

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
BUSINESS MEETING
ACTION ITEM**

SUBJECT: Partnership Agreement with Holmes County, Mississippi

ELECTION DISTRICT(S): Countywide

CRITICAL ACTION DATE: At the pleasure of the Board

STAFF CONTACT(S): Ann Golski, County Attorney's Office
Caleb Weitz, County Administration

PURPOSE: The purpose of this item is for the Board of Supervisors (Board) to consider approving a sister county declaration (partnership agreement) with Holmes County, Mississippi.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the Board approve the partnership agreement with Holmes County, Mississippi, entitled 'Sister County Declaration,' as found in Attachment 1 of the item.

BACKGROUND: Holmes County Mississippi is located approximately 50 miles north of Jackson, Mississippi, on the western edge of the Delta region. Holmes County's western border is formed by the Yazoo River and the eastern border by the Big Black River. Interstate 55 runs through the eastern portion of the county. The county seat is Lexington, Mississippi which was named in honor of Lexington, Massachusetts. The county was the birthplace of the Order of the Eastern Star (a Masonic type lodge that offered membership to women). Holmes County is also the birthplace of the 4-H movement, which began as a local community corn club.¹ According the U.S. Census Bureau, the 2017 population estimate of Holmes County was 17,739. The 2017 median household income was \$20,330.²

Holmes County is governed by a five member Board of Supervisors, which has the responsibility of establishing goals and objectives to direct the county's growth and development, and carrying out other responsibilities as set forth by Mississippi statutes. Supervisors are elected from each of the five districts in the county to serve a four-year term. The Board oversees county operations and enacts ordinances and resolutions to promote the health, safety, and welfare of citizens and businesses in the county, and approves the annual budget and millage rate which funds the operations of the offices and departments under the Board's jurisdiction. Each Supervisor is

¹More information at the Holmes County Website, www.holmescountymiss.org.

²More information on demographic and economic data at the U.S. Census Bureau page, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/holmescountymississippi,US/PST045218>

responsible for the maintenance, up-keep and improvements to all county roads and bridges within their district on a day-to-day basis.³

NACo Initiative:

In 2018, the National Association of Counties (NACo) began discussions on a program/partnership within the NACo organization to provide an opportunity to connect counties of differing economic circumstances. In support of this effort, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded a grant to NACo to support counties in the United States to come together to have discussions around upward mobility, county sharing of knowledge, resources, and experiences. According to NACo, this initiative is to learn about the barriers and how they were tackled through site visits, peer exchanges and learning from each other with the hope that they will take these best practices back to their communities. An evaluation model is being created by NACo's Counties Future Lab to assess the value of this type of programming for local leaders.

Holmes County Partnership Agreement Discussions:

At the Board Business Meeting on September 20, 2018, Chair Randall announced that she had begun exploring a county partnership between Loudoun County and Holmes County, which arose out of the above referenced NACo initiative. Chair Randall asked the Board for support in directing staff to explore a partnership agreement with Holmes County of a similar nature with our international sister cities. By consensus, the Board agreed that a discussion would be brought back to the full Board once an agreement was drafted.

On March 3, 2019, Chair Randall and staff met with Holmes County Supervisor Dr. Eddie J. Carthan regarding Holmes County's potential partnership agreement with Loudoun County. Supervisor Carthan delivered a letter (Attachment 2) to Chair Randall confirming Holmes County's intent to pursue the partnership agreement.

ISSUES: The County Attorney's Office assisted in drafting the partnership agreement and has identified no outstanding issues with the Board's approval. Should the Board approve the partnership agreement, staff will administer the relationship with Holmes County in the same manner as Loudoun's current international sister cities. On July 5, 2016 the Board provided direction to staff regarding the administration of the sister city program.⁴

The Board adopted criteria for an active sister city or partnership relationships includes one or more of the following elements:

- Recent or planned delegation visits of elected officials.
- Recent or planned student exchanges.
- Recent or planned cultural exchanges.

³ <https://www.holmescountymms.org/board-supervisors>

⁴ [July 5, 2016 Board Business Meeting Item, FGOEDC Report: Overview of Loudoun's Sister City Program and Recommendations for Future Administration.](#)

- Current collaboration on economic development prospects or leads.
- Staff exchanges or other collaborative information sharing.

