



City-County Summit



PUBLIC SAFETY WORKING GROUP

On the basis of two separate meetings, the following initiatives received the support of the Public Safety Working Group for further action regarding city-county consolidation, mergers, joint training, and further cooperation:

Police Academies

The two academies should be combined in a way that merges both academies into one, while leaving both autonomous. While this proposal suggests that the City and County each continue to operate a police academy, the goal of such a structure is to make both academies more inclusive with a shared staff and greater operational coordination. The benefits include having a streamlined staff for operations and scheduling and a greater efficiency of resources. Both academies would serve the same purpose for city and suburban police forces. Additionally, capital improvements to both facilities can be better coordinated and prioritized.

Arson Squad

The City and County should explore greater opportunities for the respective arson squads to work together with an ultimate goal to merge both squads into one. The benefit of the move would be the ability to run three complete shifts with no overtime costs. There would also be a greater efficiency with staffing and deployment.

Court System Coordination

It was determined that cost saving opportunities could be available with regard to preliminary hearings and pre-trial hearings. Departments often pay overtime to have officers report and they end up not being needed. The District Attorney has been working with local departments to address some of these issues which will ultimately have to be discussed with the Judges in the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas. The benefit to a coordinated approach is a cost savings that would allow departments to send officers only when they are needed in Court. A systematic program that would allow officers to be present only when their services are needed would go a long way towards efficiency and improving public safety.

Additional Opportunities

The services provided by the bomb squad, SWAT Team, and homicide detectives are vital to this region. The usage of the vast majority of these services is within the City of Pittsburgh, indicating that additional meetings and deliberations are necessary to determine how future services can be provided in a more efficient manner.

A common issue with each of the topics is the existence of collective bargaining agreements and whether changes being discussed would reflect or be opposite of policy from the National Labor Relations Board and Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board. As a long-term goal, work should be done with labor to provide for additional flexibility in the collective bargaining agreements.

Public Safety Working Group

The Public Safety Working Group was chaired by County Council Member Vince Gastgeb. The group first convened on Friday, March 5, 2004 and reconvened on Thursday, March 25, 2004. Working group members to participate included City Police Commander Linda Barone, Councilwoman Twanda Carlisle, County Emergency Services Chief Bob Full, and County Police Superintendent Charles Moffatt. Invited guests to participate included Dawn Botsford, representing District Attorney Stephen A. Zappala, County Sheriff Pete DeFazio, and Mt. Lebanon Police Chief Tom Ogden. Council Member Charles Martoni, Representative Frank Dermody, and Councilman Len Bodack did not participate.

Background

As a part of the state legislature's response to the ongoing fiscal problems being confronted by the City of Pittsburgh, Senators Jane Clare Orié and Jack Wagner approached members of Allegheny County Council and Pittsburgh City Council about convening a meeting where policy makers would have opportunity to talk about possible cooperation between the two entities. On February 12, 2004, representatives and members of the Governor's Office, State Senate, State House of Representatives, Allegheny County Council, Allegheny County Chief Executive, and Pittsburgh City Council attended an initial meeting at the Allegheny County Courthouse.

At the February 12th City-County Summit, participants discussed various opportunities for shared services, consolidation, and cooperation. As part of that discussion, it was determined that working groups would begin convening to address each of these opportunities in more detail. The participants set a 40-45 day window for each of those groups to report back to the full group with specific recommendations that could be presented to the Oversight Board.

Eight working groups were established: Economic Development, Facilities, Information Technology, Parks, Public Safety, Public Works, Purchasing, and Tax Collection. Four of the groups were chaired by a member of County Council; four were chaired by a member of City Council. Each group had representation from the General Assembly, the County's Legislative and Executive branches, and the City's Legislative and Executive branches and began meeting shortly after the Summit.

Each Chair was charged with completing its task and submitting a report to the organizers of the Summit by Friday, March 26, 2004. The City-County Summit would reconvene on Thursday, April 1, 2004 to allow each Chair an opportunity to present a summary of the working group's recommendations to the full body. These recommendations will then be presented to the Oversight Board, with copies to Chief Executive Dan Onorato and Mayor Tom Murphy.