

A **NJSACOP** White Paper



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# **Police Department Regionalization, Consolidation, Merger & Shared Services**

## **Important Considerations for Policy Makers**

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## Introduction

Local governments are faced with the need to provide an ever-increasing number of services to their constituents without corresponding commensurate increases in resources. Not only are new responses to old problems required, but police departments have become virtual dumping grounds for problems previously handled by other entities which have been eliminated or, at the very least, had their funding slashed. Local police departments are routinely called upon to intervene in situations which, only a few years ago, were inconceivable. As society itself has become more complicated, so has its problems. Almost universally, the workload of local police departments has increased due to these problems, often because no one knows who else to call, even in matters where providing a solution is clearly not a police function.

Exacerbating the problem of how to deal effectively and efficiently with these additional service demands are increased internal requirements which serve to further reduce the existing resources available to provide services to the public. Numerous hours of State-mandated training, for example, prepares officers to better perform their duties but, at the same time, correspondingly reduces the number of hours the officers are available to do so.

As local, county and state budgets have tightened, the idea of consolidating, merging or sharing law enforcement services has become a focus of interest to elected officials, policy makers and law enforcement executives in New Jersey.

Pooling of resources, in some form, can help to achieve the desired goals. Determining which specific form of cooperative resource pooling is appropriate for a particular community is a subject requiring careful consideration. Although many communities may initially



appear to be similar, no two are truly identical. Thus, successful measures taken in one community may yield quite unacceptable results in another. A “cookie cutter” approach fails to consider unique community characteristics, and must be avoided. Well-thought-out individual plans, carefully implemented, have the potential to yield positive results in community after community. Selection of an appropriate response, based upon each community’s unique needs and means, will help to preserve its quality of life - which is often what attracted its residents and businesses to locate there, initially.

To insure the future success of any newly merged agency, interested municipalities should identify all parties that may be affected in any merger. These parties should be partners in any examination to determine if a merger is feasible and is in the best interest of the citizens that are served by the police agencies. Police officers, civilian employees, civic leaders, and other individuals who have a stake in the outcome of the merger should be invited to participate in the examination

As the leaders of New Jersey’s law enforcement agencies, the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police [NJSACOP] has undertaken the task of examining the various options with a specific focus on the factors that must be considered by policy makers to ensure that public safety is not compromised, and to maximize efficient, effective, responsive and proactive law enforcement services for New Jersey’s communities.

## **Definitions**

“Consolidation” is often used as shorthand term, but in actuality it often stands-in for many similar – but different – concepts.

***Shared Services:*** Two or more agencies combine certain functional units, such as emergency communications, SWAT, dispatch, or records.

***Local Merger / Consolidation:*** Two separate police agencies form a single new unit.

***Regionalization:*** A number of jurisdictions combine to police a geographic area rather than a jurisdictional one. The new entity does not contain elements of any existing agency – either the jurisdictions had no previously-existing police department, or those that existed have been decommissioned (disbanded).

***Contract Services:*** A formal contract to pay for law enforcement services provided by one jurisdiction to another or others.

## **SECTION 1**

### **Pivotal Questions For Determining Need For Police Services**

There is no “one size fits all” police department model. Neither is there a routine formula to apply in order to determine how to structure an agency. There are, however a series of questions which can, and should, be asked in order to achieve a better understanding of a community’s needs, which is a certainly a critical element in providing services to address them. Only after the specific parameters of demand are identified can the concept of appropriate supply be determined.



**1. What “core services” are needed by the community in order for it to function properly and effectively?** The answer to this question is a primarily a function of the expectation of the majority of the community. Community values determine which services are deemed necessary. Services required or expected by a predominantly rural constituency are markedly different than the services required by the urban and/or suburban community. Only those services of independently high importance (if there are any), or mandated by the State and Federal governments, will generally overrule the community values. Simply listing the needed services is an appropriate basic step toward an informed decision.

**2. What level of service, for both core and ancillary functions, is needed by the community?** Again, community values dictate the level of need. Of all incidents which occur, there is little dispute about needs at the extremes. There is generally little disagreement over how major crimes or minor problems are to be processed. Within those extremes, however, the location of the cutoff points is less clear. For example, extremely rural communities used to a routine 2-hour response time by the State Police to any type call will likely place less importance on many police functions, including primary patrol, than suburban communities conditioned to expect 5-minute responses to barking dog calls. Identifying the types of calls for service received by the existing police service and the frequency of each type will help to identify the depth of a community’s needs, in addition to the

breadth.

