
Enhancing the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Police Services in Schenectady

A Report to the City of Schenectady, New York

Submitted by

Dr. William B. Eimicke & Dr. Steven Cohen*

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*Major contributors to this report were researchers:
Rob Bowell, Annemarie Eimicke, Eve Solomon, and Eve Warburton.

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Executive Summary

Schenectady and its neighbors levy some of the highest property taxes in the nation. According to the Final Report of the New York State Commission on Property Tax Relief, New York State has the highest local taxes in America, more than 75% above the national average. (Thomas R. Suozzi, 2008). To help get New York's economy growing again, newly elected Governor Andrew Cuomo has proposed a strict cap on local property taxes. In addition, he pledged that he will not raise personal, corporate or sales taxes and that he will veto any attempt to do so. The new governor has committed to oppose pay raises for state employees and promised a statutory and constitutional State spending cap.

Schenectady and all local governments in the state will have to do more for less in the foreseeable future. To help prepare Schenectady for this new fiscal environment, Mayor Brian Stratton secured a grant from the New York Department of State to explore the feasibility of consolidating or sharing police services in Schenectady County. This report seeks to identify opportunities for consolidating and sharing police services in Schenectady County in a way that will both improve service and save money. The following four recommendations are based on the results of a survey of best practices in police services consolidation and sharing in New York State, an inventory of the police services available in Schenectady County, and a survey of key Schenectady County stakeholders who are knowledgeable about the county's police services.

First, we recommend that the Mayor of Schenectady direct his executive public safety staff to develop a menu of police services that could be delivered more efficiently and effectively if shared or contracted amongst the various police forces in Schenectady County. The Mayor should then work with the Schenectady City Council and key stakeholders, including elected officials and police professionals from neighboring jurisdictions, to determine which services have support from multiple jurisdictions and are a target for sharing or contracting.

Second, we recommend that services of mutual interest be subjected to a quantitative and qualitative benefit/cost analysis to establish a prioritized list of shared services targets. Key elements in establishing priorities will include the service's timeliness, technical feasibility, and

potential for cost savings. Decision makers should also seek to identify a package of services that could be shared more efficiently and effectively if combined simultaneously.

Third, we recommend that key decision makers meet with appropriate state and federal officials, including representatives from the New York Department of State and New York Governor's Office, State Legislative representatives from Schenectady County and appropriate staff from the federal Department of Homeland Security, to assess the availability of state and federal funds to assist in the sharing and contracting among local governments for police services. Consideration should be given to the availability of funds for planning and analysis, implementation, operating and capital costs, and for the acquisition of equipment and technology.

Fourth, following the completion of the previous steps, the Mayor should develop a Project Implementation Plan of shared and contracted police services for consideration and approval by the Schenectady City Council and appropriate officials from the prospective partner jurisdictions. The plan would identify the police services to be shared or contracted, the benefits and costs of implementation and operation, potential sources of state and federal funds, and a detailed schedule of key milestones over the next three years.

Implementing a comprehensive program of shared police services among the local governments in Schenectady County will not be easy. However, given the fiscal constraints faced by New York State governments, Schenectady County should consider the potential benefits and savings that shared police services will achieve. A number of local governments in New York State are already benefiting from consolidation or sharing of police services and others are working on plans to share or consolidate. The local governments in Schenectady County should consider sharing police services as well.

1.0 The Problem—Why Should Schenectady Consider Consolidation and Shared Police Services?

1.1 The Current Economic Reality for Local Government

The national recession officially ended eighteen months ago, but Upstate New York is still experiencing persistent high unemployment rates, a mortgage crisis brought on by the collapse of the real estate market, and, until recently, weak consumer spending. These factors have left local governments, such as the City of Schenectady and its surrounding towns, with less revenue than expected from the key local tax sources, such as the property tax and the sales tax. Local governments also face increasing public pension and employee health benefits costs. New York State government is experiencing a massive, multi-year budget deficit and will likely need to cut aid to local governments for schools and health care costs, worsening the fiscal challenge for Schenectady and its neighbors.

Many economic experts are optimistic about a national recovery gaining steam in 2011 but significant concerns that temper that optimism (Chan, 2010). The housing market is still weak, particularly in the Capital District, and consumer confidence remains low. Additionally, there is mounting national and international concern about the weak balance sheets of US state and local governments, as was evident in recent negotiations over the City of Schenectady's new budget.

Schenectady and its neighbors levy some of the highest property taxes in the nation. According to the Final Report of the New York State Commission on Property Tax Relief, New York State has the highest local taxes in America, more than 75% above the national average. (Thomas R. Suozzi, 2008). New York State is home to three of ten United States counties where households pay the highest property taxes, eight of the ten counties where households paid the highest property taxes as a percentage of home value, and four of the ten counties with the highest property taxes as a percentage of personal income. (Thomas R. Suozzi, 2008).

To address the problem of disproportionately high property taxes at the local level in New York State, the Commission on Property Tax Relief's principal recommendation was to cap property

tax growth at four percent, or 120 percent of the Consumer Price Index (CPI), whichever was less (Thomas R. Suozzi, 2008). Such a cap would limit the City of Schenectady and the surrounding towns and villages' ability to pay for local government services. This is not an academic suggestion that will sit tucked away on a government library shelf. Newly elected Governor Andrew Cuomo has pledged to enact an even stricter property tax cap- set at the lower of the rate of inflation or two percent (Cuomo, 2011, p. 43). Governor Cuomo's proposal provides for an exception or adjustment for local governments that consolidate services (Ibid. p. 44).

In addition to a strict property tax cap, Governor Andrew Cuomo has pledged not to raise personal, corporate or sales taxes and to veto any attempt to do so. The new governor is committed to freezing the pay levels of state employees and both a statutory and constitutional State spending cap. However, as Attorney General, Andrew Cuomo worked to give local governments an opportunity to do more for less by empowering them to consolidate overlapping jurisdictions, eliminating duplicative activities, and enabling contracting for services among neighboring governments.

1.2 The Opportunity for Local Government Reform—Doing More for Less

New York has over 10,500 governments, including 57 counties, 62 cities, 932 towns, 556 villages, 996 school districts, 991 authorities and at least 6,927 special districts (New York State Attorney General, 2008). New York taxpayers receive multiple tax bills from this myriad of overlapping general-purpose and special-purpose governments, resulting in the highest local government tax bills in the nation. It is not unusual for a county area in New York State to ask its residents to pay for village police services, town police services, city police services, county sheriff services and the State police—as is the case in Schenectady County.

It is not difficult to imagine that savings could be achieved and services could be improved by consolidating or sharing police services across jurisdictions—particularly in the relatively small geographic area of Schenectady County; with only 206.1 square miles, Schenectady is the second smallest New York County outside New York City. (New York State Department of

Health, 2006). Many of these local governments were established prior to the invention of the automobile, telephone, electric light and national highway system, not to mention computers, the internet, email, mobile data devices, scanners, or DNA evidence. The current system of local government in New York State is a product of centuries of addition and very little subtraction; it does not account for modern technology, communication, transportation or modern living patterns. It is too expensive and inefficient to maintain New York State local government's fragmented and overlapping structure the way it has been for centuries.

