

**South County**  
**Police Services Study:**  
**Towns of Deerfield, Sunderland, and**  
**Whately, Massachusetts**

**September 16, 2015**



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# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
Summary of Current Operations.....	2
Town of Deerfield .....	2
Town of Sunderland.....	4
Town of Whately.....	6
Massachusetts State Police.....	7
Findings and Recommendations.....	9
Options for Inter-Municipal Collaboration .....	11
Mutual Aid – Formal and Informal.....	11
Merger Creating One Regional Police Department .....	12
Contracting for Police Services .....	17
Consolidation of Administration, Training, and Specialized Functions.....	18
Consolidation in Other Municipalities: Keys to Success or Failure .....	19
Items to Be Addressed in the Merger Process.....	22
Next Steps/Recommendations .....	23
Conclusion.....	25

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## Introduction

Police services are provided to communities in the United States in a patchwork of methods: there are state and large metropolitan agencies; sheriff and countywide police departments; and most commonly, small municipal police departments, many of which operate on a part-time basis. In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, there are 331 law enforcement agencies with 19,650 employees of which 14,915 are sworn officers; nationwide, 13,051 agencies employ 902,410, including 626,942 sworn officers.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most critical responsibilities of local governments is establishing the correct level of police service for their communities. Based on assessment of the community's needs, they must determine the staffing levels necessary to respond to calls for service and emergency incidents and to provide an appropriate level of proactive patrol within the constraints of limited municipal budgets. It is critical in the current climate that municipal officials look at all options to ensure that public safety services are delivered in the most effective and fiscally sustainable manner.

The Massachusetts towns of Deerfield, Sunderland, and Whately share borders and are no strangers to shared municipal services. The communities are all part of the Union 38 School District, which also serves the Town of Conway, and share a regional combined high school and middle school, the Frontier Regional School. They also jointly serve the senior citizens of the three communities through the Frontier Councils on Aging Consortium, a long-time collaborative effort that operates a senior center in a former school building in South Deerfield. In 2013, the towns approved the consolidation of their emergency medical services (EMS) into a regional entity, South County EMS, which became operational in 2014.<sup>2</sup>

The towns requested funding from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) to seek consultant services to explore options for shared services among their three police departments. FRCOG is a regional organization offering a variety of programming, products and services, both on the municipal and regional level, to its member towns. It serves 26 towns in Franklin County, located in the upper Connecticut River Valley in Western Massachusetts, the most rural county in the Commonwealth.

FRCOG retained The Novak Consulting Group (TNCG) to assess potential benefits or obstacles associated with consolidation or sharing of personnel, facilities, or equipment between the three police departments. This study is intended to be a preliminary review of a complex process.

To conduct this analysis, TNCG reviewed data regarding calls for service, staffing, scheduling, and budgets from the three police departments. TNCG also conducted field work, meeting with the respective Chiefs of Police, Town Administrators, and elected officials, and visiting the towns' police facilities.

This has enabled TNCG to develop a preliminary understanding of the areas served by the three police departments, the desired levels of service from the perspectives of both staff and elected officials, the financial constraints within which the towns operate, and the challenges faced by the departments. The result is several recommendations aimed at providing the municipalities with options for full or partial consolidation of their police departments.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States 2013*, Tables 77 and 78.

<sup>2</sup> In another example of intermunicipal collaboration, the Town of Deerfield partnered with the towns of Greenfield and Montague in 2013 to share the services of an Animal Control Officer.

## Summary of Current Operations

The Town of Deerfield, the Town of Sunderland, and the Town of Whately have a history of cooperation in public safety and in other areas of local government. While there are similarities between the three towns, there are important distinctions as well, especially regarding the delivery of police services. Profiles of each community and their demand for police services are summarized below.

### Town of Deerfield

The Town of Deerfield was settled in 1673 and incorporated in 1677. It operates under the open town meeting form of government, with a three-member Board of Selectmen. Under this form of government, an annual Town Meeting, open to all residents, is essentially the legislative body for the town, and decides three major items:

- It sets the salaries of elected officials.
- It votes to appropriate money for town operations.
- It votes on the town's local statutes.

All town residents are eligible to vote on all matters. The Board of Selectmen consists of elected officials who serve as the town's executive officers. They may call town meetings; supervise town employees; and may appoint a Town Administrator to administer town operations under their supervision.<sup>3</sup>

The total area of the Town of Deerfield is 33.4 square miles, of which 32.4 square miles is land, and it includes the villages of South Deerfield and Old Deerfield. The population of 5,125 people consists of 2,053 households and 2,181 housing units, with an average population density of 153.4 per square mile. Median household income is \$76,726, and per capita income is \$35,998. Approximately 4.6% of individual residents are considered living below the poverty line.<sup>4</sup>

The Town of Deerfield Police Department is currently staffed by 24 employees – eight full-time sworn, 15 part-time sworn, and one civilian – allocated as follows:

- One full-time Chief of Police
- Two full-time sergeants
- Five full-time police officers
- 15 part-time police officers
- One Administrative Assistant

Full-time police officers and sergeants are covered by a collective bargaining agreement between the Town of Deerfield and the Massachusetts Coalition of Police.<sup>5</sup>

The Police Department is responsible for all aspects of policing within the town, including the investigation of crimes other than homicides.<sup>6</sup> The Massachusetts State Police provides forensic assistance as well as investigative support, but investigations remain under the department's

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<sup>3</sup> "Citizen's Guide to Town Meetings," Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Secretary of the Commonwealth, <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/cis/cistwn/twnidx.htm>

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5 Year American Community Survey

<sup>5</sup> The collective bargaining agreement also covers a position referred to as "the permanent part-time police officer position (the 'part-time plus' position), "an officer who regularly works more than 24 hours per week.

<sup>6</sup> The District Attorney is charged with the investigation of homicides, with the exception of certain designated cities in the Commonwealth, under Massachusetts General Law Title VI, Chapter 38, §4.

jurisdiction. Investigations are typically handled by the reporting patrol officer. However, a sergeant is responsible for reviewing cases, and if he determines that an investigation requires a higher level of experience, he will reassign the case to a senior full-time officer.

The Police Department is housed in a wing of Town Hall at 8 Conway Street in South Deerfield. The department is equipped with six vehicles: one Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV) assigned to the Chief of Police, and three SUVs and two sedans assigned to patrol. Department vehicles are equipped with Mobile Digital Terminals, as well as first aid kits and Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs).

The Police Department's operating budget for Fiscal Year 2015 is \$756,790. Of that, \$679,790 is allocated for police salaries and \$77,000 for expenses.

During the past three years, the department has responded to an average of 2,637 calls for service annually. The call volume for 2012, 2013 and 2014 is detailed below:

- 2012: 2,723 calls
- 2013: 2,615 calls
- 2014: 2,573 calls

Emergency calls are dispatched by Shelburne Control, a centralized regional dispatch center operated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Consequently, these statistics reflect only those calls received and dispatched by the dispatch center. They do not include calls received directly by the Police Department, self-initiated calls, administrative tasks, or other items, which the department's records indicate would bring the total call volume to an average of 11,310:

- 2012: 11,972 calls
- 2013: 8,039 calls
- 2014: 13,919 calls

In 2013, the last year for which Uniform Crime Reports are currently published, Deerfield reported seven violent crimes (two Robberies and five Aggravated Assaults) and 86 Property Crimes (16 Burglaries, 67 Larcenies, and three Motor Vehicle thefts).<sup>7</sup>

The department provides coverage by two officers seven days per week, 24 hours a day. One officer is assigned to patrol the village of South Deerfield; the other covers the remainder of the town and Old Deerfield. The Chief of Police works during the day shift, Monday through Friday, and a sergeant is assigned to evening shifts seven days a week. One sergeant works four evening shifts, followed by two days off; the second sergeant also works four days followed by two days off, but performs two evening shifts weekly, when the other sergeant is off, and two day shifts. Patrol officers perform 8.5 hour shifts on a rotating basis, working four days followed by two days off. One full-time officer works day shifts; one works evening shifts; one works midnight shifts; and one works a split schedule of two evenings and two midnight shifts. As of August 17, 2015, one officer has been assigned as a School Resource Officer, working day shifts Monday through Friday (with every third Friday off); that position is funded by a grant from Deerfield Academy. All other shifts are filled by part-time officers. Based on staffing needs, part-time officers typically cover between 40 and 90 shifts per month. The following table illustrates typical scheduled coverage (since officers work a 4/2 schedule, their days off change; this is an illustrative snapshot view of coverage).

