



# Geddes Service Consolidation

## **CASE STUDIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Local service consolidation holds promise for alleviating the budgetary concerns of municipal governments and presents new opportunities for increasing the efficiency of service provision. Faced with declining sales tax revenues from the County while still reeling from the Great Recession, the Town of Geddes has looked to consolidate services and responsibilities as a means to manage their budget.

The purpose of this report is to identify several service areas where consolidation may produce cost savings or operational efficiencies for the Town. The research team conducted budget comparisons, interviews with municipal managers, and applied lessons from regional consolidation case studies to identify and analyze opportunities for consolidation. The four services areas analyzed in depth were Code Enforcement, Courts, Dog Control, and Healthcare Insurance Provision.

### **Code Enforcement**

We suggest Geddes move toward full consolidation of administrative functions with Solvay. The two staffs are currently managed by one supervisory officer, but have duplicative permit application and processing operation activities. We propose these administrative functions be merged into a single process, with both staffs able to respond to requests from either municipality. Case studies from Ossining, NY and Broome County, NY provided evidence that this combination of administrative function may lead to potential cost savings.

### **Dog Control**

We recommend Geddes pursue the possibility of contracting responsibility for dog control services to Camillus Township. Camillus has already successfully assumed responsibility for Van Buren's dog control service for an annual payment of \$30,900. The Camillus kennel may have excess capacity, and is closer in proximity than the CNY SPCA kennel in Dewitt. Cost savings

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## **GEDDES SERVICE CONSOLIDATION**

can be achieved if Geddes is able to negotiate a contract for less than the \$58,300 it currently spends on dog control.

### **Courts**

In the short term, there are two strategies we suggest to improve efficiency of the Geddes and Solvay courts; the creation of a joint scheduling system for both municipalities and holding court for both municipalities on the same day. In the long term, we recommend the Town and Village reduce administrative staff by consolidating the two courts into one department that serves both municipalities.

### **Healthcare Insurance Provision**

Geddes should open lines of communications with other municipalities and labor unions in order to assess the feasibility of creating a healthcare consortium. The Town could potentially see substantial savings by pooling insurance risk with other municipalities. Geddes must further research their existing healthcare insurance cost structure and the risk profiles of neighboring municipalities to lay the groundwork for such a coalition.

These recommendations can serve as a guide as Geddes continues to explore consolidation opportunities. Further analysis is advisable before Geddes commits to any major organizational restructuring.

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## GEDDES SERVICE CONSOLIDATION

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# INTRODUCTION

The scope of this report was initially defined by three project objectives: identify and explore service consolidation opportunities, apply lessons learned from case studies to identify costs and benefits associated with consolidation in Geddes, and provide policy recommendations and strategies for implementation.

We initially compared overlapping service areas and municipal budgets between the Township of Geddes, Village of Solvay, Township of Camillus, and Onondaga County to guide our research and narrow the scope of our analysis. This assessment helped us identify opportunities for consolidation based on existing staff structure and departmental spending.

After identifying potential service areas, we conducted interviews with municipal managers and department heads to gain an understanding of how these services are provided. We spoke with officials from Geddes, Camillus, Solvay, and Onondaga County. A complete list of interviews can be found in the appendix.

Finally, we used case studies from other municipalities in New York as models of consolidation. Using these case studies, we developed scenarios for similar service consolidation efforts in Geddes, estimated potential cost savings, and identified potential process improvements. After outlining the benefits and challenges of each scenario, we provide a suggested course of action for Geddes to realize the greatest gains from municipal cooperation.

The report begins by describing background information on Geddes Township and nearby municipalities. We then provide a short description of the Local Government Efficiency program before delving into a review of municipal cooperation literature. Following that section is an in

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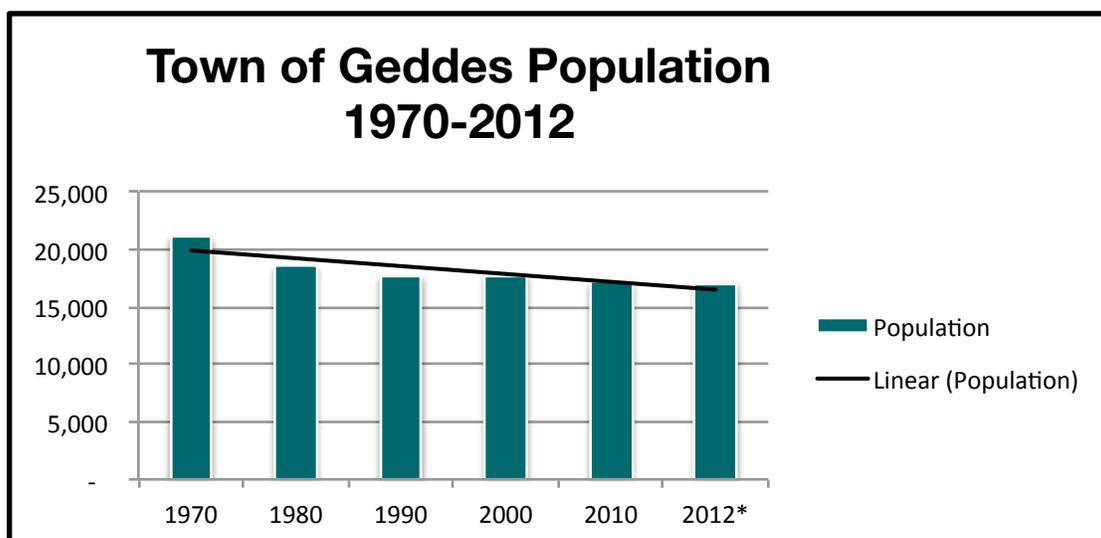
depth analysis of four service areas; Code Enforcement, Courts, Dog Control, and Healthcare Insurance Provision. Finally, we end the report with our concluding thoughts and recommendations.

