

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Municipal #1: Establishing a Metro-York consolidated police department.

#### Why is this a recommendation?

- Crime does not recognize borders. Law enforcement is inefficient if a crime spree on, say, a *two-mile* stretch of Route 30 between I-83 and the West Manchester Mall involves *four* different police departments that may not be able to communicate or deploy specialized resources.
- Studies have shown that consolidated departments operate more efficiently and more effectively<sup>1</sup> and can make possible future cost avoidance.
- A reputation as a safe place to live will boost the economic vitality of the heart of York County. Conversely, if “York” area has a reputation for a crime problem, it hurts the image of the entire area. And right now, the entire area is relying on the most strapped municipality to fight the core of the crime problem.

#### How did Metro-York reach the decision to include it?

Members of the Municipal Workgroup agreed that what’s so often described as just “city crime” is really crime that’s occurring across, and affecting all of, Metro-York. Chiefs of police have stated publicly that their departments would be more efficient and more effective working together. Many elected officials are also supportive of the idea.

The decision was made to recommend not only consolidation, but also a dedicated funding stream, because Metro-York participants have seen regional police initiatives fall apart because a single borough councilperson or township supervisor had a gripe about service levels. A combined department cannot function if it’s strung together with one-year contracts based on percentage formulas.

#### What else can you tell us about it?

This idea has the most traction of the eight so far, to the point where planning got underway before the Metro-York workgroups had even finished their meetings. The chiefs, York County’s legislative delegation and a representative of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) met in mid-September and agreed that it should be pursued. The state promotes consolidation.<sup>2</sup>

#### Where else is it being tried?

York County is already among the state’s leaders in consolidated policing. The Northern York County Regional Police Department has been in place since the early ’70s, and other departments here are thriving. There are 33 regional police forces statewide. Nationally, inter-municipal consolidation goes back at least 1954, when the Los Angeles Police Department extended services to adjoining Lakewood.

#### What happens next?

The champions of this recommendation will convene and co-chair a task force and expect the group to begin meeting immediately. The first task will be to convince each potentially involved municipality to sign a letter supporting a feasibility study, so they’ll be travelling to township and borough meetings in the coming weeks to make the case for police consolidation. Separately, the group will seek funding support from PCCD.

#### What are, realistically, some obstacles this idea faces?

A combined department will have to reconcile the different benefit and pension plans in place for each force. However: (a) this has been done before on a smaller scale, between York Township and Windsor Township during formation of the York Area Regional Police Department, and (b) York County’s state legislators say that if a local solution can be worked out, they’ll introduce specific legislation in Harrisburg to allow it. Another issue is the need to balance structural stability (achieved through a dedicated funding stream) with satisfactory local municipal representation on any governing board.

1. Krimmel, John T. “The Northern York County Police consolidation experience.” *Policing: An International Journal of Police Studies and Management*. 1997. <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/Insight/ViewContentServlet?Filename=Published/EmeraldFullTextArticle/Pdf/1810200304.pdf> and available via [yorkcounts.org/metro](http://yorkcounts.org/metro).

2. *Regional Police Services in Pennsylvania: A Manual for Local Government Officials*. September 2007. <http://www.newpa.com/download.aspx?id=525> and available at [yorkcounts.org/metro](http://yorkcounts.org/metro).