

**DEPARTMENT OF STATE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
TOWN OF MORIAH – PUBLIC SAFETY (FIRE SERVICES)**

Community Profiles

The Town of Moriah and the Village of Port Henry are located in the eastern part of Essex County in the North Country region of New York State. The Town and Village are smaller than average and obtain slightly higher than average revenues from federal and state aid, signaling a somewhat higher level of economic distress than their peers.

2005	Town of Moriah	NYS Town Average	Village of Port Henry	NYS Village Average
Population	4,879	9,326	1,152	3,385
Revenue from State and Federal Aid	16.9%	14.2%	10.9%	10.1%

Background

The two municipalities have a history of working together to address consolidation of public services since the closure of the Town’s largest employer and taxpayer in the late 1980’s. In the past 15 years, the Town and Village have consolidated their police departments, assessor’s office, justice court system, dog control officer, and wastewater treatment plant. In the mid-1990s, a citizen-based taxpayer group had looked informally into the possible consolidation of fire districts, but it was determined at that time that while some of Moriah’s communities would see some tax savings by the creation of a single town-wide fire district, others would see their taxes go up by the move. With more than 16 percent of the Town budget devoted to fire protection services, the Town Supervisor felt the time was ripe to readdress the issue. In January of 2006, he invited the mayor of the Village of Port Henry, its board of trustees, and officials of all three Town fire companies to participate in the study of consolidating fire departments within the Town.

Outcome

There were ultimately no resolutions passed by the Moriah Town Board, beyond the resolution made in January of 2006 to study the issue. The study showed very little tax savings and consequently no shared services/equipment arrangements or intergovernmental agreements were executed. A factor which hurt the effort was that the study – and the determination that consolidation would not work in Moriah - too narrowly focused on property tax impacts. The Town Supervisor acknowledged that he did not investigate other opportunities for functional consolidation, which could have reduced overall budgets or provide a level of service that could not be achieved independently.