

Fairfax Co., Clifton Plan Huge City

Agreement Signed With Town to Halt Annexation Suits

By William Chapman
Staff Reporter

Fairfax County made its bid yesterday to transform the sprawling suburb into an incorporated city which would be the second largest municipality in the United States.

Under an obscure State law, the County Supervisors have signed a merger agreement with the tiny town of Clifton which would permit the County to assume city status.

The Supervisors simultaneously petitioned the Fairfax Circuit Court to set a July 11

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referendum when they hope to win voter approval of the switch to a city.

If the proposal makes its way successfully through a labyrinth of legal difficulties still facing it, the new 400-square-mile city would be second only to Los Angeles in area among American cities.

Negotiated Tuesday

The merger agreement between the County with 275,000 people and the Town of Clifton with 230 was negotiated Tuesday night during a meeting of the Supervisors and town officials.

State law allows a county and town to consolidate into a single-city but the tactic has never been used in Virginia before.

The Supervisors consider city status the only certain way to protect the County from annexation suits by neighboring cities. Falls Church's suit to annex 4.5 square miles will be heard on May 23 and Alexandria is expected to seek a larger area later this year.

Under the agreement with Clifton, a city council and mayor would replace the County Board of Supervisors. The seven councilmen would be elected from boroughs having the same boundaries as the present magisterial districts. The mayor would be elected by the council.

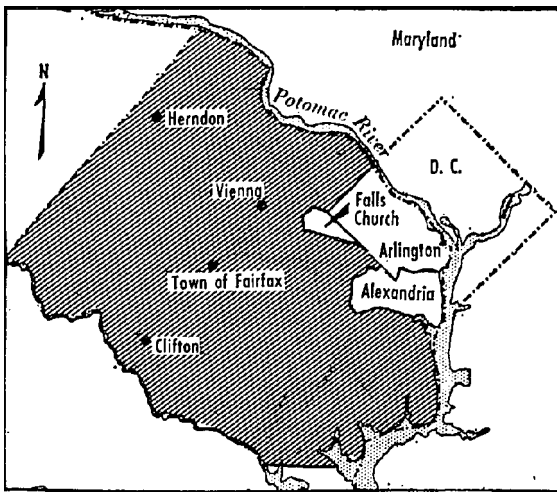
4 Names Suggested

The new city would come into being on July 1, 1962. A special referendum this November would determine a name from among four suggested in the agreement — Fairfax, Clifton, Colchester and Providence. Voters could also petition other names onto the ballot.

A key provision would permit special taxing districts, like the present sanitary districts, to provide urban serv-

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Fairfax Agrees to Unite With Clifton in Huge City



The Washington Post

The shaded area indicates the dimension of Fairfax County, whose Supervisors yesterday acted to provide it with the status of a city, asking for a referendum July 11.

ices. They could be created by City Council action, rather than through the present more cumbersome method of court petitions.

The move already has aroused opposition from Vienna and Fairfax, two of the four towns which would be swallowed up and dissolved by creation of the new giant city.

The town of Fairfax disclosed yesterday it has petitioned for second-class city status to gain territorial protection within the larger city. Circuit Judge Paul E. Brown at once appointed eight census enumerators to verify that the town has the required 5000 citizens to assume second-class city status. By the last census, it has 13,619.

Mayor Guy M. Wilson of Vienna (population 14,000) said yesterday, "It would be my guess that we'll do the same thing as Fairfax to protect our identity. But it's up to the Council and I imagine it might be a split vote."

Fairfax Is Willing

If either town becomes a city-within-a-city, it must operate its own school system and purchase some County facili-

ties. Fairfax Mayor John C. Wood said he thinks his town would be willing to do so. The fourth town, Herndon, is not large enough to become an independent city.

Although the structure of the new city would remain much the same as it is now, it would lose an estimated \$880,000 in state road funds. The Supervisors believe this loss would be more than offset by taxes saved in thwarting property-grabbing annexation suits.

Other changes would be minor. The city probably would have to pay full costs of its Health Department and retain a city attorney in addition to the present Commonwealth's Attorney. The County Court would become a Municipal Court.

Initial public reaction to the move was favorable. Herbert E. Harris, president of the Federation of Citizens Associations, termed it "an affirmative and positive action to protect the integrity of the County and to prevent the nibbling away through annexations."

The County Chamber of Commerce already has endorsed city status.

Many Legal Snarls

The Supervisors feel confident that the referendum will be approved by County and Clifton voters but recognized a host of legal problems. Among them are:

- Can this first step in itself block Alexandria's annexation suit? The County's attorneys, who studied the issue for a month, believe it will.

- Is the consolidation procedure itself legitimate under Virginia law? Former Attorney General Albert S. Harrison Jr. once said in an informal opinion that more procedural rules may be needed from the General Assembly. The County attorneys, however, concluded that the existing authority for town-county mergers, although never tried before, is sufficient.

- Will the consolidated city's charter be approved next year by the General Assembly? The Supervisors are not sure whether legislative approval is mandatory but believe that a successful referendum would clinch the matter.

The Fairfax bid for city status is the latest chapter in a continuing governmental story which has seen the county evolve from a sleepy rural community to a bustling urban area.

The last major change came in 1952 when voters approved the present County Executive form of government.

Continued growth during the 1950s prompted a search for a more modern system of government which would provide better service and help protect the County annexation.