



## YorkCounts ready for study

**Nearly two dozen municipalities will be asked to participate in a regional police study.**

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A survey showed that 81 percent of residents believe local officials should study regionalizing police services if it might improve efficiency and head off future cost increases, according to YorkCounts.

The results of the e-mail study conducted last month of 794 registered voters mirrors that of a telephone survey two years ago in which 89 percent of the 403 respondents said it would be useful for communities to create regional police forces.

With that in mind, Carl Anderson and Dave Meckley, co-chairmen of YorkCounts' Public Safety Committee, will meet with officials in nearly two dozen municipalities this summer and fall to ask for their participation in a regional police study.

"We expect it to be an all-encompassing analysis," Anderson said, which would include financial and logistical concerns.

The study, which would be conducted by the

Police Executive Research Forum, would require municipalities to open their books so researchers could gather information, such as the size of their police departments and their budgets, said James DeBord, director of YorkCounts.

It would be paid for with money from the state Department of Community and Economic Development, DeBord said. Two municipalities would need to take the lead on applying for the Shared Municipal Services Program grant.

The cost of the study would depend on how many municipalities participate, but an early estimate is \$50,000 to \$65,000, DeBord said.

YorkCounts hopes to get the study underway by late winter or early spring, DeBord said.

"We need to find out who is in on this," he said.

West York Councilman Shawn Mauck said he wouldn't be opposed to his town participating in the study, but he also wants to know what's going to happen with York County Commissioner Steve Chronister's crime-fighting plan.

It calls for assembling a team to patrol the City of York, and the sheriff's deputies would eventually cover other areas in the county as well.

Mauck thinks it would be better if the county gave the city and surrounding municipalities additional officers, which could patrol the local communities but also work together in a county task force.

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He wonders where the two divergent ideas -- the YorkCounts merger study and Chronister's plan -- come together.

DeBord said YorkCounts doesn't think the plans have to be one over the other. Chronister's plan deals more with quality of life issues and crime watch programs. The sheriff's deputies would be limited in their police powers.

Mauck said that, as for a potential police merger in the future, he would want some sort of referendum to let the voters decide.

Spring Garden Township President Commissioner John Fullmer Jr. said the board would be in favor of looking at a study.

Commissioners have seen the benefit of merging the township's fire department with neighboring Springettsbury, and they made plans for other municipalities to join them in the future, he said.

But Fullmer warned that it takes time. The townships spent years studying the fire merger before moving forward with it, he said.

The West Manchester Township board of supervisors at one point sent a letter to YorkCounts indicating they did not want to participate in a study, township manager Jan Dell said.

"I don't know that anything has changed," he said.

DeBord said the township recommended some other ideas, but YorkCounts is still hoping to speak with the supervisors directly. The coalition is asking officials to be open to the study.

## SURVEY

YorkCounts conducted a survey last month to see what the response would be for a regional public safety study. Here are the other questions the 794 registered voters were asked in the e-mail survey:

--- Are you concerned about increased crime in your area and your police department's ability to protect public safety?

**65 percent -- yes; 35 percent -- no**

--- Do you currently live in a municipality (a township, borough or city) where the police department serves only the residents of your municipality?

**50 percent -- yes; 41 percent -- no; 9 percent -- don't know**

--- Considering such issues as response time and quality of service, do you feel police protection in your municipality is adequate?

**62 percent -- yes; 26 percent -- no; 11 percent -- don't know**

--- Do you think police service in other municipalities in your region is adequate?

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19 percent -- yes; 46 percent -- no; 35 percent -- don't know

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