

# Consensus Commission

## Summary of Recommendations

### Street and Highway Maintenance

1	Create a coordinated core highway services area that integrates the City of Syracuse and more densely developed suburban communities to its north, east and west, in order to leverage highly consistent service delivery menus, equipment needs and the public works service similarities that result from density.
2	Deliver common specialized / technical functions on a shared countywide basis instead of within each agency, via intermunicipal agreement.
3	Transfer (or maintain, where applicable) routine seasonal maintenance on County owned infrastructure outside the core highway services area to municipal street and highway departments, building on the precedent of County-municipal snow removal agreements that are already in place.
4	Establish a model intermunicipal agreement to facilitate additional collaborations and mitigate planning / implementation barriers.
5	Appoint a highway advisory services committee to provide oversight countywide
6	Move to appointed street and highway administrators instead of elected officials.

### Wastewater

1	Improve our capacity to plan for wastewater infrastructure investments <i>countywide</i> by accessing a New York State Department of State planning grant. This will enable a countywide system audit and the development of an asset management plan for treatment and collection systems.
2	Develop a plan to retire and / or assume debt carried by smaller districts that are not already part of the CSD.
3	Shift engineering, system planning / design / construction and map maintenance to County WEP.
4	Our wastewater infrastructure needs attention. Much of our wastewater collection system suffers from excessive inflow of surface water and infiltration of groundwater, stressing the process capacity of our treatment plants and increasing operating costs.  It is recommended that infrastructure improvement grants be procured through NYSDEC and matching local funds be set aside to assist our towns and villages to upgrade those segments that are found to be problematic. It is also recommended that Onondaga County WEP provide the necessary technical support.
5	Create a single countywide basis for billing.

### Water

1	OCWA has been incrementally taking over the assets and operations of water districts within the region. This process should continue and be expedited.
2	Combine OCWA and the City Water Department to leverage internal efficiencies in administration and operations, and to broaden the ratepayer base.
3	Digitize the entire countywide system to provide a basis for planning in a more regionally-comprehensive way.
4	Develop a countywide comprehensive plan for water infrastructure.

### Solid Waste

1	Expand the Southern Onondaga Trash System into contiguous towns that already have contracts with private haulers.
2	Pursue bulk bidding of hauler services across multiple municipalities to increase collection volume, enhance the attractiveness of the overall bid opportunity, and drive down unit costs.
3	And in towns where there is no current municipal involvement in the service, develop service districts and bid-out collection services. It is highly likely that this will drive down costs for individual property owners who are currently paying direct to private haulers on a property-by-property basis.

## Fire Protection

1	Initial Step: Establish a Countywide "Operations Support Organization"
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## Emergency Medical Services

1	We recommend creating a countywide system in which there are fewer service providers serving larger territories. Preferably the future agencies would be independent non-profits, private commercial agencies (under contract to local governments with specific performance criteria) or a combination.
2	Group specification and purchasing of equipment, ambulances, insurance coverage, billing for service and benefits on a countywide basis. This could be accomplished under the existing organizational structure using the County Division of Purchase.
3	Establish performance standards for response times, call coverage, staffing minimums and adequate training.

## Law Enforcement

1	Consistent with the County-City recommendation detailed later in this report (see <b>Governance: A New Structure</b> ), a consolidation of the Sheriff's Office and the City of Syracuse Police Department into a single agency would allow for a larger pool of resources, especially personnel, to be deployed more effectively.
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## Corrections

1	A single organizational structure, placed under the Sheriff's Office, should be responsible for operating both County facilities and holding all prisoners. By State Constitution, the Sheriff must maintain a jail. The new organization will maintain two separate workforces and two separate union contracts under a unified management structure.
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## Tax Assessment

1	Expand shared services across towns by creating new Coordinated Assessment Programs (CAPs) and / or expanding existing CAPs to include neighboring towns, since a reduced number of units would result in greater consistency, enable sharing of limited expertise across municipalities, mitigate the challenge of finding a sufficient number of trained assessors in the future, and allow a sharing of "back office" capacity needs and costs.
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## Financial Administration

1	Migrate local governments to a common financial accounting system with the goal of consolidating finance administration
2	Centralize information technology to ensure at least a base level of service to all local governments in the community

## Courts

1	Aggressively pursue shared services to reduce the number of separate justice courts in the county and serve larger populations.
2	Migrate the remaining village justice courts into the court of their surrounding town to leverage common administrative and "back office" needs / resources, as well as to increase the scale of populations served by each court.
3	Continue exploration of a regional court system, as well as doing arraignment court on a regional (e.g. quadrant) basis.
4	Increase the share of fine revenue that municipalities can retain. Such an adjustment would require change in state law.

## Code Enforcement

1	Leverage opportunities to share “back office” functions across neighboring code offices.
2	Pursue shared / contracted code enforcement services between and among neighboring municipalities where development density, type and code issues are relatively similar.
3	Increase interaction between code enforcement officers in contiguous municipalities to ensure rational and consistent application of codes at municipal borders and “gateways.”
4	Integrate code enforcement information into the Real Property Tax System
5	Create an educational program for code enforcement officers to ensure an adequate succession pool going forward. Training should be coordinated and centralized.

## Clerk

1	Pursue shared efforts to enhance information technology sophistication and deliver more services (e.g. licenses and permits) via the Internet.
2	Create a shared digitized system of public records with access to all municipalities.

## Social Services and Health

1	Specifically, we would welcome the state assuming even more of the Medicaid cost burden as our community moved ahead with the restructuring recommendations contained in the Commission’s report.
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## Libraries

1	Pursue opportunities for regional purchasing and materials sharing within a broadened framework that includes libraries at higher education institutions.
2	Create a statewide library card system.
3	Waive library fines for children.

## Economic Development

1	Create a countywide shared tax base framework- a <b>Municipal Development Fund</b> – modeled on the Minneapolis-St. Paul program
2	Establish a countywide land use plan that provides for consistent and enforceable planning on a countywide basis.
3	Combine the City and County Industrial Development Agencies and economic development offices to create one professional, fully accountable and transparent economic development agency.

## Governance: A New Structure

1	<b>We recommend that the County and City governments be combined into a new service delivery and governance structure that leverages their functional and scale similarities.</b>
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### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1	Establish single legislative governing body
2	Establish single executive office
3	Establish a single budget department
4	Establish single purchasing department
5	Establish single personnel department
6	Establish single information technology office
7	Establish single treasury office
8	Establish single accounts office
9	Establish single clerk's office
10	Establish single audit division
11	Establish single real property and assessment office
12	Establish single law department
13	Establish single community and business development office
14	Establish single contract compliance office
15	Establish single engineering office
16	Establish single public works administration office
17	Establish single buildings and facilities division
18	Establish single road maintenance division
19	Establish single fleet maintenance
20	Establish single law enforcement department
21	Establish single parks and recreation division
22	Establish single water provider
23	Establish single wastewater service provider