**3. What specialized services are actually needed by the community?** Again, clearly dictated by the nature of the community, there may be absolutely no need for some services, and a critical need for others. The nature and volume of incidents requiring specialized responses will determine whether a ready-availability of resources is necessary, and to what degree.

**4. What functions, even if not entirely critical and necessary to the functioning of the community, should be provided in order to project a certain desired image to the residents and visitors?** Beliefs of the citizens are often more important than reality. It is not enough that residents of a community are actually safe and secure in their homes and persons. They must truly believe that they are. Conversely, a belief that they are not safe is an overwhelming burden for any police agency to operate under. It is necessary, therefore, to determine not only which particular functions, if any, should be provided directly by the municipality (and which ones needn’t necessarily be supplied “in-house”), but in what manner they can be supplied to the community in order to foster a sense of security.

**5. What are the costs involved with each option, and what is the community willing to pay for its police services?** The State Police provide patrol services to rural communities in the state which do not have their own police departments. Currently, all of them receive these services for free (although the imposition of “user fees” has currently received renewed consideration). No analysis would be complete, however, without an inquiry into the alternative of having the State Police provide police services to the community. (It may not be an



option, however, based upon many factors.) If it constituted a possible option, would that service be adequate and accepted by the community, and if not, why not? When considering the community's willingness to fund a specific type or level of service, it is undeniable that the quality of life factor plays a major role in the calculation.

Answering the foregoing (and other similar) questions are simply the start of a thorough, comprehensive, and responsible consideration of a potential police agency "consolidation." And of course a detailed financial analysis is an absolute requirement.

Costing out a proposed option, while necessary, is only one factor in making an informed judgment. Existing labor contracts, potential staff reductions, the locus of control and the issue of who will be in charge must all be addressed realistically. The resulting value of any enhanced or diminished service must also be factored into the final decision. Most importantly, however, the final decision should be a reflection of the wants, and needs, of the community, and adequate resident input into the final decision must be provided, be it through public hearings, referendum or some other manner. Such a decision is far too important to an entire community to be simply the result of the personal feelings of a select few who sit upon a governing body.

The next step in the process is consideration of a variety of specific questions touching on the operational, political/legal, administrative, and financial aspects of local policing.

## SECTION 2

### Financial Considerations

An assessment of total costs, both long and short range, and a formula to estimate and allocate those funds must be developed.

- How would a cost/benefit analysis be carried out?
- How have previous consolidations fared in such analyses?
- Are there hidden costs? What are they?
- Will the transitional investment of upfront costs be outweighed by the long-term benefits? How do we arrive at what those figures will be?
- Would hidden costs make consolidation more expensive than expected?
- How will revenue acquisition change? Who will receive these revenues? Will levels of revenue change? How? How will costs of the department be shared (prorated? evenly?), and who will decide?
- Would "consolidation" affect the rest of the local/regional criminal justice system? If so, what are the costs?
- How could stakeholders manage funds in a way that balances public safety and spending concerns?

### *How Are Costs to Be Allocated – Merger, Regionalization, Consolidation*

Under a merger or consolidation format the percent of contribution by respective towns based upon several options. The question becomes what is the fair percentage that is to be paid by contributing municipalities. The straightest answer would be to split the budget by the number of contributing towns (i.e. two towns would contribute fifty (50) percent each).



Such a setup will beg the question as to who is receiving the better share of services based upon differing factors.

Percent of staffing contributed to merger

The amount of police officers and staff contributed to any newly merged and formed police agency would determine the budget contribution percent under this scenario.

The contributing towns would have be responsible for the percentage of the newly formed force they have contributed sworn personnel to. Several questions arise from this scenario:

- a. Is the contributing percentage based only upon sworn personnel?
- b. If one town contributes civilian positions disproportionate to a second merging town is this included?
- c. If at a later point one municipality experiences disproportionate growth requiring additional police officers does the merger agreement encompass a provision for revisiting the percent of contributions?

Percent of population of represented

Under this scenario the towns would be responsible for the percent of their population represented by any merging. Questions needing attention to are:

If one municipality experiences growth disproportionate to the other merged communities are the contributions by the municipalities able to be revisited?