Recently enacted legislation makes it much easier to clear the legal hurdles that once made consolidating local governments or sharing services difficult. In December of 2008, Attorney General Andrew Cuomo began a campaign to give local citizens the power to reorganize local government services when consolidation or sharing would save money or improve services. (New York State Attorney General, 2008). Cuomo worked with a wide range of stakeholders and the State Legislature to draft The New N.Y. Government Reorganization and Citizen Empowerment Act. Enacted in 2009, the law establishes simplified and streamlined rules for consolidation and dissolution, empowers local governments to initiate consolidation and dissolution, enables citizens to accomplish consolidation by popular ballot through a petition process with a basic 10% of voters threshold to initiate the process, and permits counties to abolish units of local government through county-wide referendum with special majority requirements. (New York State Attorney General, 2008).

The cost of implementing consolidation and shared services can be substantially reduced by working with the New York State Department of State's Local Government Efficiency Program (LGE). Since 2005, LGE has provided financial and technical assistance to help local governments provide better services at a lower cost. LGE has seven full-time staff and an information-packed website to inform interested local governments about consolidation and shared services options, including case studies of successful innovations across New York State.

LGE also has four grant programs that provide money to assist local governments with the planning and implementation of consolidation and shared services initiations—High Priority Planning Grants (up to \$50,000); General Efficiency Planning Grants (up to \$35,000) to multiple

municipalities; Efficiency Implementation Grants (up to \$1 million) to multiple municipalities; and 21st Century Demonstration Project Grants (up to \$1 million) for large-scale innovations(New York State Department of State, 2010).

Since 2005, the Department of State has funded 295 projects totaling approximately \$45 million in grants. The Department reports that the 64 consolidation and shared services projects completed to date have resulted in savings equal to 4.6 percent of the applicable average local government tax levy. For SFY 2009-2010, the Department estimates that the \$3.4 million awarded for implementation grants will save local taxpayers \$66.7 million over the next decade (New York State Department of State, 2010).

As the recent budget enactment process in the City of Schenectady made clear, citizens are unable to afford and increasingly unwilling to pay the existing local government tax burden. At the same time, these citizens cannot do without essential local services, particularly police, fire, sanitation, roads, schools, water and sewer services. Therefore, it is essential that local government officials in Schenectady, indeed across New York State, seriously consider consolidation and shared services as a way of doing more for less.

The New N.Y.Government Reorganization and Empowerment Act removed many of the legal and procedural obstacles that discouraged consolidation and shared services initiatives in the past. The New York Department of State's LGE program provides the seed money for planning and initial implementation of these initiatives. And, as the following chapter documents, a number of local governments across New York State have already improved services and/or cut costs through consolidation and shared services innovations.

2.0 What Have Other Jurisdictions Done?

2.1 Successful and Unsuccessful Consolidations

Since the 1990s, there have been a number of successful consolidations in New York State. For example, the small Village of Pike in Wyoming County voted to dissolve itself into the Town of Pike in 2009 and the Village of Perrysville in Cattaraugus County voted to dissolve itself into the

Town of Perryville, effective January 1, 2012. (New York State Department of State, 2010). A larger community with nearly 7,000 residents, the Village of Seneca Falls in Seneca County, voted to dissolve itself into the Town of Seneca Falls. This consolidation was facilitated by the town's significant income from a landfill contract. (New York State Department of State, 2010).

While complete dissolution and consolidation of local governments may at times be desirable and beneficial, it is typically quite difficult, time-consuming and politically controversial. Voters in New York State Department of State's consolidation planning study grant recipient communities of Port Henry, Speculator, and Johnson City voted to retain their existing governments. (New York State Department of State, 2010). Nevertheless, as a result of the study, each community identified functions in their government that could be carried out more economically and efficiently through cooperative agreements and shared services with neighboring jurisdictions.

Functional consolidation and shared services provide an opportunity for local governments to do more for less without the political and emotional dimensions of complete dissolution and consolidation. A shared service approach can focus in on the activities that provide the greatest potential for savings, service improvements and rapid implementation. Perhaps the most important and obvious service to share in Schenectady County is police.

Schenectady is the second smallest county in New York State with only 206.1 square miles, yet it is served by seven different police departments—the City of Schenectady, the towns of Glenville, Niskayuna and Rotterdam, the Village of Scotia, the Schenectady County Sheriff, and the New York State Police. The Towns of Princeton and Duanesburg and the Village of Delanson do not have local police forces and are protected by the Schenectady County Sheriff and the New York State Police. The existence of seven police departments in a small geographical area provides a great opportunity for functional consolidation.

To date, the New York Department of State's Local Government Efficiency Program (LGE) has provided grants to 36 different potential public safety consolidations and shared services projects. (New York Department of State, no date). The following case studies provide useful

models and examples for Schenectady local governments to consider as a way of doing more for less in the area of police services.

2.2 Sharing Police Services: What Works and What Hasn't Worked

Village of Lancaster Police merges with Town of Lancaster, Erie County, NY

An initial effort to dissolve the Village of Lancaster Police in 1992 was unsuccessful, probably due to a failure to engage all of the key stakeholders. In 2003, the merger was accomplished. Contributing to the success was the popularity of a new Town Police Chief among the employees of both the Town and Village forces. In addition, Erie County provided \$700,000 to help the Village accomplish the merger and promised to provide a special revenue fund for the combined force in the future. Improvements in training, staff development and promotional procedures were implemented as part of the merger. While successful, the merger also raised some concerns—no formal evaluation of the costs and benefits of the merger has been conducted; reductions in staff and budget savings have yet to be realized; and a planned new building to house the two forces has yet to be built, so the combined force is still housed in two separate buildings. (New York State Department, no date).

Village of Angola Police merges with Town of Evans, Erie County, NY

An external consultant study projected that as much as \$140,000 per year could be saved by merging the Village of Angola Police force into the Town of Evans Police Department. The Village and Town received a \$126,000 grant from New York State to help create the merged Department. The consolidation moved forward when the Village police chief retired. A significant reduction in the annual budget of the Village of Angola resulted from the merger. (New York State Comptroller, 2009).

Town of Clay Police Department merges with Onondaga County Sheriff

In 2008, the Clay Town Supervisor and the Onondaga County Executive jointly supported the merger of the Town of Clay Police Department with the Onondaga County Sheriff. Local

officials projected a savings of \$16 million over ten years. A number of steps were taken to facilitate the merger—all 16 full-time Clay police officers were able to transfer to the Sheriff's Department and officials agreed they would be stationed in the Town of Clay during the first year of the merger. In addition, the Town paid the county \$1.3 million in the first year to cover the costs of the transfer. A lawsuit by the police union to assert collective bargaining rights under the Taylor Law was settled out of court. (Purpuro, 2009).

City of Jamestown and Chautauqua County merge Emergency Dispatch Centers

The City of Jamestown and the County of Chautauqua successfully merged their emergency dispatch services into one center in 1999. The project had bipartisan support and was jointly financed; the city paid \$450,000 over three years to cover the transition costs and the county took full responsibility for all future costs. The ongoing costs account for a relatively small percentage of both the city and county budgets before the merger. As part of the transition, city dispatchers became county employees and all employees of the new center were housed at the Sheriff's department. The consolidation is considered a success because emergency response times have decreased, communication among emergency personnel and the public has improved, and multiple emergencies are managed more effectively. (New York State Department, no date).

Villages of Greenwich and Cambridge Police in Washington County agree to share systems, uniforms and training

In June 2004, the Village of Greenwich and the Village of Cambridge entered an agreement to share police services and created the Cambridge-Greenwich Police Department. Stations remain in each village, but their systems, uniforms, and training are mirror images of each another. According to a NYS Senate report, at least \$100,000 was saved as a result of sharing services during the 2004-2005 fiscal years. At the time the report was written, further consolidations involving budgets, operations, equipment and office space were being planned. The merger was accomplished without layoffs. (O'C. Little, 2005).

