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August 11, 2015

Michael L. Shull
Chairman, Augusta County Board of Supervisors
18 Government Center Lane
Verona, Virginia 24482

Re: Augusta County and City of Staunton Courts

Dear Chairman Shull:

This letter follows up further on my prior letters, and it is intended to supplement particularly my June 1, 2015 letter. In taking this initiative, the City seeks to demonstrate a commitment to be a regional partner as we all look to the future.

Staunton City Council has recently received and now reviewed the enclosed August 7, 2015 study, entitled "Staunton and Augusta County Conceptual Design for Consolidated Courts Facilities" and prepared by Frazier Associates. We initiated the study to further explore and advance what we believe will best serve our Staunton-Augusta region and its citizens: possible consolidation of the Staunton and Augusta County courts in downtown Staunton, as an alternative to the continued maintenance by the two localities of separate judicial systems and the removal by the County of its historic county seat and its courts from Staunton to Verona. We are pleased to share the study for mutual consideration. Given Judge Ludwig's interest in the subject, we are providing the study to him, as well as to Judge Ricketts.

City Council members are pleased with Frazier Associates' concept for this downtown project. It integrates the use of three buildings—the County's historic circuit courthouse, the City's Cochran Judicial Center and a new courts building to be constructed at the northwest corner of the intersection of Johnson and Augusta streets (in the location of the current Union Bank & Trust building). As you will see in the study, the creative complement would fulfill the current needs of the County and the City and leave both localities, with a consolidated judicial system, well situated for decades to come. The estimated total cost of completion is approximately \$48 million (prior to deduction of an amount equal to anticipated state historic tax credits).

I am pleased to communicate the following proposal on behalf of City Council:

Guaranteed City Contribution: Assuming project costs not to exceed \$50 million, the City would contribute 25% of actual project costs, after deduction of state historic tax credits (presently estimated to be \$1.5 million).

Financing: Debt to be issued and carried by the County, as offered previously. The City recommends no more than a 20-year term to avoid excessive interest charges, the burden of which would fall on both City and County taxpayers.

Parking for Persons with Disabilities: As a part of the project, suitable accommodation for parking for persons with disabilities will be made in close proximity to each of the three buildings. The study contemplates dedication of the parking lot at the corner of Augusta and Johnson streets to parking for persons with disabilities, as one such location.

Additional Parking:

Judges and Other Designated Officials: A secure, underground garage with 18 parking spaces will be constructed as a part of the proposed new courts building. Within this new garage, parking will be provided for circuit court judges, general district court judges and other designated officials (including, for example, the sheriff, the circuit court clerk and the general district court clerk). Similarly secure arrangements will be made for juvenile and domestic relations district court judges at the Cochran Judicial Center.

Other Employees: Free parking will be made available on the top level of the City's Johnson Street parking garage for all other employees who work in the three buildings (including, but not limited to, court staff, and employees of the clerks' offices, the sheriffs' offices and the commonwealth's attorney's office).

Public: Parking for the public will be provided in over 800 existing off-street parking spaces within a one- to two-minute walk of the proposed new courts building, demonstrated in the study to more than adequately address the courts-related demand for parking. As a part of the parking program, it is anticipated that a validation system will be implemented at some of the City's parking facilities, so that free parking will be available to public users of the judicial facilities.

Previously Offered Items: Waiver of fees, use of Barristers Row and parking lot as staging areas, and use of Cochran Judicial Center and City Council Chambers, as detailed in City's March 2, 2015 letter, are reaffirmed.

Consolidation of the Courts: The County and the City will pursue, cooperatively, diligently and in good faith, with a strong and sustained mutual commitment to success, all state and local governmental actions necessary (including approval of the General Assembly) to

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achieve the consolidation of their respective circuit courts, general district courts and juvenile and domestic relations district courts in Staunton, and will proceed with consolidation expeditiously.

We are hopeful that with this proposal, you and your colleagues on the Board of Supervisors will see, as we do, a vision that is good for Augusta County, good for Staunton and good for all of our citizens. We further hope that your shared enthusiasm for the project will result in your acceptance of this proposal and a decision not to pursue a petition for a referendum at the present time. While we respect that it is your prerogative to effectively decline our proposal by your submission of a petition to the court, we invite you to join us in this partnership, recognizing the potential, mutual benefits of consolidation. Some of those benefits include a location truly central to all residents and businesses in the region; proximity to related offices, including the public defender and Blue Ridge Court Services; and ready access to related services, including law firms, title companies and court reporters, among others.

As another demonstration of our commitment to the ongoing process, if the County is interested, we are willing to agree to involve a seasoned mediator to help bring us together more readily on any details. At the same time, we remain confident that, working together, we can achieve much progress and a detailed agreement. I suggest that, as a first step, we immediately charge our respective staffs with the mutual development of a project timeline that reflects what I am sure is a shared desire to advance this project without delay. My colleagues and I recognize that the time has come to address this matter, and we are prepared to do so.

We enthusiastically make this proposal in the true spirit of regionalism that has taken hold here in the Central Shenandoah Valley. Born of a rich, shared history, it has strengthened both the County and the City. Working cooperatively, we can achieve yet another success, taking advantage of this once in a lifetime opportunity to do something profoundly bold and good for future generations of all of our citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carolyn W. Dull".

Carolyn W. Dull
Mayor

Enclosure

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cc: The Honorable Victor V. Ludwig
The Honorable Charles L. Ricketts, III
Patrick J. Coffield, County Administrator
Staunton City Council
Stephen F. Owen, City Manager