How do the municipalities address differences in populations and crime rates? (i.e. town one with a larger population than town two has a much reduced crime and call for service requirement yet contributes a larger share of monetary budget resources)

Percent of Calls for service

Under this scenario the percent of calls for service from each municipality would be the basis for budgetary contributions. Questions, which need resolving prior to entering into agreement, include:

What is the agreement between the municipalities as to what is a call for service? There must be a consistency as to what is being compared.

How far back does any analysis go in determining a department's workload?

Will this formula result in a lower reporting or perhaps non-reporting by residents in an effort to keep taxes and budgetary contributions low in proportion?

Percent of Uniform Crime Reports represented by contributing agencies

While this standard is more consistent than a call for service analysis, the same questions will need to be examined:

Is this ultimately a fair representation of services required by any of the constituent jurisdictions?



Will it result in any municipality's citizens a concerted and knowledgeable lack of reporting for minor thefts or crimes, which adversely affect the budgetary contributions with the intent to keep budgetary contributions artificially low?

***How Are Costs to Be Allocated – Contract For Service***

Under a contract for service the town providing such service will bill the municipality requesting service.

The amount billed to a municipality seeking a contract for service must be based upon some objective factor or the town providing the service is willingly taking on additional budgetary responsibilities disproportionate to what it is receiving from the municipality requesting service.

The straightest answer would be to split the budget by the number of towns involved in the contract for service (i.e. two towns would contribute fifty (50) percent each). Such a setup will beg the question as to who is receiving the better share of services based upon differing factors.

**Percent of staffing required by the town(s) receiving service.**

The amount to be billed to a municipality receiving a contract for police service may be calculated by determining staffing needs for a police department. There are several methods of determining such staffing:

**Volume of Calls for Service** - This method would entail examining the number, items and types of calls for service in the municipality receiving police service from another.

There may be some variation in what entails a call for service between municipalities and a lack of consistency in billing.

What is also missed in a call for service is the time of such a call. While an officer certainly may be available to take a call for criminal mischief during the dayshift morning hours, the question begs would the act have been prevented had there been more allocation of police personnel during the overnight if the event occurred at that time?

If the volume of calls rises substantially will the result again be a lack of reporting to police to keep budgetary costs down yet negatively affect the residents of said town due to lack of police services being brought to bear due to lack of reporting?

**24-hour staffing model** - in this model each 8-hour police position requires 2920 hours per year for one shift or 8760 hours to fill one shift for 24 hours a day for 365 days out of the year. Two officers would require twice this amount; three officers would require three times this amount and so on.

Officer availability for staffing is determined by deducting from 2080 hours (maximum per year given a 40-hour work week) the average time required for vacation, sick, training and other leave. This will on average leave a total of 1800 available hours per officer per year, commonly called the relief factor.





Using the 1800 hours per shift requires  $2920 / 1800 = 1.62$  officers per day per position per shift.

For one shift for 24 hours per day would require 4.87 or 5 officers per 24 hours period.

If the town receiving service requires a normal police presence of 2-3 or more officers such a budgetary percent can be calculated based upon officer salaries for patrol service alone as part of the budget.

The process becomes much more complex yet achievable if there arises a requirement for DARE/ community policing officers, detective services and the like.

The town receiving service must take into account the percent of police budget that they will be requiring and paying for without the benefit of local control and input into who and how the police department is staffed and operates.

**Index Crimes** – Using this as a basis is closely related to calls for service but is more consistent in comparisons.

Crime as reportable incidents however remains difficult to predict from year to year, due to several factors such as; economic trends, housing patterns and police efforts such as crime watch among other variables. Employing crime is difficult to use as a basis and may result in non-reporting in an attempt to keep municipal contributions low to the detriment of the community at large.

### ***Budget Authority***

Of prime concern prior to moving forward in any proposed merger or consolidation is the budgetary permissions to authorize the budget.

Dependent upon the type of merger or consolidation being considered, the entity must be identified as to who has final fiscal authority over the police department budget.

- Joint committee between communities? Who do they then submit the budget to?
- Does one community in a contract for service or merger have a veto power from their local governing body?
- Where do the budgetary allotments reside?
- Is there a separate legal account and Chief Financial Officer and auditor in receipt of the newly created budget?

### ***Expected Savings***

Using the experience from merged departments from around the nation it may be possible to preliminarily investigate the notion of anticipated savings.