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<sup>7</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reports, "*Crime in the United States 2013*," Table 8

**Table 1. Typical Deerfield Shift Schedule Coverage**

Day of Week	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Day Shift</b>	Sergeant PT PO	Chief PT PO PT PO FT PO SRO	Chief FT PO #3 PT PO FT PO SRO	PT PO PT PO			
<b>Evening Shift</b>	Sergeant FT PO #4	Sergeant PT PO	Sergeant PT PO	Sergeant FT PO #4	Sergeant FT PO #4	Sergeant FT PO #4	Sergeant FT PO #4
<b>Midnight Shift</b>	FT PO #1 PT PO	FT PO #2 PT PO	FT PO #2 PT PO	FT PO #1 PT PO			

### Town of Sunderland

The Town of Sunderland was settled in 1713 and incorporated in 1718. It also operates under the open town meeting form of government, with a three-member Board of Selectmen. The total area of the town is 14.7 miles, of which 14.2 square miles is land. It borders the Town of Williamsburg on the east. The population of 3,684 consists of 1,648 households and 1,729 housing units, with an average population density of 250.6 per square mile. Median household income is \$47,000, and per capita income is \$28,057. Approximately 21.2% of individuals are considered living below the poverty line.<sup>8</sup>

The Town of Sunderland's Police Department is currently staffed by nine employees – five full-time sworn, three part-time sworn, and one civilian – allocated as follows:

- One full-time Chief of Police
- One full-time sergeant
- Three full-time police officers
- Three part-time police officers
- One Administrative Assistant

Part-time staffing is low at this time. Typically, a complement of six to as many as 10 officers on staff is available for deployment.

Full-time police officers and sergeants, as well as part-time police officers, are covered by a collective bargaining agreement between the Town of Sunderland and the Massachusetts Coalition of Police, Local 378.

Like its neighboring agencies, the Sunderland Police Department is responsible for all aspects of policing within the town, including the investigation of crimes other than homicides.<sup>9</sup> The Massachusetts State Police provides forensic assistance as well as investigative support, but investigations remain under the department's jurisdiction and are assigned to the reporting officer. The level of effort that is devoted to case follow-up is limited by staffing constraints; cases are investigated only when resources allow.

The department is housed in a public safety building, shared with the Fire Department, at 105 River Road in Sunderland. It is equipped with four vehicles: one SUV and three sedans. The vehicles are not equipped with Mobile Digital Terminals. However, the department recently

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5 Year American Community Survey

<sup>9</sup> The District Attorney is charged with the investigation of homicides, with the exception of certain designated cities in the Commonwealth, under Massachusetts General Law Title VI, Chapter 38, §4.

acquired iPads, which are in the process of being installed in department vehicles to provide a level of digital communication.

The Police Department's operating budget for Fiscal Year 2015 was \$346,380.60, of which \$317,506.87 was for salaries.

During the past three years, the department has responded to an average of 1,448 calls for service annually. The call volume in 2012, 2013 and 2014 is detailed below:

- 2012: 1,418 calls
- 2013: 1,524 calls
- 2014: 1,403 calls

As in Deerfield, emergency calls are dispatched by Shelburne Control. These statistics reflect calls dispatched by Shelburne Control; the department does not separately track calls received directly by the department, self-initiated calls, or administrative duties.

A review of the Uniform Crime Reports published by the Federal Bureau of Investigation<sup>10</sup> indicates that crime data has not been reported for the three most recent years for which data has been published (2011, 2012, and 2013).<sup>11</sup> In 2008, the last year for which statistics were published for Sunderland, the town reported 14 violent crimes (one Robbery and 13 Aggravated Assaults) and 43 property crimes (21 Burglaries, 19 Larcenies, and three Motor Vehicle Thefts).<sup>12</sup>

The department attempts to provide coverage of the town on a 24 hour per day, seven day per week basis. The Chief of Police normally works the day shift, Monday through Friday. The sergeant works 3:00 PM to 11:00 PM Sunday through Thursday. One full-time officer works the midnight shift from Sunday through Thursday; a second officer works the midnight shift on Monday and Tuesday, and from 7:00 PM to 3:00 AM Thursday through Saturday. One full-time officer works the day shift from Tuesday through Thursday and the evening shift on Friday and Saturday. Part-time officers and a limited amount of overtime are used to fill open positions. A civilian clerk works 30 hours per week, Monday through Thursday. The table below illustrates typical scheduled coverage.

**Table 2. Typical Sunderland Shift Schedule Coverage**

Day of Week	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Day Shift	PT PO	Chief	Chief FT PO #3	Chief FT PO #3	Chief FT PO #3	Chief	PT PO
Evening Shift	Sergeant	Sergeant	Sergeant	Sergeant	Sergeant	FT PO #3	FT PO #3
Midnight Shift	FT PO #1	FT PO #2	FT PO #2	FT PO #1	FT PO #1	FT PO #1	FT PO #1
7 PM – 3AM					FT PO #2	FT PO #2	FT PO #2

Limited funding for overtime and part-time salaries results in an average of 15 to 20 unstaffed shifts per month. Limited funding for fuel restricts the number of miles driven on patrol vehicles.

<sup>10</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reports, "**Crime in the United States 2011, 2012, 2013**," Table 8

<sup>11</sup> Although participation in the Uniform Crime Reporting system is technically voluntary, it is common practice for police agencies to report this data.

<sup>12</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reports, "**Crime in the United States 2008**," Table 8

When no officers are on duty, coverage and response to calls for service defaults to the Massachusetts State Police.

### **Town of Whately**

The Town of Whately was settled in 1672 and incorporated in 1771. It is also operates under the open town meeting form of government, with a three-member Board of Selectmen. The total area of the town is 20.7 square miles, of which 20.2 square miles is land. The population of 1,496 consists of 626 households and 661 housing units, with an average population density of 72.3 per square mile. Median household income is \$80,298, and per capita income is \$36,054. Approximately 4.8% of individuals are considered living below the poverty line.<sup>13</sup>

The Town of Whately's Police Department is currently staffed by nine employees with one vacancy – two full-time sworn, seven part-time sworn, and one part-time sworn vacancy – allocated as follows:

- One full-time Chief of Police
- One full-time sergeant
- Seven part-time police officers (plus one vacant position)

The department also has four Reserve Officers and an Animal Control Officer.

Department personnel are not covered by a collective bargaining agreement.

Like its neighboring agencies, the Whately Police Department is responsible for all aspects of policing within the town, including the investigation of crimes other than homicides.<sup>14</sup> The Massachusetts State Police provides forensic assistance as well as investigative support, but investigations remain under the department's jurisdiction. Cases are assigned to either the Chief of Police or the Sergeant; however, the department's budget does not allow for flexibility in the use of overtime for case follow-up.

The department is housed in a building located at 77 Christian Lane in Whately. It is equipped with two vehicles, both marked sedans. The vehicles are not equipped with Mobile Digital Terminals.

The Police Department's operating budget for Fiscal Year 2015 was \$171,889, of which \$147,404 was for salaries.

