



**Considerations for a Joint Police District
in Sycamore Township and the Village of Silverton**

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Introduction

One of the core functions of any political subdivision is to provide efficient, effective, fair and impartial police services to its residents. There are several options for providing police services to a community and many reasons why communities explore these different options. Options can include shared services, local merger, contract services, or joint police districts. Challenging fiscal situations can lead some to consider consolidation or shared services in the hope of reducing costs. Others look for alternatives when their current policing situation does not meet the community needs. Some communities may have difficulty maintaining the adequate resources required to operate a professional, modern police department.

Villages, cities and townships may:

- Staff, equip, and fund their own police departments, that were established under a city charter or state law allowing for an independent police agency in their jurisdiction. Once a police department is in place, the political subdivision has the legal responsibility for providing police services and are required to set their own policies and procedures.
- Contract with a neighboring law enforcement agency or a County Sheriff's Office for police services. In this model, police services are provided by one community to another, usually with the smaller area contracting with the larger area's police agency. This often occurs when one political subdivision has the need to provide police services to its community but has little or no means to provide such services. Under these arrangements, the contract clearly describes the type and level of police services as well as the total associated costs.
- Rely solely on the local Sheriff's Office, that is statutorily required to respond to calls for service in a village, city, or township within their county, without a contract or agreement.
- Merge with a neighboring jurisdiction(s), which results in shared services agreement or a joint police district. This involves integrating one or more distinct organizations into one new collective entity. Mergers/consolidations are a less common arrangement but can satisfy expectations of each unique political entity.

The last option, a joint police district (JPD), is the focus of this feasibility report. In a JPD, along with the responsibilities of staffing and funding a police department, both the geographic

jurisdictional boundaries and policing services of the individual communities are combined. Under a JPD, unlike other organizations, a board or commission made up of representation from *each* participating jurisdiction is responsible for the operations, policies, and procedures of the new combined agency.

The merger of police agencies is a complex process with profound effects on both personnel and law enforcement operations, while the expectations of efficient and effective service delivery to citizens continues. Although Sycamore Township and the Village of Silverton are not currently contemplating a merger, some of the same issues and concerns exist for the alternative delivery of their police services. A local example of a merger occurred in 2008 when two cities, Southgate Kentucky and Highland Heights Kentucky, combined their police departments to form the new Highland Heights Southgate Police Authority. This merger was dissolved three years later in 2011 due to both political and citizen concerns.

Sharing some law enforcement services regionally is a less frequent arrangement but may be very successful. Multiple agencies will consolidate or share specialized services that would be cost prohibitive for individual police agencies. Most commonly and successfully, multiple agencies may share services such as: special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams, major drug or criminal investigations, or fatal traffic crash investigations. These shared services generally provide highly specialized and functional units that perform high risk/low frequency functions rather than everyday delivery of basic police services. These arrangements generally require memorandums of understanding (MOU's) and a high level of trust which often relies on pre-existing informal professional relationships among participating agencies. In Hamilton County, the Hamilton County Police Association's SWAT, the Underwater Search and Recovery Units, and Drug Abuse Reduction Task Force (DART) are examples of these type of shared resource teams that respond to incidents throughout the county.

Regional policing is another way political subdivisions have cooperated to provide police service. In regional policing, several jurisdictions, located within the same geographic area, cooperate with each other and form a regional police department. A regional approach to policing has been very successful in some areas of Pennsylvania. More specifically, the Northern

York Regional Police Department has been held up as a national model for regional policing and has been providing joint police services for over 40 years. There are currently more than 35 regional police departments in Pennsylvania representing over 125 municipalities. The Pennsylvania Governor's Center for Local Government Services has published a manual for local government officials on regional police services.¹ Without any current joint police districts in Ohio, Pennsylvania has the most proximal example of regional policing or the formation of a joint police district to provide law enforcement services to a defined area.

