

For Immediate Release

Working Together, It Happens More Than You Think

By Mayor Tom Sibold, Vice Mayor Gayle Hillert

As elected officials, we hear requests for many things from residents of our communities. Some are easy to achieve and some more difficult. In the Alleghany Highlands, to survive and thrive, it is best to work together as one entity using the strengths and contributions of Covington, Iron Gate Alleghany County and Clifton Forge. In the most recent election, we heard that sentiment expressed many times.

One of the successes of all four governmental bodies has been the Tax Abatement program which was achieved by meeting together with representatives from Covington, Iron Gate, Alleghany County and Clifton Forge's Councils and Board of Supervisors. This effort worked so well that several of the representatives asked to continue working together in additional ways to enhance the lives of the residents of our communities. Thus, the Highlands Intergovernmental Committee was established and we have begun to meet and identify projects that we can work on together. Covington is represented by Mayor Tom Sibold, who is our group facilitator, and Councilman Allan Tucker; Iron Gate is represented by Mayor Chuck Unroe and Councilman Ron Dowd; Alleghany County is represented by Board of Supervisor's Chairman Steve Bennett and Supervisor Matt Garten; and Clifton Forge is represented by Vice Mayor Gayle Hillert and Councilman Jeff Irvine.

One of the results of our first meeting several weeks ago was a discussion on the ways we currently do work together to pool both economic and human resources to provide a network of better and safer services for residents, but that perhaps are not recognized by many in our community.

With law enforcement, we share a Circuit Court, a General District Court, a Magistrate, a Clerk of Circuit Court, a Court Sheriff, a Commonwealth Attorney, and a jail. We share the Health Department and Social Services which are state agencies that service the area. Our Fire and Rescue Services work together to cover wide territories. We share a Drug Task Force and Humane Society. We share Library Services with citizens using both Charles P. Jones Memorial Library in Covington and Clifton Forge Public Library. Many of our youth sports leagues utilize facilities and parks in the County, City and Town—Youth Soccer, Youth League Football, Girls Volleyball and Girls Basketball to name a few. The Jackson River Governor's School located at Dabney S. Lancaster Community College services all areas in our community and the Viper E911 Phone 7 CAD System (Dispatch) provides the means to receive fast response and service in case of an emergency. Public Works Departments share equipment and expertise when needed. The community benefits from water and sewer agreements between Alleghany County and Covington and Alleghany County and Clifton Forge, in addition to the Western Virginia Workforce Development board, the Regional Commission and the Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Corporation. Going beyond Town, City and County services, the Alleghany Highlands Chamber of Commerce and Tourism provides educational services, marketing and promotion for the entire area. In addition, many committees, churches, arts and entertainment venues and service clubs join forces and talent to create a busy and vibrant place to live with many opportunities for sharing and are supported and encouraged by the governmental bodies.

Henry Ford said, "Coming together is a beginning (we have achieved that with our newly formed Intergovernmental Committee), keeping together is progress (we need to ensure that this happens), and working together is success. It is our responsibility to the people of our neighborhoods to make sure we work together as efficiently and amiably as possible to provide an authentic feeling of community and to make that success happen. We'll keep you posted!

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