During the past three years, the department has responded to an average of 797 calls for service annually. The call volume in 2012, 2013 and 2014 is detailed below:

- 2012: 836 calls
- 2013: 810 calls
- 2014: 746 calls

As in its neighboring agencies, emergency calls are dispatched by Shelburne Control. These statistics reflect calls dispatched by Shelburne Control; the department estimates that it handles approximately 700 calls monthly (calls received directly by the department, self-initiated calls, or administrative duties), but was not able to provide precise statistics as of the time of this review. However, on August 4, 2015, the department began publishing monthly statistics on its Facebook

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<sup>13</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5 Year American Community Survey

<sup>14</sup> The District Attorney is charged with the investigation of homicides, with the exception of certain designated cities in the Commonwealth, under Massachusetts General Law Title VI, Chapter 38, §4.

page.<sup>15</sup> Using the department’s estimates, call volume would be approximately 8,400 calls per year; projecting annual call volume based on statistics published for July 2015, annual call volume would be approximately 6,648.

In 2013, the last year for which Uniform Crime Reports are currently published, Whately reported six violent crimes (Aggravated Assaults) and 17 property crimes (three Burglaries, 11 Larcenies, and three Motor Vehicle thefts).<sup>16</sup>

The department attempts to provide coverage of the town by one officer during two shifts – a first shift of 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM and a second shift of 4:00 PM to Midnight – seven days per week. The Chief of Police normally works four 10-hour shifts, Monday through Wednesday from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM, and Thursday from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM to cover the department’s office hours from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM, during which members of the public can conduct non-emergency department business. The sergeant typically works 3:00 PM to 11:00 PM Monday through Thursday and 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM on Friday. Part-time officers fill the remainder of the schedule. The table below illustrates typical scheduled coverage.

**Table 3. Typical Whately Shift Schedule Coverage**

Day of Week	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Day Shift	PT PO	Chief	Chief	Chief	Chief	Sergeant	PT PO
Evening Shift	PT PO	Sergeant	Sergeant	Sergeant	Sergeant	PT PO	PT PO
Midnight Shift	MSP <sup>17</sup>	MSP	MSP	MSP	MSP	MSP	MSP

Consequently, one officer is typically on duty between the hours of 7:00 AM and Midnight, with occasional gaps in coverage. Although the department’s budget includes funding to backfill absences generated by vacation, it does not fill vacancies resulting from sick time or holiday leave. When no officers are on duty, coverage and response to calls for service defaults to the Massachusetts State Police.

### Massachusetts State Police

The Massachusetts State Police is the agency charged with providing police services to rural areas and towns without independent police departments, making it, by default, the agency that responds to emergencies when members of local agencies are unavailable. It also provides support services, such as crime scene processing and investigative assistance. Therefore, it is helpful to understand the agency’s role and capacity.

The towns of Sunderland and Whately are served by Station B-6 of the Massachusetts State Police, also referred to as “SP Northampton,” which is based at 555 North King Street in Northampton. The Northampton Barracks covers 17 cities and towns in an area of 400 square miles, as well as six colleges and universities, including the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, with a student body of approximately 24,000.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Statistics posted for July 2015 included 554 calls; 46 investigations; 4 arrests; 6 medical cases; 5 motor vehicle crashes; and 56 motor vehicle stops.

<sup>16</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reports, “*Crime in the United States 2013*,” Table 8

<sup>17</sup> Massachusetts State Police

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.mass.gov/eopss/law-enforce-and-cj/law-enforce/msp-troops/troop-b/station-b-6-sp-northampton.html>

The station is responsible for patrolling Interstate 91, a major north/south highway, from the southern border of Holyoke to the northern border of the Town of Whately. However, the primary mission of the station is not highway patrol, but providing police services to those municipalities that do not have independent police departments. Of the 17 municipalities covered by Station B-6,<sup>19</sup> only six have full-time police departments. The remaining 11 have both full-time Chiefs of Police and part-time officers, or are staffed completely by part-time officers. As a result, the station covers most towns during the late night hours and on weekends when no other police resources are available. It also provides assistance when town police departments have incidents that are beyond their capabilities.

Station B-6 typically assigns four patrols on the day shift; three on the evening shift; and two on the midnight shift. As a result, depending on call volume and troopers' locations, response time may be extended.

The Town of Deerfield lies within the jurisdiction of State Police Station B-2, referred to as "SP Shelburne Falls," which is located at 289 Mohawk Trail in the Town of Shelburne Falls. SP Shelburne Falls is responsible for eight state highways, including Interstate 91 from Deerfield to the Vermont state line, as well as patrol of the Mohawk Trust State Forest and the Kenneth Dubuque State Forest. More importantly, the station covers an area of 461 square miles that encompass 17 towns<sup>20</sup>, only three of which have full-time police departments. Six towns have part-time police departments, and the State Police is the primary police agency for eight towns. Its area is often covered by a desk officer and two patrol cruisers.

Consequently, simply as a result of staffing and geography, response time to calls for service is often extended.

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<sup>19</sup> SP Northampton covers the towns of Amherst, Chesterfield, Cummington, Easthampton, Goshen, Hadley, Hatfield, Holyoke, Leverett, Northampton, Plainfield, South Hadley, Southampton, Sunderland, Westhampton, Whately, and Williamsburg.

<sup>20</sup> SP Shelburne Falls covers the towns of Ashfield, Bernardston, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Conway, Deerfield, Gill, Greenfield, Hawley, Heath, Leyden, Monroe, Montague, Northfield, Rowe, and Shelburne.

## Findings and Recommendations

The findings and recommendations resulting from this study are outlined below. This study is not an operational assessment of the three departments; the scope of the project is limited to a preliminary review of the potential for shared services or consolidation.

There is no question that public safety is a core service of municipal government, and it is a costly one; in many municipalities, it is the largest cost center. Although some minor revenue streams may be associated with it, such as fines and forfeitures, policing is not a profitable enterprise. At the outset, analysis of a community’s policing needs, in the absence of the key drivers found in larger communities such as a significant call volume or major crime issues, depends largely on several factors:

- Does the community need or want its own police department, or is it willing to rely solely on an outside entity (such as the State Police)?
- What is the community’s perception of its safety and its need for police services?
- Does the community need or desire around-the-clock coverage; proactive patrol; specialized programs; traffic enforcement; visible police presence; or just reactive response to emergency calls?
- What does the community consider to be an acceptable response time?
- What is the community’s willingness – and fiscal capacity – to fund police operations?

It is also important to bear in mind a fact that is sometimes overlooked: there is a sizeable administrative burden associated with the operation of a modern police department. Training, scheduling, record keeping, statistical analysis, updating of policies, evidence management, review of reports, legal updates, human resources administration, information technology, recruitment and retention, compliance with Freedom of Information/Open Records Law requirements, and similar tasks beyond routine patrol have continued to increase in both complexity and importance. The “back office” operation of any law enforcement agency is not insignificant, regardless of the size of the agency, and the liability that can accrue to a municipality that fields a police department without satisfactorily addressing its administrative obligations can far outweigh the benefit provided by a token police presence.

Although all three towns serve predominantly rural areas and enjoy relatively low crime rates, a side-by-side comparison shows significant differences among the departments, as reflected in the table below.

**Table 4: Statistical comparison, Police Departments, Towns of Deerfield, Sunderland, and Whately**

Category	Deerfield	Sunderland	Whately
<b>Population</b>	5,125	3,684	1,496
<b>Population density</b>	153.4 per sq. mi.	250.6 per sq. mi	72.3 per sq. mi.
<b>Calls for Service 2014<sup>21</sup></b>	2,573	1,403	746
<b>Average calls per shift<sup>22</sup></b>	2.35	1.28	1.02
<b>Major roadways</b>	Interstate 91; MA Route 5/10; 116	n/a	Interstate 91; MA Route 5/10

<sup>21</sup> 2014 calls for service represent calls dispatched by Shelburne Control and do not include any calls received directly, self-initiated calls, or other activity

<sup>22</sup> Calls per shift for Deerfield and Sunderland are based on 24/7 coverage, 1,095 shifts per year. Because Whately staffs only two shifts, the figure is based on 730 shifts per year. A three-shift average would be 0.68.

