



YDR Opinion: W. York could go regional

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Assorted thoughts on assorted subjects:

Metro York study: West York has lost two longtime emergency response leaders: The police chief and the fire chief recently handed in their resignations.

That's a shame - Fire Chief Shane Feeser and Police Chief Keith Albright have a lot of valuable experience. Luckily, it won't be totally lost, as Chief Feeser said he'll continue to volunteer with the department and Chief Albright will serve as a patrolman until his planned retirement within the next year or so.

We salute them both for their community service.

But the borough council should also look at the resignations as an opportunity to explore regional police and fire protection.

The borough is part of a study spearheaded by YorkCounts on the feasibility of a regional metro York police department, perhaps encompassing the city and several other inner-ring municipalities. The resignation might make it easier for the borough to move forward with such a plan, which has the potential to offer better, more professional services at a reasonable cost.

Perhaps there's a similar opportunity with borough fire services - merging operations with

an adjacent municipality's department as Springettsbury and Spring Garden Townships have recently done. The obvious choices there would be York City and West Manchester Township. But unfortunately, West Manchester officials have made it clear they have little interest in regional mergers of emergency services,

refusing to even participate in the metro police study.

But city officials have been open to the idea. Officials from the two municipalities should meet and discuss such opportunities.

Renovations too costly: Speaking of York City, it's a good thing that the city council has slowed down the process of buying the Sovereign Bank building on South George Street for a new city hall.

Last week the council postponed introduction of a bill to move in that direction.

It still seems like a good building for a city hall - if indeed city business administrator Mike O'Rourke's financial analysis holds up that the move would cost the city a mere \$7,000 extra per year.

But the proposal to spend some \$5 million to renovate the current city hall for an expanded police station is troubling. That's nearly twice the \$2.7 million purchase price for the bank building. Police deserve a serviceable headquarters, but that's just too much money for a city in York's



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flabby state of fiscal fitness.

It almost seems the police department renovation costs were shielded from public debate until after officials got consensus that the bank purchase was a good idea. The \$5 million renovation costs were the proverbial "other shoe" dropping.

Well, police department gumshoes should pick that shoe back up, put it on and investigate a less costly renovation plan. Many of the ideas in their initial proposal were good - but perhaps they're things that could be phased in over a much longer horizon. Come up with a "make-do" plan for now.

If the metro York police discussions come to fruition, a city that's part of a regional police cooperative might not even need such an elaborate station. The department itself might not even exist - and the headquarters might be in the suburbs.

The council must sort these things out before OKing the bank building purchase.

P.S.: City Council President Genevieve Ray had a good idea to selling off part of the bank parking lot for development to counter some of the loss of revenue when (if) the building comes off the tax rolls as a city hall.

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