



**LOCAL
GOVERNMENT**

Advancing Democracy by
Empowering Communities
Through Local Government

**DELIVERING ON
A PROMISE:
PARTICIPATORY
GOVERNANCE**

2019

**FINAL REPORT OF THE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON
THE INTRODUCTION OF LOCAL
GOVERNMENT TO NEW PROVIDENCE**

Submitted for the Cabinet of The Bahamas
on behalf of the members of the Advisory Committee

PHOTOS FROM OUR MEDIA ROUNDS



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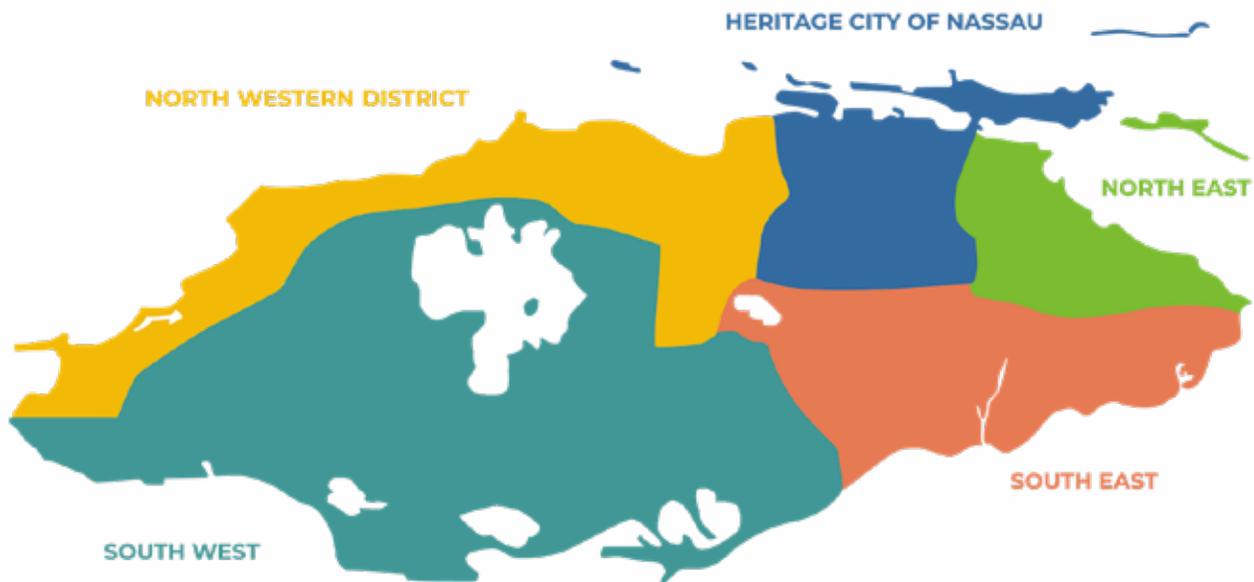
PREFACE



PREFACE

The Advisory Committee, after extensive and effective consultations both locally and internationally submits its Report on the introduction of Local Government to New Providence. The recommended model ensures accountability, transparency, self-sustainability and participatory democracy.

The Advisory Committee's recommendations are consistent with the FNM government's theme, 'It's the people's time'. The Committee's recommendations, if implemented, would afford the government the indisputable right to tout that it delivered on its campaign promise. For the first time in our history, New Providence residents would be able to shape the future development of their communities via duly elected district councils of community leaders whose focus will be to improve the quality of life and participate in solving vexing local community issues



Senator Ranard Eric Henfield

Chairman



THE MINNIS ADMINISTRATION'S CAMPAIGN PROMISE



THE MINNIS ADMINISTRATION'S CAMPAIGN PROMISE (CONT'D)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FOR NEW PROVIDENCE

The **Free National Movement** administration introduced a modern system of Local Government in the family islands with the enactment of the Local Government Act in 1996 which resulted in greater participation by the people in the governance of the affairs of their communities.

The **FNM** believes that the deepening of our democracy requires the immediate introduction and implementation of local government in New Providence so that our citizens could likewise participate in the governance of their communities.

AN FNM GOVERNMENT WILL:

- ✓ Will introduce Local Government to New Providence during its next term in office.



FNM MANIFESTO | IT'S THE PEOPLE'S TIME



SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

The new government's policies were outlined by Her Excellency Dame Marguerite Pindling in the Speech from the Throne. The event, held in Parliament Square, marked the opening of Parliament after the 2017 general election.

“My Government will provide for a portion of the revenue collected by the District Councils to be used to address local needs.

My Government will establish a committee to look into the implementation of local government in New Providence.”



Her Excellency Dame Marguerite Pindling
Governor General
May 24th, 2017

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Advisory Committee's research and consultation over this six-month period strongly recommends that the Cabinet introduce a **strong local government** in New Providence during the 2020 local government election cycle. Our findings during this research and consultative period also suggests that there be an **overhaul of the Family Island local government system** that was birthed in 1996 (but remains in an infantile state). Deploying the twenty-two-year-old Family Island system in New Providence would be a pointless exercise in an era when an extremely large portion of our citizenry and local government practitioners are publicly calling the system a charade.

Local Government in New Providence would exist to provide a level of community and island-wide coordination and cooperation by residents in addressing the numerous environmental, social, educational, economic and infrastructural issues in the New Providence area. Local Government will deepen democracy by introducing citizen participation in the decision-making process and administration of their communities and island. What local government does not do is seek to address national issues, which is a matter entirely in the dominion of central government and parliament.

PROPOSED STRUCTURE & CLEARLY DEFINED ROLES

It is being proposed by the Advisory Committee that **New Providence be divided into five districts**, preferably with **socio-economic parity** between districts. A less desirable option would be dividing districts based on the number of registered voters. For an inclusive local government structure with a focus on sustainability, we strongly suggest proceeding on the basis of socio-economic parity.

We strongly recommend introducing a **Mayor and Council model** so that there is a separation of powers in the operation of the system. More specifically, the Council would be the policy making body whilst the Mayor would have responsibility for the administrative body – inclusive of full-time staff to address the District needs on a daily basis.

To run as a council member, the individual would have to **live within the Community**. To run as Mayor, the individual would have to **live within the district** (the collection of all the Communities in a local government region).

We propose **ongoing training throughout the term of office** for all council members and mayors. The well-trained Council would be required to debate local issues and pass resolutions with the **oversight and guidance of a central government figure**. We propose that this central government oversight figure be an **Assistant Deputy Director of Local Government** who would apprise the Minister responsible for Local Government on Council deliberations and ensure that all councils are apprised of government policies, regulations and laws.

The **various working relationships** between Councils, Mayors, the Administrative Staff, Members of Parliament and Central Government are crucial for the success of local governments worldwide. As each of the five districts would be comprised of **four to six constituencies**, it is being proposed that the respective Councils be constituted of an **odd number of council members** from the various parts of the district. Additionally, it is recommended that **Committees be established for Councils/Mayors and the Members of Parliament in their Districts to network and complement each other**. This local government structure may invite Cabinet to make a pronouncement on the role of MPs in light of the introduction of this new tier of governance.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONT'D

The Mayor, who acts as a City Manager or Chief Councilor of sorts, would receive his or her instructions from the Local Government Act and the Council's resolutions to mobilize the Mayor's Office to carry out the Council's directives. The Mayor does not determine the vision or agenda for the District. He merely manages and carries out the Council's resolutions and mandates. The Mayor would clearly need to be an individual with exceptional skills for management and execution. The Mayor's Office, which we strongly recommend should be full-time with professional staff, can be organized into departments to address local concerns and the Council's focus, for instance:

1. The Department of *Community & Economic Development and Promotion*
2. The Department of *Education, Innovation and Strategic Planning*
3. The Department of *Public Relations/Customer Service & Good Governance*
4. The Department of *District Regulations and Legal Aid*
5. The Department of *Finance, Budgeting and Auditing*

Each Council should be required to:

- a). Meet publicly at least twice per month ;
- b). Publicize its agenda ahead of meetings and its minutes within a month thereafter;
- c). Publicize the budget and expenditure on a quarterly basis;
- d). Attend quarterly local government training sessions organized by the 'Ministry' of Local Government for organizational evaluations and further training;
- e). Attend quarterly Q & A sessions within their respective Communities.

The Mayors should be required to:

- a). Meet monthly with the Minister or Director of Local Government for the purposes of oversight and adherence to central government policies;
- b). Meet monthly with their respective district Members of Parliament for the purposes of networking and collectively ensuring the Districts' issues are being resolved efficiently, fairly and timely;
- c). Conduct quarterly town hall meetings for the purposes of garnering consensus from the residents thus ensuring inclusion, participation and satisfactory response to their community concerns;
- d). Meet monthly with their Mayoral colleagues to share best practices, solutions to issues and to ensure an island-wide focus is maintained in the local decisions;
- e). Meet monthly with their respective Council members before Council sessions to ensure a good working relationship and that each Councilor's community's concerns and suggestions are being addressed;



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONT'D

- f). Host an annual District Awards Ceremony to recognize District residents who have done exceptional community service and encourage residents to get involved;
- g). Oversee all Departments, mayor's staff and vendors servicing the District Council;
- h). Advise the Council on District, Community and island-wide matters;
- i). Ensure implementation of Council's directives are carried out and that the overall quality of life for residents is enhanced.

In essence, the recommendation is for a local government structure with *various checks and balances*, with *tremendous citizen participation* and *adequate central government oversight* designed to *significantly improve the quality of life for residents* on the island of New Providence.

CHANGING THE MINDSET OF OUR PEOPLE

Over the last six months, we found that introducing a strong local government system in New Providence, and eventually in the Family Islands, would transform our communities and the mindset of our people. Interestingly enough, during one of our stakeholders interviews a comment was made that, '*we are not a people with nothing, looking for something*'. Nothing could be truer! Our people and leaders must be reminded of this.

As a result of our research and consultation, we found when other central governments empowered their citizens via a strong local government, that it:

1. ***Unleashed the creativity and innovation of the residents*** to improve their quality of life.
2. ***Promoted healthy competition between communities*** to attract residents and businesses.
3. ***Reduced residents' dependency on central government*** to financially address every issue as residents found ways to maintain their communities and provide essential services from their allocated budgets or via public private partnerships.
4. ***Improved residents' environmental focus***, protection and maintenance of the same.
5. ***Improved adherence to and enforcement of laws*** as residents felt ownership of and responsibility for their communities and saw the direct benefit of the fines being allocated to their communities.
6. ***Increased collaboration between a cross section of residents*** in addressing local issues like dumping, unemployment, further education, senior and child care services and eradicating bush mechanics etc.
7. ***Improved the integration of marginalized residents*** who had become despondent. For instance, it engages the young men, women, the under-educated, the unemployed and non-natives thus making them feel valuable and essential to the future of their community and the country.
8. ***Promoted the village concept*** we prided our older generations on decades ago as residents in a community regain pride in the localities and express consideration for others well-being.



AN IDEAL TRAINING GROUND FOR NATIONAL LEADERS

Our findings also suggest that a strong local government *serves as a training ground for national leaders as political parties and the electorate would get to gauge a potential national candidate's commitment, vision, effectiveness and support base while they serve at the local level.*

We also found that an alarming number of our local government practitioners are not familiar with the laws of The Bahamas or international best practices. As such, our findings mandate that local government practitioners be properly and consistently trained for the success of this initiative.

Our research shows that numerous jurisdictions offer Local Government Certifications. We are convinced that *one of the keys to the success of this initiative is quality candidates/officials.* As such, we strongly recommend that the National Training Agency, and possibly the University of The Bahamas, introduce **Local Government Certificates and Advanced Local Government Certificates.** To this end, Mr. Gadville McDonald (Executive Director of the National Training Agency (NTA) and committee member) has begun preparation of a proposed course.

In the months prior to the 2020 local government elections, the NTA can offer a six-week certification course and once elected, the officials can undergo quarterly advanced training with the '**Ministry of Local Government**'. The Certification courses can include fundamentals for high-performance local governments, namely:

1. *The Principles of Leadership and Public Life*
2. *Community Involvement, Development and Promotion*
3. *Sustainability, Innovation and Strategic Planning*
4. *Economic Development, Finance and Budgeting*
5. *The Principles of Good Governance*

SUSTAINIBILITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NEW PROVIDENCE

Becoming financially self-sufficient is a vital component for the success of local government. Towards this end, the Revenue Team considered the following as revenue sources for local government:

1. **Property Taxes** - Research shows that globally one of the most significant sources of revenue that local governments receive is from property taxes. In fact, the Jamaican local government system receives 100% of real property taxes. The Committee proposes that a meaningful and fixed percentage of real property tax



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONT'D

be allocated to local government. It is noted, with interest that currently and under the last administration, that two entities other than Central government have engaged in the collection of real property tax; the Hope Town Local Government Council which could receive up to 10% of outstanding Real Property Tax collected in their district, and a West Palm Beach firm (Real Property Tax (RPT) Recovery Authority LLC that is reported to be retaining up to 25%.

2. **Traffic and environmental fines** - The Committee proposes that each district manages the 'enforcement' of traffic infractions and levies for environmental violations (such as bush mechanics, dumping & illegal burning of waste). Innovative technology (like drones), traffic cameras and online ticketing could be outsourced by local governments for maximum effectiveness and minimal costs.
3. **Nomination fees** - The Committee anticipates a large number of persons offering themselves as candidates for New Providence's local government elections. To encourage registration, the non-refundable nomination fee being proposed is considerably low in comparison to that of national elections but sufficient enough to be a source of revenue for the districts which can assist in the cost of the initial debates and promotion of the elections.
4. **Community Park Usage Fees** - It is proposed that each district would manage and coordinate usage of parks, beaches and other public spaces for medium to large scale events thus collecting usage fees to maintain the facilities. If the residents are to see and touch the improvements in the quality of life that local government can afford them, then *properly managed community parks, CCTV in strategic locations in the districts, exercise and play areas, public restroom facilities and picnic areas* would be an ideal feature.
5. **Roadside Signage fees** - The Committee proposes that a Mayor's stamp be required to be affixed to every temporary sign/billboard erected in each district to show that the fee has been paid and the signage approved for erection in the district. The installation and removal of the same can be done by the Mayor's grounds staff. *This would be a lucrative source of revenue and means of regulation as there is a proliferation of advertisements plastered in residential communities that are left long after the events or promotions have transpired.* Any sign identified without the appropriate stamp would automatically be removed and the entity responsible fined.
6. **Impound Fees** - It is proposed that districts be allowed to tow and impound vehicles *parked in no parking zones, abandoned vehicles on the roadside after a specified period, vehicles being sold on the side of the road and vehicles parked in disabled parking spots without the necessary decal/permit.* The Committee recommends that a single impound lot on New Providence be established for use by all districts to reduce costs. The revenue from the fines and towing would go back to the relevant district from which the car was towed. This would ensure compliance and enforcement of the laws. Unfortunately, there has been a blatant disregard for no parking areas and handicap parking spots island-wide. *This proposal would serve as an instant source of revenue and a great means of regulation/enforcement.*
7. **Garbage Collection** - The Committee proposes that garbage collection be a local government service thereby allowing *the costs, budget, management and coordination of the same to be diverted from central government to the relevant local government districts.*





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONT'D

8. **Ordinances** - It is proposed that each District Council be able to establish Ordinances/Bye-laws that do not contravene national policy or laws. For instance, ***a Council may pass an ordinance that prohibits parking on a particular side of the street or for playing loud music between the hours of 10pm and 7am without a permit.*** The fines can be paid at the Mayor's office. This too can be an instant source of revenue and provide for regulation and enforcement at the same time.
9. **Delivery of Postal packets** – It is proposed that each district will benefit from the implementation of a system of delivery of postal packets and from the rental of post office boxes to its residents.

Encouraging community spirit and causing residents to have a '***vested interest***' in the success of their districts and local government is fundamental. According to the Advisory Committee's research, this is usually achieved through the economic empowerment of districts. Encouraging district wide input and shopping locally within your district tends to stimulate local-ownership and socio-economic growth within the district. As such, the Committee proposes the following as ways to spur and sustain local economic development:

1. The Council's ability to issue ***Community Bonds***;
2. Introducing local government procurement policies where request for proposals are sent to ***local businesses first*** inviting them to bid on providing the necessary district services;
3. Establishing ***District Heritage Sites & Business Improvement Districts*** with economic incentives
4. The latitude to ***offer incentives to attract and retain new residents and/or businesses*** within the districts with on-going campaigns like "move to and/or invest in the Heritage District of Clifton"; and
5. District Satellite SBDC offices (***Small Business Development Centres***) to offer support for small district start-ups



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONCLUSION

Seized with input from the various Family Island local government practitioners, civil society organizations, New Providence residents, the media, several Members of Parliament, the Leader of the Opposition, Alfred Sears QC and other persons with institutional knowledge, it appears to the Committee that now is the time to deliver on the FNM's campaign promise of "*it's the people's time*" and empower residents to participate in governance at a local level. I invite a Cabinet pronouncement in the coming weeks on the political will to deepen democracy.