Category	Deerfield	Sunderland	Whately
Full-time police officers <sup>23</sup>	8	5	2
Part-time police officers	15	3	8 <sup>24</sup>
FT Police Officer Salary	\$19.23 - \$24.63	\$18.28 - \$22.78	
PT Police Officer salary	\$15.00 - \$20.00 <sup>25</sup>	\$17.64	\$17.18
Collective bargaining	Yes – FT only	Yes – FT and PT	No
Annual Operating Budget	\$756,790	\$346,380	\$171,889

A similar comparison can be made for the communities themselves as shown in the table below.

Table 5: Statistical comparison, economic indicators, Towns of Deerfield, Sunderland, and Whately

Category	Deerfield	Sunderland	Whately
Households	2,053	1,648	626
Housing Units	2,181	1,729	661
Owner-occupied housing	1,464 units/70.8%	730 units/48.0%	504 units/87.7%
Renter-occupied housing	603 units/29.2%	790 units/52.0%	71 units/12.3%
Median household income	\$76,726	\$47,000	\$80,298
Median per capita income	\$35,998	\$28,057	\$36,054
% of individuals below poverty line	4.6%	21.2%	4.8%

Some distinguishing characteristics that affect demand for service and the nature of policing include the following:

- Deerfield, with the largest population, has the biggest commercial and tourist enterprise: the 90,000 square foot flagship store of the Yankee Candle company draws 3,000,000 visitors annually. The company's corporate headquarters is also located in the town. Frontier Regional School, the high school and middle school serving Deerfield, Sunderland, Whately, and Conway, is in South Deerfield. It serves 600 students.<sup>26</sup> Deerfield is also home to three private boarding schools: Deerfield Academy, Bement School, and Eaglebrook School.
- Sunderland is physically separated from the other two communities by the Connecticut River, with only one direct point of access, a bridge on Route 116 that connects it with Deerfield. Unlike the other two towns, whose housing stock is primarily owner-occupied, more than half of Sunderland's housing (52%) consists of rental units, many of which are occupied by students of the colleges located nearby in Northampton and Amherst. It is reported to have one of the highest ratios of rental housing units among communities statewide. The town also has a considerably higher number of residents living below the poverty level than its neighbors (21.2% vs. 4.6% in Deerfield and 4.8% in Whately). It also has the lowest per capita spending on police services at \$94.23.<sup>27</sup>
- Whately is home to a Yankee Candle factory and some commercial/industrial property, but is primarily rural, agricultural, and residential.

<sup>23</sup> Supervisory officers are included.

<sup>24</sup> One part-time position is currently vacant; seven part-time officers are currently employed.

<sup>25</sup> Part-time Deerfield officers are paid \$10 per hour while in training; \$15 for their first two years on patrol; \$16.50 in their third year; \$18.00 in their fourth year; and \$20 beginning in their fifth year of service.

<sup>26</sup> Elementary schools are located in each of the towns.

<sup>27</sup> Deerfield's annual budget represents \$147.66 for each of its 5,125 residents; Sunderland, \$94.23 for each of its 3,684 residents; and Whately, \$114.90 for each of its 1,496 residents.

With that background, the sections that follow review potential choices available to the three towns for consolidation or shared services.

## **Options for Inter-Municipal Collaboration**

The focus of this study is to identify opportunities for collaboration between the Towns of Deerfield, Sunderland, and Whately and the various forms that inter-municipal resource sharing could take. The three communities have a history of formal collaboration in other areas of government: the regional middle and high school; the tri-community senior center; and more recently, the merger of emergency medical services into South County EMS. However, there are certain sensitivities that must be recognized when considering the consolidation or regionalization of police services. Just as every community has its own unique character, police departments also have individual personalities reflective of the communities they serve. Different areas develop different styles of policing, and residents develop certain expectations of their police officers. In many cases, municipalities feel that their police departments are part of their identity. People feel strongly about knowing their police officers and, more importantly, that their officers know the communities they serve. These concerns must be taken into account in the evaluation of service sharing opportunities.

Several potential options are discussed below, including the consolidation of police departments; contracting for police services; and sharing of particular functions. First, it is helpful to review the practice of Mutual Aid.

### **Mutual Aid – Formal and Informal**

Mutual Aid is a recognized concept in both the police and fire services. However, the term can be misinterpreted, so it merits discussion. The three towns are parties to a formal Mutual Aid pact enacted in 2013, the *Franklin County Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Agreement*, which permits them to request police personnel and equipment when there is a need for assistance, pursuant to Massachusetts law.<sup>28</sup> It provides authorization for police officers to exercise police powers in the requesting jurisdiction and establishes procedures for command and control, indemnification, and reimbursement of expenses. The requesting municipality is responsible for all personnel and equipment costs associated with the mobilization, as well as indemnification of the responding municipality from any claims for civil rights violations, personal injuries, death, or property damages resulting from the Mutual Aid response.

The concept of Mutual Aid is intended for emergency mobilization of resources – large scale emergency incidents, civil disorder, officer in need of assistance, etc. – and is not, strictly speaking, intended to provide routine coverage. The Mutual Aid agreement calls for reimbursement of salary and equipment expenses, language commonly intended to cover a large-scale emergency deployment.

Most neighboring police departments, however, routinely engage in what is best referred to as “informal mutual aid.” They back up neighboring officers, respond to priority calls when the neighboring jurisdiction is occupied, etc. This is the practice in Deerfield, Sunderland, and Whately, as in most communities.

Informal mutual aid is an accepted and valuable aspect of policing, especially in an area where officers must routinely rely on members of neighboring departments for backup. It can become an issue, however, when the perception arises that a municipality is taking advantage of the

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<sup>28</sup> Chapter 40, §8G, Massachusetts General Laws

process by using mutual aid, at the expense of a neighboring jurisdiction, to cover regular operations. This does not appear to be the case; however, as needs and demands for police services increase, along with the associated costs, it is important to prevent it from becoming a point of contention.

**RECOMMENDATION 1: Adopt a process of maintaining and regularly reporting mutual aid responses by type for each town.**

Data regarding cross-jurisdictional response, maintained in readily retrievable format, will be helpful to inform future discussions regarding regionalization or shared services, and should be tracked closely. Moreover, it is important for town leaders to consider not only the calls for service that were responded to by local officers, but those that were addressed through mutual aid and those handled by the Massachusetts State Police in the absence of on-duty officers. This is critical to ensuring an accurate understanding of actual service demand which in turn informs resource allocation and policy decisions regarding resource allocation.

**Merger Creating One Regional Police Department**

The central focus of this study is the potential merger of the three police departments into a single regional entity. Because Deerfield has the largest and most active department with the most developed administrative systems, the most logical proposition is to merge the Sunderland and Whately Police Departments into the Deerfield Police Department. The simplified assessment of this proposition is that it is feasible and has potential benefits for all three municipalities; however, there are significant obstacles that would have to be overcome – not an easy task, and not an uncommon situation in consolidation of public agencies.

A key need if the towns consider consolidation of police departments will be the collection of detailed and consistent data. That topic is discussed further under a subsequent heading of this report; however, it is important to mention at this juncture the impact of limited data available to TNCG during this evaluation. For example, although accurate records are available regarding calls for service dispatched by Sherburne Control, complete data regarding a substantial portion of the agencies' workload – such as self-initiated calls, calls received directly by the departments, administrative tasks taking officers out of service – is not available. As a result, a complete analysis of the departments' workload and staffing needs cannot be performed at this time. Financial projections used in the example cited below are estimates based on the available data and the scope of this project; more refined data would be required if the towns move forward. Assumptions made for purposes of this report are noted where appropriate.