#### ***Crystal City- New Hope Minnesota Proposed Merger***

The cities of Crystal City and New Hope sought a potential cost savings merger. Using a report generated from Public Administration Services Associates (PAS) the initial report indicated a potential savings of 11% (or the police department budget) through the elimination of redundant supervisory personnel through attrition although upon closer analysis of the report the actual cost savings were closer to 8%





(of police agency-related costs, not of the total budget).

This merger proposal faced significant and in the end fatal, obstacles such as personnel, facility issues and governance. Appropriate Authority issues arose over whom would have control over this department.

Eventually the city council of New Hope abandoned the idea of a police merger. *Jacksonville – Duval County Merger*

There was an increase in startup costs. Although first combined budget was \$50,000.00 less than the two separate budgets there was an additional \$300,000.00 spent to remodel the police department and uniforms<sup>1</sup>

### ***Contractual Issues of Parity Of Pay***

Differing rates of pay must be resolved prior to any merger.

Rank structure is another issue to be examined. No savings will be achieved by a reduction in officers' rank. NJSA 40:48B-4.1 preserves seniority and tenure rights when departments merge.

### ***Ancillary Costs/ Special Services***

Special event issues:

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<sup>1</sup> Donald K. Brown, "Law Enforcement Consolidation for Greater Efficiency", FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, V39, No. 10: October 1970, pp 11-15

Any special events over and above the costs for basic police service needed by one town - who pays for such events?

Towns in need of beefed up police presence for fairs, street parties, encompassing thousands of people will need to purchase extra police presence from the newly merged or contract for service police department.

Training:

An examination of officers training and education should be conducted. All future training will have to be standardized and attaining that level of standardization of training may be costly. Preparing all officers to compete for special assignments and promotions is important to the success of the newly merged agency.

### **Operational Considerations**

- Would the new agency move in a new direction philosophically? Should it?
- Would consolidation respond to the growth of the city, county, region?
- Would the quality of service provided to residents rise or fall? How would this be measured?
- How would the command structure be set up? Who will make the decisions?

### **Administrative Considerations**

- Who would be the head of the agency? Who would make the selection?
- How have other consolidated agencies arrived at an equitable management plan for the new agency?
- How will officers be deployed?



- How will patrol sectors or districts be designed?
- How will patrol allocation per shift and sector be determined?
- How will preliminary deployment decisions be evaluated after implementation?

### ***Strategic Planning For Staffing a Local Police Department***

Regardless of the type of policing is being considered, including the current status whereby most municipalities provide their own force, below are universal considerations that affect and determine the force deployed.

1. Full-time Population
2. Land-Square Miles
3. Density of Population
4. Urban, Suburban, Rural
5. Housing Stock—cluster, single family homes, lot size
6. Demographics
7. Type of Population —elderly, families, fixed income, owned or rented homes
8. Economic base—commercial, residential, professional
9. Scope of Service Expected by Community
10. Basic services-Patrol, Investigation, Administration
11. Special Services-School Resource Officers, DARE, Traffic
12. Total Calls For Service-annual, for total jurisdiction
13. Calls For Service-citizen calls for assistance
14. Officer Initiated-officer stops vehicle, pedestrian, etc.

15. Average Consumed Time-for all calls for service
16. Average Officer Availability-based on patrol work schedule, base year minus leave taken
17. Method of Deployment —mobile-patrol vehicles, motorcycles, bicycles, walking
18. Stationary-sub-stations, district houses, storefront
19. How many officers will the department need for next five years?

*Attrition-retirements, long term disability, separations from service*

*Community-projected building permits, construction, new residents, commercial ratables which require police service and protection*

### ***Facilities***

Many of the issues regarding the merged or consolidated agency will be determined by which method two or more municipalities are joined; i.e., shared services, merger, consolidation, or dissolving one of the two agencies.

The location, size, age and configuration of each police/municipal facility must be taken into consideration. If neither facility is suitable, all participating towns must agree to build a new facility and how to fund it. A suitable location must be found. If a suitable location is not available, one of the existing facilities must be razed to provide a site for the new facility. If one existing facility is suitable, modifications will have to be made to accommodate additional personnel, technology, parking, court, etc. Property may have to be purchased in order to provide adequate space for a new police facility.



The configuration of the building(s) must be determined, i.e. police only, police and court, or police, court and municipal services.