Senator Ranard Eric Henfield

Chairman



THE WAY FORWARD

In 1996, under the leadership of the then Prime Minister and Minister of Local Government, the Honourable Hubert Alexander Ingraham, Local Government in its present form was introduced in the Family Islands.

This represented a new day for Family Island residents. Residents were empowered to make decisions that affect their quality of life. It meant that the garbage would get collected on a timely basis and the dump site would not be infested with flies and running over. It also meant that the local school house, the community clinic and the local airport could be assisted with minor repairs. Over all the community environment in the Family Islands would be greatly improved. The local vision could now be implemented, and island economies could be bolstered – the ideal.



The reality however, is that Local Government in its present state has done well for as long as it could. Its effectiveness has deteriorated mainly because its practitioners for the most part have failed to educate themselves on the purpose of Local Government, have not learnt and stuck with their roles, have failed to put in place strategic plans, and were not able to sustain or provide for a vision.

In 2020 the Government of The Bahamas proposes to implement Local Government on the Island of New Providence. Unlike the system that is currently in place in the Family Islands, any form of Local Government in New Providence would have to be stronger, more effective and resistant to those factors that have caused the system in the Family Island to deteriorate and become ineffective. Namely, lack of knowledge, training, funding, and political bias. The following components must be present:

1. There must be a clear road map for the implementation, execution and healthy sustainment of the system.
2. The proposed system must be communicated to all residents.
3. There must be proper and continuous training for any/all practitioners.
4. There must be an organizational structure with clearly defined roles.

5. There must be a means for Local Government to provide for itself (the ability to raise revenue).
6. The system must be guided by strategic planning with a strong element of succession.
7. There must be a means to hold ALL practitioners accountable with consequences.
8. Provisions must be made to allow for the removal of any person or persons deemed to have acted contrary to any established laws and policies or to have acted in any matter unbecoming of an elected official.

In April of 2018 the Committee to explore the implementation of Local Government in New Providence was appointed. Under the most able leadership of the Chairman, Senator the Honourable Ranard Henfield, along with other notable and reputable members of a wide cross section of New Providence, this committee has successfully canvassed/solicited the views and opinions of many of the residents in New Providence and throughout the Family Islands. Additionally, representation from all stakeholder groups throughout the country were included. These encompassed persons who may have had a less than positive opinion on Local Government for New Providence.

I deem the initial phase a success and give my full support for the recommendations that have been put forth by the Committee. Moving forward, it must be noted that Local Government will only work in New Providence if the “people” are fully involved in it.



Brenda Bullard-Colebrooke
Acting Director
Department of Local Government

THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Committee's Vision

At the Committee's first three meetings, we brainstormed why local government was needed, what it should be responsible for and how it would work. It was apparent that the Committee's members all wanted to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors to New Providence and to deepen democracy via a sustainable system.

Extremely high on the Committees' list of deliverables for this report was conducting extensive consultation with the citizenry, civil society, opposition, media and persons with institutional knowledge (Family Island practitioners). The end goal is to propose a model of local government that is suitable to a modern Bahamas and that would empower the people of The Bahamas to get more involved in their communities. We found that the New South Wales legislation is ideal and that the Jamaican legislation would also be great for benchmarking.

ACTIVE MEMBERS



Mrs. Brenda Bullard-Colebrooke,
Acting Director, Department of Local Government



Dr. Nicolette Bethel,
Professor, The University of the Bahamas



Mr. Geoffrey McPhee,
Assistant to the Parliamentary Commissioner



Mr. Edward Fields,
Director, Downtown Nassau Partnership



Mr. Errol Bethel,
Former Parliamentary Commissioner



Mrs. Dianne Holowesko-Dunkley,
Town Planning Committee Chair



Mr. Dwight Strachan,
Station Manager of Guardian



Mrs. Khrystle Rutherford-Ferguson,
Vice Chairman of Bahamas Chamber of Commerce



Mr. Matt Aubry,
Organization for Responsible Governance



Mr. Leron Neely,
Ministry of Finance Representative



Mr. Gadville McDonald,
Executive Director, National Training Agency



Ms. Karen Dorsett,
Senior Counsel, Office of the Attorney General



Ms. Lenette King,
Attorney, Office of the Attorney General



THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AS AT SEPTEMBER 30TH 2018

SPECIAL MENTION

Ms. Christine Campbell,

First Assistant Secretary, Department of Local Government

Ms. Cleo Fernander,

Assistant Controller, Road Traffic Department

Ms. Ashley Dorsett,

Law Student, The University of the Bahamas

INACTIVE MEMBERS

Philip Smith, Opposition's Representative, resigned citing government lacks political will

Director Cephas Cooper, Retired early July.

Dr. Nicola Virgil-Rolle, Transferred to NIB.

Brett Lashley, Relocated to the United Kingdom.

Roderick Pinder, Resigned as President of BALGA and from Committee.

Myra Farquharson, Inactive as of August due to short staffing and course in China.

Valentino "Scrooge" Brown, Inactive throughout process.



PUBLIC CONSULTATION

A. THE OPTIONS PAPER (2017)

Shortly after the 2017 general elections, stakeholder consultation was conducted by Professor Greg Clark & Caitlin Morrissey at the instance of the OPM and IDB. The end result of their stakeholder consultation was the preparation of an Options Paper under the Sustainable Nassau Project. In the Options Paper, Professor Clarke suggested introducing either a 'local level' or 'island-wide' local government system. The Advisory Committee considered all options and collectively agreed to move forward with a local level system rather than an island wide system for a number of reasons. The Committee considered all options and narrowed down the options to what we feel are the two most practical options.



The first being, the introduction to New Providence of a similar Local Government system as in the Family Islands. Despite this being the easiest option to proceed on, the Advisory Committee unanimously rejected this proposal as our recommendation to Cabinet for the many reasons that will be mentioned throughout this report. We note with concurrence Professor Clarke's comments on the existing local government model in the Family Island:

"The challenges faced on New Providence involve a complex combination of service provision, social and economic development, change and growth management, and ultimately civic and democratic renewal. These are not challenges that the existing local government pattern on the Family Islands seems well placed to address, given the limited focus on local 'place' and 'environmental' services.

Local government on the Family Islands is not seen as effective in improving the performance of central government services. It does not have any real ability to raise resources. Mechanisms for the sharing of government revenues between local and central government have not been implemented. If local government of this type were to be established, there would likely be active campaigns quickly established to design it differently to the Family Islands, or to reform it immediately.

Most commentators in the stakeholder discussions suggested that the models of local government introduced in New Providence should be stronger than that on the Family Islands or should not be introduced".

Professor Clarke's second option is in fact the Advisory Committee's recommendation to Cabinet, which is 'introducing Strong Local Government' at a District Level in Nassau/New Providence with substantial devolution of power from Central Government. We also note Professor Clarke's comments on this option:

"This model might be more likely to address the service and development challenges of New Providence/Nassau than Option 1, in that the local governments envisaged would have greater capacity and resources. The direct election of the leaders/mayors has the potential to have a significant impact on democratic renewal. The new local governments may be successful in both creating better services for local people and better managed districts and localities, and they may be helpful in improving the service culture within central government. This model of local government would involve some delegation or devolution of powers from central government to local government. This process would need to be actively managed. There is also a 'constitutional dimension' to this model in that it may increase expectation that the local government model on the Family Islands may be 'upgraded' to have parity with the model on New Providence".

FOCUS GROUP



FOCUS GROUP SESSION (JULY 2018)

In an effort to identify the best way forward in its role as advisors to the Government of The Bahamas on the matter of establishing local government in New Providence, the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) retained Barefoot Marketing to conduct a series of exercises aimed at a range of public relations activities. The first priority was to learn what the public knew or felt it knew about how local government operates. Along with that came the desire to understand the appetite for or resistance against the introduction of local government on the largest and most heavily populated island in the archipelago.

To gain insights and gather information from the public, Barefoot Marketing engaged Diane Phillips & Associates to help coordinate and conduct a series of focus groups. Stipulations included ensuring that along with proper demographic representation, all 24 constituencies on New Providence were represented. The agencies targeted a range of groups including the General Public, Media, Businesspersons and Non-profit organizations.

This report lays out the findings of six intense and productive focus groups conducted over a two-week period between July 26 and August 9, 2018.

Four of the focus groups were specifically requested by Sen. Ranard E. Henfield, who has charge of the initiative and wanted to ensure that the general public, the business community, NGOs and media were represented. Two other groups were added to further increase the spread of representation of the general public. The report covers perception, understanding, expectation and what participants would want to see if local government were implemented in New Providence. A total of 57 persons participated, 36 from the general public, nine from media and 12 from the business and civil society sector.

Every attempt was made to populate the groups with persons from all constituencies of Nassau, and of both sexes:



FOCUS GROUP SESSION (JULY 2018)

- Killarney – 2 person
- Carmichael – 0 persons
- Bamboo Town – 2 persons
- Bain and Grants Town – 2 persons
- Golden Gates – 1 person
- Golden Isles – 1 person
- Marathon – 2 persons
- Centreville – 2 persons
- Elizabeth – 2 persons
- Fort Charlotte – 2 persons
- Free Town – 2 persons
- Garden Hills – 2 persons
- Pinewood – 2 persons
- Sea breeze – 2 persons
- Mount Moriah – 1 person
- Nassau Village - 1 person
- Yamacraw – 2 persons
- Fox Hill – 0 persons
- South Beach – 2 persons
- Southern Shores – 1 person
- St Anne’s – 2 persons
- St Barnabas – 1 person
- Tall Pines – 2 persons



TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT

All participants were advised not to discuss details of the focus group and were required to sign an approved non-disclosure agreement. In exchange for their participation each person in the general public group received \$50 in cash and were offered light refreshments (assortment of Subway sandwiches, chips and juice).

Participants were presented with two forms, a Who Am I, which allows the agencies to track demographics, including constituency representation, and a form which mirrored the basic questions that would be discussed. Participants were informed that their responses would be kept confidential. In addition to the promise of confidentiality for participation, each individual was advised of the basic rules of being part of a focus group, that there are no right or wrong answers, the purpose is to ascertain how they feel about an issue and to invite them to share their thoughts. They were promised anonymity and were instructed not to put their names on the written forms they completed in addition to answering questions in the session.



METHOD OF SELECTION FOR THE MEDIA / TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT

The nine media participants were selected via personal solicitation. Due to their busy evening work, a private breakfast was held for those who were able to attend.

Media participants were advised that their responses would be kept confidential and all participants were required to sign an approved non-disclosure agreement.

They were also advised not to discuss or reveal details surrounding the focus group until formal details were made public.



METHOD OF SELECTION FOR BUSINESS / NGOS / TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT

The twelve participants were selected via personal solicitation and due to busy work schedules, were invited to participate during a private lunch to help accommodate their needs.

Participants were told their responses would be kept confidential and everyone who attended signed an approved non-disclosure, they were also advised not to discuss the focus group until it was made public.



Note: In all cases, sessions were recorded and there were two facilitators and two observers in the room.

ALL PARTICIPANT FINDINGS



ALL PARTICIPANT FINDINGS

Please Note:

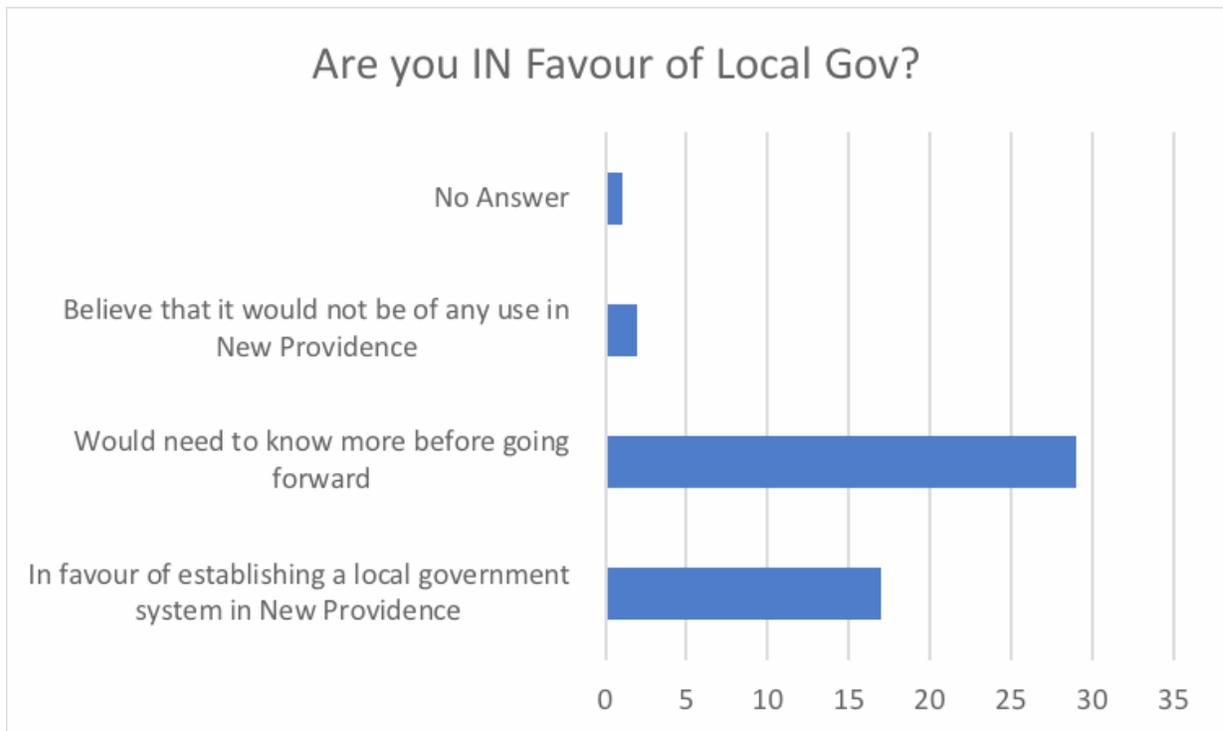
The following section contains only the basic answers as completed or voiced and completed in writing. This portion of the report should be considered in conjunction with the summary that follows and includes individual quotes, suggestions and beliefs in addition to summary analysis.

For instance, taken alone, #2 would indicate that participants ranked planning as the number one most important function of a local government should local government be implemented in New Providence. And that is absolutely the case, but the answers alone do not reflect the passion with which people a) wanted the right to plan their local communities and b) felt they should have a right to influence education and recreation as well as infrastructural demands including waste disposal. Nor do the answers alone reflect the sense of a lack of empowerment that was a repeated theme throughout the sessions.



ALL PARTICIPANT FINDINGS CONT'D

2. **Based on how you have rated your knowledge of local government, do you believe you would be most likely to (check one):**
- a. Be in favour of establishing a local government system in New Providence – 17 people
 - b. Would need to know more before going forward – 29 people
 - c. Believe that it would not be of any use in New Providence– 2 people
 - No Answer – 1 person





ALL PARTICIPANT FINDINGS CONT'D

- 3. From your understanding of how local government works, what would you expect your Local Government representatives to be responsible for? Rank from one to our top 5:**
- a. Roadworks: Councils must build and repair local roads, control traffic, and provide adequate parking facilities;
 - b. Public works: Councils build and maintain parks, public buildings such as community halls and Scout halls; and contract for and maintain cleaning of sidewalks and lighting; manage signage according to locally determined standards;
 - c. Waste Disposal: The job of disposing the community's waste is very important. In order for this to happen the council organizes for the waste to be picked up and taken to dumps where it is becoming landfill or recycled. The council also ensures that the footpaths and all other public places are clean;
 - d. Planning: This involves ensuring that new buildings and houses develop in a coordinated and well planned way. Council develops plans on how the built environment should be developed and sets rules on enforcing these plans. When a new building is being planned, for example, council permission must be obtained before the building is erected;
 - e. Recreation/Education Enhancement: Facilities, such as computer centres, libraries, playing fields, golf courses, tennis courts, and the Town Hall and community centers are all provided by the local council;
 - f. Public Health: Making sure the community is healthy is partly the responsibility of the council. They do this by providing public toilets, making sure public places, including restaurants, are clean and ensuring pets are registered and returned to their owners when lost.