Consolidation is a complex and sensitive endeavor, but there are a number of reasons why it can benefit the three municipalities.

The statistical differences that distinguish the three communities tend to support consolidation. The mission in establishing the size and staffing of a police department is to determine the appropriate level at which the department operates efficiently; responds adequately to the average demand for service and has sufficient time for proactive patrol;<sup>29</sup> provides an appropriate level of community outreach and crime prevention initiatives; is capable of providing adequate investigative services, narcotics enforcement, traffic enforcement, and youth programs; provides meaningful work and personal engagement opportunities for its officers; and has not grown so

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<sup>29</sup> While a community's proactive policing level of service standard is a policy decision, the International Association of Chiefs of Police recommends that at least 33% of an officer's time be allocated to proactive policing; the remaining two-thirds is divided equally between response to calls for service and administrative duties. Put differently, an officer should, in theory, spend 20 minutes of each hour on calls for service; 20 minutes on the resulting administrative tasks (preparation of reports, etc.); and 20 minutes on proactive policing.

large that it loses its connection with the community it serves. All of this, of course, has to be accomplished in a fiscally responsible and sustainable manner.

A smaller department bears the same administrative burdens as its larger counterparts. The importance of keeping up with those responsibilities has been mentioned throughout this analysis, as has the disproportionate expense of it.

Consolidation offers an opportunity to combine administrative tasks – training, scheduling, evidence management, etc. – into one functional area, and to combine patrol resources in a way that under ideal circumstances provides both additional staffing to the larger agency and an enhanced level of coverage and emergency response capacity to the smaller agencies. It also allows supervision to be enhanced and streamlined. Currently, one town has two sergeants, and the other two each have one sergeant. As a result, multiple sergeants may be working on a single shift, as members of separate departments, leaving many shifts without a supervisory presence. Merging the sergeants into a single agency serves as a force multiplier; when a sergeant is on duty, he or she would supervise all three areas, resulting in supervisory coverage on most shifts.

It also provides an opportunity to consolidate personnel and equipment. For staffing purposes, three separate departments of 23, 8 and 10 sworn officers would be combined into a single agency of 41 (a flexible number depending on the number of part-time officers on staff and the allocation of funding between full-time and part-time positions), with two civilian administrative employees, as illustrated below:

**Table 6: Police personnel, Towns of Deerfield, Sunderland, and Whately**

Job Title	Deerfield	Sunderland	Whately	Combined
Chief of Police	1	1	1	3
Sergeant	2	1	1	4
Full-time Police Officer	5	3	0	8
Part-Time Police Officer	15	3	8 <sup>30</sup>	26
Non-sworn/ Administrative	1	1	0	2
<b>Total Sworn<sup>31</sup></b>	<b>23</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>41</b>

The combination of the three departments' vehicle fleets would, in theory, allow for more efficient utilization and more flexible deployment:

**Table 7: Police vehicles and approximate mileage, Towns of Deerfield, Sunderland, and Whately**

Vehicle Category	Deerfield	Sunderland	Whately
<b>SUV: 5</b>	2014 Tahoe 19,677 2013 Ford 40,414 2013 Ford 47,772 2015 Ford 5,680	2012 Tahoe 36,000	n/a
<b>Sedan: 7</b>	2011 Ford CV 113,128 2011 Ford CV 152,253	2008 Ford CV 100,000 2010 Ford CV 55,250 2015 Ford 1,762	2009 Impala 100,000 2013 Ford 60,000
<b>Total: 13</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>30</sup> One part-time police officer position is currently vacant

<sup>31</sup> "Total Sworn" represents total headcount. Because hours performed by part-time officers vary widely, it is not possible to accurately calculate the number of Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) at this time.

The most basic consolidation – a simple merger of the three agencies, providing essentially the same coverage now in place with some minor adjustments – is used here for purposes of discussion. The table below illustrates the estimated cost of a combined police department that would provide the following level of coverage:

- One Chief of Police (with full-time command/administrative responsibilities – not included in patrol coverage)
- Four full-time Sergeants (providing a supervisory presence on most shifts, while also factored into patrol coverage)
- Deerfield: Two Police Officers on duty 24 hours per day
- Sunderland: One Police Officer on duty 24 hours per day; two on duty during one shift, six days per week
- Whately: One Police Officer on duty, 16 hours per day

This estimate makes the following assumptions:

- Salaries are based on the current highest rates, those of Deerfield Police Department personnel
  - The collective bargaining agreement establishes a salary range of \$19.23 to \$26.44; full-time salary estimate is based on average full-time hourly rate: \$22.47
  - Part-time salary estimate is based on the fourth step of the current range: \$18.00
- A full-time Chief of Police, without patrol coverage responsibilities, would be the Department Head
- Four Sergeants would provide supervisory presence on approximately 85% of shifts; salary estimates are based on the current Deerfield sergeant rate
- Patrol coverage levels would be consistent with the current configuration, as noted above.
- Two civilian employees would remain assigned to administrative duties

**Table 8: Cost of Possible Deployment Model**

2015 Police Salary Combined Budget	\$1,047,034 <sup>32</sup>
Chief of Police Salary	\$75,272
Full-time Sergeant Salary (4) (8,352)	\$230,848
Less Admin/non-sworn salaries (2)	\$61,979
Full-time police officer salaries (10) (20,880 hours) <sup>33</sup>	\$469,174
Balance Available for Police Officer Salaries	\$209,761
Average Hourly Rate per part-time Police Officer	\$18.00
Hours available based on current budget (using part-time officers)	11,653
Hours available based on current budget (using full-time officers)	9,335
Patrol Hours Funded in Aggregate Budget (includes sergeants/PT officers)	40,885
Total Number of Annual Patrol Hours to Meet Coverage Requirements	34,616
Percent of Coverage Requirement Funded in Current Budget	118%

<sup>32</sup> Salary figure does not include \$97,667 in the Deerfield budget earmarked for items other than regular pay, i.e., differential; overtime pay; holiday pay; personal pay; and crossing guard wage, to facilitate a direct comparison using available data.

<sup>33</sup> Full-time positions include two positions of Chiefs of Police who are part of patrol coverage.

Note that in this estimate, should the merged department retain the current number of full-time officers and utilize its remaining budget to fund part-time positions, the present aggregate budget appears to fund approximately 118% of the patrol hours required to provide the existing level of coverage in all three towns, or three additional Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions. If it chose instead to increase the number of full-time positions, funding would be available for approximately 1.89 FTEs.

Allocation of the additional positions is a decision to be made after a more in-depth financial analysis, but options could include:

- Assigning one or more officers to investigative duties, handling follow-up investigations in all three communities.
- Creating a permanent Youth Officer or School Resource Officer position to provide services to all schools, including the elementary schools located in each town, and/or to handle youth issues outside of school hours.<sup>34</sup>
- Creating an additional supervisory position (Deputy Chief/Captain/Lieutenant) to assist in administrative duties.

All three towns rely heavily on part-time police officers; in Deerfield, part-time officers cover between 40 and 90 shifts per month; in Sunderland, approximately 20 shifts; and in Whately, approximately 22, not including backfill for vacation. Staffing with part-time employees provides advantages and disadvantages. They provide useful flexibility in scheduling, extremely valuable in departments that deploy only one or two officers per shift, although their availability may be limited by conflicts with their primary employment. Their salaries are typically lower than those of full-time employees, and they do not normally accrue benefits. However, they may work infrequently – usually only one or two shifts per week – which can limit communication regarding unusual occurrences or crime trends. An officer who has not worked for six or seven days may not be as conversant with recent events and emerging issues as a full-time officer might be.