Town of Ossining in the process of contracting with Westchester County to provide its police services

In September 2010, the Town of Ossining decided to contract police services with Westchester County in order to save money. Since Ossining is a relatively low-crime area, town leaders and residents decided that the 17-member town police department was a luxury it could no longer afford. The decision came after a review of a commissioned report from the International City Managers Association (ICMA), which recommended a merger between the town and the Villages of Ossining and Briarcliff Manor. This recommendation was not implemented; nor was a different proposal from the Village of Ossining. Instead, under the contract between the town and the county, Town of Ossining police officers would operate from a town-owned “precinct” to maintain local presence; the town’s community policing initiatives would be preserved; the Town of Ossining would pay the county approximately \$2.1 million per year for police services (approximately \$900,000 less than the cost of the town’s own police department costs); the county will retain the members of the Ossining Town Police as part of the county force; and taxpayers from Westchester County and two villages within the Town of Ossining will not pay any additional money. (Town of Ossining).

Dissolution of Town of Cicero Police Department into Onondaga County Sheriff’s Department approved by Town Board and will go to referendum

The Cicero Town Board voted to begin dissolving the town's police department. Next in the process will be a public hearing, and at some point residents will be asked to vote on the proposed plans. According to a media report, “Town Supervisor Judy Boyke says she is also in favor of dissolving the department and relying instead on the County Sheriff’s Office. Currently, the Town pays \$1.4 million for its own police department and \$2.6 million to the County Sheriff’s Office.”(9wsyr.com, 10).

Villages of Carthage and West Carthage in Jefferson County are evaluating a feasibility study on sharing police services

The Villages of Carthage and West Carthage contracted with the Center for Governmental Research (CGR) to conduct a feasibility study for shared police services in these villages. The draft report was received in June 2010 and is currently under review. The key findings of the report are that the two villages spent a combined \$501,764 in FY2008-2009 on police services with over 84% coming from the Village of Carthage budget; and that the West Carthage police department provides only part-time coverage, while Carthage provides round the clock services. The report recommends that the villages share services through an inter-municipal agreement (IMA) that would allow each department's officers to do routine police work in both villages; coordinate schedules between both departments so there is always at least one officer on duty in either village to cover both areas; and to create a corresponding cost sharing agreement that allows for a sharing of any "new incremental costs" in staffing. (Center for Governmental Research, 2010).

City of Binghamton and Broome County Sheriff share Special Investigations Services Unit (SIU) services

This initiative has been described as occurring "under the political radar of local officials and the public," but has nonetheless produced a positive result. The idea was developed within the ranks of the two participating police departments. The innovation became the SIU Task Force, made up of members from the Binghamton Police Department and the Sheriff's office. Officers continue to be employed by their home departments while also jointly engaging in task force activities. This is a small, realistic but important advance, which may demonstrate that consolidation processes should begin with small, incremental steps. (NYS Department of State, Albany Law School/ Government Law Center).

Consolidation of police departments in the urban core of Broome County – still under discussion

In August 2006, Deputy County Executive Patrick Brennan publicly proposed the merger of the

City of Binghamton, the Village of Johnson City, the Town of Vestal, the Village of Endicott, and the Village of Port Dickinson into a Broome County Metropolitan Police Force. The chiefs of five police departments comprising the Metropolitan Police Force would report to an Under Sheriff, a new Civil Service position that would have parity with municipal police chiefs' salaries and benefits, and with the Sheriff's compensation.

The plan proposed that the participating municipalities enter into a five year inter-municipal agreement with Broome County enabling the Metropolitan Police Force to provide police services to governments for price equal to each jurisdiction's estimated 2007 budgets for police. After the five-year period, each jurisdiction could opt out of the consolidated force and reestablish their pre-existing departments. The proposed plan estimated it would reduce police service costs by \$7.7 million throughout the County over the five year term while maintaining the same number of police officers in the urban core.

This initiative would require an IMA between the county and each municipality, and agreement from the town and village boards, the legislature and a referendum in each of the participating jurisdictions. The proposal was presented to stakeholders in villages and towns in 2007, and while none of the police departments have "wholeheartedly" embraced the proposal, the plan continues to evolve and attract interest. (NYS Department of State, Albany Law School/ Government Law Center).

Dissolution of Town of Waterford Police Department into Saratoga County Sheriff's Department is rejected by referendum

In 2004, Town of Waterford officials proposed the dissolution of the Town of Waterford Police Department and the transfer of its responsibilities to the Saratoga County Sheriff's Office. The proposal was put to a referendum in 2005 and was rejected. Subsequent analysis of the rejection suggests a number of reasons for the defeat including the public's satisfaction with Town's police services; scepticism regarding projected cost-savings; fear that crime would increase; a desire to keep the police sub-station in the town; concern that response times would increase; and less specific concerns regarding the loss of local autonomy.

A subsequent analysis by Sydney Cresswell and Jordon Wishy faulted proponents for failing to engage the public and other key stakeholders, or to cite specific compelling reasons for the dissolution either in terms of savings or service improvements. They also mentioned the emotional attachment to a “local police force” as a potential reason for the defeat of the referendum. (Cresswell, 2007).

Related Projects funded by Department of State LGE Public Safety Grants¹

The **City of Batavia** and Genesee County merged the Batavia police information system and dispatch operations into a county-wide dispatch system.

The **Town of Chester** and the Village of Chester are studying the consolidation of police services.

The **Village of East Syracuse** and the Town of Dewitt are studying better to provide police services in the town and village.

The **Town of Greenburgh** is studying opportunities for consolidating and/or sharing police services between the town and the village.

The **Village of LeRoy** is consolidating its police information and dispatch services into the Genesee County Sheriff’s Department.

Monroe County has used technology to improve radio communications among participating police agencies in the county.

¹More information on these grants and studies is accessible at the Department of State’s Local Government Services Website, at: http://www.dos.state.ny.us/LG/lge-public_safety_projects.html.

Onondaga County and the City of Syracuse are developing an incident management system that will facilitate the sharing of information between all law enforcement agencies in Onondaga County.

Orange County is exploring a collaborative regional approach to jailing for the Hudson Valley to reduce capital and operating expenses.

Otsego County is consolidating its communications systems to provide higher levels of interoperability to first responders in the county.

The **Town of Saugerties** and the Village of Saugerties are consolidating their separate police departments into a single Town Police Department.

As you know, **Schenectady County** is consolidating its emergency dispatch system through the creation of a Unified Communications center.

Steuben County is working with Allegany and Schuyler counties to determine the advisability of consolidating or sharing 911 services among municipalities in the region.

Yates County and the Village of Penn Yan studied the feasibility of coordinating police and court services.

3.0 The Case of Schenectady

3.1 Police Resources in the City and within the County

Schenectady County has a number of police personnel resources divided among its local jurisdictions. In this section, we describe the allocation of police personnel, equipment, services and dollars to the County Sheriff, Schenectady City, the Town of Rotterdam, the Town of Niskayuna, the Town of Glenville, and the Village of Scotia. Princetown, Delanson and Duanesburg are policed by the Sherriff's office and the New York State Police.

3.2 Number of Personnel per Department

Table 1 provides data on the number of full-time sworn officers, civilian full-time officers, civilian part-time officers and other staff. Sworn law enforcement officers have taken an oath to support the constitution of the United States, the State, and the laws of their jurisdiction. Sworn officers also have the authority to make arrests and carry firearms. Non-sworn or civilian officers have not taken an oath and positions vary among police departments, but may include corrections officers, dispatchers, community outreach/crime prevention, intelligence analysts, IT specialists, forensics technicians, and records management. Full-time officers are considered those officers who regularly work at least 40 hours per week. Part-time officers regularly work less than 40 hours per week and may include seasonal workers (International Association of Chiefs of Police and the Bureau of Justice Assistance).