Communications systems must be compatible, including police, fire, EMS, 911 and telephone. Programming changes may be necessary, and new communications equipment may have to be purchased. A software package must be selected and purchased that can be used by both departments, and must be capable of merging all existing police records. The CAD system must be compatible with mobile data terminals in existing police cars. All marked police vehicles must be standardized once a department name and graphics scheme is decided.

In-house vehicle maintenance done by one or both agencies may necessitate an increase in staff in one of the Public Works Department. (A mechanic from one town may be hired by the other to provide adequate staff).

If two (or more) towns have an existing fueling facility, one may have to be abandoned unless a shared service contract is already in effect.

### **Leadership**

Local leaders overseeing the newly merged or “consolidated” police department must examine and decide who will lead the new agency. Leadership styles differ from Chief to Chief. Police Chiefs and the departments that they lead have different philosophies. Many times this law enforcement philosophy and

culture is developed from the expectations of the governing body and the citizens of the community being served. The merging local units must be comfortable with the new Chief’s philosophy and the culture that he or she will bring to the newly merged agency.

### **Legal / Statutory / Political Considerations**

- Who would make the key decisions about the consolidation process?
- How could the process be designed to ensure that stakeholders have a role in decision-making?
- What contractual issues would arise when separate and distinct agencies combine?
- What other legal issues would arise?

### **The Consolidated Municipal Service Act and the Interlocal Services Act**

Generally, there are two acts that apply in the context of merging or consolidating law enforcement services. The Consolidated Municipal Service Act, *N.J.S.A. 40:48B-1 et seq.*, provides for the governing bodies of any two or more municipalities or counties (or combination thereof) to enter into a joint contract to provide for certain joint services. *N.J.S.A. 40:48B-2(a) and (b)*. The Interlocal Services Act, *N.J.S.A. 40:8A-1 et seq.*, allows for any local unit to “enter into a contract with any other local unit or units for the joint provision within their several jurisdictions of any service which any party to the agreement is empowered to render within its own jurisdiction.” *N.J.S.A. 40:8A-3*. Parties to a contract under the Interlocal Services Act “may agree to provide jointly, or through the agency of one or more of them on behalf of any or all of them, any service or aspect of a service which



any of the parties on whose behalf such services are to be performed may legally perform for itself.” *N.J.S.A. 40:8A-5*. These services include police and fire protection. *Id.* Both acts contain provisions that apply specifically to law enforcement officers.

Generally, the Consolidated Municipal Service Act and the Interlocal Services Act have significant differences. First, the Consolidated Municipal Service Act limits activities to counties and municipalities, while the Interlocal Services Act provides for joint activities between municipalities, school districts, and regional authorities, including districts other than interstate authorities or districts.

Second, the Interlocal Services Act permits parties to structure the joint activity as they desire. The Consolidated Municipal Service Act, on the other hand, mandates that all such activities be done through an autonomous body. In addition, under the Consolidated Municipal Service Act, non-civil service units are deemed to have adopted the civil service upon consolidation with a civil service unit.

However, the status of the providing entity (civil service or non-civil service) remains unchanged under the Interlocal Services Act.

### ***Government Control/ Appropriate Authority Issues***

New Jersey law provides for civilian control over local police departments, through the agency of a statutorily

required position known as the “Appropriate Authority.”

In discussing the issue of merger or consolidation, the basic tenets and questions apply regardless of the size of the proposed combining of government service. Whether the proposal is between two municipalities disbanding their old departments and forming a new merged department, or one municipality disbanding its department and consolidating with a neighboring jurisdiction, the same questions apply. Even in a large-scale regionalization, where multiple municipalities disband their departments and form a regional one, the same basic questions still apply.

In short, in the event several police departments merge or consolidate the Appropriate Authority issue becomes the paramount legal and political consideration.

Who does the newly formed police department report to? Who becomes the Appropriate Authority? While New Jersey law *N.J.S.A. 40:48B-2.1* addresses municipalities entering into joint agreements it does not explicitly address the issue of who becomes the Appropriate Authority.

To solve this issue an independent Appropriate Authority might have to be enacted in special legislation through the State creating such an entity.

This additional level of government between the contributing agencies inherently will require appointed and representative positions from the contributing municipalities through election or appointment from the respective governing bodies.



