



City of Charles Town

101 East Washington Street, P.O. Box 14, Charles Town, WV 25414
Phone: (304) 725-2311 ♦ Web: www.charlestownwv.us

VIA EMAIL AND FIRST-CLASS MAIL

May 21, 2025

MAYOR
Robert M. Trainor

**CITY
COUNCIL**

James Kratochvil

Elizabeth Ricketts

Jeff Hynes

Kevin Tester

Julie Philabaum

Michael George

Andie Sugrue

**CITY
MANAGER**

John Nissel

Pasha Majdi, President
Jefferson County Commission
pmajdi@jeffersoncountywv.org

Steve Stolipher
Jefferson County Commission
sstoliphert@jeffersoncountywv.org

Jack Hefestay
Jefferson County Commission
jhefestay@jeffersoncountywv.org

124 E. Washington Street
P.O. Box 250
Charles Town, WV 25414

Dear Commissioners,

The Charles Town City Council hereby resubmits our County meeting agenda request, submitted on May 6, 2025 (Attachment) to discuss a redevelopment study for the County-owned properties to be vacated in downtown Charles Town and partnership options between Jefferson County Commission (JCC), the City of Charles Town (City) and Charles Town Now (CTN).

We believe that this redevelopment study would strengthen the cooperative foundation between the City and JCC, providing greater transparency, cooperation, and coordination for JCC's relocation transition. As fellow elected officials, representing the residents of the City as well as Jefferson County, we request just fifteen to thirty minutes of your meeting time to present the proposal.

As Commissioner Majdi expressed in his e-mail denying our initial agenda request, it is truly an "exciting time[s]" for both Charles Town and the Commission. We understand that JCC has outgrown its present spaces and has been in need of more efficient space(s) to provide services to our ever-growing county. To finally see that coming to fruition is remarkable and exciting and you are to be commended for your determination to finally achieve this long-standing goal. JCC's pending relocation also presents a tremendous opportunity for the City to revisualize and redevelop the vacant block in the core to our historic downtown area and we are excited to take full advantage of this once in a lifetime opportunity.

With the potential opportunities for JCC and the City, we are confused and frustrated at the inability to actually begin a meaningful dialog with JCC, to collaborate sharing ideas and visions to best capitalize on this opportunity, which needs to happen sooner rather than later. We understand that JCC has a great deal of work left before executing the closing on the spaces. However, failure to adequately plan for the vacant space will likely lead to dire consequences. For example, our precious historic courthouse will continue falling into disrepair as it sits empty waiting for a responsible steward. The process should have already begun to find that steward, the longer we delay the greater will be the need and expense. Further, a redevelopment study for the rest of the buildings on that block will take months to complete. The City is willing to put in the work to shepherd the study, with JCC playing as large or as small of role as it is able.

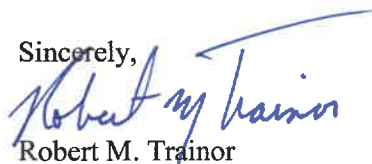
The communications between the City and JCC of late have been indirect and quite confusing, guessing at where we are in the process, what each requires or desires, and how we can work together to accomplish a harmonious outcome for JCC, the City, and most importantly our residents and taxpayers. For example, several public interviews and recent e-mails from Commissioners and County staff have indicated that JCC believes that the City is interested in buying the current county spaces. In fact, the JCC administrator, without consulting City officials, went so far as to e-mail several banks on the City's behalf to solicit possible financing options. Even more troubling, purchase of the buildings is presented as the only alternative to the statutory process of auctioning the buildings as required by W.Va. Code 7-3-3.

We believe there are other, more effective and creative, solutions to enable the City and JCC to collaborate to the benefit of both entities, and, as earlier stated, most importantly to our residents and taxpayers. For example, the County could transfer the buildings to any number of County or State agencies that are not restricted in disposing of property. Alternatively, the buildings could be placed with a City entity, either our Building Commission or a newly created Urban Renewal Authority. Any such arrangement would need to be meticulously documented, ensuring that both entities' interests are protected. Or perhaps the City and the County could enter into an option agreement. We're sure there are a variety of other solutions that, working together, we could identify to avoid the buildings being sold to the highest bidder at auction. But we must be afforded an opportunity to discuss these options with JCC in order to move ahead to the benefit of all!

The City is eager to collaborate with JCC to facilitate the successful relocation and transition of County services. We must begin our collaboration soon! We are convinced that the first step is for JCC to make time at your earliest possible Commission meeting, by placing us on your meeting agenda, for your fellow government leaders, allowing us to share our vision for the future of soon to be vacated County buildings.

We are very excited and eager to begin our partnership in this very rare opportunity.

Sincerely,



Robert M. Trainor
Mayor, City of Charles Town

Attachment: Charles Town Agenda Request, May 6, 2025

cc: Edwina Benites, County Administrator

ebenites@jeffersoncountywv.org

Editor, Spirit of Jefferson

editor@spiritofjefferson.com

Editor, Shepherdstown Observer

editor@observerwv.com

Editor, The Martinsburg Journal

tmilbourne@journal-news.net

Ann Paonessa, CTN

ann@amorelaw.com