There are a total of 448 full-time and part-time officers in Schenectady County, including 282 sworn police officers, 94 full-time civilian officers, and 72 part-time civilian officers. Schenectady City is responsible for more than half of the sworn and civilian officers in the county.

Schenectady County is responsible for the area's correctional division and has 179 additional staff members who work in corrections, including one major, two captains, six lieutenants, 12 sergeants, 153 corrections officers, one senior cook, two cooks, and two clerks.

Many of the police departments also reported having administrative staff, found under the category of "Other" in Table 1. The Town of Glenville has two secretaries and one dog control officer. The Village of Scotia has one civilian clerk. Niskayuna has one confidential secretary and one data maintenance clerk. The other departments did not provide data about additional personnel.

Table 1: Police Staffing in Schenectady*					
City	Sworn Officers	Civilian Full-Time Officers	Civilian Part-Time Officers	Total Police Officers Per City	Other
Schenectady City	160	48	46	254	N/A
Schenectady County	14	6	2	22	179
Glenville	22	14	0	36	3
Scotia	13	1	0	14	1
Niskayuna	29	8	5	42	2
Rotterdam	44	18	18	80	N/A
Total Personnel	282	95	71	448	185

*Source of Data: (NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services, 2009).

3.3 Equipment in Each Schenectady County Jurisdiction

Table 2 provides data on the amount of police equipment located in each jurisdiction in Schenectady County. Each unit represents one piece of equipment that the police departments use for transportation, communication, or other purposes. The Schenectady City police department has 91 vehicles; 160 portable communication devices and 80 mobile in-car radios; and 96 computers or laptops. The Village of Scotia has one marked police car, one unmarked police car and one police chief car; Scotia also has one D.A.R.E (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) vehicle, and specially equipped bicycles. Niskayuna has seven marked patrol vehicles, two administrative vehicles, five unmarked vehicles and three bicycles. Niskayuna also has a dispatch phone and radio panel with a direct link alarm monitor, live scan equipment for fingerprinting, and an ELSAG license plate reader. The town of Rotterdam has 12 police vehicles and 15 radio communication devices.

We were unable to obtain complete information on equipment information for Schenectady County and the Town of Glenville for this study.

Table 2: Police Equipment in Schenectady			
City	Transportation (Vehicles)	Communication Devices	Other
Schenectady City	91	240	96
Schenectady County	0	0	0
Glenville	0	1	0
Scotia	3	0	4
Niskayuna	14	3	3
Rotterdam	12	15	N/A
Total	106	255	98

*Data compiled from interviews with Schenectady County police chiefs.

3.4 Police Services in Each Schenectady County Jurisdiction

The county and city police forces implement a number of critical security functions. For the purposes of this study, we have broken these functions into the following categories: child protection services, preventative or security services, correction and jail, investigative, patrol, administrative, and miscellaneous. The number of programs underway in each jurisdiction is reported in Table 3.

The Schenectady City Police Department provides child protection services including school resource officers and youth aid; preventative security including the field services bureau, counter-terrorism, and sharp-shooter; investigative services including the investigative services bureau, special investigations unit and forensics; motorcycle and mountain bike patrol; administrative support and human resources bureaus; K-9; and software and special operations.

The Schenectady County Sheriff's Office is responsible for the Schenectady County Correctional Facility, which Houses a maximum of 280 inmates in cells and 97 dorms. It is typically at 80% - 90% capacity. The correction facility services include bookings, medical and psychological services, admissions, meals, visitation, exercise, laundry, digital law library, transport for inmates, a correction oversight committee of approximately eight people, inmate education programs, religions services and YMCA programs. In addition, Schenectady County is responsible for operation safe child, daily victim information and notification system, an investigative operation, a patrol division stationed at the correctional facility, a professional standards unit, and a self-funded canine unit.

The town of Glenville has five preventative/security services: a house check program, a special attention program, a community event security service, bicycle registration, a public safety communications center, and a dog control officer (shared with Scotia). Glenville also has a public safety dispatch center, which services Scotia as well. While it shares many resources with Glenville, the town of Scotia has its own investigations bureau and youth aid bureau.

The town of Niskayuna Police Department has five preventative services: child finger printing, combat auto theft, a CarFit information program, a sex offender registry, and internet safety

services. Niskayuna also has child passenger safety services and project child safe and staffs a police awareness program.

The town of Rotterdam has three child protection services: operation safe child, D.A.R.E (Drug Abuse Resistance Education), and child safety seat installation. Rotterdam also has police explorer post services and crime prevention tips; as well as 24-hour law enforcement and community policing initiatives.

Table 3: Police Programs in Schenectady*

City	Child Protection Services	Preventative Security	Correction /Jail	Investigative	Patrol	Admin.	Other
Schenectady City	2	3	0	3	2	2	1
Schenectady County	1	1	14	1	1	1	1
Glenville	0	6	0	0	1	0	0
Scotia	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Niskayuna	2	5	0	0	0	1	0
Rotterdam	3	2	0	0	2	0	0
Total	9	17	14	5	6	4	2

*Source of data :(City of Schenectady Industrial Development Agency, 2011)(County of Schenectady, 2009), (Town of Rotterdam, New York, 2009)(Town of Niskayuna New York, 2011)(Town of Glenville in County of Schenectady, 2010)

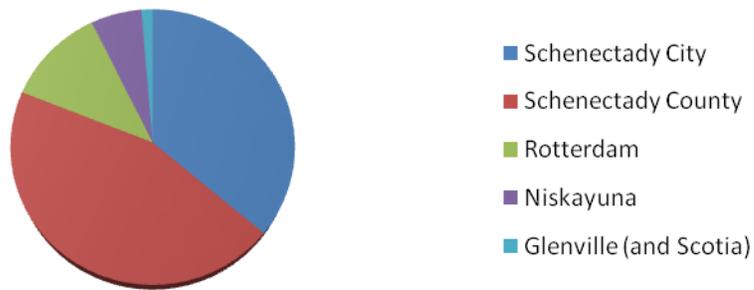
3.5 Police Services Budget in Schenectady County

The total police budget for all jurisdictions in Schenectady County police services was \$48,170,291 in 2009, as indicated in Table 4. As Chart 1 illustrates, the Schenectady County Sheriff’s Office accounts for approximately 45% of the total police expenditures within the county; Schenectady City’s police budget accounts for approximately 35% of all police spending; Rotterdam accounts for approximately 6% of police expenditures; Niskayuna accounts for 5%; and Glenville and Scotia account for approximately 1%. These data provide a sense of the order of magnitude of police expenditures within Schenectady.

Table 4: Police Services Budgets in Schenectady County	
City*	Budget 2009
Schenectady City	\$16,090,088.00
Schenectady County	\$20,614,536.00
Rotterdam	\$5,381,167.00
Niskayuna	\$2,739,981.00
Glenville (and Scotia)	\$604,538.00
Total	\$45,430,310.00

(Ibid.)

**Chart 1:
Schenectady County Police Services
Budget 2009**



(Ibid.)