ALL PARTICIPANT FINDINGS CONT'D

Focus Group Responses					
Question Three Ranking:	Ranked #1	Ranked #2	Ranked #3	Ranked #4	Ranked #5
Public Health	12	9	7	8	10
Public Works	5	10	8	11	12
Roadworks	2	5	9	9	8
Recreation/Educational Enhancement	13	14	7	6	6
Planning	22	7	6	4	2
Waste Disposal	9	5	12	10	10

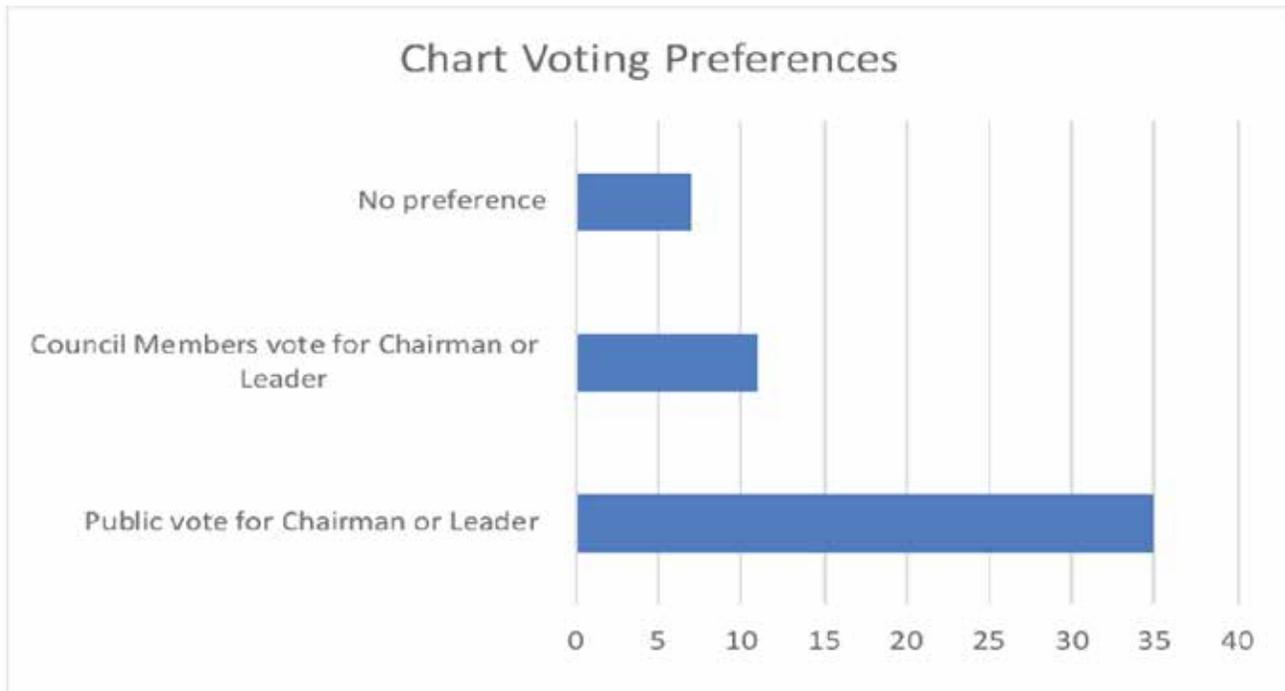




ALL PARTICIPANT FINDINGS CONT'D

4. **Our country's current legislation allows for Local Government members to be voted for by the public. The winning council members vote and elect the Council Chairman and Deputy-Chairman. It is being proposed that the public vote for both the council members and the chairman – who may be called a Mayor. Do you agree and why?**

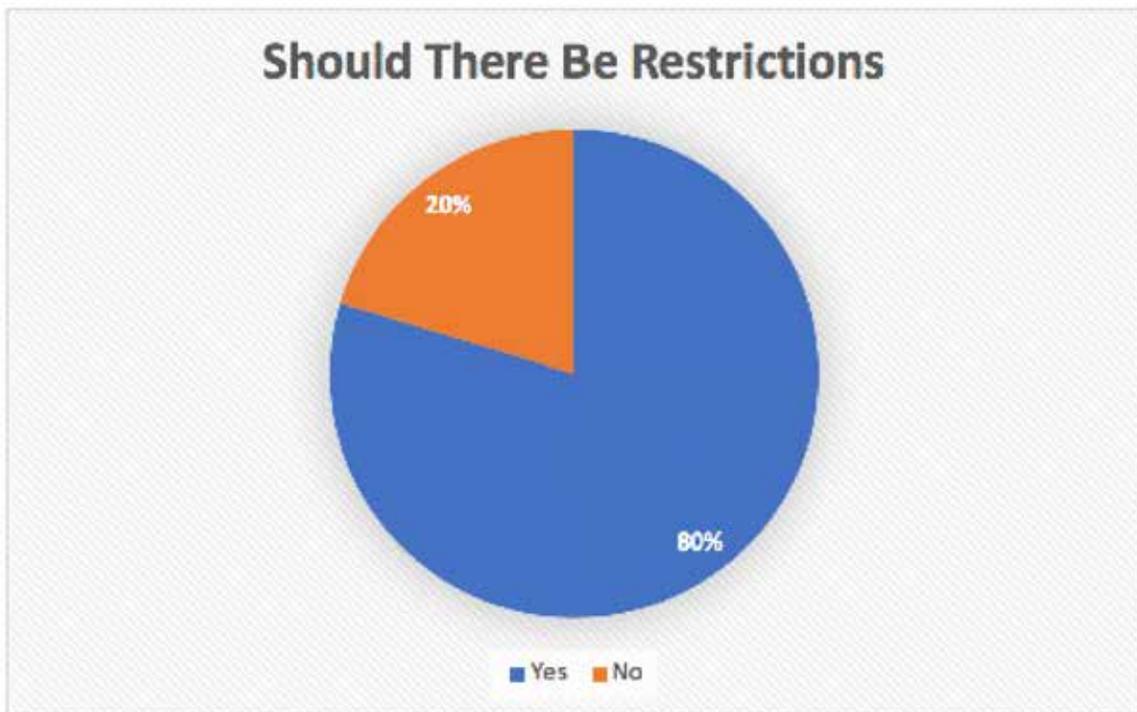
- a. Public Vote for Chairman or Leader
- b. Council Members vote for Chairman or Leader





ALL PARTICIPANT FINDINGS CONT'D

- 5. **Do you think there should be restrictions on who should be allowed to run for local government?**
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - i. If you answered YES, what do you suggest these are:

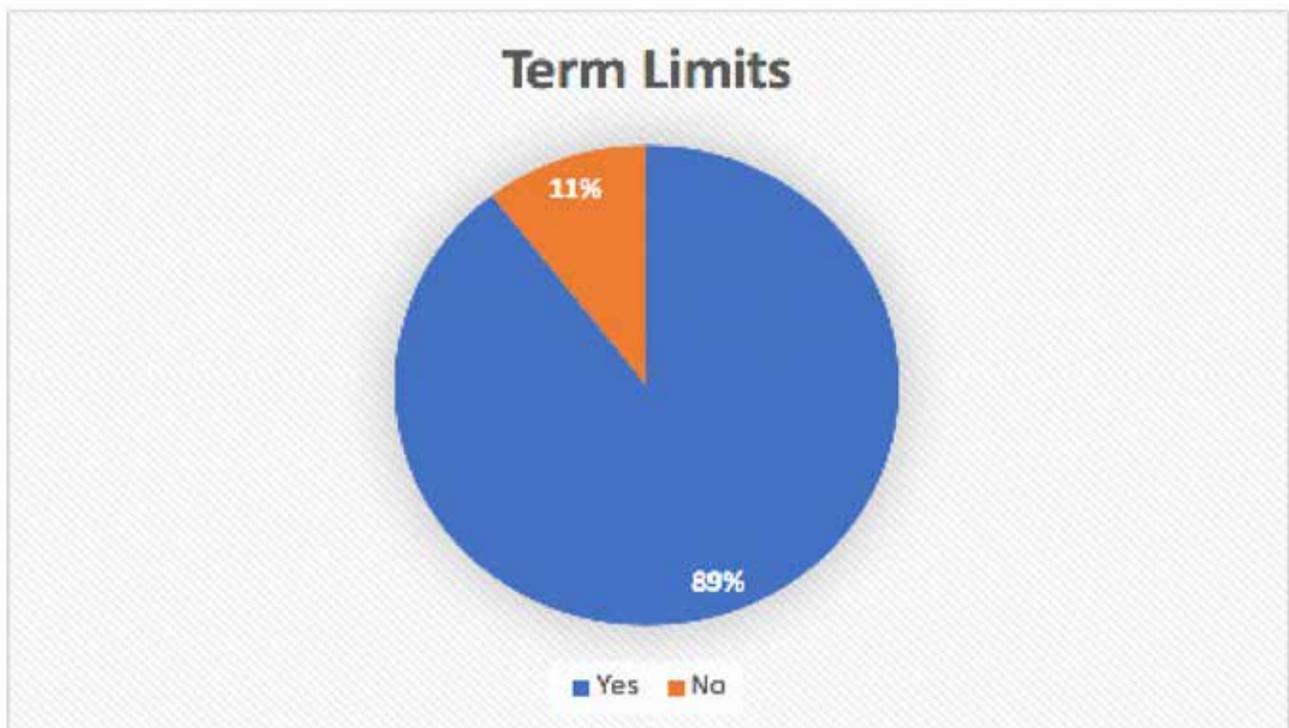


Of the people that answered yes, here are the stipulations suggested:

- General Election Rules – 9
- Vetting of each person (Criminal Record, Background, etc.) – 11
- Age requirement: 25 years old to 65 years old – 5
- Council should reside in community they're presenting for– 6
- Bahamians and naturalized citizens only – 8
- Persons with invested interest in New Providence – 3
- In possession of their mental faculties – 1
- Minimum age of 18 years – 7
- Should be the average age of the district – 1
- No older than 70 – 1
- Hold permanent residency - 3



6. **Do you think there should be restrictions or term limits for being a council member or the Chairman/Mayor? Currently each local government council member serves for 3 years, and may run as many times as they like.**
- a. Yes
 - b. No





ALL PARTICIPANT FINDINGS CONT'D

If you answered YES, what do you suggest these are:

- 2 Terms – 18
- No Limit - 3
- 3 Terms – 8
- 1 Term – 1
- 5 Terms – 1
- Limit on being Chairman, but no limit on being a part of the Council – 1
- 6 Terms – 1

7. In the Family Islands, Local Government has been asking for changes in current legislation, they would like their council to earn local revenue, to help fund their responsibilities. Do you agree or disagree with this?
- a. Yes
 - b. No





ALL PARTICIPANT FINDINGS CONT'D

Of the people that answered yes, here are the stipulations suggested:

- Resident Approved programs/Sponsorships - 7
- Local Taxing – 14
- As long as expenses are made public they can fundraise – 4
- Get a % of Hotel Tax – 1

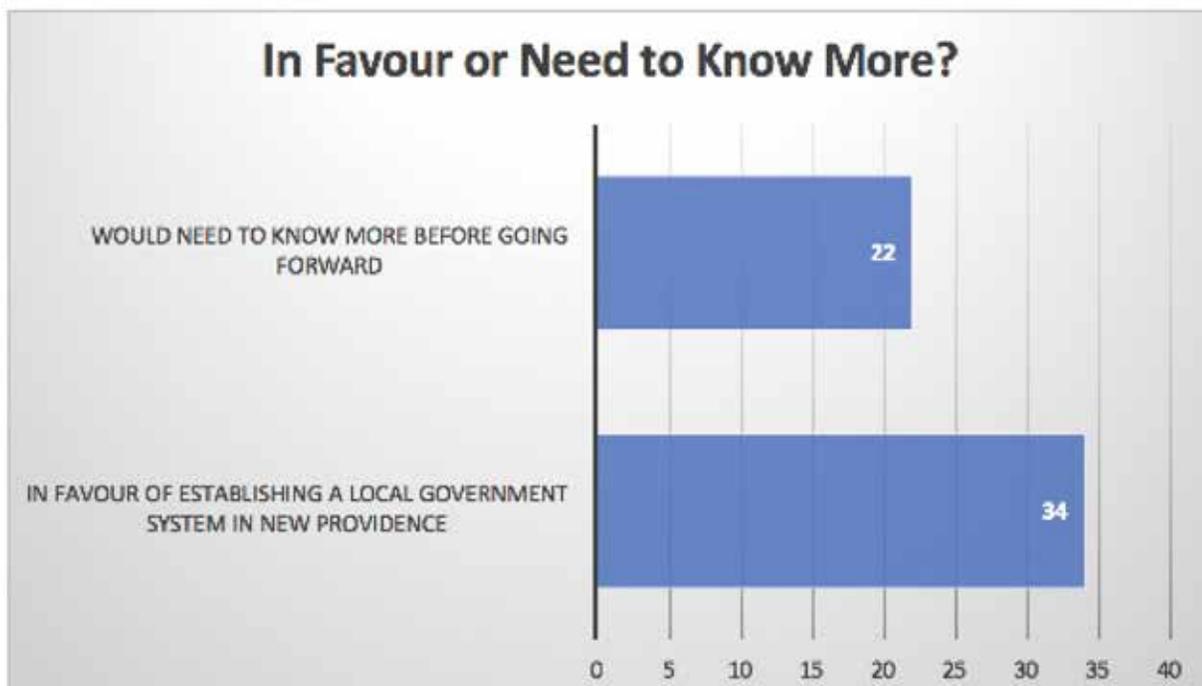
8. **In the Family Islands, Local Government council members receive a Government stipend, for time and costs. It has been suggested that this will be the same in New Providence Local Government, but that the Chairman of each council area or Mayor be paid a full-time salary. Do you agree or disagree?**
- a. Yes
 - b. No



Other options:

No real comments were made, just a reconfirmation of their vote, all participants said it must be a full-time job. Only the business group felt that it should be an option on their business.

9. Based on today's discussion, do you still believe you would be most likely to (check one):
- a. Be in favour of establishing a local government system in New Providence.
 - b. Would need to know more before going forward.



GENERAL FINDINGS



GENERAL FINDINGS

Most participants were not particularly knowledgeable about local government, although some participants expressed having prior interaction with local government as it exists in the family islands or in other international jurisdictions. There was really no understanding of the depth of work that local governments handle in other countries, including the UK, Canada and the U.S.

Regardless of their level of knowledge on the subject though, everyone was quite willing to share their opinion and seemed pleased to offer their input on how they felt local government could work in Nassau, New Providence. The general consensus was in favor of the establishment of local government for New Providence with special caveats and strict guidelines to oversee how the initiative would run as well as how the system would interact and relate to the work of central government.

The theme of accountability for all local government participants was repeated across all groups. Discussions also revealed that most participants did not feel they were heard by their constituency MP, and were hopeful that this would change with this new format, and that it would create better camaraderie in their respective communities.

The comments from various participants reflected their feeling of distance and disengagement or general lack of faith that government was performing the way it had the potential to perform as follows:

- *“A lot of government is out of touch with millennials.”*
- *“Any little thing you can do to improve organization will go a long way.”*
- *“Local government is the way to go to get work done.”*
- *“Smaller pockets of people get more done.”*
- *“Local government could mean “people for the people.”*
- *“It has to be about empowerment. Citizens must feel like they have input. We don’t want just another layer of government.”*
- *“It has to be independent. It won’t work unless I feel I am part of it.”*
- *“Many of us feel out of the loop, just here for the ride. “*
- *“We want input into decisions.”*

Participants were generally optimistic about implementing Local Government and felt it may serve as a training ground for those wishing to enter front line politics at the national level as well.

There was widespread agreement that the Family Island style of local government would not be the best formula for New Providence, but there was little agreement on how many districts should be created. Those who felt five were adequate feared that too many would dilute the process and involve too much 'politicking' while those who felt five was not enough pointed to the many differences in communities.

Responses were also split about the use of the title "Mayor" as a designation for the council leader with some suggesting that it seemed too American and suggesting a name which would resonate locally. Others said we would become accustomed to it (suggesting an education process if the LGAC decided to go that direction) but others suggested Chief Councillor would be more Bahamian.

As for monetary incentives, participants seemed to welcome the idea of a fulltime salary for the individual occupying the seat of "Mayor". Most were adamant that it be a full-time job that required the Mayor to end other business ties for the time in which they are serving in local government. Many felt there should be some payment for the council members, though others felt all "time" should be donated.

The largest discussion of all the groups was on local government duties with many pushing planning and health as top priorities from the list of options suggested, although most participants felt like all the listed areas should fall under the purview of local government.



The discussion around scope of work for those who serve and priorities for the work local government should do was lively in every session. Those who felt the greatest disconnect from their MPs or experienced the least satisfaction with how they perceived their communities were treated, were eager for change. One working mother's story was particularly poignant:

"I born in Bain Town and I scared (now). It's dangerous...If I'd known what it was going to be like, I wouldn't have had children."

She wants local government to focus on crime prevention and that, she says, means enhanced facilities for recreation, after-school activities and monitoring – all under the umbrella, she said, of planning, her top priority.