There is also a considerable ongoing training requirement for part-time employees. Part-time officers must initially attend a part-time Police Academy; subsequently, they receive 40 hours of training annually. The amount of time devoted to training (and therefore paid time when the officer is not performing patrol duty) is proportionally much higher for an officer who works a single shift – or on an on-call basis – than for an officer who works a full-time or a more traditional part-time (i.e., 20 hours per week) schedule.

Because of these factors, it is important for departments to be as proactive as possible in scheduling personnel in order to maximize coverage during the days and hours of greatest need; to achieve the best return on their training investment; and to keep officers' skills sharp to avoid any rustiness that can result from long gaps between shifts.

Part-time employment as a police officer is often viewed as a stepping stone toward a full-time position – and although part-time employment provides a valuable opportunity to evaluate an officer's proficiency before hiring him or her for a full-time position, it is not unusual for an officer to be hired by a town, receive training and experience, and move on to a full-time law enforcement position elsewhere. Therefore, recruitment and retention efforts must be ongoing to maintain healthy staffing levels.

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<sup>34</sup> As of August 17, 2015, one Deerfield officer has been assigned as a School Resource Officer, working day shifts Monday through Friday (with every third Friday off); that position is funded by a grant from Deerfield Academy. The extent and duration of that funding is unknown at this time.

There are clearly potential advantages to consolidation. However, there are significant obstacles. They include the following:

- Consolidation is a delicate and difficult undertaking. It requires strong political will and consensus throughout – from the initial review through conclusion and implementation. In this case, it will require the consensus of three Selectboards.
- It will require community support, which should be assessed prior to taking any formal steps.
- It would most likely require approval at the annual Town Meeting, followed by presentation to and approval by the State Legislature.
- It is critical that each of the communities bear an equitable share of the costs associated with the consolidated department, both during the merger process and in future years. (In North Carolina, for example, the Charlotte Police Department and the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office merged in 1993. In 2015 the merger was close to being terminated due to disagreement about cost allocation.)
- It is also important that the merger benefits all departments, and that none are negatively impacted by its terms.
- Two of the three police departments are covered by collective bargaining agreements. Members' rights must be respected throughout the process, and negotiation will be required regarding changes in salary or benefit structures.
- Three Chiefs of Police are currently in place. Their rights, and their years of service to their respective departments, must be respected in determining the impact of consolidating their positions.
- Only one of the departments currently uses Mobile Digital Terminals (MDTs) in its police vehicles. All three agencies will have to be brought into the same records management system, provided with necessary hardware and software, and be trained in its operation.<sup>35</sup>
- Geographical issues (i.e., limited road access to the Town of Sunderland) will have to be examined for any negative impact on response time.
- All three departments have headquarters facilities that appear to be in good condition and adequate for their needs. Space and functional analysis will be needed to determine whether all three should be retained as substations, if officers should operate independently from them, or if operations can or should be consolidated into a single location.

**RECOMMENDATION 2: Further evaluate consolidation of the Deerfield, Sunderland, and Whately Police Departments.**

There are efficiencies to be gained from the consolidation of the three police departments. It appears that patrol coverage or specialized functions can be enhanced simply by merger, and there is potential to extend patrol coverage – 24 hour per day coverage in Whately and more consistent coverage in Sunderland, for example – at a reasonable additional cost. Additional data must be collected regarding deployment, workload, and financial impact. Operational assessments of the three agencies should be conducted. In addition, the level of support on the part of elected officials and the community must be assessed, whether formally or informally, prior to a decision to proceed.

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<sup>35</sup> An initiative underway to implement a countywide computer system may assist in this effort.

### **Contracting for Police Services**

Another model that has become more common is for municipalities to contract for services. In the most likely scenario, the Town of Sunderland or the Town of Whately would essentially purchase a certain level of police services from the Town of Deerfield. The terms are open for negotiation; they could range from the assignment of periodic patrols, to one officer and car per shift, to response to calls without proactive patrol. The City of Reading, Pennsylvania, for example, provides coverage to the neighboring Borough of Kenhorst on a contract basis, providing a set number of officers per day, in Reading Police uniforms and vehicles, to patrol the borough and provide all necessary police services.

Westchester County, New York had a similar arrangement with the Town of Ossining, which disbanded its police department in 2010 and contracted with the County Department of Public Safety to provide coverage. Upon the expiration of the original contract, the Town of Ossining recently negotiated a new arrangement with the neighboring Village of Ossining, which now polices the town. Westchester County also recently contracted to police the Village of Mount Kisco, absorbing the members of that department into the County Police. The County has a lengthy precedent for this; it contracted to provide limited police service to the Town of Cortlandt when it dissolved its police department in 1998. The nearby Town of Putnam Valley disbanded its police department and contracted with the Putnam County Sheriff's Office in 1997.

King County, Washington operates under a different model; Sheriff's Department employees provide police services to municipalities as their own departments, with municipal uniforms, vehicles, patches, and command staff. A town police chief may actually be a Sheriff's Department officer on assignment.

Under a contracted services model, a town essentially disbands its police department and negotiates a desired level of service and an associated fee with the providing municipality. The fee would include all associated costs, factoring in salary, vehicle and equipment expense, an appropriate portion of training and other administrative expenses, and an administrative fee. The benefit to the contracting community would be the elimination of the costs and workload associated with the maintenance of a police department in return for a set level of service. For the service provider, the arrangement should at the minimum break even, but realistically should be negotiated so that some revenue or other benefit accrues to the town.

For a contracted services model to work effectively, the providing town's resources (Deerfield, in the most likely scenario) would have to be increased as necessary to meet the demands of the negotiated agreement, enabling it to maintain or increase its current level of service to its residents while supplying the agreed upon level of service to the contracting party. Within that framework, the contracted services model may take almost any form acceptable to the parties.

There are clearly potential benefits to this arrangement, and a history of success. While cost savings are not always as extensive as anticipated, operational efficiencies can be achieved and local government can be streamlined. Of course, this is a major change for a town, and like consolidation, requires strong support from elected officials and the community.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3: As an alternative to regionalization, engage in further discussions regarding contracted services.**

Contracting for police services provides an opportunity for individual towns to streamline their police operations without the creation of a full regional police department, potentially generating savings but, more importantly, enhanced administration and operational efficiencies. Like

consolidation, it will require consensus of at least two boards of elected officials and the support of the affected communities. As an initial step, elected officials should determine whether such an arrangement would be suitable for them – as provider or recipient – and then begin discussion of the terms that would be acceptable to them. Additional data should be collected regarding workload and finances, and an operational assessment of each of the participating agencies should be conducted in order to identify issues which should be resolved prior to entering an inter-municipal agreement.

### **Consolidation of Administration, Training, and Specialized Functions**

As noted at the outset of this report, the “back office” operation required by modern policing is considerable. The administrative tasks associated with running a police department – such as training, scheduling, payroll, record keeping, statistical analysis, updating of policies, evidence management, review of reports, legal updates, human resources administration, information technology, recruitment and retention, procurement and maintenance of equipment, fleet management, building maintenance, and similar tasks beyond routine patrol – are similar regardless of the size of the agency.

In fact, the burden may be proportionally higher in a smaller department, or one staffed largely by part-time employees. The 40 required hours of annual training, for example, represents about two percent of a full-time officer’s scheduled hours. For a part-time officer who works one eight hour shift per week, the training obligation represents almost 10 percent of his or her scheduled work time. Yet it is critical for each town that all departmental training and administrative obligations are met. When one looks at a small police agency, often fielding only one officer per shift on patrol, the cost is often inordinately high when considered in proportion to the size and level of activity of the department.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 4: Consider the benefits of collaboration or contracting of administrative oversight as a more cost-effective approach to meeting administrative obligations.**

One option considered by many police agencies exploring consolidation is the merging of administrative or non-patrol functions. For example, in somewhat more densely populated suburban areas, two or three neighboring 20-member police departments, despite struggling to field adequate patrol coverage, are required to maintain individual command staffs, investigative units, records management, information technology, and training staffs. They have explored economies of scale that might be achieved, for example, by merging three separate investigative units, each staffed by a supervisor and two detectives, into a joint squad supervised by a single ranking officer and staffed by three detectives. In this example, the merged staff is adequate to absorb the workload, while two supervisors and three officers can be assigned to other duties.