3.6 Stakeholders Views of Consolidating or Sharing Police Resources

3.7 Methodology

A questionnaire about the possibility of sharing or consolidating police services in Schenectady County was sent to key stakeholders throughout the County. Stakeholders included police chiefs

and personnel, the Sheriff's Office, town and village supervisors, members of congress, councilmen, local political party members, union representatives, and members of the local media. Each stakeholder was emailed a questionnaire, and research assistants made follow-up phone calls to confirm that the information had been received, and to answer any questions. The responses do not constitute a representative sample but rather they suggest the range of issues that must be understood to develop a viable plan to make police services in the county more efficient and effective

Between November 22nd and the 19th of December 2010, 14 key stakeholders responded to our questionnaire:

1. Chief Mike Ranalli, Glenville Police Department
2. Chief Thomas Rush, Scotia Police Department
3. Chief Mark Chaires, Chief of Police, Schenectady Police Department
4. Lt. Fiminksi, Niskayuna Police Department
5. Chief Seber, Assistant Chief, Schenectady Police Department
6. Chief LuBrant, Niskayuna Police Department
7. Wayne E. Bennett, Commissioner of Public Safety
8. Christopher Koetzle, Town Supervisor, Glenville
9. Charles Steiner, Chamber of Schenectady County
10. Marty Finn, Schenectady County Legislature
11. Joe Landry, Town Supervisor, Niskayuna
12. Margaret King, Schenectady Council
13. James Gormley, Editor Legislative Gazette
14. A local reporter who does not want his name included for attribution. His answers do not reflect the opinions of his employer.

Our questionnaire (attached as Appendix A) focused mainly on the following issues:

- *Is consolidation a good idea?*
- *What specific services would be easy to share?*
- *How feasible is consolidation and what are the main challenges?*

- *Is merging with towns or villages a good idea?*
- *Who should be in charge of shared services and how can disputes over the use of shared services be resolved?*
- *How much cost savings makes this a success?*
- *What are the operational roadblocks to consolidation or sharing; who is opposed?*

3.8 Is consolidation a good idea?

Of the 14 stakeholders interviewed for the study, all 14 were in favor of consolidating some services. The police chiefs generally qualified their answer by emphasizing that planning and implementation are key for achieving maximum buy-in from principal stakeholders, specifically the police departments and the community. One police chief believes that consolidation is possible if it starts with “*smaller, more manageable steps.*” However, Christopher Koetzle, Town Supervisor of Glenville, summarized a common concern that “*centralized or consolidated services... [are] almost never better at delivering better ‘customer’ service.*”

Stakeholders identified services they considered viable for sharing or consolidating, and others they considered infeasible consolidation targets for the near future. These are described below. ***Overall, there was a general preference for sharing services rather than merging departments.*** The only stakeholder who was not interested in consolidation was Joe Landry, Town Supervisor of Niskayuna, who feels that his community is, “*very happy with their police department and does not support the idea.*”

3.9 What specific services would be easy to share?

Most respondents who weren’t associated with a police department gave brief responses, and referred this question back to the chiefs. Chief Mike Ranalli of Glenville Police Department confirmed that the various departments have already taken important steps toward consolidation: “*We have already talked about entering into a county-wide mutual aid agreement developed under sections 119-n and 119-o of the General Municipal Law.*” Chief Ranalli has drawn up a

draft agreement that is currently being reviewed by the Sheriff and other police chiefs. The services under discussion were, *“a joint serious injury/death investigation team; joint forensic response team; a shared team of Drug Recognition Experts (already in place); joint training; sharing of Dog control or animal control officers; and a day-to-day backup for serious calls and incidents.”* Chief of Police at the Schenectady Police Department, Mark Chaires, was particularly interested in establishing a countywide *“civilianized workforce”* for a shared crime investigation unit. Other police chiefs and personnel interviewed for this study also spoke positively about the mutual aid agreement proposed by Chief Ranalli.

3.10 Dispatch

Responses revealed that plans for consolidating emergency dispatch are already in progress, with a proposal currently being reviewed by the various municipalities. It is not clear how this plan has been received; most respondents indicated that plans are underway but offered no further comment. However, according to Chief LuBrant there are mixed feelings. The Niskayuna Police Department and the Town Supervisor support the proposal in theory, but need to be assured that response times won't be jeopardized, and that low-grade calls in the towns won't be affected. They also emphasize that the community must feel that the service quality to which they are accustomed will not be at risk. The implication is that the current plan under review might not satisfy all of these concerns. Chief LuBrant also questioned the fiscal side of the plan; he believes that consolidating dispatch would cost far more than the allocated grant money of one million dollars. He also commented that community members in Niskayuna have expressed a great deal of anxiety about these issues at town meetings.

3.11 Information Technology

Some see information technology (IT) as a major financial burden for the county's police departments, and like the idea of consolidating IT personnel and sharing the costs of purchasing. Currently, Schenectady City employs IT experts, and according to Wayne Bennet, Commissioner of Public Safety, the towns and villages contract out for IT services. Chief Seber suggested that

a shared IT unit *“may have to be for an entire city and/or town and not just the Police Department,”* in order to achieve sufficient savings.

3.12 Records Storage

Chief Seber (SDP), in particular, seemed interested in furthering the idea of sharing records storage. He would like to see the data from all municipalities stored and processed in a central archive, from which municipalities could request information and have it sent electronically via the internet.

Chief LuBrant of the Niskayuna Police Department, however, saw consolidation of records storage as a complicated process in which consensus would be difficult to achieve. Niskayuna is already moving to a High Tech storage system using Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant money from the U.S. Department of Justice and other agencies may begin to do the same thing in their own time. However, according to Niskayuna, getting the *“required consensus amongst all chiefs to move to a single RMS package would be so difficult.”*

3.13 Bookings/Jail

Responses indicated that the jail is already a shared service. Though Wayne Bennet, Commissioner of Public Safety, identified the temporary police lock-up at the City Police Department as a possible service to be contracted out to the County Sheriff’s office.

Chief Seber (SDP) believes that given the relatively small size of Schenectady County, a centralized booking system should be examined for consolidation. If bookings were shared, it *“would streamline the process for the city, and the towns would not have to locate a judge during off court hours to have the individual arraigned.”* Niskayuna PD sees the benefit of central booking *“if done correctly,”* however, Chief LuBrant expressed some ambivalence due to potential costs and the difficulty of achieving consensus. Others did not comment.

3.14 K-9

Most of the chiefs thought K-9 was an unnecessary focus for consolidation because there is already a successful, informal agreement between the Sheriff's Office and the other municipalities who use K-9. However, Chief Seber (SPD) did seem to identify K-9 as a potential service for consolidation, perhaps between the Sheriff's Office and the City Police Department.

3.15 How feasible is consolidation and what are the main challenges?

While most stakeholders felt that achieving some level of service consolidation was feasible, the following issues emerged as common concerns:

3.16 Anxiety about compromising service quality

A challenge that was reiterated in a number of responses was overcoming stakeholder anxiety that consolidation would compromise service delivery in the towns and villages. An overriding theme of the responses was the belief that town and village police services are not broken, so they do not need fixing. Some respondents fear that services will be jeopardized in an effort to improve the City Police Department. So a key issue is how to strike a balance between the larger needs of the City and those of towns and villages in any shared service arrangement. Wayne Bennet, Commissioner of Public Safety, said that that the size of the City gives cause for "*concern over the cost effectiveness balancing*" for the smaller municipalities, who may see services tighten in order to meet the demands of the City. Mr. Koetzle, Town Supervisor of Glenville, summed up this sentiment by highlighting the need to make sure, "*the city's problems don't become the town's.*" Chief LuBrant of Niskayuna expressed a similar concern, and emphasized that in order to manage differences in opinion and priorities between the departments there needs to be "*a lot of behind the scenes work with all the agencies and police chiefs.*"

Chief Seber (SDP) suggested that a detailed cost-benefit analysis be undertaken to demonstrate the benefits of consolidation to all effected stakeholders. He believes, the “*biggest obstacle is gaining buy-in from all the Departments. By picking off a couple of soft targets and showing that the system can work, buy-in will follow.*” The most effective way to approach longer-term consolidation is by identifying a few services that are more likely to be accepted by the departments, and then to clearly demonstrate the benefits of sharing those services.