Neither the Village of Silverton nor Sycamore Township currently have their own police departments. To provide police services to their communities, these jurisdictions contract with the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office (HCSO). Each individual jurisdiction separately contracts for a specific amount of daily police coverage. Prompted by proposed increases in contract rates over the years and the uncertainty and inability of the contracted agency to control or predict future costs, along with the inability of the contracting jurisdictions to precisely spell out how the unencumbered time of the contracted officers is spent, has led these jurisdictions to explore other policing options.

When Change is Considered

Communities may begin to look for alternative ways to provide police services when the loss of funding impacts the delivery of services, or community members are dissatisfied with current police services. For example, the Financial Crisis in 2008 and the loss of Local Government Funds in 2011 trickled down and caused tremendous stress on local funding. Furthermore, increased or changing service demands, poor service delivery, inefficiency, lack of precise crime, administrative and cost data, liability/insurance costs, or corruption can create legitimacy crises for local police departments.

When faced with the above situations, some communities have chosen to disband their police departments and find alternative (pre-existing) sources of police services. In recent history, three local agencies in Hamilton County; Silverton, Lincoln Heights, and Arlington Heights have

¹ Regional Police Services in Pennsylvania: A Manual for Local Government Officials. Tenth Edition, June 2011
<https://dced.pa.gov/download/Regional%20Police%20Services%20in%20Pennsylvania/?wpdmdl=59692>

dissolved. These jurisdictions now either contract for police services or rely on the County Sheriff's Office to provide services under state statute. When communities are considering alternatives to their current police service delivery, the alternative chosen should be able to provide the same or better service, for either a similar or reduced cost.

When communities do not have their own police departments, contracting is perhaps the most common method of providing police services among political entities. As mentioned above, a merger or consolidation is also an option if one or more of the political subdivisions have existing independent departments that can be merged. If neither or none of the neighboring communities have police departments that can be merged, the neighboring jurisdictions may consider forming a Joint Police District (JPD) in which all political entities involved join together to create one new, joint police department that provides police coverage for the combined area.

The Current Policing Situation in Silverton and Sycamore Township

The Village of Silverton, located in Hamilton County, Ohio, is an inner ring (first) suburb of the City of Cincinnati with 4,788 residents. Silverton spans slightly more than 1 square mile, and includes approximately 2,500 buildings, 183 streets and 2,400 households. Approximately 51% of residents are black and 42.5% white. The median household income is approximately \$37,000, which is lower than estimates for the County and State. About 11% of the population lives below the poverty line (factfinder.census.gov). The Village is a chartered municipal corporation with a Council/Manager form of government. The Village participates in the Silverton/Deer Park Joint Fire District for their fire and emergency medical services.

Silverton used to operate a full time, full-service police department, that was first formed in 1905 when the village was incorporated. However, budgetary issues and personnel turnover caused the Village to explore alternatives for providing policing services when their number of officers began to dwindle. In 2013 the Village contracted with the HCSO to augment the services provided by the Silverton police department. In June 2014, Silverton's city council voted to enter into a contract with the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office for all of its policing services. The Silverton Police Department was staffed by five officers, including the chief, down from 10

officers only two years prior. The village said a decreased population directly led to less money available for the department's operations and a contract with the Sheriff's Office would save the village money. In July 2014, Silverton disbanded their police department and the HCSO took over full responsibility for the policing duties in Silverton. The 5 remaining Silverton officers and a clerk were absorbed into the HCSO and sworn in as employees of the sheriff's office.

Sycamore Township is adjacent to Silverton. The land mass of Sycamore Township is split among three "islands" of which are also surrounded by other Hamilton County communities. In total, Sycamore Township is 6.7 square miles, and includes about 9,500 buildings and 830 streets. Sycamore Township houses Hamilton County's largest shopping center (Kenwood Towne Center). Sycamore Township has approximately 20,400 residents, most of which are white (79%). The median household income is approximately \$65,000 and less than 10% of the population lives in poverty, which are both more positive than statistics for both the County as a whole and the State.

However, while not dissatisfied with the services currently being provided, in discussions with the Village Manager and former Township Administrator, there are some concerns with the current state of policing services and operations in both jurisdictions. There is a seeming lack of clarity over increasing contractual costs, calculation of those costs, billing processes and a lack of real time data for police operations. The concerns have led these 2 jurisdictions to explore alternative ways of providing policing services to their residents.

