

Fairfax County (Pop. 263,000) Offers To Merge With Clifton (Pop. 230)
 By William Chapman
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Single City Sought as Defensive Plan

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Four-hundred-fourteen-square-mile Fairfax County has offered itself for merger with the town of Clifton, a quarter-of-a-square-mile area within its borders.

Fairfax County (population 263,000) has asked the folks in Clifton (population 230) to unite as a single city in an attempt to avert loss of territory to the hungry cities of Falls Church and Alexandria.

W. Swen Elgin, mayor of Clifton, on the Southern Railway, is all for a merger. "Should have done it long ago," he said yesterday.

Fairfax County Supervisors have been attracted to the often-overlooked dot on the map called Clifton in their wide-ranging quest for an ab-

solute defense against annexation suits.

They have concluded that city status is the best answer. But the Virginia General Assembly has looked coolly on a city charter for a half-rural county in the past, so the Supervisors have been drawn to an alternative.

This alternative is consolidation with one of its interior towns. The State Code says that such a combination can become a city. But Attorney General A. S. Harrison has ruled that more legislation is needed to spell out the procedures—thus throwing the ball back to a recalcitrant General Assembly.

Before giving up the chance completely, the Supervisors have hired a Richmond law firm to research the legal issues and give an opinion. County Executive Carlton C.

Massey said yesterday that a report is expected next week.

If the answer is "no," the Supervisors probably will seek a standby city charter from the Assembly next year. This would mean, however, that no action could be taken before Falls Church comes to court next month or before Alexandria files its expected suit later this summer.

Falls Church is seeking 4.5 square miles, including some choice residential areas and the Seven Corners Shopping Center. Alexandria is studying an area of at least 27.4 square miles.

As yet, the Supervisors have not planned any definite action with Clifton other than sounding out the town's leaders. The cost of becoming a city and the all-important legal timetable, have not been worked out.

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