3.17 Logistical challenges

Getting unions on board and equalizing union contracts and benefits throughout the county is a major hurdle. According to Charles Steiner of the Chamber of Schenectady County, union contracts may “*include rules that will not allow for these types of consolidations.*” Chief LuBrant of Niskayuna also commented that sharing records storage would be logistically challenging, given each department’s separate systems and unwillingness to change their Records Management Software (RMS), unless that change comes from within.

3.18 Shared services are feasible and already underway

There was also a sense of frustration that our study was traveling a well-worn path, with several comments about the shared services and consolidation plans that are already underway. Chief Ranalli from Glenville pointed out, “*We already frequently cross our borders to assist each other.*” Chief LuBrant of the Niskayuna Police Department confirmed this point, and highlighted shared service initiatives that have been introduced recently, as well as plans that are currently under review. The Mutual Aid Agreement is progressing slowly, and Chief Ranalli is hopeful that the municipalities will reach an agreement soon, despite difficulties in getting each separate municipal board to reach a consensus. To this end, Chief Ranalli feels that the proposed agreement, “*provides an immediate mechanism for facilitating interaction and cooperation between the departments,*” which he believes will encourage people to support consolidation and shared services.

3.19 Staffing

Some respondents identified the possibility of a public backlash if there are “*layoffs*” as a result of consolidation. One anonymous respondent said this problem emerged after the consolidation of the fire departments.

3.20 Local Power

Chief Thomas Rush of the Scotia Police Department also cited the unwillingness of local stakeholders to “*give up control*” in order to share services. Others briefly cited local politics as an obstacle.

3.21 Is merging with towns or villages a good idea?

All of the police Chiefs did *not* think merging with towns or villages was feasible or desirable. Arguments against a merger included: loss of local control; contracting issues; disproportionate resource allocation to city policing at the cost of services in the villages and towns; and public backlash due to the risk to service delivery. Many argue that the City of Schenectady Police Department (SPD) is facing significant service problems, and consolidation would only bring greater challenges rather than benefits to the towns and villages. The Town Supervisor of Glenville stated, “*People in the towns and villages should not be forced to bear the costs of the problems of the city.*” Chief Ranalli explained that the announcement of a feasibility study about consolidating police services occurred at a time when SPD was undertaking high-profile disciplinary actions. The towns generally reacted very negatively to police consolidation, interpreting it as a response to the City’s troubled department. He believes, “*the immediate reaction was negative and was viewed as an apparent attempt to unload the ‘city’s problems’ on the whole county.*”

Chief LuBrant of Niskayuna echoed this point, stating, “*The city has a call volume that is not so much less than other big cities, but they have so few staff,*” and merging departments would just see resources and personnel being taken away from the towns and villages. Most police

personnel outside of the SPD who took part in the questionnaire communicated agreed on this point.

Another police chief was not positive about the feasibility of merging departments because, “*unlike shared services, which I think could precipitate immediate quantifiable benefits, the merger with another agency is problematic.*” The chiefs at both the city and town levels agree that sharing services is the most appropriate means of reducing costs while potentially maintaining a satisfactory level of service provision.

Chief Ranalli of Glenville is an advocate of merging with the Village of Scotia Police Department, but says that resistance is strong because the smaller police departments don’t want to lose their power. According to Chief Ranalli, this is why, “*the starting point is with shared services.*” Interestingly, Chief Rush of Scotia Police Department was the only chief to feel that a merger *could* be a positive and feasible enterprise.

Other stakeholders more open to the idea of a merger included representatives from Schenectady Council, the County Legislature, the Schenectady County Chamber, and the media. However, they did not provide much detail on their position, and those with more knowledge of the police departments, such as the Commissioner of Public Safety, the town supervisors, and the chiefs, were far more ambivalent about merging departments.

3.22 Who should be in charge of shared services and how can disputes over the use of shared services be resolved?

Some people believed that the only practical option was to have the county be in charge, possibly under the jurisdiction of the County Sheriff’s Office. However, others expressed concern that the county would be incapable of effectively implementing and monitoring the impact of shared services in the towns and villages. Respondents also pointed out that people prefer local control, which makes proposing that towns and villages give up power to the county problematic. Most responses saw a key role for an oversight committee or board, with representatives from the various municipalities. One chief suggested, “*a governance body comprised of operational heads meeting on a monthly basis to assess the effectiveness*” of shared services. The board

would need police agency representatives, a financial officer, and a research tool that could assess customer satisfaction and quality control with particular services. Chief Seber also commented that an oversight body should be established, with representatives from each of the agencies, which could hear complaints from the municipalities

Responses to this question reveal the nature of the relationship between the county legislature, the city, and the towns and villages. There appears to be political friction between these different levels of government, particularly over the way in which the issue of consolidation has been handled. Christopher Koetzle, town supervisor of Glenville, contends that the county legislature, “*has done very little to seek a partnership with the local communities.*”

Most responses suggested establishing a board where complaints could be heard and disputes resolved. This would be the same governing board that many suggested in response to the previous question.

Chief Ranalli, referring back to the Mutual Aid Agreement currently under review, believes that if participation is not mandatory, then only those agencies who are committed to sharing services will take part or have the motivation to work together to resolve disputes.

3.23 How much cost saving makes this a success?

Almost all respondents emphasized that cost is not the most important factor for consideration. Rather, as the Supervisor of Glenville stated, “*service implications and loss of home rule need to be weighed*” against any cost savings. Only Wayne Bennett, Commissioner of Public Safety, gave a figure of 33% as a minimum savings target.

3.24 What are the operational roadblocks to consolidation or sharing; who is opposed?

Most respondents repeated ideas they had put forward earlier, or pointed to their previous answers under the “what are the main challenges” question. Many referred again to the

challenge of getting union buy-in. One anonymous respondent felt that the public in Scotia, Glenville and Niskayuna will not perceive any benefit to their community and will not readily support a proposal for consolidation. Chief LuBrant echoed this sentiment, and said that the community in Niskayuna doesn't feel there is any need to change a system that is working well.

Another police chief emphasized, *“facilitating participation of all potentially affected stakeholders, right from the beginning of the project, will increase the project’s opportunities for success.”* He cited the delay in implementing consolidation of Emergency Dispatch, explaining that the exclusion of important stakeholders at the early design stage caused division: *“If elected officials guide this project and not a governance board of operational stakeholders – the project is more susceptible to contamination by political concerns.”* He is also critical of the Mayor’s handling of the entire project, arguing that without efforts to include the other units of government in the county, the proposal will not address the kinds of mutually beneficial projects that are necessary for gaining optimum buy-in from the departments.

4.0 Analysis of Data

4.1 Potential Shared Services

The key stakeholders involved in managing and delivering police services within Schenectady County are protective of their operations and their turf, but are open to sharing services and facilities where they see mutual benefit. Opposition to consolidation is widespread, and there is little support for creating a single police force for the city and county. Suburban and rural jurisdictions are fearful of being saddled with the city’s policing problems and are concerned about the potential for degraded police services in their jurisdiction.