Data

A request was made to the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office for specific police related data and records, by the Silverton village manager and the Sycamore Township administrator. UC Researchers were seeking information on citizen calls for service, arrests, and crime reports for both jurisdictions. Researchers found that although there is a centralized HCSO Records Section, there is no electronic records management system in the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office. The HCSO Records Sections was unable to respond to the records request in a manner sufficient to allow robust analysis of crime, arrest, and calls for service data.

The lack of easily accessible and useable data makes it difficult for Silverton and Sycamore Township officials and HCSO deputies and supervisors to see and use data to: generate reports, deploy resources based on crime, calls for service or identified current crime patterns or trends, develop operational plans, make more proactive use of deputies discretionary times, or engage in problem solving or other community policing efforts. The current method of data entry is inefficient and time consuming. The lack of ability to quickly access data makes it difficult for both jurisdictions and HCSO supervisors and managers to quickly and accurately answer questions from elected officials or community members about area crime and traffic issues.

Operations

Since both jurisdictions contract with the HCSO, there is little, if any, distinction between the policing services provided to each community. When other jurisdictions have contemplated forming a JPD, there always needed to be a discussion or understanding of the differences in the agencies considering consolidation. These may include: wages, uniforms, labor agreements, and policies. These and any other operational differences are not present and will not become impediments as they have when other jurisdictions with their own police departments have explored consolidation or the formation of a JPD.

There is presently no formalized operational plan directing officers' activities when not responding to citizen calls for service. There is no clear policing vision or philosophy in these two communities. As contracting entities, they do not have the ability to establish policing policy and they have little oversight and influence over the way policing services are provided by the contractor (HCSO). The officers assigned to the communities are not employees of the Village or Township. Direction for these officers comes from the Lieutenant assigned to that HCSO Patrol District (Sycamore is D3 and Silverton is D4).

Change in Service Model Considerations

Each of the above communities are in a unique position to explore policing options and the feasibility of creating a joint police district. As stated previously, Silverton and Sycamore Township currently contract with the HCSO for their police services. Many of the communities that have previously considered joint police districts or regionalization had their own police

agencies. Those communities had to deal with issues such as: relinquishing political control of budgets or agency operations, merging of individual agency labor contracts, retention of current employees, resistance by unions or communities, and differing funding mechanisms. Oftentimes these obstacles occur and derail an initiative even if the proposed consolidation will save money or enhance policing services.

Silverton and Sycamore do not face some of these same obstacles. While police service in these communities is well regarded by the residents, neither currently has their own police agency. All personnel providing police services are employees of the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office and do not necessarily identify with the communities they serve other than driving police vehicles with minor marking additions (each marked HCSO vehicle, assigned to either community, is owned by that political subdivision and has their community name marked over the left and right rear fenders). All assigned officers wear the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office uniform regardless of what community they patrol.

It is important to note that the Sheriff's Office staff that serve Silverton and Sycamore are a well-trained and professional group of law enforcement officers. The basis of this report is not about their staff performance, but examines the current police service model and service methodology in order to identify alternatives for providing police services that may be more efficient or effective all concerned

Control

Each community has limited control over the policing services provided in their respective jurisdictions. Although each jurisdiction has a voice in how their community is policed, the direct control of the officers is through the HCSO command staff and the officers are guided by the Sheriff's Office policy and procedures. Essentially each community, even though different in many ways, receives the same type/style of policing as any other community patrolled by the HCSO. There is some limited ability to have officers transferred out of a community through a request by the village manager or township administrator, but all other personnel decisions are made by the HCSO command staff. The communities do not have control over assignment of the District Commander, an important role that provides the guidance and direct oversight of the

deputies assigned to those communities. There is no Police Chief that is responsible or directly accountable to either the community or elected/appointed officials of those communities.

