



EDITORIAL: Fingers crossed as merger study begins

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The long-anticipated regional police study involving at least nine York County municipalities and five police departments is about to begin.

Organized by YorkCounts and three years in the making, it will try to answer several questions specific to the area, including whether a merged department would work better for York County, how much a merger would cost and how it would be funded.

Washington, D.C.-based Police Executive Research Forum, the consultant hired to do the study, also will factor in variables such as the staffing of each police unit, personnel and overtime expenses, any cost-sharing possibilities and how to deal with existing departments' pension plans.

According to York City Police Lt. Russ Tschopp, the main sticking point will be the pension plans.

"This has been talked about before. And every time we come to the table, the main difficulty we're faced with is that each municipality has a

different pension plan," he said.

Tschopp wants to make sure the consultants do a thorough job examining that issue, and so do we.

Regionalization is a proven way for many municipalities to save money on one of their most expensive services. But it's also a delicate issue involving not just money and efficiency, but a community's sense of identity.

We hope the study eases concerns, but we know that might not be the case for every municipality and department.

To reap the long-term benefits of another large regional police department in York County, there's going to have to be some give and take.

But it can be done. It has been done.

The Northern York County Regional Police Department was the first of its kind in Pennsylvania in the early 1970s. As recently as 2007 there were 32 more, including another four in York County.

All have been able to put aside narrow interests and see the broader good of consolidation.

We hope the participants in this new study can do the same.

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