It is clear that some degree of service sharing is already underway. Emergency dispatch services seem particularly far along. In 2009 Schenectady County secured \$1 million from the New York Department of State to implement a Unified Communications Center (UCC). Implementation is behind schedule and the plans are still under review by the municipalities.

A 2008 report by the New York State Technology Enterprise Corporation (NYSTEC) recommended a centralized emergency dispatch in the county. NYSTEC proposed Schenectady County and its local governments form a unified communications center (UCC) to receive all E-911 wire line and wireless calls along with selected seven digit telephone calls. The unified communications center would also perform all radio dispatch functions for law enforcement, fire, and EMS. It would facilitate coordination with adjacent counties, towns, state agencies, and federal agencies by centralizing all call taking and dispatch in Schenectady County. According to the study, the center would receive 75,000 emergency 911 calls and 291,000 7-digit calls each year.²

Another possible area of shared services is booking and jail. A central booking and holding facility was mentioned as a possibility by some stakeholders. Since this is a behind the scenes service not typically visible to many local citizens, it has the potential of being consolidated with little potential for negative impacts on local police forces. Other services that are even more administrative in nature also hold our potential for consolidation. Information technology and record keeping might well benefit from centralization. Economies of scale and deployment of higher levels of expertise are possible if the counties all decide to work together in these areas.

One could imagine a shared police support facility that would provide central booking and holding services, a dispatch staff, electronic record keeping and IT support staff for all departments.

4.2 Limits to Sharing and Consolidation

While there is little question that New York State has many overlapping jurisdictions and redundancy in service delivery, it is clear that there is popular support for extra levels of public safety capacity throughout the state. While our interviews were limited to local officials and police staff, we have not observed a taxpayer revolt focused on cutting back small local police forces. Like the shopping mall that needs to make sure they have enough parking spaces in their lot for the day after Christmas, excess capacity is only excess until an emergency takes place and all hands are required.

²See: NYSTEC “*Model for a Unified Communications Center: Final Report*” December 2008.

It is to be expected that local police officials would not want to consolidate their departments, and possibly their own jobs, out of existence, so some resistance to consolidation and merger is to be expected. We were not surprised to see the argument take the form of fear of degraded police services. Nevertheless, the views of these stakeholders must be taken into account if consolidation is to be attempted.

One of the difficulties of merging police services is that while the potential financial savings and possible service enhancements are uncertain, the loss of local control is not. It is impossible to specify the actual financial savings of a merged department until the transition is over and the final organization is in place. Savings from mergers are often overstated, and due to the high level of uncertainty, we have provided preliminary savings estimates for two options for the City of Schenectady using limited data and recommend further cost/benefit analyses be undertaken for more precise figures. The previous chapter provides data on current resource use, and indicates the opportunities for financial savings, but the operational issues that would need to be overcome for a successful merger cannot be precisely specified in advance. In any case, as the next chapter indicates we are not recommending merging the county's police forces, but rather that Schenectady County increase the amount of services shared between forces.

4.3 Opportunities for Improvement

Our analysis indicates that there would be support for a more aggressive strategy of shared services, while retaining the independence of the county's police forces. In addition to dispatch, information technology, record keeping, booking and jailing, there is also opportunity to enhance communication among the forces and integrate police strategies and training. The demands on modern police forces continue to grow. When domestic disputes, natural disasters and other 21st century threats to public safety occur, the county may benefit from all of its police forces viewing themselves as part of a network of police organizations.

Due to enhanced communications and information technology, throughout the economy we are now seeing the growth of small, distinct organizational units, tied together as networks engaged in service delivery and other forms of production. The New York-based business that contracts

with a call center in a distant location in the United States or elsewhere is an example of such a networked organization. Centralized and vertically organized structures are being replaced by decentralized networks, and policing in Schenectady could follow this path.

4.4 Feasibility of a Single, Unified Police Force for Schenectady County

As part of our proposal to the City of Schenectady, we suggested that the City consider a number of options to improve the efficiency, economy and quality of police services in the City and surrounding region, including several county-wide options such as requesting that the New York State Police provide all police services in the county, merging all existing police departments in the county into the County Sheriff's Department and merging the City Police Department with the County Sheriff.

Based on our analysis, research and interviews over the past four months, these county-wide options are not feasible in the short-term. Given the budget crisis at the state level and proposals for a state spending cap, the NYS Police will not have the resources to consider a request to provide all police services in Schenectady County. The State Police do not provide such comprehensive county-wide services anywhere in the State, so we recommend that this option no longer be considered viable.

Establishing the County Sherriff as the prime police department for the county has been done in other urban counties of the state, including Erie County, Nassau County, Suffolk County and Westchester County. So there are models to learn from and it is possible that Schenectady County could move toward a county-wide police force over time. Our interviews with stakeholders found that there is little support for a comprehensive county-wide consolidation of police services at the present time. In addition, as the Broome County case study makes clear, consolidating multiple police departments into the County Sheriff's office is extremely complicated operationally, politically, and emotionally for local community residents. Finally, since the City of Schenectady Police Department has a force ten times the size of the County Sheriff and has more officers than the other five departments in the county combined, a merger of the Schenectady Police Department into any of the other departments in the county is not feasible at this time.

In the longer term, the City of Schenectady and the other police departments could also look carefully at a national best practice for contracting for police services on a county-wide basis—the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, or what is also known as the Lakewood Plan. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department is one of the largest providers of contract law enforcement services in the country. The use of intergovernmental contract services in Los Angeles County dates back to 1954 when the City of Lakewood and the Sheriff's Department entered into the first agreement for one government entity to provide law enforcement services to another independent government entity. Known as the "Lakewood Plan", it has become a model for incorporation that has been adopted by 30% of California's cities and dozens more throughout the nation.

Forty of the 88 cities in Los Angeles County contract with the County Sheriff's Department for all of their police services. Since 1954, all but one of the cities incorporated in Los Angeles County have adopted the Lakewood Plan, and 80% of all new cities incorporating in California now also adopt the Lakewood Plan. Intergovernmental contracting in Los Angeles County has expanded to include other areas of law enforcement services as well, including transit policing, school policing, court security, and custody services.

While it can certainly be demonstrated that there are cost efficiencies because of the consolidated command structure and the shared specialized resources (such as having a SWAT team, an arson investigation unit, or another highly specialized trained unit that can respond to a number of jurisdictions as needed), there are concerns about local control, community identification, and the commitment of resources geographically. The Los Angeles County Sheriff is elected by the voters throughout the county as opposed to a police chief, who is appointed by the elected board or council of a city, town or village. In the past, some cities have been frustrated enough to investigate the alternative of forming an in-house police department, but when the analysis demonstrates the start-up and ongoing operational costs (not the least of which are the controversial high pension and benefits costs), local budget constraints always win out.

In the 1990s, a small city in Los Angeles County called Hawaiian Gardens terminated its contract with the County Sheriff and formed its own police department; however, amid

controversy, the police department was disbanded ten years later and the city again entered into a contract with the Sheriff’s Department. The City of Maywood (also in LA County) recently disbanded its police department and entered into a contract with the Sheriff’s Department as well. (Schiesl, 1982).

4.5 Cost Savings Analysis

Sharing police services in Schenectady County can be a way to improve service and save money. We analyzed the City of Schenectady 2011 budget to estimate the potential for cost savings based on sharing and/or consolidating record storage, communications and dispatch, and training. It is estimated that the City of Schenectady could potentially realize between \$280,000

-\$560,000 in annual benefit from sharing these services with other jurisdictions. Most of these savings may carry forward, suggesting a 4 year benefit of \$1.1 – 2.2 million. This estimate is based on initial discussions and limited data. Fiscal year 2011 spending is based on the City’s Adopted 2011 Budget while the savings ranges are based on benchmarks, case studies, and third party analyses. A full cost/benefit analysis is required to add precision to the financial impact estimate.