There were suggestions for additional tasks for local government, including community disaster preparedness, safety and security and a sex registry.

One of the most valuable comments was a simple one:

"Local government...it won't work unless I feel I am part of it."

Further discussions on the matter of health revealed that many participants felt the scope of work surrounding that particular issue was too wide to be left solely at the local level and would require interventions from the National level – although suggestions were also made to utilize local government on issues relative to disease control. These discussions also led to conversations on education. This was most prevalent in the business and NGO group, where they felt education was the key to making Bahamians better. Many also wanted safer, cleaner parks with public bathrooms and some security.

Comments from the business and NGO group were pro-local government and particularly strong in leaning toward independence, accountability, rules and enforcement. Education and empowerment were priorities.

This group was more vocal in its feelings about national government performance as it relates to "the people."

- *“Central government is completely emasculated.”*
- *“MPs are useless on the ground.”*
- *Local government can “alleviate the disconnect.”*
- *“The need at local government level would be the same that is urgently needed at national, a rule book to live by so that not every decision ends up in a Minister’s office or someone else’s hands. What’s missing from the entire government is the rule book...”*
- *“Local government would provide more opportunities for SME’s. Like waste disposal. Small companies could manage the waste, recycle, create products from the waste, run the collection trucks.”*
- *“Decentralization of power offers opportunities for true representation.”*
- *“Financing, budgeting has to be part of the system or it won’t work.”*

There was also heated discussion on the subject of whether the council should elect the leader or the public at large should vote for that position. One practical suggestion which the advisory committee may wish to consider was for everyone to vote for council members and whoever got the largest number of votes would be named leader, whether that title was “Mayor” or other.

In summary there is little knowledge of specifics about how local government works outside The Bahamas, there was widespread interest in local government by people across all demographics who currently experience a disconnect between themselves and the national government. They feel local government would allow them a voice they do not currently have and an opportunity to decide on and manage matters in their own communities.

The theme of seeing the MP at election time and being left to fend for themselves the rest of the time until the next election was common.



GENERAL FINDINGS CONT'D

There was a strong sense that people are hungry for greater participation in matters that affect them. They are eager for empowerment, do not want new taxes but want their local government to be funded and transparent meaning revenue would have to be raised (portion of local business license fees, parking, fees for rental of public spaces, parks, auditoriums for local events, tax on Airbnb rentals in the community if applicable) and in part diverted from other sources. They also wanted the right to collect what funds them on a local basis.

As for who would be allowed to participate in the process, the general consensus revealed a desire that all participants be Bahamians although there was heated discussion on whether or not restrictions would be placed on naturalized Bahamians, or even permanent residents.

Most participants in public groups also thought it fair that anyone in voting age be allowed to run for local government. Some suggested that age caps be implemented to ensure that new and fresh participants were being given a chance to participate in the process.

The name for a leader of a local government is a decision-in-waiting, no clear cut opinion but interesting to note that while there was instant resistance in several cases to the use of the word “Mayor”, once it was repeated a few times, as in “Should a mayor or local council chief or leader be...” participants referred to “Mayor” in their discussion and the longer the discussion lasted, the more frequently participants used the word “Mayor.” Choice of name requires further research but remains the only fully unresolved matter.

With business and NGO mix, discussion took a different turn, greater interest in education and empowerment. Some members of this group were adamant about the need for a standardized set of rules to ensure fair treatment across the board and reduce outside interference while decentralizing power and creating opportunities for true representation.

There was also robust discussion on the opportunities which a Local government system could provide for SMEs – e.g., waste disposal – small companies could manage the waste, recycle, create products from the waste, run the collection trucks



GENERAL FINDINGS CONT'D

The Business group was also particularly concerned with matters of financing and budgeting pointing to areas along the north coast of New Providence, which has historically generated most of the money on the island.

Another key area of concern was education and a need to focus on the quality of education at schools on the island with a view to alleviate the disconnect on issues such as waste management, the environment, and even tourism, through a deeper focus on education. The group thought that putting plans for education in the hands of the people would be effective.

Overall, plans for Local Government were met with a nearly resounding yes, though more information is required.

On the right to fund and to collect locally – a resounding yes with strict stipulations to encourage wider accountability and transparency.

New taxes to fund Local Government – a resounding no.

Leader to be full-time position – divided, leaning toward yes.

Leader to be elected by public or named by council – divided.

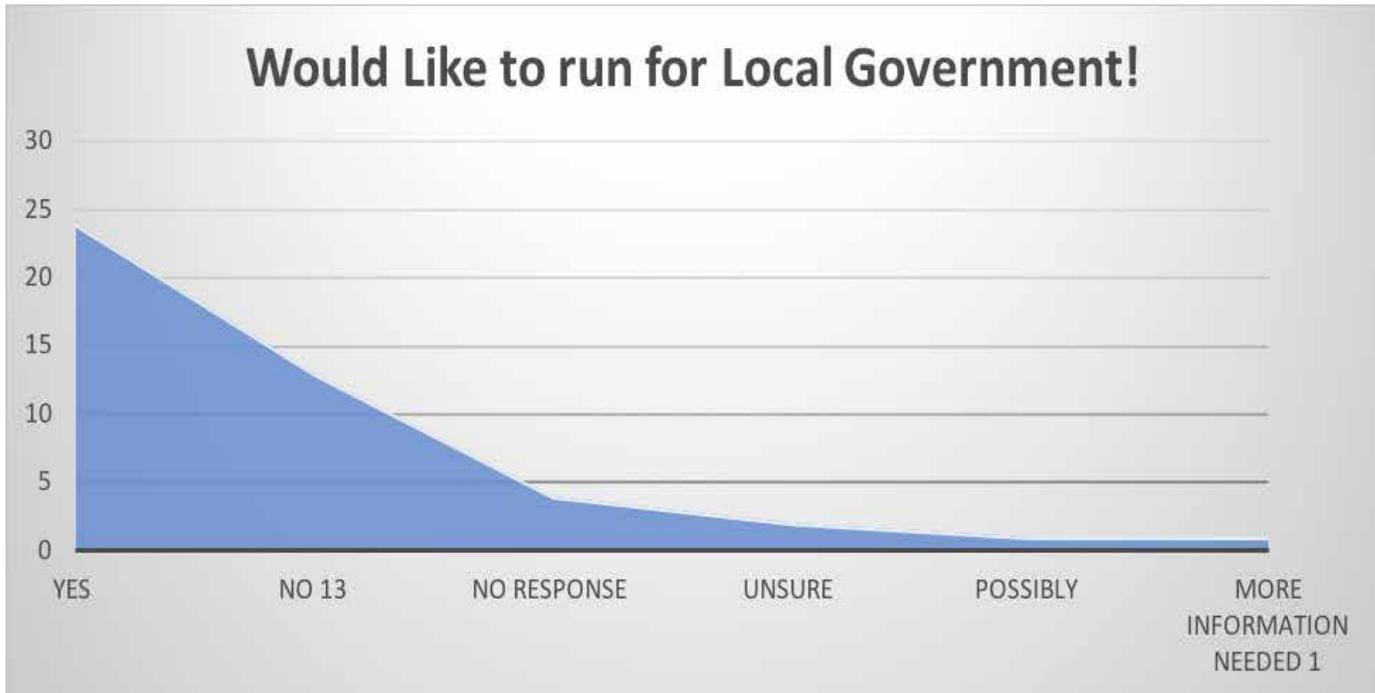
Number of Districts – divided (some groups were in favour of the proposed five as a means of depoliticizing the process while other groups preferred that each district coincide with existing constituency boundaries.





MEDIA PREFERENCES RESULTS (ALL GROUPS COMBINED)

Would you consider running for local government? Yes or No



THE STAKEHOLDERS SESSIONS (AUG-SEPT 2018)

THE STAKEHOLDERS SESSIONS (AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2018)

The Advisory Committee was strategic in its stakeholder consultations. We sought input from several key figures that are integral in the implementation of local government to New Providence. These persons gave their unfettered suggestions, expressed their concerns and hopes on what would create a respected, efficient and sustainable system of local government, not only in New Providence, but in the Family Islands as well. During the stakeholders' consultation phase, the Advisory Committee sat down with various Members of Parliament, Family Island Chief Councilors (former and current), Parliamentary Commissioners, Auditor General, Leader of the Opposition and Alfred Sears, Q.C. In each meeting, the Advisory Committee was aided in crafting the framework for the envisaged local government system to thrive. Summaries of the key points offered during these comprehensive discussions are provided in the following pages.

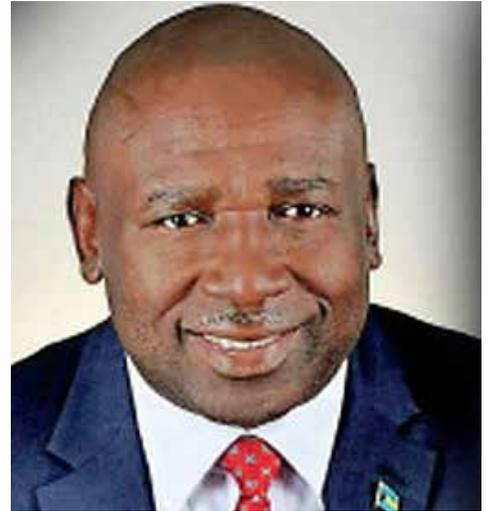


Member of Parliament for North Eleuthera

The Honourable Rickey Mackey, a former local government practitioner, expressed in his consultation sessions that the introduction of a strong local government, starting in New Providence, would enable individuals to assume a functioning role in their locale. MP Mackey indicated that, in his opinion, the system in the Family Islands can be regarded as a disappointment. MP Mackey is of the view that the current issues in the Family Island system can be accredited to political tribalization imbedded in the Councils by political parties. He voiced that local government issues must be left to local governments and urged the Advisory Committee to embed regulations that limit political parties' manipulation of the system.

To that end, MP Mackey concurred with the Advisory Committee's proposals to introduce mandatory debates, campaign spend limits, term limits, a recall system and public deliberation of local government contracts. MP Mackey suggested that declarations/disclosures for candidates should be minimal.

MP Mackey supports the proposal of Primary Elections and feels that they ought to be offered to further encourage the election of the best candidate for the job rather than the most popular or richest candidate on the ballot. MP Mackey also suggests that Councils should host regular public discussions and Q & A segments with the residents, utilize the parliamentary channel and broadcast their meetings via radio stations (which are in eager for content).



Member of Parliament for MICAL

During the Advisory Committee's consultations with the Honourable Miriam Emmanuel, the MICAL MP noted that there are many challenges within the existing local government structure and that local government in New Providence must have a well-rounded approach to be successful. She held that a local government system in New Providence is necessary and will prove beneficial.

MP Emmanuel also expressed a view, which was shared by many Family Islanders; that the Family Islands are being treated as colonies. There exists a perception that the Family Islands are being treated as colonies. Their practitioners, residents and MPs note that the islands generate a substantial revenue for central government, yet their local governments' allocation is minimal.

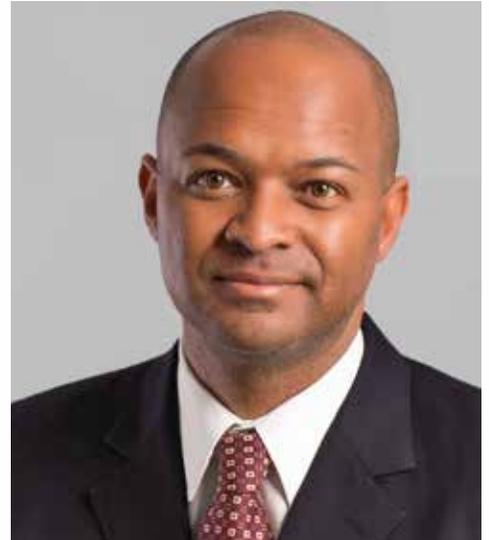
MP Emmanuel expressed her concern, and cautioned the Advisory Committee, with respect to major businesses in a local government district influencing local government decisions. Additionally, MP Emmanuel suggested that there ought to be input from the local government before central government approves developments and concessions within a local government district. MP Emmanuel reiterated the importance of strong and comprehensive legislation and proposed including corporate social responsibility. Additionally, MP Emmanuel recommends that the MPs in a District can fill in as aides and provide a layer of checks and balances for the local government Councils.



Member of Parliament for Centreville

During consultation, the Honourable Reece Chipman raised the issue of adequate pay for Council Members and traced the connection to the level of participation/representation. MP Chipman was supportive of the Advisory Committee's proposal that the Mayor be full-time and that the Council members be part-time with a stipend in the range of B\$1,000 per month.

The Advisory Committee invited the MPs' thoughts on campaign finance limits, term limits and declarations. MP Chipman supports all three proposals and recommends that the ceiling for campaigns should be \$20,000 and not the \$10,000 that the Committee recommends. He also recommends that the term limits for Councilors and Mayors should be limited to two consecutive terms. As far as the declarations, while MP Mackey had suggested it be minimal, the Centreville MP saw the need for a proper declaration process as Parliamentarians so as to ensure accountability and limit corruption.



Member of Parliament for Bain and Grants Town

During his consultation, the Honourable Travis Robinson expressed his concern with the number of persons in a District voting for their Mayor. More specifically, MP Robinson's focus was on the comparison to the number of persons that vote for an MP at the constituency level and the larger number that would be eligible to vote for the Mayor. The Committee sought to address the need for clearly defined roles of MPs and Councils. In fact, to this point, The Committee's Report expresses that an MP's primary focus is to represent their constituency in addressing national issues, whereas the Council would exist to address local community issues. There ought not be any trepidation of the coexistence as local government has existed in the Family Islands for two decades.



MP Robinson also expressed his support for introducing campaign spend limits and added that the limit should be raised to B\$15-20k. However, he doesn't agree that there ought to be term limits for the Mayors.



THE STAKEHOLDERS SESSIONS (AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2018) CONT'D

Member of Parliament for Pinewood

In consultation with the Honourable Reuben Rahming, the Committee was urged to consider the provision of revenue to meet the social needs of a community. MP Rahming suggested a percentage of sin tax being allocated to local government. The Committee shared its proposal for a percentage of real property tax and the re-allocation of existing expenditure to local government which the MP expressed his support. The MP also noted that it may take a few rotations of the local government system to iron out the kinks and urged the Committee to carry out intense public education exercises.

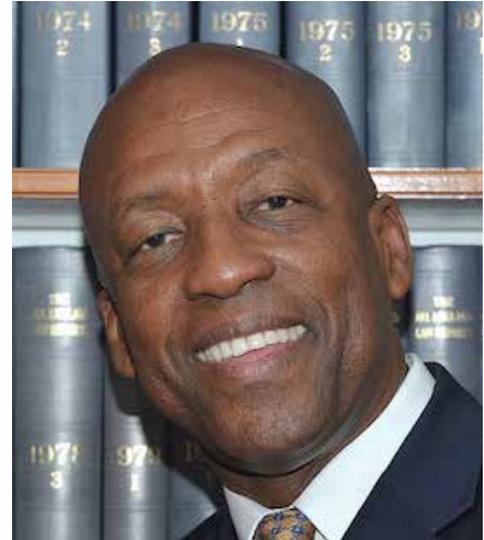


MP Rahming recognized the critical need for collaboration in local government being critical and that their connections with taxpayer driven organizations have characterized objectives. He believes that local government will provide a successful pathway to getting community issues addressed. MP Rahming concluded with his overall support and suggested that there should be two consecutive terms limit.



Former Cabinet Minister & Contender for Leadership of the Progressive Liberal Party

The Advisory Committee consulted former Cabinet Minister and contender for the leadership of the PLP, Mr. Alfred Sears, QC. Mr. Sears has publicly expressed his support for the introduction of local government to New Providence for several years. He noted that Cabinets around the region have announced a policy for decentralization of government functions. The meeting with Mr. Sears can be summarized in the following headings:



1. Re-invigorate Bahamian pride and civic participation

“We are not a people with nothing, looking for something. We have a lot to offer – we need to be empowered”. These were the words of Mr. Sears when we discussed empowering our people to improve their quality of life.

While Mr. Sears was not aware of our proposal for five districts and that the only one named thus far is the ‘Heritage City of Nassau’, on his own volition, he suggested that the Districts have heritage significance that will tell the narrative of our people. Mr. Sears spoke to Clifton as a District name for the Southwestern District which would include communities such as Adelaide, Albany, Mount Pleasant, Lyford Cay and Old Fort Bay. He urged us to seek to remind our people of who they are and to give them a ‘sense of self’.

The Committee is receptive to this recommendation provided its pursuant to a socio-economic parity across all Districts. In essence, it would not be desirable to have any District made up of an entirely middle to upper class or another made up of entirely lower class.

To his mind, as the population of New Providence is approximately 250,000, he suggests 4 to 5 Heritage Districts would be sufficient. In determining the makeup of each District, he urged us to consider equitable economic viability, cultural significance and population.