A similar model may benefit Deerfield, Sunderland, and/or Whately. In Whately, for example, both of the full-time officers hold supervisory rank, but typically work as the only patrol officer on duty. The Chief of Police must balance competing expectations: that he is visible and active on patrol, while also handling the duties of Chief of Police and the bulk of the department’s administrative functions – payroll, public office hours, etc. – which require him to be at his desk.

It appears that certain efficiencies might be achieved by contracting among agencies to assume many administrative tasks, such as scheduling, training, and records management. Determination of a reasonable fee for services provided would enable the contracting agency to divert some of the hours currently consumed by administrative tasks to patrol time, and the contracted agency would be compensated for assuming the tasks, which would enable that department to increase staff hours to handle the workload and concomitantly increase patrol availability.

## **Consolidation in Other Municipalities: Keys to Success or Failure**

Consolidation of police departments has been discussed, studied, or completed in dozens of communities. The notion is not new; in fact, the New York City Police Department was created from the merger of five distinct borough police departments in the mid-nineteenth century. Activity has increased in recent years, sparked largely by overall increasing costs of government and the recession of 2008. Some examples are provided below (this is not an inclusive list).

### **Large Cities:**

- In the latter part of the 1990's, the New York City Police Department absorbed the formerly separate Transit Police Department, Housing Police Department, Board of Education School Safety Division; and Department of Transportation Traffic Enforcement Division.
- In 1993, the Charlotte, North Carolina Police Department merged with the Mecklenburg County Police Department to form the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department.
- In 2007, Indianapolis Police Department merged with the Marion County Sheriff's Department, becoming the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department

### **In Massachusetts:**

Studies have been performed in a number of communities, including:

- Bernardston, Gill and Northfield in 1993
- Buckland and Shelburne, and Bernardston, Northfield and Gill, in 2009
- Oak Bluffs and West Tisbury, in 2011
- Williamsburg and Chesterfield, in 2014
- In 1992, the Capitol Police and Metropolitan District Commission Police were merged into the Massachusetts State Police. There has been recent discussion about a potential merger with the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) Police.
- The Towns of Hamilton and Wrentham, which have discussed and studied the possibility of merger for a number of years, recently began sharing the services of a Chief of Police and a lieutenant.

### **In Maine, several towns share police chiefs:**

- Eliot and Kittery
- Mount Desert and Bar Harbor
- The Town of Madison recently voted to consolidate its Police Department with the Somerset County Sheriff's Office.

### **In New York:**

- The Town of Cortlandt disbanded its Police Department and contracted with the Westchester County Department of Public Safety for police services in 1998.
- The Town of Ossining disbanded its Police Department and contracted with the Westchester County Department of Public Safety for police services in 2010. In 2015, upon expiration of the original agreement, it negotiated a similar agreement with the Village of Ossining.

- The Village of Mount Kisco disbanded its Police Department and contracted with the Westchester County Department of Public Safety for police services in 2015.
- The Town of Putnam Valley disbanded its Police Department and contracted with the Putnam County Sheriff's Office for police services in 1997.
- The Town of Mamaroneck and the Village of Larchmont have studied the possibility of consolidating investigative functions.
- The Town of Carmel has made a formal request to Putnam County to study the feasibility of merging police departments in Putnam County into a countywide agency.
- The Village of Haverstraw and the Town of Haverstraw Police Departments in Rockland County merged in 2006.
- The City of Binghamton and Johnson City shared a police chief for several years; that arrangement was recently discontinued and the cities reverted to individual chiefs.

### **In Pennsylvania:**

- In Bucks County, there have been discussions regarding the merger of five police departments: Doylestown Township, Doylestown Borough, New Britain Borough, and Warwick. Separate discussions have been held regarding Newtown Township and Upper Makefield.
- Berks County has studied the consolidation of all police departments in the county; a 2009 study by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) presented five options for consolidation.
- Wernersville Borough Police Department and Robesonia Borough Police Department merged to become the Western Berks Regional Police Department in 2010.
- Dauphin County began a regionalization study in June 2015.

There are numerous other cases throughout the country. Consolidation/regionalization has been introduced in municipalities of all sizes. A sampling of efforts in locations similar in size to the South County communities includes the following (populations are noted in parentheses):

- Chisago City (4,967) and Lindstrom, Minnesota (4,442)
- The Centennial Lakes Police Department in Minnesota serves the communities of Lexington (2,049), Circle Pines (4,918), and Centerville (3,792)
- Round Lake Park (5,200) and Hainsville, Illinois (2,000)
- The Lattimore – York Springs Regional Police Department, Pennsylvania, serves Lattimore Township, York Springs Borough, and contracts to the Bermudian Springs School District (3,102)
- The Eastern Adams Regional Police Department, Pennsylvania, serves Oxford Township, Berwick Township, and New Oxford Borough (8,390)
- The Central Berks Regional Police Department, Pennsylvania serves Lower Alsace Township and Mt. Penn Township (7,494)
- The Northern Cambria County Police Department, Pennsylvania serves Carroltown Borough and West Carroll Township (2,494)
- The Morris Cooper Regional Police Department, Pennsylvania, serves Morris Township and Cooper Township (5,794)
- The Conneaut Lake Regional Police Department, Pennsylvania, serves Conneaut Lake Borough and Sadsbury Township (3,649)
- The West Shore Regional Police Department, Pennsylvania, serves Lemoyne Borough and Wormleysburg Borough (6,602)

- The Jefferson/Clark Regional Police Department, Pennsylvania serves Jefferson Borough and Clark Borough and contracts with Fredonia Borough (3,049)
- The Upper Perkiomen Regional Police Department, Pennsylvania serves East Greenville Borough and Pennsburg Borough (5,835)
- The RESA Regional Police Department, Pennsylvania, serves Roscoe Borough, Elco Borough, Stockdale Borough, Allenport Borough, and Dunlevy Borough (2,711)
- The Ell-Co Police Department, Pennsylvania, serves Ellsworth Borough and Cokeburg Borough (1,788)

The common threads are that merging police agencies is a popular subject for discussion and study; most studies recommend consolidation, but it is often not pursued; consolidation can be accomplished under the right conditions; and it is difficult to align elected officials, voters, administrative staff, and employees to do so. One author stated that the failure rate with voters is about 85 percent.<sup>36</sup>

There are certain best practices that emerge regarding successful attempts at consolidation.

Generally, a consolidation proposal that is seen principally as an expedient way to save money is doomed to failure. The process must be approached in a thoughtful and deliberative manner, the way in which the South County communities have begun the process. Consolidation can save money, and that should be a consideration; however, savings are often overestimated. The primary goal should be improvement of the delivery of police services; secondary goals should include reduction in duplication of services; providing greater professional and growth opportunities for employees; and saving money. In the short term, however, expenses may actually increase, as startup costs associated with merger are absorbed, such as adjustment of salary rates and benefits; use of legal counsel for negotiations with bargaining units and drafting of intermunicipal agreements; standardization of uniforms, badges, vehicle markings, equipment, training, computer hardware and software; and physical plant renovations that may be required.