Table 5: City of Schenectady Potential for Shared Police Services		
Category	Spending (FY11)	Savings Range
Record Storage Data from all municipalities stored and processed in a central archive	\$1.4 M	20 – 40%
Communication & Dispatch (plans already in progress) Enhance communication among the forces; consolidate dispatch across multiple municipalities		
Training Integrate police strategies and training between City / County	Unknown, but assumed low	4-12%

Further, while the county-wide options discussed in the previous chapter are not feasible in the short-term, they have the potential to result in more significant savings. To assess this potential for the City of Schenectady, we calculated estimated savings by comparing Schenectady to

police costs of neighboring cities with similar force size, budget and demographics. Table 6 displays the police collaboration in these cities and their savings.

We found that moving towards a merged or contracted police force collaboration has the potential to save the City of Schenectady between 15 and 45% in total public safety spending which might translate into \$2.2 – 6.5 million in annual savings, assuming total police spending of \$14.6 million (from FY11 adopted budget). This estimate is based on limited discussions and data and additional analyses will be required to add precision.

Table 6: City Police Collaboration and Budget Savings							
City	Type of Collaboration	Pop.	Officers per 1K people	Police Budget (\$M)	Budget per Capita	XJC Savings (\$M)	XJC Savings (%)
Schenectady, NY	Independent	61,500	2.60	\$14.6	\$237	n/a	n/a
Dublin, CA	Contracts with Contra Costa Co.	50,000	1.22	\$12.3	\$246	\$3.2	21%
Rochester Hills, MI	Contracts with Oakland Co.	69,000	0.83	\$8.8	\$128	\$1.5	15%
Cupertino, CA	Contracts with Santa Clara Co.	55,000	0.51	\$8.5	\$155	\$4.5	35%
Clay, NY	Merged into Onondaga Co.	58,000	0.28	\$1.3	\$22	\$1.1	46%
San Carlos, CA	Merged into San Mateo Co.	27,238	1.43	\$6.8	\$250	\$2.0	23%
Average			1.00		\$169		15-45%

5.0 Recommendations

It seems clear that many of the key stakeholders in Schenectady County are not ready to join forces and form a single, consolidated police force. Instead, our analysis indicates that there is the potential for growing the number of services shared among the county’s police forces. A shared communications service is already being developed. Jailing seems to be largely a county function as well. Therefore, our principal recommendation is that state and federal funding be secured to establish a single shared service facility to handle communications, lock-up, information technology, record keeping, training, and perhaps homeland security and emergency response planning. A professional manager should be hired to run this facility and a governing board of directors, comprised of the police chiefs throughout the county, should be created.

Using seven different organizations to provide primary police services in a geographic area as compact as Schenectady is the result of history rather than strategy. Local governments are under intense and growing pressure to reduce expenses and improve performance. Police services are among the most important and most expensive services provided by local governments.

Based on our analysis and the information provided by key stakeholders who answered our questionnaire, there are a number of police services that could be improved to provide a lower cost through shared services and contracting among the multiple police forces in Schenectady County. By working together on a set of shared services and planning processes, the police professionals within the county would likely develop deeper working relationships that could lead to more shared services and in the longer term, a more centralized strategy of policing.

5.1 Next Steps

First, we recommend that the Mayor of Schenectady direct his executive public safety staff to develop a menu of police services that could be delivered more efficiently and effectively if shared or contracted amongst the various police forces in Schenectady County. The Mayor should then work with the Schenectady City Council and key stakeholders, including elected officials and police professionals from neighboring jurisdictions, to determine which services have support from multiple jurisdictions and are a target for sharing or contracting.

Second, we recommend that services of mutual interest be subjected to a quantitative and qualitative benefit/cost analysis to establish a prioritized list of shared services targets. Key elements in establishing priorities will include the service's timeliness, technical feasibility, and potential for cost savings. Decision makers should also seek to identify a package of services that could be shared more efficiently and effectively if combined simultaneously.

Third, we recommend that key decision makers meet with appropriate state and federal officials, including representatives from the New York Department of State and New York Governor's Office, State Legislative representatives from Schenectady County and appropriate staff from the federal Department of Homeland Security, to assess the availability of state and federal funds to assist in the sharing and contracting among local governments for police services. Consideration

should be given to the availability of funds for planning and analysis, implementation, operating and capital costs, and for the acquisition of equipment and technology.

Fourth, following the completion of the previous steps, the Mayor should develop a Project Implementation Plan of shared and contracted police services for consideration and approval by the Schenectady City Council and appropriate officials from the prospective partner jurisdictions. The plan would identify the police services to be shared or contracted, the benefits and costs of implementation and operation, potential sources of state and federal funds, and a detailed schedule of key milestones over the next three years.

Implementing a comprehensive program of shared police services among the local governments in Schenectady County will not be easy. But given the fiscal constraints that all New York State governments are facing for the foreseeable future, the potential benefits and saving from sharing police services should not be ignored. A number of local governments in New York State are already benefiting from consolidation or sharing of police services and others are working on plans to do so. It is time for the local governments in Schenectady County to move forward more aggressively on this opportunity.

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Interview Questionnaire: Schenectady Police Management Study

In order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of local government, many towns, villages, cities and counties are considering the merger of some departments and/or sharing services across borders. Their goal is deliver better service at a lower price and more efficiently use existing equipment and staff. The city of Schenectady has contracted with Columbia University Public Administration experts Dr. William Eimicke and Dr. Steven Cohen to help them improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their city's police department. We are research assistants on their team, and we were hoping you might speak to us for a few minutes and share your views on this important issue. The interview takes approximately 15 minutes and can be for attribution or recorded without your name attached, as you wish.

1. One option under consideration is providing some specialized police services such as K-9, records storage, booking, dispatch, jail, or IT by contract from one department to one or more other police departments.
 - a. Do you believe that such a step is a good idea?
 - b. Are there specific services or types of equipment that you think could be readily shared through inter-departmental contracts?
 - c. How feasible would it be to establish or consolidate these specific police services?
 - d. If feasible, what are the major obstacles/challenges to overcome?
2. A second option would be to merge police forces in the county. Schenectady could join with a town (or towns) and/or village, creating a multi-jurisdictional police force.
 - a. Do you believe that such a step is a good idea?
 - b. How feasible would it be to create a multi-jurisdictional police force including the Schenectady Police force?
 - c. If feasible, what are the major obstacles/challenges to overcome?
3. If a merger happened, how could accountability best be insured for all of the communities served by the merged department?
4. Who should be in charge of these services once they are shared?
 - a. How can a clear chain of authority be achieved?
 - b. How might disputes or conflicts about the use of shared services be resolved?

5. What level of cost savings would be required for you to consider a merger or shared services to be a success?
6. What are the operational roadblocks to consolidation or sharing services, and which people or groups are opposed to it?
7. If you oppose any merger or shared police services, is there anything that would make your change your position?
8. If there is statewide property tax cap, would you be more inclined to pursue merged or shared police services?
 - a. If there was an incentive incorporated into state aid formulas to localities that merge or share services, would that have a major impact on your interest in merged or shared services?
9. Who else should we be speaking to about this?
10. Are there any other questions we should be asking?

Thank you for your help on this. We would be happy to share the results of our study with you once it has been completed.

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