THE STAKEHOLDERS SESSIONS (AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2018) CONT'D

2. The integrity of the system

Mr. Sears expressed his full support upon learning of The Committee's proposals. Namely, Mr. Sears agrees that there should be term limits. "*It is not a divine right to always be in office*", he said.

He supports the proposal for public debates leading up to the elections, regular mandatory training of practitioners, spend limits and declarations. He also noted that there must be an esteemed criterion for candidates, inclusive of their filing of financial disclosures, not being bankrupts, citizens and/or permanent residents.

Mr. Sears stressed that the Ministry of Local Government ought not be making decisions for local government Councils as government is tasked with policymaking. The Ministry ought not be able to veto a project unless it offends national policy. The Ministry's focus should be more supervisory, ensuring compliance with the system, ensuring accountability and making sure there is harmonization and training.

Finally, on this head, Mr. Sears spoke to the perception (more so reality) that foreign investment shapes the agenda by determining the development and economic priorities in our islands. He suggests that local government would cause the people on the ground to contribute to the economic future of their communities if they are empowered to innovate and participate in the ownership of their communities.

3. Decentralization of Infrastructure

"Too much power is vested in the Minister – so you can't take initiative without approval of the Minister. It inhibits innovation and creativity. We have an obligation to devolve power to empower people to take responsibility for their lives and solve local problems".

Mr. Sears noted that it is impossible for the Ministry of Works, for instance, to satisfactorily resolve every issue that presents itself on a daily basis from hundreds of residents with respect to potholes, dilapidated government buildings, etc. During the consultation meeting, Mr. Sears invited the Committee to consider that local government should have a more substantive capacity. He noted that local governments in New Providence can be empowered to address infrastructure issues in their Districts.





THE STAKEHOLDERS SESSIONS (AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2018) CONT'D

Mr. Sears shared that self-determination at the community level is a fundamental right and that local government should be enshrined in our constitution as it is in other jurisdictions. “Unfortunately, we inherited a centralized structure designed to facilitate the interest of the colonial power – to rule”, said Mr. Sears.

4. Revenue Generation and Retention

To Mr. Sears, the present local government system is inadequate because there exists 100% dependency on central government. Local governments should be authorized to collect real property tax, bicycle licensing fees etc.

According to Mr. Sears, we don’t have a viable or sustainable local government because the system lacks the ability for revenue generation and retention. The pilot initiative launched in with the local government Hope Town District in 2017 has been a tremendous success and represents the way for community for revenue generation.

5. Community Services & Development Programs

Local governments according to Mr. Sears should have community centers.

At these community centers, the Mayor’s staff can provide pre-schools, technical vocational education facilities at the community level, adult evening learning classes, seniors day care, swimming classes, wellness centres, health education classes to prevent and detect, cultural events, cooperatives, entrepreneurial rental spaces and civil society meeting spaces to name a few. The local government’s role can no longer be limited to collecting garbage. As was said earlier by Mr. Sears, “We are not a people with nothing, looking for something. We have a lot to offer – we need to be empowered”.

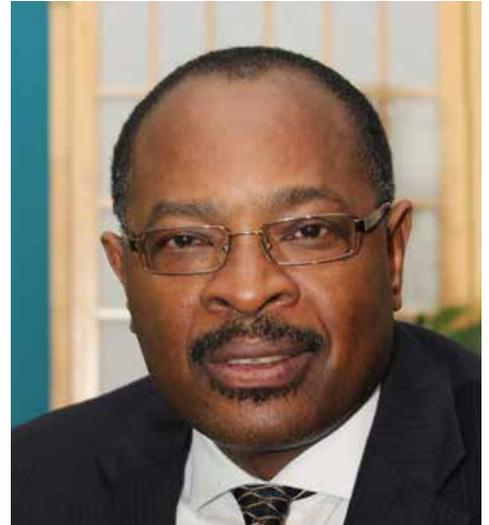
6. Controls / Harmonization

Mr. Sears urged the Committee to consider measures that would ensure harmonization. He spoke to e-procurement for District Contracts, strengthening the role of the Auditor General and full implementation of the Freedom of Information Act. Finally, Mr. Sears reiterated central government’s role ought to be to create policy and supervise local government for the purpose of accountability, training and assistance.

THE AUDITOR GENERAL

Several members of the Advisory Committee had the good fortune to consult with Terrance Bastian, the Auditor General, who was very excited to learn of the intent to introduce local government in New Providence. He stands ready, willing and able to assist in maintaining the integrity of the system and offered great advice for checks and balances.

The Auditor General also noted that autonomy, specifically revenue generation authority, is critical for the success of the system but urged the Committee to consider central government allocating adequate funding for the first two to three rotations of the system until its revenue generation capacity is built up to ensure sustainability. It was noted that the Ministry of Finance and the Treasury Department would set the stringent policies to govern all revenue and expenditure.



THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER

During a thorough consultation session with the Parliamentary Commissioner, he expressed that with the requested number of returning officers, he and his team are more than able to deliver a smooth registration and election process in April 2020.

The Commissioner and Mr. Geoffrey McPhee brainstormed with former Parliamentary Commissioner Mr. Errol Bethel for hours on the best way to ensure socioeconomic parity or registered voter parity. The three gentlemen are in agreement on the ability to conduct elections for Mayors and Council Members on the same day in the five Districts. Their knowledge, recollection of boundaries, polling divisions and registered voters is impeccable. I have no doubt that with the requested number of Returning Officers, the Parliamentary Commissioner and his team will deliver a smooth inaugural local government election in 2020.



THE MEDIA ROUNDS (SEPTEMBER 2018)



THE NATIONAL MEDIA ROUNDS (SEPTEMBER 2018)

The National Advisory Committee teamed up with the Advertising and Marketing Agency, Barefoot Marketing, to publicize the Local Government survey results and to show the public the ongoing NAC consultation with various stake holders in Government, Local Government and more. They also used local radio show platforms to inform the public about survey results and asked them to put in their input via social media pages, established by the NAC. All PR was distributed to the National Bahamian Media and all links and stories were posted on social media avenues. All work will also be published on a Local Government website currently being finished for approval launch by NAC, with Cabinet Approval.

TUESDAY
SEPTEMBER 18, 2018

The Freeport News

Local Government NAC seeks advice

Keeping with their theme "Advancing Democracy by Empowering Residents," the National Advisory Committee (NAC) has spent the last few weeks soliciting the advice and guidance of various stakeholders in helping them draft the best implementation proposal possible for local government in New Providence. The NAC was launched in April 2018, by the Minnis administration under the Chairmanship of Senator Russell Eric Henfield, and the committee has spent the past five months researching, debating and creating an effective local framework for the New Providence system. After engaging a wide cross section of residents from New Providence — from the general public, to the business community, to the media — about their plans for local government the committee and its subsidiary groups have now begun to engage with those immersed in the local government system as practitioners in the Family Islands.

"We started meetings three weeks ago with family island local government Chief Councilors, Chairmen and Council Members," noted Henfield. "We visited Councils in Harbour Island and North Eleuthera, learning of their frustrations with the current system and the success stories. We received with them our plans to implement a stronger system of local government in New Providence and asked for their advice, suggestions, or any changes they felt needed to be made to our proposals to improve our system."

In comments to a local daily, retired Alcoa Councilor David Ralph recently expressed his concern about the government's proposal plan.

"Mr. Ralph and his wife are extremely passionate Bahamians and local specifically. Family Islanders that want to continue significantly contributing to the development of their district and the country at large. The NAC read his article and we reached out to him because we appreciate his frustration with the Family Island local government system," Henfield explained. "The inability to raise revenue, the fact that so much of its allocation goes for salaries and the times when those impacted by certain decisions did not have a say in that decision making process is frustrating," he noted. "It's not just to enquire, imagine residents seeing hundreds of millions of dollars leave their district for the capital, to only get pitance returned. It's enough to discourage the best of us," said Henfield after several conversations with Mr. Ralph.

"Ralph showed the committee and I the importance of putting in place a structure where local

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The Bahama Journal

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VOL. 30 - NO. 221

TUESDAY - SEPTEMBER 18TH, 2018

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as practitioners in the Family Islands. "We started meetings three weeks ago with family island local government Chief Councilors, Chairmen and Council Members," note Henfield. "We visited Councils in Harbour Island and North Eleuthera, learning their frustrations with current systems and success stories, reviewed with them plans to implement stronger system of local government in New Providence and asked their advice, suggestion or any changes they needed to be made to our proposals to improve our system."

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THE NASSAU Guardian

TUESDAY - SEPTEMBER 18TH, 2018

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NATIONAL NEWS

National Advisory Committee seeks advice on local government implementation

In keeping with their theme "Advancing Democracy by Empowering Residents," the National Advisory Committee (NAC) has spent the last few weeks soliciting the advice and guidance of various stakeholders in helping them draft the best implementation proposal possible for local government in New Providence. The NAC was launched in April 2018, by the Minnis administration under the Chairmanship of Senator Russell Eric Henfield, and the committee has spent the past five months researching, debating and creating an effective local framework for the New Providence system. After engaging a wide cross section of residents from New Providence — from the general public, to the business community, to the media — about their plans for local government the committee and its subsidiary groups have now begun to engage with those immersed in the local government system as practitioners in the Family Islands.



retiree David Ralph recently expressed his concern about the government's proposal plan. "Mr. Ralph and his wife are extremely passionate Bahamians and local specifically. Family Islanders that want to continue significantly contributing to the development of their district and the country at large. The NAC read his article and we reached out to him because we appreciate his frustration with the Family Island local government system," Henfield explained. "The inability to raise revenue, the fact that so much of its allocation goes for salaries and the times when those impacted by certain decisions did not have a say in that decision making process is frustrating," he noted. "It's not just to enquire, imagine residents seeing hundreds of millions of dollars leave their district for the capital, to only get pitance returned. It's enough to discourage the best of us," said Henfield after several conversations with Mr. Ralph.

"We started meetings three weeks ago with family island local government Chief Councilors, Chairmen and Council Members," note Henfield. "We visited Councils in Harbour Island and North Eleuthera, learning their frustrations with current systems and success stories, reviewed with them plans to implement stronger system of local government in New Providence and asked their advice, suggestion or any changes they needed to be made to our proposals to improve our system."

In comments to a local daily, retired Alcoa Councilor David Ralph recently expressed concern about the government's proposed plans, "Mr. Ralph and his wife are extremely passionate Bahamians and local specifically. Family Islanders that want to continue significantly contributing to the development of their district and the country at large. The NAC read his article and we reached out to him because we appreciate his frustration with the Family Island local government system," Henfield explained. "The inability to raise revenue, the fact that so much of its allocation goes for salaries and the times when those impacted by certain decisions did not have a say in that decision making process is frustrating," he noted. "It's not just to enquire, imagine residents seeing hundreds of millions of dollars leave their district for the capital, to only get pitance returned. It's enough to discourage the best of us," said Henfield after several conversations with Mr. Ralph.



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CALL FOR VIEWS ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

THE National Advisory Committee (NAC) is asking the public to weigh in on proposals for local government in New Providence. Last week, *The Tribune* reported concerns by retired Abaco publisher David Ralph, who suggested government take a closer look at the successes and frustrations of the Family Island local government system before it pressed on with a New Providence roll-out.

NAC chairman Senator Ranard Henfield acknowledged Mr. Ralph's concerns. "It makes no sense telling community leaders to be innovative and to address the problems if you don't clearly legislate that they have the authority, sufficient revenue streams, adequate facilities and proper training," he said.

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Advisory Council promotes Local Govt

★ THE National Advisory Council on Local Government for New Providence took their consultation process to the nation during the month of September to encourage widespread engagement from residents in New Providence and the nation at large. The large volume of radio calls and text messages, coupled with a dramatic increase in engagements on the Council's social media pages is evidence of the tremendous level of public interest that exists and denotes further that the Council's

efforts are proving fruitful. Council Members Ed Fields and Acting Director of Local Government, Brenda Colebrooke kicked off the last week of radio appearances by taking their message to the thousands of listeners who tune in to the nationally syndicated ZNS show, Darold Miller Live. Our photo shows (L-R): members of the Local Government NAC, Chairman Senator Ranard Henfield, Ed Fields and Dr Nicolette Bethel (centre) with host Darold Miller and Acting Director of Local Government Brenda Colebrooke.



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Cabinet approves appointment of Local Government Advisory Committee for New Providence
 By Matt Maura
 Apr 24, 2018 - 9:50:22 PM

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ROYAL BAHAMAS POLICE REPORTS

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NASSAU, The Bahamas – The Cabinet of The Bahamas has approved the appointment of an Advisory Committee for the introduction of Local Government in New Providence.

The Committee met for the first time on Wednesday, April 18 (2018) in the Conference Room at the Ministry of Transport and Local Government at which time they received their charge from Minister of Transport and Local Government, the Hon. Frankie Campbell.

Press Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister, Mr. Anthony Newbold, said the Committee is comprised of a "good cross-section" of professionals from varying backgrounds, during his weekly press briefing.



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Committee for the establishment of local government in the capital to release report soon



Vice Chairman and Transport and Local Government Director, Ceephas Cooper.

The recently appointed advisory committee for the establishment of local government in New Providence will release its first report in August, according to the committee's Vice Chairman and Transport and Local Government Director Ceephas Cooper.

"We're looking to make local government stronger in New Providence than in the Family Islands," Cooper said.

"The problem is that we are looking into ways of streaming an income of revenue for local government."

Earlier this year Press Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister Anthony Newbold told media that the Minister of Transport and Local Government Frankie Campbell would also be looking into ways to improve how local government operates in the Family Islands.

"In his charge, minister Campbell highlighted the need for the committee to take a very good look at the current system in the Family Islands and to recommend how it can be improved," Newbold said.





THE NATIONAL MEDIA ROUNDS (SEPTEMBER 2018)

Local Government Publication List

1. 26/08/18 **242NewsBahamas**: Public Consultation continues for Introduction of Local Government Structure in New Providence..
2. 27/08/18 Bahamas Local: Public Consultation continues for Introduction of Local Government Structure in New Providence
3. 27/08/18 The Punch: NAC holds talks on Local Govt for New Providence.
4. 28/08/18 Bahamas Weekly: Publication Consultation continues for Introduction of Local Government Structure in New Providence.
5. 28/08/18 The Freeport News: Public Consultation continues for introduction of Local Government structure in the capital.
6. 28/08/18 Official Website of The Bahamas: Publication Consultation Continues for Introduction of Local Government Structure in **New Providence**.
7. 28/08/18 ZNS Bahamas: Public Consultation continues for Introduction of Local Government Structure in New Providence.
8. 29/08/18 The Nassau Guardian: Local govt committee widens consultations.
9. 29/08/18 The Tribune: Do you want Local Government for New Providence?
10. 29/08/18 The Bahama Journal: New Local Gov't Structure Planned.
11. 30/08/18 EyeWitnessNews: Public Consultation continues for Introduction of Local Government in New Providence.
12. 17/09/18 242NewsBahamas: Local Government NAC Seeks Advice from Family Island Practicioners, Auditor General and starts.

Media Tours

13. 18/09/18 Bahamas Local: Local Government NAC Seeks from Family Island Practitioners, Auditor General and start Media Tours..
14. 18/09/18 The Freeport News: Local Government NAC seeks advice.
15. 18/08/18 The Bahama Journal: National Advisory Committee (NAC) seeks Guidance for Local Government Proposal.
16. 19/09/18 The Nassau Guardian: National Advisory Committee seeks advice on local government implementation.
17. 19/09/18 The Tribune: Call For Views On Local Government.
18. 24/09/18 242NewsBahamas: National Advisory Board Seeks Public feedback on Local Government Implementation 2020.
19. 24/09/18 The Bahama Journal: Advisory Board Seeks Public feedback on NP Local Government Implementation.
20. 26/08/18 Bahamas Local: National Advisory Board Seeks Public Feedback on Local Government Implementation 2020.
21. 1/10/18 242NewsBahamas: National Advisory Council encourages public engagement on Local Government.
22. 2/10/18 Bahamas Local: National Advisory Council encourages public engagement on Local Government.
23. 3/10/18 Bahamas Weekly: National Advisory Council encourages.
24. 9/10/18 The Punch: Advisory Council promotes Local Govt.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT & ROAD MAP

Introducing local government in New Providence during this term of office would be a defining moment for the Minnis Administration and the fulfillment of a major campaign promise. It has been said during one of our consultative meetings that, 'the Ingraham Administration gave birth to local government in the Family Islands during their first term but did not intend for the child to grow'. It confounds many practitioners that the twenty-two-year-old system still awaits its allowance from central government.

