logical move. But elsewhere in Virginia, conditions do not appear to favor such action. At this time, no serious merger talks are underway among any PDCs.

If merging entire districts is unlikely, what about realignment of the local governments in existing districts? This could be initiated in two ways. DHCD has

authority to propose planning district boundary changes, or it may react to realignment proposals from PDCs or individual local governments. In either case, prospects for significant boundary adjustments seem dim. After 21 years of working together, localities in a planning district become comfortable with the relationships they've developed with other member localities. Ties and alliances are formed that tend to hold the membership together. Of course, periodic disagreements can threaten these alliances, but experience has shown such disruptions tend to be short-lived and the traditional arrangements seem to endure. Twenty-one year histories can be hard to overcome. And when conditions arise that call for intergovernmental action among localities in adjoining planning districts, cooperative agreements between the PDCs can provide a way to handle these situations. Such agreements can be acceptable alternatives to redrawing district boundaries. Without compelling reasons, state government is not apt to shift localities from PDCs they are happy with to adjacent planning districts where they would have to "start over" by developing new relationships.

The concept of "dual membership" is a recent innovation that allows a locality to join a second PDC while maintaining membership in the one it was initially assigned to. Dual membership was originated by a locality that had developed significant ties -- economic, social and physical -- to some of the localities in an adjacent PDC. It believed these ties were sufficient to justify establishing a formal alliance with this commission, but at the same time it did not want to withdraw from the PDC it had belonged to since the early 1970's. Special legislation was enacted in 1985 clearing the way for the locality

to be a member of both commissions (§15.1-1416 Code of Virginia). In certain situations, dual membership may be more acceptable than realignment of planning district boundaries.

Virginia's planning district map may not change appreciably unless objectives originally envisioned for PDCs also change. Mechanisms have evolved for dealing with situations that require PDCs to interact, and as long as PDCs continue to be areawide planning agencies, forums for dealing with intergovernmental concerns, and coordinating agencies to address regional issues, the present alignments, with minor adjustments, should serve reasonably well.

**APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

The Virginia Division of State Planning and Community Affairs (DSCPA) was responsible for delineating planning district boundaries, assisting in the formation of planning district commissions, and administering the program once PDCs began to organize.

Three staff members were involved with developing the planning district program on a day-to-day basis.

T. Edward Temple, DSPCA's Director and former City Manager of Danville, Virginia was an avid spokesman for regional planning and intergovernmental cooperation. His unrelenting efforts in behalf of the planning districts were a major reason for the early successes in getting this program underway.

Robert H. Kirby, DSPCA's Assistant Director, worked closely with the Hahn Commission during its study of metropolitan areas. Much of his time during the initial year of the planning district program was spent on activities associated with delineating district boundaries.

Stanley S. Kidwell, Jr., DSPCA's Regional Planning Officer, former Chief of Regional Planning for the Georgia State Planning Bureau, was responsible for developing the approach and schedule used in delineating boundaries and for seeing that the schedule was maintained.

These three individuals also conducted the 22 public hearings on the planning district preliminary map in early 1969.

The four teams that conducted public meetings with 159 Virginia local governments were comprised of persons who filled top administrative jobs in DSPCA. The team leaders were Lynn Curry, Chief of Special Programs; Stanley S. Kidwell, Jr., Regional Planning Officer; Robert H. Kirby, Assistant Director; and B. C. Leynes, Jr., Chief of Local and Regional Planning.

Other team members included Charles R. Burbach, Chief of Community Affairs; Thomas P. Credle, Chief of Federal Programs; H. Bland Franklin, VPI Extension Specialist; H. Jackson Furr, Local Government Specialist and Ann M. Harvey, Chief of Mental Retardation Programs.

## APPENDIX B

### The Virginia Metropolitan Areas Study Commission

T. Marshall, Hahn, Jr., Chairman

J. Lewis Rawls, Jr., Vice Chairman

Willis M. Anderson

Harold I. Baumes

Fitzgerald Bemiss

Weldon Cooper

Alan S. Donnahoe

John D. Gray

Francis S. Kenny

George R. Long

Carlton C. Massey

John B. McGaughy

William F. Parkerson, Jr.

W. Ferguson Reid

J. Harvie Wilkinson, Jr.

## APPENDIX C

Service districts, as envisioned by the Hahn Commission, would be a new unit of government intended to deliver governmental services on an intergovernmental basis. In the words of the Commission, there was "no reasonable alternative to providing certain governmental functions and services most effectively on an area-wide basis."

The Hahn Commission saw planning district commissions as stepping stones to the creation of service districts. The commission report said that "the creation of a service district can be expected to evolve naturally following a period of area-wide planning.....in a planning district." However, service district legislation, enacted in 1968, never caught on at the local level. There were two primary reasons.