Labor Contracts-

The HCSO contract deputies are all covered under a single labor agreement. It is negotiated between the Hamilton County Sheriff's Association (HCSO enforcement officers) and the Hamilton County Sheriff. Contract agencies have no voice in these negotiations and have none of the management rights asserted in the labor agreement they would normally have if they operated their own police department. It is almost a certainty that officers in a new JPD will organize into a bargaining unit, seek recognition as a bargaining unit and negotiate a labor agreement with the JPDB under ORC 4117 and the rules of the State Employment Relations Board (SERB).

Management rights are a key component of any law enforcement labor agreement and in Ohio are spelled out as set forth in Ohio Revised Code Section 4117.08(C) 1-9:

- 1. To determine matters of inherent managerial policy which include, but are not limited to areas of discretion or policy such as the functions and programs of the public employer, standards of services, its overall budget, utilization of technology and organizational structure;*
- 2. To direct, supervise, evaluate or hire employees;*
- 3. To maintain and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of governmental operations;*
- 4. To determine the overall methods, process, means, or personnel by which governmental operations are to be conducted;*
- 5. To suspend, discipline, demote or discharge for just cause, or layoff, transfer, assign, schedule, promote or retain employees;*
- 6. To determine the adequacy of the work force;*
- 7. To determine the overall mission of the employer as a unit of government;*
- 8. To effectively manage the work force;*
- 9. To take actions to carry out the mission of the public employer as a governmental unit.*

The current inability of Silverton and Sycamore township to have any voice in these areas is problematic,

Hiring and Retention of Employees

All police personnel serving the contract jurisdictions are employees of the Sheriff's Office. If a JPD is formed, the Joint Police District Board (JPDB) would set forth the hiring standards and practices for the new JPD. Retention or hiring of any HCSO deputy, currently serving either jurisdiction under the contractual agreement, would be at the discretion of the new hiring authority (JPDB). The future employment of any deputy currently serving these communities and not selected to continue under the new JPD is up to the Sheriff and the existing staffing needs within his/her agency.

Potential personnel layoffs are also an important part of the discussion when considering consolidation of police services. In situations where jurisdictions operate their own police agencies; this can be a very divisive issue and one of great community concern. Often, members of a community identify with one or more of the officers they have had regular contact with. Especially in smaller communities, residents will be greatly concerned with the fate of that officer if a merger occurs, fewer officers are needed for staffing the new department and downsizing may occur. Jurisdictions must take into consideration the impact any changes will have on each employee.

In the current situation with Silverton, and Sycamore Township, they do not have their own police department employees and are not merging multiple agencies. However, if a JPD is formed, there would be no guarantee of positions for the current deputies and the possibility would exist that some deputies would be laid off if no vacant positions existed with the HSCO to absorb those deputies.

Resistance by Unions

Since the deputies serving these communities are employees of the Sheriff's Office and not the contracting jurisdictions, any union resistance would be limited to violations of the current labor agreement with the Hamilton County Sheriff, not the contracting jurisdictions. Although, the union may voice concern over any deputy potentially losing employment if the jurisdictions cancel their service contract with the Sheriff and joins the new JPD, these union grievances would revert to the HCSO and not to the new police jurisdiction.

Service - Some reasons communities don't join or consolidate include: feeling of loss of control, cost allocation, impact on personnel, loss of identity, lack of political will, lack of community support, or union opposition.² This is a recurring theme in several reports regarding police consolidation.

This could occur if the consolidation is among existing agencies in different jurisdictions. In the case of Silverton and Sycamore, neither has their own police agency, there is little local control currently over delivery of police services, and "personalized service" has not been assessed on any level which should minimize this concern.

Forming a JPD

Since no JPD's yet exist in Ohio, there is no model available for jurisdictions to build upon. However, there are key areas of importance, for any professional law enforcement agency, that must be explored for a JPD. These key issues are designed to understand whether a JPD is both feasible and an efficient and effective way of using available policing resources. Communities considering the formation of a JPD should conduct or retain the services of a consultant to have a comprehensive feasibility study completed that takes an in-depth look at all of the internal and external factors associated with a change in police service delivery.

Jurisdictions need to both ask and understand why they are considering a change in service delivery. Below is a list of potential questions each jurisdiction should ask itself before potentially moving forward.

