

Shared Services Panel's Findings and Recommendations

Findings: Similar to 2017, the Panel did not find any new initiatives that would produce significant, recurring new property tax savings. Tompkins County continues to participate in many larger shared services initiatives such as: health benefits consortium (GTMHIC), energy purchasing consortia (MEGA), shared insurance cooperatives (NYMIR), shared plowing (County contracts with towns for snow plowing), shared highway equipment (informal arrangements throughout the County), affordable housing development (Community Development Housing Fund), county-wide assessing (the only such program in New York State), county-wide computer aided dispatch and records management, and county-wide transit service (Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit).

The Panel did find merit in several relatively small shared service initiatives. They include:

1. **Flood Resiliency and Climate Conservation Engineer.** Tompkins County is funding this position with the Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) in order to mitigate some impacts of non-point source pollution related to sediment and nutrients. The SWCD is routinely asked to assist municipalities in regard to flood impacts including: culvert sizing to pass storm flows, DEC permitting around streams and other regulated water courses, stream erosion impacts to road shoulders and infrastructure, stormwater implementation around publicly owned facilities and watershed analysis studies of storm drainage systems. All of these types of projects require various degrees of engineering certifications in the State of NY and would otherwise be funded at the expense of the municipality responsible for the project. Providing this service county-wide ensures projects will be completed with consistency across the county and in some instances will advance projects that would not be able to obtain local funding to complete.

Savings Estimate: **\$130,000** in savings for the first year since municipalities would not have to individually contract these services.

2. Study of a **Back-up Dispatch Center with Cortland County.** Currently Tompkins County does not have a backup E-911 dispatch center and the current Cortland County backup E-911 dispatch center is ill equipped to handle any extended large-scale incident. Cortland County is in the process moving and upgrading its primary E-911 dispatch center into a new location that would have adequate room for Tompkins County to establish a back-up dispatch center. Likewise, Tompkins County's existing facility can easily be outfitted to provide Cortland County with adequate space for a backup facility. Because both Counties current use the same computer aided dispatch (CAD) and records management system as well as the same Motorola emergency communications systems, the main benefit of utilizing each County's primary dispatch center as a redundant backup facility is that each center is staffed 24/7 allowing either County to pick up the others' calls immediately should a backup center be activated.

Savings Estimate: **\$75,000** in planning and engineering savings by jointly studying Tompkins and Cortland County's dispatch facilities for inclusion of each other's back-up facility needs. This would prevent either County from having to construct or maintain a separate stand-alone back-up dispatch facility.

3. ***Shared Town/Village Recreation Services.*** In the past, the Village of Trumansburg and Town of Ulysses have contributed to a single pool of funds held by the Town that was used to purchase and provide both the recreation programs formerly run by the Village and several other sub-contracts. This new collaborative effort will expand to include year-round recreation programs and increased coordination with other public and private recreation programs serving not just youth but those of all ages. In addition, the Town will now administer the Village summer recreation programs. By the Village and Town deciding to create a single shared, expanded service rather than the Town creating a new separate and parallel department at an additional cost, residents will be offered not only recreational services but also year-round programming.

Savings Estimate: **\$23,720** in savings is estimated from sharing a single service by having a single Town employee oversee summer recreation while planning and coordinating year-round offerings for all age groups. The Town and Village will now equally share the cost of the combined year-round recreation program, including the on-going recreation program.

4. Expansion of the ***Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium***, which will consider at least two new municipalities to the “pooled” risk arrangement for a January 1, 2020 start date. After reviewing the applicants for submission, the Board will take action to consider acceptance of new members. If accepted, new members must adopt a municipal resolution stating intention to join by signing the Municipal Cooperative Agreement and directing appropriate documents to be submitted. All potential members are located in the counties contiguous to Tompkins County and meet eligibility for membership. Accordingly, this initiative is incorporated as part of Tompkins County’s shared services plan.

Savings Estimate: **\$50,000** annually, based on current municipal health insurance costs compared to the Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium costs.

5. The subscription of a ***Short-Term Rental Data Partnership*** available to all municipalities in the County. This subscription will allow Tompkins County to purchase a subscription to private data on Short-Term Rentals (STRs) for the shared benefit of municipalities, the County's Finance Department, Department of Planning & Sustainability, and the Strategic Tourism Planning Board. Private vendors currently offer data subscriptions to identify addresses of properties operating as STRs via websites such as Airbnb, VRBO, HomeAway, and others. These data can benefit Tompkins County and municipal staff which currently have no mechanism for independently tracking or regulating STRs.

Savings Estimate: **\$35,200** in savings for the first year since municipalities would not have to individually issue RFPs, contract for services, and manage the contract and data, as a result there will be savings in staff resources. Also **\$7,000** to purchase the data in bulk versus individual municipalities purchasing the data separately.

After year one, an intermunicipal shared service agreement could be developed in out years whereby each participating municipality would pay the costs associated with the number of

STRs in their municipality. The municipality would receive monthly reports on the locations of short-term rental listings.

Other Areas Following A Collaborative/ Shared Services Approach and Worthy of State Support:

Similar to prior years, the Panel discussed two major issues that are being approached in a collaborative fashion. While neither requires the involvement of all the Panel members, it is believed that cost savings and improvements in quality will accompany a shared services approach to the following projects, and that New York State should incentivize these large-scale shared services activities through the provision of grant funds offered through the NYS Department of State or other agencies:

- **Inflow and Infiltration.** A collaborative approach to optimizing the capacity of the Cayuga Heights and City of Ithaca Wastewater Treatment facilities by the six entities served by those facilities. Collaboration among all the users is needed to measure and manage Inflow and Infiltration. Currently some municipalities are undertaking this work independently, duplicating effort, and generating data that are not easily consolidated. However, discussions have begun to unify focus regarding a comprehensive approach can be implemented.
- **Cayuga Lake Watershed.** The Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (IO) is seeking funding to facilitate and advance actions to address water quality issues, particularly Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs), and to advance the discussion of the development of watershed rules and regulations for the protection of Cayuga Lake and its watershed. Cayuga Lake's 785 square mile watershed is geographically the largest of the Finger Lakes watersheds. It is made up of 3 lakefront counties, 3 upland counties, 34 towns, 9 villages, 1 city, and numerous regional state agencies. It is administratively challenging to unify this jurisdictionally complex watershed for coordinated restoration and protection efforts. Members of the IO, comprised of municipal representatives from throughout the watershed, are working and actively exploring funding possibilities for this undertaking.