



NEWS RELEASE

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Poll shows continued support for police study; YorkCounts to take conversation to municipalities this summer

York, Pa., June 16, 2008 – Local officials should study the pros and cons of a regional approach to public safety if the change might produce more efficient service and head off future cost increases, according to a recent survey of York County registered voters. The poll results will be one backdrop as volunteer leaders of YorkCounts – York County’s community-wide, nonpartisan quality-of-life coalition – go municipality to municipality this summer, making the case for such a study.

About 81 percent of those responding to Govercom’s late May poll expressed support for a regional public safety study. Citizens identified as York County voters were e-mailed with an invitation to participate in the poll. YorkCounts Director James DeBord noted that the results were similar to research commissioned two years ago.

Now, the co-chairs of YorkCounts’ Public Safety Committee – attorney Carl Anderson and businessman and former Spring Garden Township Commissioner Dave Meckley – will seek local government participation in a feasibility study, conducted by an independent consultant, to evaluate the merits of a multi-municipal, regional police department. Anderson and Meckley hope to foster an earnest conversation on the issue, starting with visits to municipal boards and councils and two regional police commissions.

“We have heard many different ideas about how to improve public safety, particularly in terms of police service,” Meckley said. “Some people support a regional police department, while others express concerns about how such a merger would be implemented. The next responsible step is to invite an independent consultant to conduct a customized study.”

“Based on our initial discussions with the researchers, we understand that the study would explore options for meeting the increased demand for police services and the increased cost of providing future service,” Anderson said. “We have already identified a national-level association capable of conducting the research – and we understand that a state Shared Municipal Services grant is available for the study.”

In a May-June 2006 survey – conducted by Marttila Communications Group – 89 percent of York County respondents believed that communities should work together to create regional police forces to increase efficiency and provide better police protection.

YorkCounts volunteers are planning a busy schedule of meetings with municipal boards and councils during the next three to five months. Dates for specific meetings will be scheduled soon. YorkCounts is reaching out to nearly two dozen municipalities: Spring Garden Township, Springettsbury Township, West Manchester Township,

West York Borough and York City, each of which currently have stand-alone police departments; the eight municipalities currently served by the York Area Regional Police Department; and the eight municipalities currently served by the Northern York County Regional Police Department.

“The first step – asking for the study commitment – will take several months,” Anderson explained. “It will take that long to visit each municipality on regular meeting nights, many of which overlap.”

Regional police consolidation was a recommendation of YorkCounts’ Metro-York process – a 2006-2007 effort aimed at generating ideas for improving municipal prosperity and education in the area. While YorkCounts did actually recommend consolidation, Meckley and Anderson say they are very aware that the municipalities feel they need more information before they make a binding decision.

“We know some people are asking, ‘Why haven’t the municipalities had a say until now?’ The simple answer is – it’s not until now that the real conversation begins,” Meckley added. “All we’ve really done to this point is, we’ve found out that some people support police consolidation. Many people support the idea of a serious, professional feasibility study, funded by the state, to determine just what consolidation would mean. The process is really just getting started.”

“No idea should be dismissed out of hand if there’s a chance for future cost avoidance and more robust police protection,” Anderson concluded. “Why not have the study done, especially when the state appears ready to support it financially?”

DeBord said each municipal board was sent a letter May 19 advising that YorkCounts would attempt to schedule a presentation time and date soon. Municipal officials and any others who are interested in more information should contact YorkCounts at 717/815-6430.

Govercom is a Harrisburg-based marketing and consumer research company that offers Web 2.0 communications solutions to a wide range of organizations. Govercom utilizes a unique integration of opt-in consumer data, voter records and census data to provide large-scale e-communications and research solutions. Govercom’s web address is govercom.com.

Editors: A one-sheet outlining the 2008 poll results and summarizing the 2006 results is attached/below.

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YorkCounts is a community-based coalition working to assess, sustain and enhance York County's quality of life – building alliances, introducing partners, spotlighting issues and facilitating conversations on education, economic development, health and safety, diversity and more. Partners include Better York, the United Way of York County, WellSpan Health, York College of Pennsylvania, the York County Chamber of Commerce, the York County Commissioners, the York County Community Foundation and the York County Economic Development Corporation. Learn more at yorkcounts.org.

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Count me in

Results of opinion surveys on York County public safety

May 2008

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

Yes	516	65 %
No	278	35

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

Yes	397	50 %
No	326	41
Don't know	71	9

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

Yes	492	62 %
No	206	26
Don't know	96	11

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

Yes	151	19 %
No	365	46
Don't know	278	35

If a regional approach to public safety might result in more efficient service and could head off certain future cost increases, should local officials study the idea?

Yes	643	81 %
No	71	9
Don't know	80	10

From an electronic mail survey of 794 York County registered voters conducted for YorkCounts.

May-June 2006

How useful do you believe the following proposal would be? "To increase efficiency and provide better police protection, smaller communities should work together to create regional police forces."

NET: USEFUL	89 %
<i>Extremely useful</i>	53
<i>Somewhat useful</i>	36
NET: NOT USEFUL	9 %
<i>Not very useful</i>	6
<i>Not at all useful</i>	3
Don't know	2 %

From a telephone survey of 403 York County residents conducted for YorkCounts.

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