As the Minnis Administration embarks on its very own defining moment, the degree of autonomy and the investment this administration makes into its own creation will speak volumes for generations to come. Undoubtedly, the Minnis Administration has to advance this implementation exercise with care, not to repeat the shortfalls of the Family Island system which lacks regular capacity building opportunities, strategic development planning at the District level, economic sustainability measures, adherence to good governance and the principles of public life inter alia.

As expressed throughout this Report, the Advisory Committee was tasked with a very important mission over a short period. The Committee members that endured sometimes conducted as much as eight consultation meetings in a day and on occasion, two (2) full length nationally carried radio shows in a single day. The commitment of the faithful is commendable having regard to the fact that they received no remuneration for their research, attendance and proposals over this period.

At our very first meeting, I challenged the committee to propose ways that we can improve the quality of life of New Providence residents, and visitors while deepening democracy. In the weeks that followed, amidst intense research and debates, we considered and now propose the following to address that



1. PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNANCE

Considerable research was conducted on international and our Family Island local government systems to ascertain how best to promote good governance at the local government level. Fortunately, the Advisory Committee's composition consisted of organizations and entities that pride themselves on transparency, responsiveness, accountability, innovation, inclusion and participation in the decision-making processes. Inevitably, at our core was ensuring that residents and central government could have confidence in the local government system and practitioners.

The Committee recommends, and invites the Cabinet to approve, modeling the New Providence legislation after the stringent good governance legislation and regulations enunciated in the New South



Wales' local government Act. The Committee also recommends, and invites the Cabinet to approve, the system's adherence to the seven principles of public life and the United Nations' eight pillars of good governance which can all be enshrined in the legislation and regulations.





2. DISTRICTING

As mentioned throughout this Report, the Committee proposes that New Providence be organized into five Districts. The Committee has sought to ensure socioeconomic parity between the Districts as much as is practicable. We felt it unwise to group into a District, constituencies like Bain and Grants Town, Centerville, St. Barnabas and Englerston and expect them to be self-sufficient and sustainable as a District composed of St. Anne's, Yamacraw and Freetown. Each District is being subdivided into communities to afford each community to elect a Council Member. For example, in the Over-The-Hill communities, we propose that Council members be elected for The Grove, Black Village, Farm Road, Bain Town, Grants Town etc.

The Committee has had preliminary discussions with the Financial Secretary and the Controller of Inland Revenue. While we have not yet gathered the data required, we were advised that Inland Revenue has engaged a consultant to install methodologies that will allow for the compiling of the information needed to determine what is available with respect to funding from allocated property taxes. Notwithstanding the absence of the information requested, we propose that New Providence be divided into five Districts pursuant to either of the following models:

a. Socioeconomic Model

Under this model, the five Districts' makeup can resemble the following:

1. The Heritage City of Nassau
Saunders Beach to Mackey Street/Marathon Road inclusive of Bay Street and Paradise Island, south to the East West Highway.
2. The Northwest District [Heritage Name to be determined]
Saunders Beach to Lyford Cay south to Milo Butler Highway and Fire Trail Road onto Gladstone and west along the Airport Road.



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT & ROAD MAP CONT'D

3. The Southwest District [Heritage Name to be determined]
Mount Pleasant, Clifton, Albany, West Carmichael Road to Faith Avenue South inclusive of Marshall Road and north to Firetrail Road.
4. The Southeast District [Heritage Name to be determined]
Faith Avenue South to Port New Providence and Yamacraw, Prince Charles Drive Eastern tip to the East West Highway onto Milo Butler Highway back to Faith Avenue South - inclusive of Garden Hills, East Carmichael Road etc.
5. The Northeast District [Heritage Name to be determined]
Mackey Street to Winton, Prince Charles Drive's eastern tip to Marathon Road – inclusive of the Eastern Road, Fox Hill, Kemp Road and San Souci.

b. Registered Voter Model

Under this model, the Districts' makeup can resemble the following:

1. The Heritage City of Nassau

- a. Bain & Grants Town with 4603 voters and 12 polling divisions.
- b. St. Barnabas with 4215 voters and 11 polling divisions.
- c. Centreville with 4978 voters and 12 polling divisions.
- d. Fort Charlotte with 4631 voters and 11 polling divisions.
- e. Englerston with 4767 and 11 polling divisions.

Total registered voters would be 23,194 with 57 polling divisions, 7-11 council members for the various communities and 1 mayor.

2. The Western District - [Heritage Name to be determined]

- a. Killarney with 6475 voters and 14 polling divisions.
- b. Southern Shores with 5469 voters and 12 polling divisions.
- c. Golden Isles with 6897 voters and 14 polling divisions.
- d. Tall Pines with 5946 voters and 15 polling divisions.

Total registered voters would be 24,787 with 55 polling divisions, 7-11 council members for the various communities and 1 mayor.



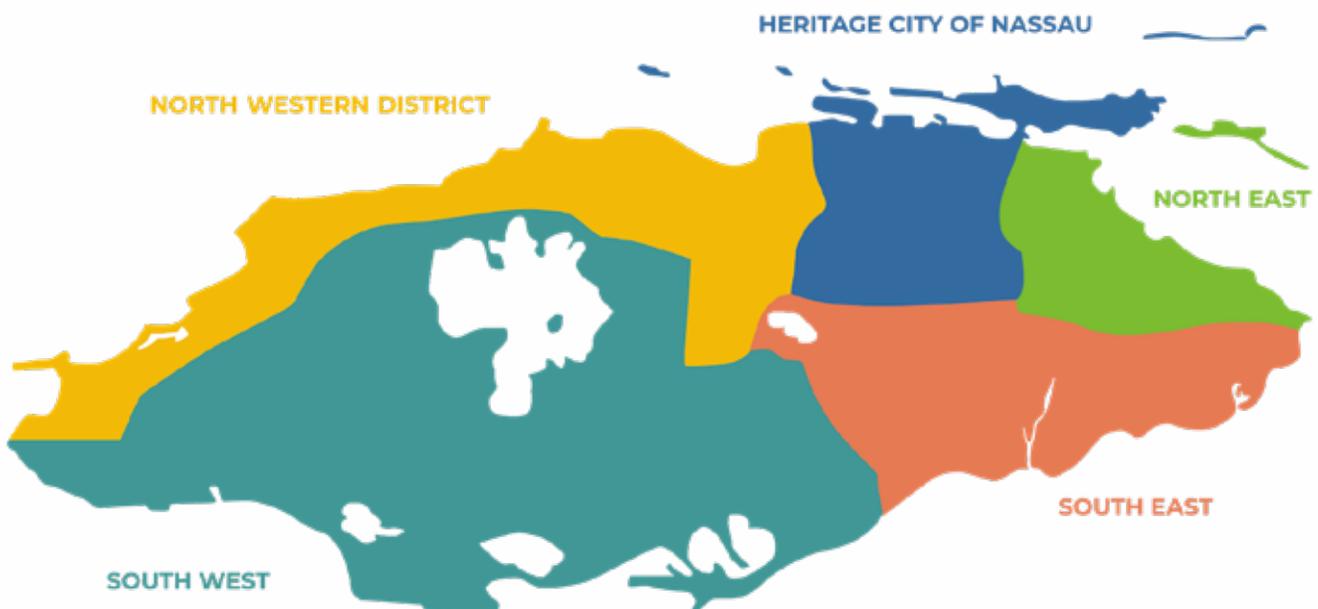
3. The Southeast District - [Heritage Name to be determined]:

- a. Elizabeth with 5394 voters and 13 polling divisions
- b. Yamacraw with 5051 voters and 13 polling divisions
- c. Pinewood with 5222 voters and 13 polling divisions
- d. Sea Breeze with 5442 and 12 polling divisions
- e. Nassau Village with 5477 voters and 14 polling divisions

Total registered voters would be 26,586 with 65 polling divisions, 7-11 council members and 1 mayor.

4. The Northeast District - [Heritage Name to be determined]:

- a. St. Anne's with 5358 and 15 polling divisions
- b. Fox Hill with 5710 and 12 polling divisions
- c. Free Town with 4741 and 12 polling divisions
- d. Marathon 5215 with 13 polling divisions
- e. Centreville 4978 with 12 polling divisions





CHAIRMAN'S REPORT & ROAD MAP CONT'D

Total registered voters would be 26,002 with 64 polling divisions, 7-11 council members and 1 mayor.

5. The South Central District:

- a. Bamboo Town with 5613 voters and 14 polling divisions
- b. Garden Hills with 5104 voters and 12 polling divisions
- c. Golden Gates with 5301 voters and 14 polling divisions
- d. Carmichael with 5835 voters with 14 polling divisions
- e. South Beach with 5288 and 12 polling divisions

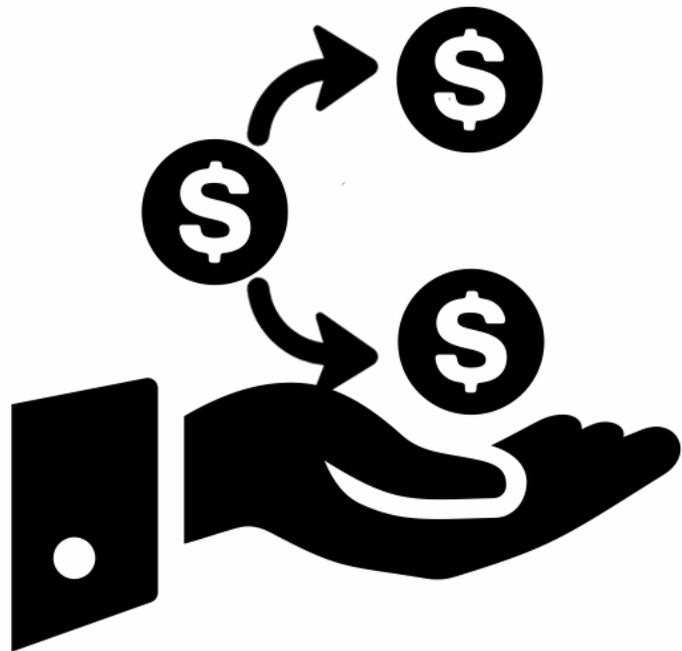
Total registered voters would be 27,141 with 66 polling divisions, 9 council members and 1 mayor.

The Cabinet is enjoined to consider the socioeconomic model as the preferable model and assist the Committee with the necessary real property tax figures etc. to facilitate fine tuning the Districts' composition and boundaries.



3. ELECTING QUALITY CANDIDATES

As articulated throughout this report, a major shortcoming of the existing structure is constant capacity building opportunities. It was a disheartening moment to converse with practitioners that are not familiar with the legislation, regulations, obligations and good governance principles. For the history of the existing system, residents have been relegated to voting for whomever spends the most on their campaign, is more popular or well connected. Unfortunately, personalities prevailed over issues being addressed. It is imperative that the Minnis Administration does not permit its creation to descend that path. It is being recommended, and the Cabinet is enjoined to approve, that the New Providence local government elections mandate participation in public district debates by all candidates in addition to questions and answer sessions at the community level.



The Advisory Committee also recommends to the Cabinet that there be campaign spend limits of \$10,000.00 maximum so that candidates can not significantly outspend others and are constrained to knock on doors and converse with residents as much as possible. It is also our recommendation that Candidates do not include national political party slogans or logos on their paraphernalia. All Candidates ought to file disclosures, submit nomination forms and consider participating in local government certification courses made available at no cost by the Department of local Government. After being elected, it is recommended that officials are not sworn in until completion of the local government training and advanced certification course. As such, the Committee proposes elections for April 2020 and swearing in on or about September 1st 2020.

It is being recommended to the Cabinet that all local government officials attend quarterly training day sessions on the legislation, protocol, citizen engagement, public administration, good governance, the principles of public life, strategic planning, community development, disaster preparation, economic development and public relations.

4. FUNDING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

A substantial amount of research was carried out on funding local government by the sub-committee headed by Khrystle Rutherford-Ferguson. There has been a lot of unnecessary trepidation on this issue when in fact, it's a matter of re-allocation and empowerment. Central government presently budgets to address the needs of New Providence communities. If allocated proportionately and fairly, the very same budgeted expenditure (or less) can be administered by local government to address those very same issues. I am again reminded of a quote referenced earlier from Mr. Sears, "We are not a people with nothing, looking for something. We have a lot to offer – we need to be empowered".



The Revenue, Budget and Economic Development Team was tasked with investigating and recommending the following:

1. Sources of revenue that can be derived and utilized by local government districts;
2. Opportunities to spur economic development within districts;
3. A regionally comparative honorarium for the Mayor and Councilors and the functions required to effectively operate a district office.

Revenue Sources

The ability to be financially self-sufficient is a vital component to the success and independence of local government. Towards this end, the Revenue Team considered the following as revenue sources for local government:

1. Property Taxes - Research shows that globally one of the most significant sources of revenue that local government receives is from property taxes. In fact, the Jamaican local government system receives 100% of Real Property Taxes. The Committee proposes that a meaningful and fixed percentage of property tax revenue; both arrears and current taxes, be allocated to the relevant local government districts. It is noted that under the last administration, two entities continue to collect real property tax; the Hope Town Local Government Council which could receive up to 10% and a West Palm Beach firm (Real Property Tax (RPT) Recovery Authority LLC) that may be retaining up to 25%.
2. Traffic and environmental fines - The Committee proposes that each district manages 'enforcement' for traffic infractions (such as speeding) and levies for environmental violations (such as bush mechanics, dumping & illegal burning of waste). Innovative technology (like drones), traffic cameras and online ticketing could be out sourced for maximum effectiveness.



3. Nomination fees – The Committee anticipates a large number of persons offering themselves as candidates for local government elections. In an effort to encourage registration, the nomination fee being proposed is considerably low in comparison to that of national elections but sufficient enough to be a minimal source of revenue for the Districts which can assist in the cost of the initial debates and promotion of the elections.
4. Community Park Usage Fees - It is proposed that each district would coordinate usage of parks and common spaces for medium to large scale events and collect fees accordingly to maintain the facilities. If the residents are to see and touch the improvements in quality of life that local government affords them, properly managed community parks with CCTV, exercise and play areas, restroom facilities and picnic areas would be an ideal feature. As we have observed in other local government districts, residents would be more inclined to rent communal areas with features for events.
5. Signage fees - The Committee proposes that a Council/Mayor's stamp be required to be affixed to every temporary sign/billboards in each District to show that the fee has been paid and the signage approve for the designated period. The installation and removal of the same can be done by the Council's staff. This would be a source of revenue and regulation as there is a proliferation of advertisements plastered in residential communities that are left long after the events or promotions have transpired. Any sign identified without the appropriate stamp would automatically be removed and the entity responsible fined.
6. Impound Fees - It is proposed that districts be allowed to tow and impound vehicles parked in no parking zones, abandoned vehicles on the roadside after a specified period, vehicles being sold on the side of the road and vehicles parked in disabled parking spots without the necessary decal/permit. The Committee recommends that a single impound lot on New Providence can exist for all Districts to reduce costs, with funds from fines going back to the relevant district from which the car was towed. This would ensure compliance and enforcement of the laws. Unfortunately, there has been a blatant disregard for no parking areas and handicap parking spots. This proposal would serve as a source of revenue and regulation.
7. Sin taxes - The Committee proposes that a portion of sin taxes generated in each District be allocated to the relevant local government District to positively counteract any negative impact on the communities from residents gambling, alcohol usage, etc. This would not only be a source of revenue, but it would decrease the burden on the Ministry of Social Services.

8. Emissions Testing - The Committee proposes that each district may facilitate an emissions testing station which would be a requirement for new and renewed automobile registrations. This can be done by a joint venture with Road Traffic and the Council or by way of public private partnership to eliminate expenditure on the part of government while empowering residents to launch a new business venture. This proposal would also generate positive environmental gains.
9. Garbage Collection - The Committee proposes that garbage collection be a local government service thereby allowing the costs associated with and the responsibility for the same to be diverted from central government to the relevant local government districts.
10. Ordinances - It is proposed that each District Council be able to establish Ordinances/ Bye-laws that do not contravene national policy or laws. For instance, a Council may pass an ordinance that prohibits parking in handicap spots, on sidewalks or partially in the street. Fines can be paid at the Council office. It is appreciated that laws are already in place for such infractions, however, there is a noticeable lack of enforcement by central government authorities for any number of reasons.
11. Issuing construction permits - It is proposed that each district would have a role in the determination and issuance of permits for new construction and renovations of residential and commercial properties.
12. Rental or Lease Fees - Fees derived from renting or leasing local government buildings or parcels of land is a long-term goal of local government as it provides strategic rental spaces to businesses within the Districts.