If the newly formed appropriate authority is a several member body that the Chief of Police of the newly-merged or created department reports to, what are the new Chief's responsibilities to the contributing governing bodies and Mayors?<sup>2</sup>

### ***Labor Agreements / Personnel***

Municipalities must review all existing labor contracts. NJSA 40:8A-6.1 requires that municipalities recognize and preserve the seniority, tenure and pension rights of every full time law enforcement officers when two or more local units enter into a joint services agreement. Since costs are to be shared, jurisdictions must closely examine contracts. Municipalities may take on additional costs for salary and benefits that have been negotiated in neighboring communities. This examination must include benefits paid to retirees. Additionally, contracts should be examined for work rules, scheduling and assignment issues that may have an adverse effect on the newly merged agency.

State statute also addresses the position of Police Chief in any merger. The choice of who leads the newly merged police department is up to the participating units

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<sup>2</sup> In a contract for service scenario the issue of appropriate authority becomes much more clear. The town requesting service from another municipality either starts with no police department or completely disbands their department in favor of paying another municipality for a police service. The appropriate authority remains with the town that is providing the service to another. The town requesting service will have little to no say in appropriate authority issues such as hiring, promoting and discipline of the forces members.

or government and/or whatever entity may be created to govern the department. However, according to NJSA 40:8A-6.1, municipalities are required to provide the displaced Chief of Police several options. The displaced Chief may accept demotion of no more than one rank without any loss of seniority or pension rights or impairment of tenure. Or, the Chief of Police can retire and be provided with one month of terminal leave for each five years of service with the community.

### ***Department of Personnel [Civil Service] Issues***

When a Title 40A (that is, a jurisdiction not governed by Department of Personnel / Civil Service rules) community investigates a merger with a Title 11A (Civil Service) community, additional issues must be examined.

When a civil service law enforcement unit and a non-civil service law enforcement unit are merged, civil service status applies to the consolidated unit. According to *N.J.S.A. 11A:9-8*, when "the functions of two or more political subdivisions are consolidated, and any one of the political subdivisions shall be operating under this title at the time of such consolidation, the other political subdivision or subdivisions shall be deemed to have adopted this title with regard to the combined functions." Therefore, so long as one of the consolidating political subdivisions is a civil service entity, that status will apply but only as to the combined function. In addition, *N.J.S.A. 40:48B-4.1* states that when two or more local units enter into a joint contract for the joint operation of law enforcement services, and any one of the local units is operating under Title 11A, or is a civil service unit, at the time of the contract, the other local unit(s) shall be deemed to have adopted Title 11A with regard to the provision of law enforcement services.





As for the status of employees, *N.J.S.A. 11A:9-9* states that:

Any employee of a political subdivision who, at the time of adoption of this title, was actively employed by the political subdivision continuously for a period of at least one year prior to the adoption of this title, or any employee who was on an approved leave of absence and had at least one year of continuous service with the political subdivision prior to the adoption of this title, and who comes within the career service, shall continue to hold such position, and shall not be removed except in accordance with the provisions contained in this title.

### **Conclusion**

“Consolidation” of police services<sup>3</sup> whether partial or complete, among two or more agencies, has become a topic of interest and discussion among elected officials, policy makers, and police executives. Whether the consideration is more abstract and speculative, or highly charged and contentious, the operational efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and the needs and expectations of the communities involved should be paramount factors in final decision-making.

The New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police urges those considering consolidation to avoid simplistic assessments. Determining that consolidation brings substantial immediate

costs is not a sufficient reason to discontinue a complete and detailed investigation. On the other hand, a determination that consolidation may bring some long-term financial savings in and of itself is not sufficient to make a final decision to move forward with consolidation.

Rather, consolidation should be viewed in the totality of police services, citizen and officer satisfaction, and the capacity to best serve the public and fight crime. Looking at this larger picture, policy makers, law enforcement leaders, and the public can make informed decisions based on the widest possible number of relevant factors, and perhaps avoid costly and ill-considered judgments that ultimately may not prove to be in the long-term interest of the communities which will be required to live with the consequences of such decisions.

In order to facilitate rational, informed and thorough decision-making about the various issues that are known by the shorthand term “consolidation,” the NJSACOP has prepared this White Paper to assist police and government leaders, other policy makers, and the public assess all aspects of any partial or complete consolidation proposal. Although the process may be complex, we urge all parties that may be involved in such considerations to give full consideration to topics and inquire discussed in this Paper. Our communities deserve no less.

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<sup>3</sup> In any of the various meanings given to this term.