

## The birth of a merged fire company

The merged Springetts and Spring Garden fire company started this week.

Daily Record/Sunday News  
York Daily Record/Sunday News

Article Launched: 05/07/2008 11:35:47 PM EDT

Happy birthday to the York Area United Fire & Rescue service!

The brand new department, a merger of the Springettsbury and Spring Garden Township fire departments, officially began Monday.

This is an exciting move in the direction of regional cooperation, which will offer citizens better services at a lower cost -- saving a projected \$1.68 million over the 20-year life of the charter.

It's precisely the sort of consolidation our community has been discussing since the Rusk Report more than a decade ago and by the YorkCounts group in recent years.

This should be a sign of things to come as other municipalities look at the professionalism of this merged entity and decide to either join or emulate the venture with their own neighbors.

The Metro-York group of YorkCounts has recently proposed a metro police department serving the city and its neighbors -- an excellent idea that even some of the chiefs of inner-ring suburban police departments say has merit. But the proposal will first need to gain acceptance from taxpayers in those municipalities.

If the merged fire department is successful, what better advertisement could there be for other regional cooperation ventures?

It's especially important to include the city in future consolidation efforts, as York is in need of assistance from its neighbors.

But let's not get too far ahead of ourselves. Such mergers have long gestation periods. The Springetts-Spring Garden consolidation was five years in the making. That's a lot of work, a lot of diplomacy and discussion -- miles of groundwork to lay.

So we salute all township officials who made this possible and wish new chief Robert McCoy well as the department moves forward.

The big lesson here is that *it can be done*.

If government officials decide they want to work together to better serve citizens, they can find ways to do so. They can overcome resistance from those who say such mergers will destroy decades of fire-fighting tradition.

Those traditions are important and well worth celebrating. But in our growing community, larger departments where equipment purchasing can be shared among wider population groups make more sense. Plus, regional departments seem better poised to meet the challenges presented by the declining ranks of volunteer firefighters in our community.

**East Manchester area:** Speaking of long, honorable firefighting traditions, happy 150th birthday to the Union Fire Company of Manchester. The company recently held a ball to celebrate a century and a half of service to the community.

It sits in the heart of a community that has recently been involved in regionalization talks.

East Manchester Township, Mount Wolf and Manchester started talking about merging a few years ago. Manchester dropped out of the talks. Then Mount Wolf officials decided the borough should remain, well, a lone wolf.

What a shame.

Maybe folks in that area are not ready for a full-blown merger. But might there be smaller first steps in that direction such as the one taken by Springettsbury and Spring Garden townships?

Close Window

Send To Printer