



## YorkCounts makes progress

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Assorted thoughts on last week's YorkCounts summit meeting:

Things are taking off on several fronts for this group of community leaders engaged in promoting sensible regional cooperation and solving tough problems.

The last year brought a major accomplishment on one initiative and significant progress on others.

**Charter school:** Thanks to the hard work of Dennis Baughman, Sue Krebs and others, the York Academy Regional Charter School is about to become a reality.

The project was approved by three partner school districts - York City, York Suburban and Central York.

A location for the school has been found at the old Smyser-Royer site in the city's Northwest Triangle redevelopment project area.

A curriculum - the challenging and prestigious International Baccalaureate program - has been chosen, offering students a program not available at any other York County school.

It's wonderful news. And the underlying motive - to bring together students from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds - should help

rebuild social bridges between the city and surrounding areas that have been lost during the decades of massive suburbanization.

Congratulations.

**Blast from the past:** At the summit, United Way of York County director Bob Woods talked about reviving the old First Capital Compact idea of employers helping their employees who do not have high school diplomas to get their GEDS.

That sounds like a great idea. You can't get far in today's work world without a diploma.

It's good to see YorkCounts revisit past community improvement plans. Too often, a lot of effort is put into developing these plans, and then they just sit on the shelf.

The YorkCounts group itself is an outstanding example of such an effort that has avoided that pitfall, as it continues to push doggedly forward.

Progress comes slowly in the best case scenario. It doesn't come at all if you give up.

**Metro regional police department:** Another YorkCounts effort has taken a significant step forward: Studying the potential of a metro regional police department.

YorkCounts has brought together several inner-ring suburban police officials to talk about potential partnerships - though not all, unfortunately.

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To their credit, many local chiefs and municipal leaders have been receptive - at the very least to cooperation and regional purchasing compacts if not outright mergers.

The group has brought in the Police Executive Research Forum to conduct a formal study of various possibilities - and we eagerly await the results of that study.

Meanwhile, it's not too late for other local municipalities to join the discussions.

One possible stumbling block to a metro regional police department: pension issues involving the city, which has some complex funding problems.

But these issues don't seem like they should be insurmountable if old officers are grandfathered in their existing plans and new officers are in placed in a new joint pension.

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