Economic Development

It is noted as best practices around the world, to encourage community spirit and build 'vested interest' in the success of Local Governments. This is usually achieved through the economic empowerment of communities. Encouraging community input and economic development is intended to drive ownership and a continued socio-economic growth within the district. As such, the Committee proposes the following District level reforms as ways to spur and sustain local economic development:

1. The ability to issue Community Bonds;
2. Local procurement policies and community cooperatives where request for proposals are sent to local businesses first inviting them to bid on providing the District services;
3. Creating District Heritage Sites & Business Improvement Districts;
4. The latitude to offer incentives to attract and retain new businesses within the districts with on-going “invest in the Heritage District of Clifton” marketing campaigns; and
5. District Satellite SBDC offices (Small Business Development Centres) to offer support for small start-ups.

Budget for Local Government Operations in New Providence

The Committee considered honorariums that would attract quality members on the Local Governments and proposes the following: B\$12k per annum for Council Members and a salary for the Mayor in the range of \$45k per annum. The Mayor's salary was intensely debated and justified as it was noted that the Mayor must be a full-time position whereas Council Members are part-time. Some of the duties proposed are:

1. Councilors: attending twice monthly council meetings; researching and debating local ordinances; representing their respective communities at events; engaging community residents on a regular basis via mandatory monthly community meetings; overseeing and developing annual community and District budgets; reviewing of contracts with the E-procurement system to be used; whereas
2. Mayors: would be responsible for the day-to-day operations and management of the Districts; including supervision of staff; attending twice monthly council meetings, facilitating monthly meetings with individual council members; engaging the residents and attending community events. The Mayor should also liaison with central government, the District's Members of Parliament and central government service providers such as the Police, Ministry of Works, Ministry of Social services etc.

As a reference, the Committee reviewed examples of regional salaries regarding Mayors and Council members as follows:

Jamaica: Mayors - \$24k and Councilors - \$10k

Trinidad: Mayors - \$37k and Councilors - \$9.6k

Bermuda: Mayors - \$75k and Councilors - \$30k

With regard to budget and expenditure, the Committee proposes that the Council should determine annual budgets inclusive of costs, anticipated revenues as well as execute vendor contracts. The Mayor would request bids then submit them for Council's debate and determination every two weeks in addition to overseeing the vendor relationships. She or he, would sign off on cheques as authorized by Council along with the co-signature of the Assistant Deputy Director of Local Government assigned to the District.

To effectively operate a local government district the following are additional expenses that should be considered:

1. Initial lease or rental of Local Government facilities adequate for Council meetings, Mayor's Office and Community Center;
2. Utilities;
3. Two Administrative Staff;
4. Part-time Accountant;
5. Part-time Attorney/Arbitrator;
6. Quarterly capacity building workshops;
7. Security Services;
8. Janitorial Services; and
9. IT Services.



The above are all general categories for the function of a district office however, based on the on-going public consultation it may be necessary to make changes to what is being proposed.



SELECT REPORTS & PERSPECTIVES

SELECT REPORTS & PERSPECTIVES

As Chairman, I invited several persons to offer their insight on specific issues after engaging conversations on various subject matters. While I would have loved to include everyone and everything that has poured into this pool of ideas, at this juncture, we will engrave the following and include the others at a later stage:

1. An Abaconian Local Government Perspective ;
2. Districting, Regulations & Elections;
3. Elections Team, Registration & Quality Candidates;
4. Mandatory Mechanisms for Responsible Governance;
5. The Future of the Town Planning Commission;
6. Devolution of Power - The Time is Now for New Providence.



1. AN ABACONIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVE

The Advisory Committee had the pleasure of receiving input from Mr. Dave Ralph (former Council Member) who published an article in the papers that was rather concerning. In the article, captioned ‘Fix local government in the Family Islands before bringing it to the capital’, Mr. Ralph railed the existing systems as a frustrating structure. He reiterated many points we had heard from the various Family Island practitioners, including the fact that “those with ideas and initiative frequently quit in frustration”. Additionally, he shared instances of road blocks to their effectiveness by the central government. Specifically, he spoke to local government’s attempts to address traffic issues in Abaco, stating that, “Hope Town has been trying for years to get local traffic rules in place but finds it frustrating to get Nassau’s cooperation”.

At the time, Mr. Ralph had no intuition of our Committee’s proposals, consultations or research and was of the view that the Family Island system would be left behind and to their own devices. We reached out to Mr. Ralph shortly after the article was published and shared some of our research and considerations, after which, he became a proponent of introducing a strong local government system in New Providence. In the last few weeks, he has shared a tremendous amount of views and suggestions which we would like to include in this report and accredit to him.

Additionally, he reached out to several Abaco practitioners and provided us with their views and suggestions as well. At this juncture, we should note that Abaco is one of the better local government districts, if not the best. Interestingly enough, their practitioners like many across the country, are frustrated and agitating for a stronger local government system.

By email correspondence dated September 14th 2018, Mr. Ralph writes, *“I approve of using the term Mayor as it is a universally – understood title. That title should be adopted for Family Islands as well”*. This was a welcomed suggestion as the Committee was concerned as to how existing practitioners felt about the title of Chief Councilor being changed to Mayor. The change in title was also welcomed by other Chief Councilors. In fact, Jeremy Sweeting, the Chief Councilor of the Hope Town District Council, wrote on September 21st 2018, *“Change the name of Chief Councilor to Mayor... I am tired of having to explain to foreign home owners, tourists and even foreign diplomats on what a Chief Councilor is. Wouldn’t it be much easier to use the internationally known term of mayor?”*

After our consultation with the various Family Island practitioners, we learnt that there was a serious need for collaboration and communication between Councils, their Members of Parliament, the Ministry responsible for Local Government and other government departments. The Committee invited Mr. Ralph’s input on networking of Councils, Mayors and Central government for the better management of

Districts and he shared the following via email.

“The present local government Act requests the Chief Councilors to meet together for the common good of their island, but no funding for this was allocated. An appropriate per diem should be given... New Providence Mayors should be required to meet together, perhaps quarterly. This is to mutually discuss issues between themselves and approach superiors with a unified voice”.

It should be noted that Local Governments are not meant to be left to their own devices. Instead, they exist to provide better service to the local community and to afford the residents the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process for their communities. If that is in fact the purpose, then the Councils, MPs and Minister responsible should have a great line of communication and opportunities for collaboration. There should be a unified effort to ensure that their Districts are functioning exceptionally.

On the Committee’s proposal that the Mayor be full-time, Mr. Ralph had initially indicated that the Mayor should not be salaried. However, the Committee’s recommendation is that the Mayor would in fact operate as a City Manager of sorts. Mr. Ralph, in his October 1st email shared the following:

“The Central Abaco District Council has an annual budget near one million dollars. It hosts the country’s second busiest airport. It is the gateway to Guana Cay, Man-O-War Cay, Hope Town and other communities which are acknowledged tourism and second home destinations. A qualified city manager employed for this District would be justified... The position should be a full-time employee paid by the Ministry of Local Government but the actual workload would be subservient to instructions from the Council. A true office manager would help government get value for the money expended”.

In essence, the Mayor’s role may be that of a City Manager and spokesperson for the Council and District. She or he would be in office every day to address the District needs and that of the 25,000 plus residents from garbage collection, pothole repairs, malfunctioning street lights, elimination of bush mechanics, removal or derelict vehicles, maintenance of roadside verges, maintenance of parks, operation of community and further learning centers, oversight of juvenile community service orders, promotion of District events, organization of Council meetings and implementation of Council decisions.

Another suggestion of Mr. Ralph was to have staggered Council Member Terms “to avoid loss of continuity every three years”. As indicated in this Report, the Committee is recommending that each Council implement a District Strategic Development Plan for short, medium and long term goals. Additionally, the Committee has suggested that after being elected, but prior to being sworn in during September of the election year, the Council Members and Mayors receive Local Government training by the Ministry responsible for Local Government for the elected officials to attain Certification in Local



SELECT REPORTS & PERSPECTIVES CONT'D

Governance. During this period, it is being suggested that the outgoing Council and Mayor share all Minutes, proposed plans, outstanding issues and financial reports with the incoming Council and Mayor.

Mr. Ralph also raised a point that we had not contemplated - Public Service Awards. *“There is an unrecognized need for honoring persons for community service... The logical vehicle for this is local government. The key is to keep the costs down and the presentation simple and easily managed. An appropriate certificate presented by local government would accomplish this at close to zero cost”*.

There is a quote that says, ‘A person who feels appreciated will always do more than is expected’. If we are to truly deepen our democracy, truth is, people need to be encouraged to contribute and acknowledged for their contributions and sacrifice. The Mayors in each district could have an annual awards event on the October Heroes Day or on their respective District Establishment Day. A simple plaque or certificate acknowledging community leaders/builders would change the mindset of many and encourage many others to get civically engaged.

The Chief Councilor from Hope Town expressed two other valid observations on the licensing authority and revenue raising authority of local government which are worth sharing.

“Since 2011, licensing in the Bahamas or at least the Family Islands has been a nightmare as the statutory powers of licensing were stripped from local government and authority was placed in the hands of one individual. Taking this responsibility from local persons with hands-on knowledge regarding town geography and the cultural background has proved detrimental as business applicants have been approved in non-desirable locations. Non-residents in these positions have no knowledge of the communities in which they are approving the business for. Under local government, business license applications were posted publicly giving residents a chance to be involved in the approval process, whether they wished to register their opposition or even issue a letter of support. Under the current system, no one is aware until a business puts the open sign on their doors. This system needs to revert back to local government. It is presently out of control”.

As mentioned in this Report, the Committee strongly recommends that the New Providence Local Government be granted the authority to raise and retain revenue to cover its expenditure. Chief Councilor Sweeting’s District was the only Local Government District to date that ventured out to assist the Ministry of Finance by collecting Real Property Tax. Pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding, the Local Government Council was to receive up to 10% of any outstanding Real Property Tax in their District. It was expected that his Council would be able to collect about \$600,000 in outstanding taxes. Surprisingly, his District was able to collect in excess of \$1,000,000 since inception a year ago. Unfortunately, to date, they have not received one cent for their Council’s efforts and have been demoralized and infuriated to say the least. I suspect it is an issue that will bear its teeth prior to the next local government elections. As



such, it should be addressed posthaste. Nonetheless, this shows the ability of Local Government Councils to inspire their residents to pay their taxes. When asked, ‘what did you do to get these homeowners to pay’, the Chief Councilor said that his Council issued letters and advised the homeowners that if they pay, a portion of their taxes would be returned and used for community development. This speaks volumes to why many persons are not paying taxes and the influence of local government.

On the issue of revenue, Chief Councilor Sweeting stated, ***“To succeed and truly become local government, Council must have the ability to raise its own revenue and pass local ordinances... Obviously, much legislation would have to be amended initially, but in the long run, a move like this would bode well for local government”***.

I would add to that statement that it would bode well for the Ministry of Finance as well as the outstanding millions of dollars that local governments would collect would now make their way to the central government’s purse which could in turn be used to subsidize local government.

During a February 2018 visit to the Hope Town District, it was noted that the Deputy Prime Minister shared his support for empowering Local Government Councils to tap into additional revenue sources to help them make improvements in their communities. According to Timothy Roberts’ February 28th article in the Abaconian, the DPM stated during his visit with Minister Campbell that, ‘it is the government’s intent to have a revenue sharing arrangement with the Councils so they can relinquish more of the Central Government’s control allowing them to grow in the way that they know directly benefits the local community in a more tangible way’.

Overall, the Committee is extremely thankful to Mr. Ralph, Chief Councilor Sweeting and the many other Family Island practitioners, both current and former who have offered their input and support.



2. DISTRICTING, REGISTRATION & ELECTIONS

While the introduction of local government in New Providence will require a wide range of concerns that need to be addressed, for the most part there are four main components that must be addressed. They include, good governance, the electoral structure and process, delineation of powers between Central Government, funding and districting.

This portion of the Report deals specifically with the latter in its broad sense as there are several pieces to the puzzle that will have to be set in to place in order to reveal the final picture as to how the districts will look.

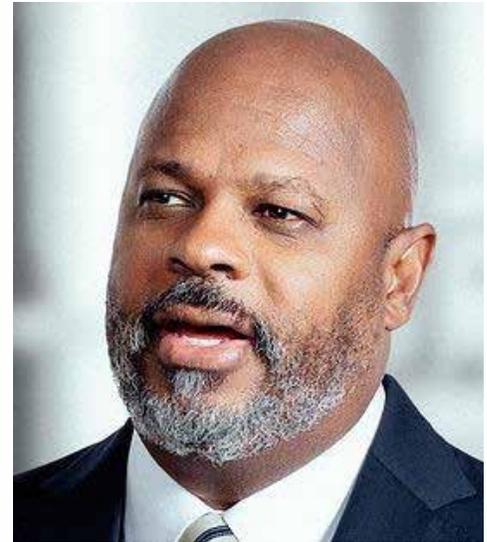
It is generally held that New Providence should have between 4 to 6 districts. It is also held that the districts will have to be created in a manner that lends to an inclusion of a cross section of socio-economic communities so as to allow for a level playing field as it relates to tax base.

We see from many examples around the world the inequities with respect to the provision of services, such as education, community maintenance, recreational spaces, roads and easements, etc. due to the disparity in tax base. We wish to negate those disparities in this model.

It is therefore our intent to use the most logical tax base available, property tax, to achieve that even playing field. We have been working with the Parliamentary Registrar to extrapolate from their data base that which we can present to the Department of Inland Revenue for the estimation of billable property tax by constituency. We will use a combination of registered voters and billable taxes to draw lines so as to achieve, as much as practicable, the objective sought. The result will be that all districts will be comprised of lower, middle and upper end tax brackets along with a reasonably close number of registered voters. We are aiming on being able to have a districting layout by the end of the year.

Each District will be comprised of an appropriate amount of communities and each will have a representative on the council. The amount of Council Members would range from 7-11. A representative must live in his or her community. A Mayor would be independently voted on and the mayor must live in the district (which is made up the 7-11 communities). It is important to note that a concept of primaries is being contemplated as it is anticipated that a large number of persons would wish to offer themselves for these positions in 2020. We therefore wish to ensure that the ultimate winner does not win with an unacceptable small minority of votes.

Communities will bear some semblance to existing constituencies but would remain intact in name (i.e. The Grove Community, Heritage District of Nassau) and not be subject to constituency name changes. Existing polling divisions and constituency registrations lists would be used as the basis for elections and elections would be run by the Parliamentary Registrar.



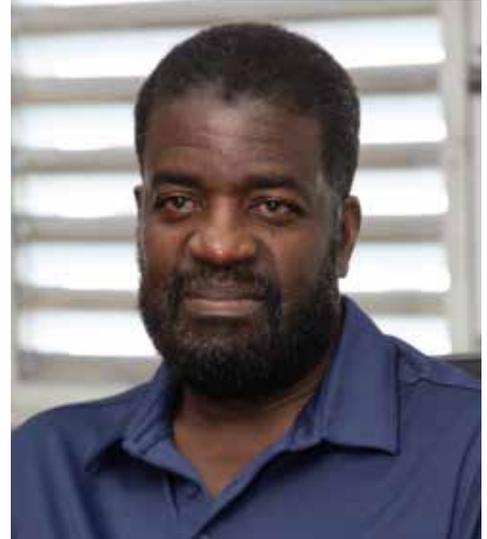
Submitted by:
Ed Fields

Director, Downtown Nassau Partnership

3. ELECTIONS TEAM

The final number of Districts for the island of New Providence and the method(s) to determine the boundaries of these Districts is still under active review. Primary among these considerations is a means to determine the basal revenue generating potential of each of these Districts once outlined. Secondary, is the importance of providing a model where each resident in every District feels he or she has a role to play in this grand, new, exciting, endeavor, we are undertaking on their behalf. To ensure that this effort remains grassroots at the heart, a further subdivision of the Districts into Communities is proposed.

The Community level is where residents/voters will bond initially with this entire process. It is a means of ensuring that even the smallest sector of the island has an opportunity to elect and maintain a representative on their District council. Elections will be fundamentally, 'community elections' with district wide elections for mayor. In this utopian example (IF) we settle on 5 Districts with an average of 7-11 Communities represented in each, (THEN) we would have an average of 'X number' of community elections. Winners of electoral races will be determined by 'First Past the Post' for simplicity and familiarity in this initial round.



REGISTRATION

All new and current New Providence registered voters for the 2017 Elections will be eligible to vote in these elections. Registered Voters from Family Islands moving to New Providence and residing continuously for a period exceeding ninety (90) days will be entitled to transfer their residency to New Providence. We will require District/Community Voters Cards. The New Providence Local Government Elections are proposed for April 2020. It should be noted that the current register remains in effect until June 15th, 2020. Council member candidates will be required to reside in their communities and Mayoral candidates will be required to reside in their districts.

QUALITY CANDIDATES

As we seek to ensure, as much as practicable, quality Council members and Mayors, the possibilities of primaries are still being discussed. It is proposed that candidates must participate in debates organized by the Department of Local Government in the weeks leading up to the elections. Opportunities for prospective candidates to gain Educational Leadership qualifications at no cost has been proposed via the National Training Agency.