Consequently, refining the goals and expectations of the project is a key initial step; all parties must agree upon, at least in general terms, what they want and what they will accept. Collaboration and transparency are vital. Stakeholders must be identified and brought into the process, including elected officials, administrators; financial staff; members of the community; and police department representatives, whose subject matter expertise will inform the process. The process must be transparent. The careers of members of the departments are at stake, and they may well be skeptical and uneasy about the concept. Likewise, members of the community may have serious concerns about the impact on their lives and their communities of significant change in their police departments. The damage that can be done to the stakeholders, as well as to the process, by rumors and misinformation must be avoided by means of appropriate dissemination of information.

Legal complexities must be identified and acknowledged. Approval requirements, such as Town Meeting and legislative approval, must be identified and kept in mind when formulating a timetable for the process. The impact of collective bargaining agreements must be researched and addressed accordingly.

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<sup>36</sup> Suzanne Leland in *City-County Consolidation: Promises Made, Promises Kept?*, quoted at [www.minnpost.com](http://www.minnpost.com), December 8, 2010.

Cost benefit analysis must be thorough and accurate; by whatever formula is agreed upon, each municipality must shoulder its fair share of the burden. Failure to ensure that all participants are treated equitably can not only impede the early stages of the project; it can unravel a merger many years after it takes effect.

Conducting an operational analysis – a “deep dive” into the workings of each department – is a useful step to identify strengths and weaknesses, areas of concern, and opportunities for growth, so that the merged agency is in the best possible condition at the outset.

Many of these items will be discussed below as recommended next steps in the process.

### **Items to Be Addressed in the Merger Process**

There are numerous items that would have to be reviewed and addressed to create a regional police department, including but not limited to the following:

- Review of any legal or legislative actions required to implement the merger.
- Determination of an oversight structure for the department. A separate Board of Commissioners, with representatives from all towns, would be the most effective approach, with a determination to be made as to the number of members: four, to provide equal representation to each community, or three, to avoid deadlocks. The communities have some experience in this area as a result of their prior consolidation of senior services and EMS.
- Design of a command and supervisory structure.
- Negotiation with unions representing Deerfield and Sunderland officers regarding potential impacts of merger on terms and conditions of employment.
- Determination of eligibility for coverage under the collective bargaining agreements of currently non-represented employees.
- Designation of the name of a merged agency.
- Design of uniforms, patches, and vehicle markings.
- Adjustment of pay scales, including:
  - Equalization of rates; salary rates for Deerfield officers are currently higher than those of the other two agencies.
  - Equalization of benefits
- Establishment of hiring and appointment processes to address any procedural differences between the two towns.
- Merging of files and records management systems.
- Standardizing hardware and software; installation of Mobile Digital Terminals as needed.
- Standardization of rules and procedures.
- Standardization of weapons and related equipment.
- Revision of dispatch protocols with Shelburne Falls Control, and the Massachusetts State Police.
- Public education regarding the merger.
- Evaluation of building facilities; determination of use as substations, or physically consolidating all personnel in one location.
- Determining the financial contribution, if any, expected of each town toward any necessary facility enhancements.
- Determining final costs to be borne by each municipality, future cost escalators, and payment processes.
- Creating a vehicle and equipment replacement plan, with a formula for assessing costs for capital expenditures (i.e., vehicles).

- Setting standards of service for each community, i.e., minimum shift staffing levels, areas and methods of patrol, guidelines for assignment of overtime or backfill of vacant shifts; circumstances under which personnel may be redeployed to another community.
- Development and execution of a formal inter-municipal agreement.
- Transfer of vehicles and equipment to the new agency.

## Next Steps/Recommendations

The scope of this study is limited; it is essentially an initial overview of potential opportunities for consolidation or sharing of police services. It is not a conclusive report, since there is much to be done before any concrete steps can be taken toward the final goal. The only point that is “decision ready” at this time is whether the three municipalities are in agreement about pursuing one or more of the options that have been provided.

If that question is answered in the affirmative, several next steps are recommended to prepare to make a final determination.

### **RECOMMENDATION 5: Begin a six-month to one year period of data collection to inform the process.**

As mentioned previously, there are areas in which additional data is needed for the level of analysis that should be used as the basis for negotiations and decisions about consolidation. Ideally, one to three years of data is ideal; however, to facilitate the process, a minimum of six months should be tracked. Some technical information will form the basis of a detailed analysis of staffing and workload:

- To track officers’ workload and assess resource requirements for response to dispatched calls for service, the following information should be tracked for all calls – both those dispatched by the Public Safety Answering Point and particularly those received directly by the departments or self-initiated:
  - Response time: the average time from receipt of a call for service to the arrival of an officer on scene.
  - Service time: the average time spent on a call for service from receipt through disposition.
  - The total number of police staff minutes worked, to ensure that staffing factors can be determined accurately.
  - The total number of minutes absorbed in responding to calls for service.
  - The total number of minutes – and percentage of officer time – dedicated to administrative duties.
- Track follow-up investigation of crimes:
  - Number of cases assigned for follow-up investigation
  - Number closed by arrest
  - Number closed without arrest
  - Number of cases amenable to investigation but not investigated due to staffing
  - Number of open cases
- Track performance measures regarding the following category (information that will assist in further analysis, but also serve as a means of ongoing assessment of performance for the department):
  - Criminal complaints
  - Criminal complaints closed without investigation
  - Unfounded criminal complaints

- Criminal arrests
- Juvenile arrests
- Traffic arrests
- DUI arrests
- Total overtime hours
- Overtime hours at Court
- Sick leave utilization
- Community outreach
  - Community contacts
  - Events held
  - Number of public participants in both events and ongoing programs
  - Overtime hours at community events
- Motor Vehicle Accidents
  - Report
  - Non-report

**RECOMMENDATION 6: Conduct an organizational assessment of each police department.**

An organizational assessment provides an in-depth look into the operations of a department, identifying strengths and weaknesses and offering recommendations regarding areas and processes in need of correction, improvement, or likely to benefit from change. This “check-up” provides a valuable insight into any organizational issues that may impede the success of the proposed consolidation so they can be addressed in the merger process, and serves as a starting point for the new administration assuming responsibility.

**RECOMMENDATION 7: Conduct a staffing analysis.**

Normally conducted as part of an organizational assessment, a staffing analysis utilizes the data previously discussed to determine appropriate staffing levels for an agency. It may justify current staffing levels or determine that the department is overstaffed or understaffed. Such an analysis provides an empirical basis for the staffing decisions that will be critical to the consolidation process.

**RECOMMENDATION 8: Appoint a working committee of stakeholders.**

As mentioned previously, consensus and political will are critical to the success of a shared services or consolidation initiative, as is a good deal of hard work. That will require appointment of a working committee to oversee the project, representing key stakeholders of each town: elected officials, administrative staff, police department representatives, and members of the community. If necessary, subject matter experts can be utilized to facilitate the process.

**RECOMMENDATION 9: Assess community opinion.**

Consensus on the part of elected officials will be critical; equally critical will be the support of the communities affected by what, to them, may be a major change. Community opinion should be assessed both at the beginning of the project and as it proceeds, whether by soliciting residents’ input or through a formal community survey.

## Conclusion

The Novak Consulting Group has presented several options for enhancement of the delivery of police services in the towns of Deerfield, Sunderland, and Whately by means of shared services or consolidation. It is ultimately up to the elected officials of the three towns to determine what actions best meet the needs of their respective communities.

The merger of police departments is a major step for any community. In addition to the amount of work that must be undertaken to implement such a change, it can be a controversial move that provokes a strong reaction. Success depends on the support of the employees involved, attention to detail, and primarily on the political will to move forward with the process.

This report examines consolidation of the three police departments into a regional agency; contracting for the delivery of police services; and contracting or consolidating administrative or specialized services. All are viable options, and they also present significant challenges. This report attempts to provide an overview of the process sufficient for the elected officials of the three communities to make an informed decision as to whether it is in the interest of their communities to further pursue any of these options. Based on our interaction with the professional staffs of the towns, we are confident that they have the capability of moving forward with whichever option is selected.