Loudoun County currently has five active international sister city/partnership relationships and one inactive international sister city.⁵ Holmes County would represent the first domestic sister city/county relationship within the United States. Should the Board approve the partnership agreement between Holmes County and Loudoun County, the relationship between Holmes County and Loudoun County will be considered active for the purposes of staff administration.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no fiscal impact associated with approval of the partnership agreement. A \$5,000 fund has been established in the Board's annual corporate budget for expenses associated with official County business regarding active sister city and partnership relationships.

ALTERNATIVES: The Board could propose amendments to the partnership agreement or choose not to approve the partnership agreement.

DRAFT MOTIONS:

1. I move that the Board of Supervisors approve the partnership agreement with Holmes County, Mississippi, entitled 'Sister County Declaration,' as found in Attachment 1 of April 18, 2019, Board of Supervisors Business Meeting Action Item.

OR

2. I move an alternate motion.

ATTACHMENT(S):

1. Sister County Declaration – Loudoun County, Virginia and Holmes County, Mississippi
2. Letter from James Young – President, Holmes County Board of Supervisors, February 28, 2019

⁵ [November 13, 2018 FGOEDC Item: Annual Update on Loudoun's International Sister Cities Program.](#)

SISTER COUNTY DECLARATION

WHEREAS, Loudoun County, Virginia, and Holmes County, Mississippi, are counties located in the United States of America;

WHEREAS, In 2017 the median household income for Loudoun County, Virginia, was \$129,588 and the median household income of Holmes County, Mississippi, was \$20,330;

WHEREAS, both counties are active in the South Atlantic Region of the National Association of Counties;

WHEREAS, the counties believe that because of their circumstances, they are in a unique position to work together for the mutual benefit of their citizens, as diverse perspectives often lead to creative solutions to common problems;

WHEREAS, the counties wish to establish a formal relationship to promote friendship and mutual cooperation for the noble purpose of improving the lives of the citizens of each county;

NOW, THEREFORE, It is hereby declared that Loudoun County, Virginia, and Holmes County, Mississippi, shall enter into the relationship of **SISTER COUNTIES** to exchange information in an effort to work together in various fields of relevance such as infrastructure; rural economic development; tourism promotion; emergency management, preparedness and response; mapping and geographic information; opioid abuse prevention; public education and libraries.

In witness thereof our elected representatives hereby sign this declaration.

LOUDOUN COUNTY, VIRGINIA

By: _____
Phyllis J. Randall, Chair-At-Large
Board of Supervisors

Executed as of _____, 2019

ATTEST:

Loudoun County Chancery Clerk/
Clerk of the Board

In witness thereof our elected representatives hereby sign this declaration.



ATTEST:

HOLMES COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

By:

James Young

President, Holmes County, Mississippi
Board of Supervisors

Executed as of April 1, 2019

Henry Duckett
Holmes County Chancery Clerk/
Clerk of the Board



Board of Supervisors Holmes County, Mississippi

James Young
President

Henry Anderson
District One

Debra Mabry
Vice-President

Larry Davis
District Four

J. Carthan
District Five

Bryant Clark
Special Counsel to Board

February 28, 2019

Chair Phyllis Randall
Loudon County Board of Supervisors
1 Harrison Street SE, 5th Floor
Leesburg, VA 20175

Henry Lockett
Clerk of the Board

Joe McCraney
Comptroller

Charlie M. Joiner
County Administrator

Willie E. March
Sheriff

Katherine B. Riley
Board Attorney

Dear Chair Randall & Board:

We appreciate the dialogue that has been occurring between you and our Holmes County team. It is our intent to forge a relationship that will carry us well into the future. We regret that more members of our team were not able to attend this historic meeting, but do to budgetary restraints; we were not able to do so.

Please accept this letter as our introduction of and support of our District Five Supervisor, Dr. Eddie J. Carthan, as our official representative from Holmes County, Mississippi.

We are looking forward to a long and continued relationship.

Sincerely,


JAMES YOUNG
President