- Is there a fiscal situation facing the agencies or legal entities involved?
- Is the desire merely to save money
- Are all of the involved jurisdictions seeking to improve operating efficiencies?
- Is there a current duplication of efforts among agencies that can be reduced?
- Is there a desire for shared services?
- Is there a possible reduction in overall costs for operations?

² Case Studies of Success and Failure in Massachusetts: Pioneer Institute White Paper No. 43, October 2008
https://pioneerinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/wp43.pdf

- Will police services improve in certain areas of the JPD?
- Is there a possible reduction in capital expenses (buildings, vehicles, equipment etc.)?
- Will a change in the current police service delivery model be more efficient and effective than the current model?

Answering these questions may help determine the path of the feasibility study and the actual creation of a JPD.

Since no JPD's currently exist in Ohio, there is no standard model available to help determine any cost savings, operational efficiencies or long-term success of a JPD. A comprehensive feasibility study can help determine if the existing conditions are favorable for the process. The feasibility study may include, but is not limited to, the following items:

- Description and demographic characteristics of each jurisdiction, which will help determine similarities and differences in communities and their unique police service needs.
- Degree of intergovernmental cooperation, particularly among other subsections of local government, which are key to a successful consolidation effort
- The economic and fiscal conditions of each jurisdiction which will help determine the fiscal capacity of each jurisdiction for funding a JPD, as well determining an equitable cost sharing model
- Current method and level of police service delivery
- Desired method and level of police service delivery
- Current police staffing levels
- Desired police staffing levels
- Crime and calls for service statistics, for each jurisdiction, to determine how crime and calls for service distributes geographically within the new JPD's geographic area
- Police calls for service data for each jurisdiction to help determine service demands in a new JPD, which will determine appropriate staffing levels
- Consolidated, written analysis of both current and historical police data and records, which will inform and guide stakeholders and decision-makers
- Inventory of the current physical assets of each jurisdiction such as: Land, Buildings, and Improvements to Systems, Motor Vehicles, Office Equipment and Computer Equipment

(including some software and supplies) necessary for the operation of a new JPD and identification of the life expectancy of each item as well as an estimate of the replacement cost of each item.

- Issues surrounding pensions and collective bargaining agreements, including health care costs
- Dispatch costs for the new JPD
- Liability insurance and legal counsel options for a new JPD
- Determine the public opinion surrounding the formation of a new JPD and identify their desired level of police services and service delivery
- Development of both implementation benchmarks and an on-going assessment/evaluation process to ensure desired goals are being met.

A comprehensive feasibility study, that answers these questions will assist the governing bodies in making rational and informed decisions as to whether the benefits/costs of a change in their police service delivery model are in the best interest of the jurisdiction.

Staffing Analysis

Perhaps one of the most significant issues/concerns to address when considering consolidation of policing resources is staffing and personnel. Personnel costs can account for 80-95% or more of a jurisdiction's safety budget,³ and safety budgets can account for up to 35 or 40% of a jurisdiction's total budget. Personnel and staffing can also become a hot button topic when discussions take place on mergers, consolidations, contracting etc. Employees become uneasy and oftentimes fearful of loss of pay or changes in benefits, loss of seniority, job assignment and shift, or even loss of their job entirely. Any plan to change the way police services are provided to a community should include regular discussions with employees. There should be no surprises for these employees if, ultimately, there is a change in their workplace through a merger, consolidation or the formation of a new police department. Therefore, one of the first things any jurisdiction should consider before engaging in any type of merger, consolidation, or change in police service delivery is a staffing and workload analysis as part of an overall comprehensive feasibility study.

³Orrick, Dwayne W., Budgeting in Small Police Agencies, Best Practices Guide, The International Association of Chiefs of Police

To do this, each jurisdiction should complete, or have completed a staffing analysis of its current agency by a competent research group or consultant that has expertise in this area. The staffing analysis should be able to answer the following questions:

- What are the current staffing levels of each agency?
- Are the current staffing levels appropriate for each agency?
- What staffing level would be required for a JPD based on both current projected future service demand?
- What staffing (rank) structure would be used for new JPD agency?