Submitted by:
Geoffrey McPhee

Assistant to the Parliamentary Commissioner

4. Mandatory Mechanisms for Responsible Local Government in New Providence

The Government of The Bahamas endeavors to implement Local Government in New Providence. Some stated key objectives of this initiative are to expand the role of citizens in the governance of their communities and empowerment towards self-management of quality of life issues. The Organization for Responsible Governance, as a member of the National Advisory Committee for Local Government in New Providence, supports these objectives as measures towards good governance. ORG holds that ensuring Good Governance must be established as a top priority for the success and sustainability of Local Government in New Providence and throughout The Bahamas.

It is notable that many benefits of Local Government mirror those of good governance. Local Government is intended to bring the people closer to government and increase their representation within democracy. In review of a list of benefits of Good Governance, there is evidence of strong overlap in the underlying philosophy of both.



Good Governance and Local Government

- Puts citizens first
- Improves the quality of services of public authority
- Ensures democratic input in and control of the process
- Ensures effective local democracy: a wise investment
- Promotes community confidence
- Encourages elected officials and public officials to be confident and competent
- Leads to better and more ethical decision making
- Helps to ensure that different, and often competing interests are appropriately addressed and responded to

However, Good Governance comes as a result of very specific and deliberate systems, policies and actions which must include strategic and inclusive work by government, civil society and the citizenry. As such, ORG recommends that mechanisms of good governance be strategically embedded within the New Providence system of local government. Additionally, to ensure consistency and integrity, fundamental Good Governance actions must also occur at the central level of government.

The United Nation has designated 8 Pillars of Good Governance. These are Accountability; Transparency; Participatory; Responsiveness; Inclusiveness; Following the Rule of Law; Effectiveness & Efficiency; and Orientation to Consensus.

Submitted by:

Matt Aubry

Organization for Responsible Governance

5. THE FUTURE OF TOWN PLANNING IN LIGHT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

I believe the Town Planning Committee performs a vital function in overseeing and implementing Government's vision for all islands with respect to balancing sustainable development with the need to protect the environment.

The districts we propose to create with Local Government in New Providence cannot act in vacuums. Their footprint is associated with the surrounding districts, and the island and country as a whole, with which they share resources and opportunities. Rather than just looking within municipal boundaries, districts will need to follow central government's framework for sustainable, successful growth. Town Planning will help to ensure this objective.

I would propose that each Mayor automatically be appointed to the Town Planning Committee as part of the Mayor's responsibilities.

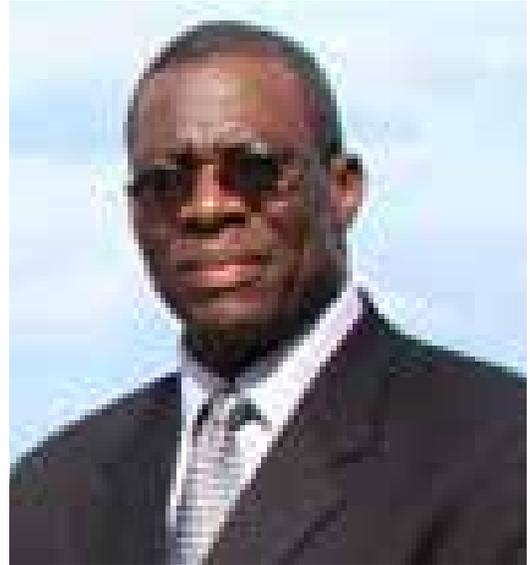


Submitted by:
Dianne Holowesko-Dunkley
Town Planning Committee's Chair

6. Devolution of Power - The Time is Now for New Providence

A form of local government was introduced in the Family Islands in 1996. This brought about a small measure of autonomy to elected officials who, by law, reside in the townships and districts they seek to represent. These districts are divided by polling divisions. (This component of the current system of Local Government should be retained when introduced in New Providence).

These elected officials are responsible for the general upkeep of their respective town areas and districts and carry out certain prescribed functions as outlined in sections 9 and 14 of the Local Government Act Chapter 37. Prior to 1996, such functions were primarily directed and overseen by agencies of the Central Government, based in New Providence.



In principle, the introduction of Local Government was, and still is a very good thing for Family Island communities and a step in the right direction. For example, Applications for docks, building permits, shop/restaurants, self-drive franchises, hotel licenses etc. can be approved or, otherwise, by locally appointed Statutory Boards in a timely manner, without any reference to New Providence, except in special cases.

It should be noted that the powers of Councils to appoint Licensing Boards was taken away by Central Government. I believe this should be reconsidered with a view to putting this authority back in the hands of Councils if Local Government is to be taken seriously.

However, from the inception of Local Government in the Family Islands, residents and officials viewed the system as being very weak, lacking in sufficient authority, and openly stated that Local Government was void of real power and too dependent on Central Government.

The major problem for many officials is the lack of funding, primarily due to the inability of Councils to generate fund internally. Secondly, there is the notion that the funding from Central Government is inadequate. The bulk of their revenue is used for recurrent expenditure. This has resulted in the constraint of most Local Government authorities to execute development projects for their districts beyond the usual upkeep and maintenance of roads, parks, playgrounds, cemeteries, etc.

Statistics will show that there has been a continuous decline in voter participation and in qualified individuals offering for leadership roles during Local Government elections.



SELECT REPORTS & PERSPECTIVES CONT'D

How Local Government for New Providence is initially perceived, therefore, will determine the quality of individuals it attracts to offer themselves as active participants. A stronger form of Local Government therefore, has to be introduced in New Providence if it is to successfully get out of the gate. Having adequate resources and capacity is critical to enable local government to deliver on local needs and priorities and respond to national challenges.

It is accepted that Local Government will not be able to raise all of the funds it needs and will have to rely on Central Government. However, it must be empowered to generate the additional fund through levies and taxes, to improve performance, governance and service delivery.

Central Government must put financing mechanisms in place, supported by legislations, to support Local Government, and by so doing demonstrate its serious intent to truly empower residents and officials at the local level.

It is envisaged that New Providence be divided into five (5) to seven (7) districts. Each district will be divided into different precincts or Wards. Each Ward/precinct will elect a Councilor /Councilor (depending on the size of the Ward). Each district will comprise of not more than nine (9) Councilor, chief of whom will be the Mayor of the district. While each Councilor represents a particular Ward of the district, the Mayor is chosen by and represents the entire district.

To bring about parity and equity, it is suggested that the Local Government Act be amended to reflect a similar arrangement in the Family Island districts. The name Chief Councilor should be changed to Mayor and should be similarly elected by voters throughout the district, as opposed to being elected by his/her peers, as is the case now.

It stands to reason that there has to be some degree of devolution of authority from the Central Government Agencies to the Local Government authority in New Providence. In this regard, certain functions carried out by Public Works, Roads and Parks Authority, Environmental Health (sanitation) etc. should be closely examined to determine what and how much should be transferred to the local authorities in each district.

Similarly, the extent to which Local Government districts in New Providence are represented on Statutory Boards will also require further consideration. I will suggest, however, that the Mayor of each Local Government district in New Providence be automatically be appointed to each Statutory Board.





SELECT REPORTS & PERSPECTIVES CONT'D

Finally, New Providence Local Government districts will require staffing. As is the practice in other jurisdictions and the Family Islands, these staff can be drawn from the Public Service at the senior and junior levels, to assist Local Government districts with their administration.

The time is now for New Providence Local Government. New Providence is perhaps the only city in the Commonwealth of nations that cannot boast of implementing a form of Local Government. Hopefully, that statistic will be no more very soon, with the introduction of Local Government.

Submitted by:

Cephas A Cooper

Director

Department of Local Government

ROAD MAP

If the Cabinet is inclined to proceed with implementation of a strong local government system in New Providence, the Cabinet is encouraged to prepare its own road map to accomplish that goal. It is being recommended that the following be included:

1. An early Cabinet pronouncement to devolve power to a strong local government system;
2. Launch an island-wide PR campaign by the end of the first quarter of 2019 for public education from the Committee's remaining budget;
3. Cause a local government training Certificate course to be designed and introduced at the National Training Agency as of September 2019;
4. Instruct draftsmen at the AG's office to prepare a draft Bill, benchmarked against the New South Wales and Jamaica legislation pursuant to the initial autonomy Cabinet seeks to endow New Providence local government councils;
5. Cause the said Bill to be disseminated for public consultation by September 2019;
6. Table and pass said Bill by December 2019;
7. Mobilize the Parliamentary Commissioner to produce a District map for the Cabinet determined local government jurisdictions;
8. Introduce a stand-alone Ministry of Local Government to supervise the local government system as of April 2020;
9. Consider short term to long term goals for the local government system that would allow its success to be noticeable;
10. Consider existing expenditure in New Providence that can be allocated to the Ministry of Local Government to empower residents to improve their communities and quality of life.

CONCLUSION



Introducing Local Government in New Providence will be an historical accomplishment for the administration without a doubt. As intended, it will cause residents to take on an involved role at their community level to collaborate and solve their vexing local issues rather than simply complaining or being frustrated. It in effect, empowers them to bring about the changes they wish to see in their communities.

The Advisory Committee humbly invites the Cabinet to make a pronouncement in the coming weeks on its decision and commitment to deepening democracy on an historical level during this first time in office. The Committee is also urging for at least a year to promote the initiative, educate the public and put in place the necessary training and elections process for the prospective candidates so as to ensure successful elections, successful implementation and a sustainable Local Government. Again, we express our gratitude for the opportunity to assist the government and Minister responsible for Local Government in achieving this milestone.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On April 18th 2018, Minister Frankie Campbell convened the first meeting of the Advisory Committee for the introduction of local government to New Providence. At the time, the conference room at the Ministry of Transport and Local Government was crammed with a team that had never worked together. After introductions, it became pellucid that there were no extras onboard as every member would bring to the table their institutional knowledge, vision for deepening democracy, critical perspectives, research expertise, organization skills and/or passion for empowering the residents of New Providence and improving their quality of life.

On behalf of the Advisory Committee, I wish to acknowledge the wide range of persons from around New Providence, the Family Islands, Jamaica, Trinidad, Canada, the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom who have contributed to the production of this Advisory Report over the last six months. We also wish to acknowledge, with great appreciation, the Cabinet for bestowing each of us the opportunity to delve deeper into two areas we are all entrenched and passionate about – improving the quality of life of our people and deepening our democracy.

We also acknowledge the fact that the introduction of local government in New Providence is a decades old contemplation which has never materialized as the political will did not exist to deepen our democracy to the extent of citizen participation on such a level. While this has been unfortunate, it has allowed us the opportunity to consult with major contributors to the last 3 decades. As such, we wish to acknowledge the countless persons who have offered us advice and their support after having served in the capacity of Family Island Commissioners, Family Island Administrators, Director of Local Government, Members of Parliament, Cabinet Ministers, Chief Councilors and/or Council Members. We were able to draw significantly from their experiences, success stories and frustrations with the former and present system. To them, we are forever indebted.

We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the Minnis Administration for its political will to introduce local government in New Providence during this first term in office. We express our gratitude to the many Ministers, Members of Parliament and Senators who have taken the time to offer their input and support.

The Advisory Committee also wishes to single out and recognize Minister Campbell, outgoing Director Cephias Cooper, the Financial Officer and the former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Transport and Local Government who accommodated the Advisory Committee every step of the way. Director Cooper is a wealth of knowledge on Local Government and would be an ideal consultant for the implementation and training phase of elected officials. The Acting Director, Mrs. Brenda Colebrooke, has proven that she is more than qualified for the very important task ahead of the Department and/or 'Ministry of Local Government'. She is extremely knowledgeable, firm and well respected by the Local



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS CONT'D

Government practitioners around the country. I have the utmost confidence in her and can vouch that Local Government continues on in good hands.

We also wish to acknowledge Minister Renward Wells who became our Minister mid-way through this process yet made himself available at hours' notice on quite a few occasions for Committee briefings and to offer his support as we carried out this very important task. Minister Wells really lifted our spirits in September when, on a Friday morning, we requested the opportunity to consult all Parliamentarians on the government side and he made the same possible that Sunday evening.

As Chairman, one of the first tasks was to organize the diverse Advisory Committee into teams of expertise and ensure that despite its diverse composition, all pronouncements from the Committee members via the media echoed one collective view. As such, we spent countless meetings discussing concepts, pros and cons and the ramifications. Without a doubt, we respected each team's expertise and appreciated their recommendations.

Dr. Nicolette Bethel coordinated the **'Districting, Registration and Elections Team'** and their debates, research and recommendations were impeccable. Thanks to their in-depth and extensive research, the Advisory Committee was able to propose two options for determining the District Boundaries. We were also able to settle on a name (Communities – as per Errol Bethel) for the grouping of polling divisions in those Districts from which the Council Members shall emerge. Additionally, we have proposed a tentative and strategic date for the inaugural elections (April 2020 – as per Dr. Nicolette Bethel), a modern democratic election process to ensure quality candidates and an unproblematic registration process. Dr. Bethel, Ed Fields, Geoffrey McPhee, Diane Holowesko-Dunkley and Errol Bethel by way of this Team have contributed tremendously to the drafting of this Report and if there are any errors or difficulty in understanding the districting, registration or elections process, they would be on my part in trying to summarize their discussions and recommendations.

Attorneys Karen Dorsett and Lynette King coordinated the 'Legal and Training Team' and focused the entire Advisory Committee's research. The team was specifically tasked with advising the Committee on the legal ramifications of our farfetched proposals and facilitating a draft schedule of what the New Providence legislation would need to look like in order to address the Committee's recommendations for structure, central government oversight, fair elections, ongoing training, accountable and transparent administrations and removal of local government officials.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS CONT'D

Additionally, the Legal Team familiarized the Committee with, and benchmarked our proposals with, the New South Wales' local government legislation, that of Jamaica and parts of South Florida. The benchmark will serve as a guide for draftsmen in the Office of the Attorney General in creating a new Local Government Act for New Providence. It was noted that as the implementation of local government would need to be incremental, that relevant legislation can then be amended accordingly over time. The legal team's members, Ms. King, Ms. Dorsett and Mrs. Rutherford-Ferguson contributed significantly to the drafting of this Report and if there is any difficulty digesting their rationale, it is on my part in trying to convey their extensive research, discussions and recommendations into the legal framework.

The Chamber of Commerce's representative, Mrs. Khrystle Rutherford-Ferguson coordinated the **'Revenue, Expenditure and Economic Development Team'**. Their proposals in this report will ensure that local government is sustainable, that it significantly increases government's revenue collection whilst minimizing central government's expenditure in New Providence.

Coming out of the gate, Local Government New Providence may have to be subsidized by Central Government for at least two cycles. During this time, the Districts will explore and test their revenue collection capacity, accountability, transparency in addition to exploring public private partnerships that could help attain the goal of sustainability. Mrs. Rutherford-Ferguson, Mr. Matt Aubrey, Ed Fields and Myra Farquharson by way of this team have also contributed substantially to the drafting of this Report.

Ms. Myra Farquharson, of the Economic Development Planning Unit at the OPM, coordinated the initial and wider **'Research and Consultation Team'** during June and July and the Team was able to point us in the right direction on a number of areas that influenced the Committee's final recommendations.

The various teams and overall Committee were able to consider the pros and cons of the strong local government recommendation and I am eternally grateful for their sacrifices, attention to detail, endurance and commitment. Thanks to their respective input, the Report creates a great framework and roadmap for the Cabinet to consider, build upon and approve.

In an effort to engage the public in an unbiased manner, the Advisory Committee retained a **PR Firm** in late June to conduct two major aspects of our consultation process. The PR Firm delivered beyond our expectations despite the numerous demands we made for extensive consultation exercises. Some days, we had them organize and/or secure two full length radio show appearances for the Committee in addition to two to three press releases per week to invite the public's input. They attended each talk show with us and kept the hosts and the committee on point. We are well-rounded and able to speak thoroughly on our proposals because of their exceptional work. They've worked professionally and passionately up to the last minute and we anticipate working with them again on the next phase subject to their success during the RFP process.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS CONT'D

Additionally, the Advisory Committee retained a UB law student (the Fellow, Ms. Ashley Dorsett) who had to pull the various team's research, discussions and proposals together into one place for the Committee on a weekly basis and for the production of this Report. She also scheduled our Committee Meetings and organized as much as eight meetings one day. We express our gratitude for her commitment and tolerance.

Last but certainly not least, **Ms. Christine Campbell** and **Ms. Ernestine Fernander** who were the whips on my back and the wind beneath my wings throughout this process. Their guidance, assistance and accommodations are invaluable. I am forever indebted to these remarkable ladies.





LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Advancing Democracy by
Empowering Communities
Through Local Government

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ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE
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