First, it was an idea ahead of its time. While the advantage of providing governmental functions and services on an intergovernmental basis is generally acknowledged, conditions needed to foster this kind of cooperation were not pervasive in Virginia in 1968. At the time, there was no urgency for local governments to cooperate on services because things were going well. Hard times can make economic advantages of intergovernmental cooperation appealing, but the 1960's and 70's were generally a time of well-being for Virginia local governments. This worked against the implementation of service districts. And there were other factors. Local governments understandably guard proprietorship of the services they provide because ownership gives them control. In addition, some services such as water supply can be a dependable source of revenue.



Furthermore, working out the agreements to provide intergovernmental services is a slow, painstaking process that cannot be accomplished without a willingness among the participants to negotiate and compromise.

The second factor that worked against the formation of service districts was the inclusion of certain provisions in the law that would seem to make their creation all but impossible. Here's what these provisions required:

1. A service district has to be based upon planning district boundaries. And when a service district plan is drawn up, all localities that are members of the planning district commission must be named as parties to the plan (even if they don't want to be included) (§15.1-1421). (What the law doesn't recognize is that a combination of local governments which might be a logical regional planning area may not be appropriate for providing intergovernmental services.)
2. The proposed service district plan has to be approved by vote of the county board of supervisors or municipal council of each governing body named in the plan (§15.1-1425). Disapproval by a single governing body prevents a service district from being formed.
3. After the service district plan receives unanimous approval from the governing bodies named in it, the plan must then be approved in a referendum conducted in each local government that is a party to the plan.

A "no" vote on the plan by the electorate of a single local government prevents the service district from being formed.

These are big hurdles in the path of organizing a service district. And they seem insurmountable when considered (1) in relation to three additional provisions of the service district law and (2) in the context of Virginia annexation law in 1968. These three additional provisions in the service district law are analyzed below:

4. The power to "tax" -- a service district is permitted to levy an annual assessment on its local governments for the purpose of financing its operations. The assessment is based upon the true value of taxable property within the service district (§15.1-1436(a)). Local governing bodies in turn are authorized to levy a separate tax on real estate to cover the service district assessment (§15.1-1436(b)). The service district plan must include the amount or the percent of the annual assessment that the service district intends to levy. This seemingly puts the service district plan in double jeopardy. First, local elected officials realize that a vote for the plan is likely to be a vote to raise taxes of their constituents. Next, assuming that the proposal is approved by every governing body, it then goes to the citizens who have the final say in a referendum. And citizens who step into the polling booth know that a "yes" vote is a vote to raise their own taxes. In effect, the service district levy while technically not a tax is similar to a tax. It has the disadvantages of a tax but not the advantages. Since it is not a

tax, the service district (without taxing powers) may have trouble selling its bonds because it can not guarantee them through the power to tax. Nevertheless, the sale of bonds is regarded as a major source of service district income authorized by state law.

5. The size of service district boards -- a service district would be governed by a board of "elected members" who represent election districts established within the service district. These membership districts are termed "single-member election districts" -- one member being elected from each. The statute requires the election districts to be essentially of equal population and to lie "wholly within either a city or county" (§15.1-1428(a)). Therefore the minimum population of a single-member election district would be determined by the population of the smallest city or county in the proposed service district. This sounds reasonable until it is applied to individual planning districts. To illustrate, here's what would have happened if the Southeastern Virginia Planning District Commission (SVPDC) had become a service district soon after it was organized in 1969. SVPDC had a population of approximately 770,000. Its smallest member locality, the City of Franklin, had about 6,900 residents. Sixty-nine hundred into 770,000 equals 111. This would have been the number of elected board members on the service district in 1969. In addition to "elected members", service district boards would also have "official members" appointed by the

governing body of each member local government. Today, the area that comprises the Hampton Roads PDC (created by the merger of SVPDC and the Peninsula PDC in July 1990) would have 188 single-member election districts if a service district were created there. After each of the 14 member local governments appointed an "official member", the Hampton Roads service district board would have over 200 representatives. And Hampton Roads is not an isolated case. The Northern Virginia PDC would have 134 election districts; Richmond Regional 108; Central Shenandoah 83; and the Fifth PDC 62. These computations are based upon the most recent (1988) population estimates. But the potential number of single member election districts would not be significantly smaller if the computations were made with population data that was current when PDCs were becoming organized in 1969-70.

6. The power to annex -- no city or town member of a service district would be permitted to annex land without permission from both the county in question and the service district commission. Only four planning district commissions have no municipal members. In 1969 when annexation procedures were more clear-cut and not in transition as they now seem to be, this restriction of annexation power would likely have killed the chances for creating a service district in the 18 PDCs with municipal members. Could a city or town realistically have been expected to vote "yes" on a proposal

that would have eliminated its power to annex? Today annexation might not be as critical to the formation of a service district as it would have been in 1969, but the other controversial provisions in the law still create significant obstacles.

Providing services on an intergovernmental basis may be more economical, and it may be in the best interest of local governments and their citizens, but the service district concept, perhaps because of statutory problems, perhaps because the time was not right, did not provide the hoped for results.

# The Process for Delineating Virginia Planning Districts

Appendix D