The staffing analysis should be conducted to determine appropriate staffing levels for each agency individually, followed by a joint staffing analysis for a combined agency based on known workload. Determining the appropriate staffing level for the proposed police agency – in other words, how many sworn officers are needed to run the daily operations and to provide appropriate policing services to the community - can drive the budgeting decisions that follow.

The Village of Silverton and Sycamore Township engaged the services of the University of Cincinnati's Institute of Crime Science to complete these analyses. Each jurisdiction received an individual staffing analysis as well as a combined joint staffing analysis of Silverton and Sycamore Township.

The staffing analysis provided to Silverton and Sycamore used different methodologies to develop patrol staffing scenarios as if Silverton had its own police department. The scenarios included minimum staffing levels based on citizens calls for service and included recommendations for staffing based on how much pro-active, or non-obligated time is desired for police officers. The staffing scenarios do not include administrative or support staff, rather they focus on patrol staffing.

The International City/County Management Association's (ICMA) recommends that 60% of total sworn personnel should be allocated to uniformed patrol functions. After a jurisdiction completes a staffing analysis, they must then determine the total staffing needs for the police agency. This will include all positions such as Police Chief, supervisors (unless included in

patrol staffing for small agencies) detective(s), special unit(s), and support personnel including non-sworn positions.

Another important aspect of the staffing analysis is crime analysis. An agency needs to know what the crime data shows regarding types and locations of crime. Responding to crimes, investigating crimes and solving crimes all take time and personnel. Crime and calls for service must be looked at together to help determine appropriate staffing levels. Understanding crime, crime patterns, hot spots, repeat locations etc. all help determine when, where and how resources are deployed. This deeper understanding leads to better resources management and allocation.

What an officer does with his/her time is important to both understand and manage when it comes to resource allocation and deployment. The relationship of the number of officers to crime rates is the subject of numerous research papers and debate among experts.

In a recent systematic review, the authors concluded that merely increasing police force size does nothing to reduce crime. The effect on crime of adding or subtracting police is miniscule and not statistically significant. Practically, this means police agency size has no impact on crime⁴. Furthermore, the authors state that changing police agency strategy to address crime is far more effective than hiring more officers. Hot-spots policing, focused deterrence, and problem-oriented policing are more effective than hiring more police.⁵ In other words, *what* officers do may be more important than how many officers there are. Therefore, it is important to understand the crime and service demands for each individual agency when determining appropriate staffing levels rather than merely relying on per capita comparisons, crime rate comparisons with similar jurisdictions, minimum staffing or other popular metrics.

⁴ Lee, Y., Eck, J. E., & Corsaro, N. (2016). Conclusions from the History of Research into the Effects of Police Force Size on Crime—1968 through 2013: An Historical Systematic Review. *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 12(3): 431-451.

⁵ Eck, John E., Lee, YongJei, and Corsaro, Nicholas, Adding More Police Is Unlikely to Reduce Crime: A Meta-Analysis of Police Agency Size and Crime Research *Translational Criminology* Spring 2017

Budget

After determining an appropriate staffing level, a personnel budget can be formulated. Using the staffing analysis as a starting point for patrol operations, there must be thought given to other services provided by a police agency such as: investigations, support, problem oriented policing activities, traffic enforcement, community outreach expectations, etc. All these services may impact the total staffing needed in an agency. Some of the important budget items to consider include:

Personnel

- Base salary or hourly rate of each employee
- Cost of living or annual salary increases negotiated in a labor agreement
- Overtime
- Court time
- Fringe benefits including health insurance, life insurance, pension, vacation time, sick time, personal leave and Workers Compensation insurance
- Training
- Other department overhead

Capital Costs

Capital costs must also be considered in any feasibility study before starting any merger or consolidation. Each jurisdiction needs to conduct a complete inventory of their existing physical assets. Jurisdictions need to ask, what do we have and what do we need? Items to consider for this inventory include, but are not limited to:

- Vehicles owned by each jurisdiction
 - Vehicle equipment including items such as, mobile computer, firearms, radar units, lights/siren, radio, camera
 - Annual fuel and maintenance/repair costs
- Buildings/Facilities
 - Annual utility costs
 - Property/evidence room
 - Locker room facilities
 - Briefing/Roll Call area

- Interview rooms
- Holding area
- Administrative offices
- Other Equipment
 - Computers
 - Printers
 - Office Furniture
 - Copy machine
 - Telephones
 - File cabinets for record storage

Personnel Equipment

There are numerous other equipment considerations to make sure all employees are provided the necessary items to allow them to perform their duties. Almost every labor agreement includes a section on uniforms and equipment to be provided by the employer. Some of these items include:

- Uniforms (almost certainly there will be a change in uniforms for a JPD)
- Leather/duty gear (gun belt, holster, handcuffs etc.)
- Firearms
- Taser
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Radios
- Body Armor
- Body Worn Camera (if applicable)

Other budget items that must be examined include costs for recruitment and hiring which may include testing services, background investigations, polygraphs and medical examinations.

Annual training is also another budgetary item that cannot be overlooked. There are costs associated with state mandated firearms training (ammunition, range time, overtime etc.).

Continuous professional training and accreditation are also areas that may require additional budgeting.

Revenue/Funding

This is an important part of forming a joint police district that should be decided on before any legislative action is undertaken. Each jurisdiction must make a thorough review of all revenue and funding sources currently utilized to operate their police agency. Some jurisdictions rely on income tax or general fund revenues while others rely on tax levies. When the jurisdictions considering the formation of a joint police district have different funding mechanisms, each one must be examined closely because the funding of a joint police district will take coordination and cooperation between the jurisdictions. The funding mechanism for one or both of the agencies has the potential to change and impact the residents of that community.

Funding a Joint Police District

If a Joint Police District is formed through legislative action, a Joint Police District Board must also be formed to operate the JPD. Since there are no joint police districts in Ohio to use as models, we will examine joint fire districts for our funding options models as there are several in operation throughout Ohio.

The Ohio revised code allows for a joint fire district to levy a tax upon all the taxable property in the joint fire district. Similarly, a joint police district board may levy a tax upon all of the taxable property in the joint police district pursuant to sections [5705.19](#) and [5705.25](#) of the Ohio Revised Code to defray all or a portion of expenses of the joint police district in providing police protection in an area.

When joint fire districts are formed, there is specific legislative language detailing the funding plan going forward. Each jurisdiction could initially pay the newly formed fire district a certain amount of money upon formation to ensure available operating funds, and they could then transfer existing funds, or a portion of funds in their levy account to the joint fire district for operating money. This could be done until the joint fire district places a levy on the ballot with the fire district board determining the millage. If the levy passes, each jurisdiction would then retire their existing levies stating that continuation is unnecessary. If the joint fire district levy fails, the jurisdictions could continue to fund the joint fire district until the levy is placed on the

ballot again. If the levy passes, the jurisdictions would retire existing levies. If the levy fails, depending on the resolution language, the fire district could be dissolved.

Another way to fund a joint fire district is through contracting. This is the model used for the Madeira/Indian Hill Joint Fire District (MIHJFD) and it could also be used for a joint police district after appropriate legal review and enabling legislation. The District was established by the councils of the Village of Indian Hill and the City of Madeira under the provisions of Section 505.371, Ohio Revised Code, on December 17, 1984, commencing operation as a District on January 1, 1985.

The Fire District operates under the direction of a twelve-member Board of Trustees, of which two members are council members of their respective city and village and 5 are appointed members from each City. The Madeira/Indian Hill Joint Fire District does not have a levy. Each community pays 50% of the cost of providing the needed fire services. The city and village agreed to split costs 50/50 and entered into an agreement with MIHJFD to not seek a tax levy in order to fund services. There is a 5-year contract in place.

All fire buildings are owned by the JFD. They were previously owned by the private fire company that predated the JFD. The JFD owns all of the fire vehicles and equipment. All utility, insurance, and Workers Compensation costs are paid for by the JFD. All of these costs are built into the budget for contract pricing determination.

The JFD hires its own legal counsel. Employee health care benefits are provided through a private insurance carrier. The JFD has a Personnel Committee that both hires and handles all personnel actions. It is also part of the grievance process for the labor agreement with the International Association of Fire Fighters local 2236.

If there is money left over at the end of the year, this amount is carried over and placed in the budget reserve. The target for the budget reserve is 10-15%. Any amount in excess of 10-15% is refunded to the 2 jurisdictions. This return on investment can be a big benefit and may encourage creative methods of cost savings rather than expenditures.

Forming a Joint Police District

A Joint Police District is similar to a Joint Fire District (JFD). Joint Fire Districts in Ohio have been around for a very long time and have successfully provided fire services to many different communities. Drawing from the success of Joint Fire Districts, there are several steps that must be taken to form a Joint Police District.

Legislative Action

In Ohio, JPD's are governed by the Ohio Revised Code Section 505. Specifically, Section 505.482 (A) which allows contiguous townships and municipal corporations to form a joint police district comprising all or any part of the townships or municipal corporations as are mutually agreed upon. Through legislative action in each political subdivision, one new police agency would be formed to provide all police services for each of the communities. Each jurisdiction would need to prepare a joint resolution detailing the intent to form the joint police district.

Joint Police District Board

After the successful passage of the necessary joint resolutions or ordinances, a joint police district board (JPDB) is required to be organized within 30 days of the last favorable vote by each of the participating authorities.

The JPDB shall include either all of the township trustees of each township and all of the members of the legislative authority of each municipal corporation in the district, as agreed to and established in the joint resolution creating the joint police district; or an odd number of members as agreed to and established in the joint resolution, as long as the members are representatives from each board of township trustees of each township and from the legislative authority of each municipal corporation in the joint police district. (ORC 505.482 (B)).

Operation of the JPDB and JPD

The JPDB may exercise the same powers as are granted to a board of township trustees in the operation of a township police district (ORC 505.482 (C)). The JPDB may adopt rules necessary for the operation of a JPD that includes the determination of the qualifications of the chief of

police, patrol officers, and others to serve as members of the district police force (ORC 505.49). The JPDB may purchase, lease, lease with option to purchase, or otherwise acquire police apparatus, equipment or materials that the joint police district requires (ORC 505.50).

So, in the case of Silverton and Sycamore Township, there are options for funding a joint police district. Silverton currently pays for the HCSO contract out of the income generated by income tax in their general fund. Sycamore Township pays for the HCSO from monies collected from their safety services levy. Any shortfall is made up through general fund monies. If a JPD is formed, the jurisdictions could contract with the JPD and an agreement would be reached on a precise contract amount for each jurisdiction (see above example of the Madeira/Indian Hill Joint Fire District). Of course, another option is a district wide tax levy with the millage determined by the JPD board. If this were to occur, each jurisdiction would have to determine what to do with their current safety services levy or general fund income tax to avoid double taxation.

In the case of a joint police district, the joint police district board may levy a tax upon all of the taxable property in the joint police district pursuant to sections 5705.19 and 5705.25 of the Revised Code to defray all or a portion of expenses of the joint police district in providing police protection (ORC 505.51).

Once the JPD and JPDB have been formed through the necessary legal process, operational items must be considered and acted upon. In the situation where communities have formed a joint police district, but do not have existing departments, they are essentially building a police department from the ground floor. While this may seem a daunting challenge, it can also have its advantages because there are no existing departments and personnel that would be unequally and/or adversely affected. In essence, the communities begin with a clean slate to build the police department that will best serve their precise community needs.

Conclusion

Consolidation of police services has been an ongoing discussion and issue of interest for decades. The process is not simple. It requires open and honest dialogue among all stakeholders, and decision making informed by current research, data analysis and evaluation. There is no

“best” way to consolidate or deliver police services. Jurisdictions have different community make-ups and needs, different expectations and goals surrounding public safety, and unique political structures. The chosen method of delivery of police services must be determined as proper for the individual communities only after a thorough evaluations of all the options.

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