## CONTEXT

### Town of Geddes, NY

The Town of Geddes is a municipality located just west of the City of Syracuse along the western shore of Onondaga Lake. The Town currently has a population of 17,000 people (*US Census Bureau*). Due to its strategic location, the Town served as a major site for salt mining, iron ore, and other industries, and experienced significant growth soon after its founding in 1848 (D. Mason & Co, 1878). The population of the Town peaked sometime after 1960, and, as shown in Figure 1, saw a significant decline of 11.9 percent during the 1970s. Population loss has continued, but slowed in recent decades. Currently 76% of the general population lives in owner occupied properties (*US Census Bureau*), the median age is 44.3 years and the median household income is \$56,883 (*US Census Bureau*).

FIGURE 1

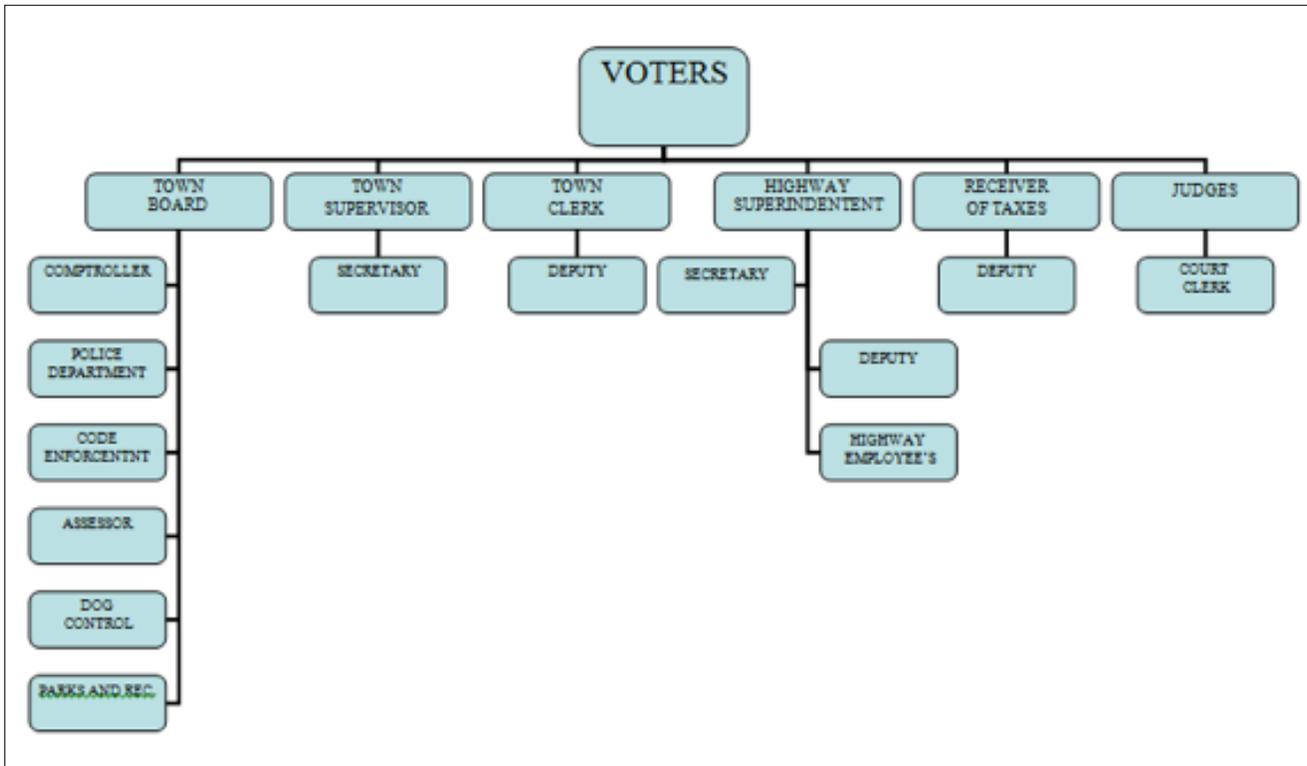


The Town of Geddes is a council-supervisor form of government, with various departments designed to cater to the needs of Town residents. The Town Board is comprised of seven elected officials who live within the Town, including five councilors, Town Supervisor and Deputy Supervisor.

Current departments within the Town include:

- Highway      -Codes/Dog Control      -Town Clerk      -Trash/Refuse
- Assessor    -Parks & Recreation      -Town Court      -Police
- Comptroller                      -Engineer

**FIGURE 2**

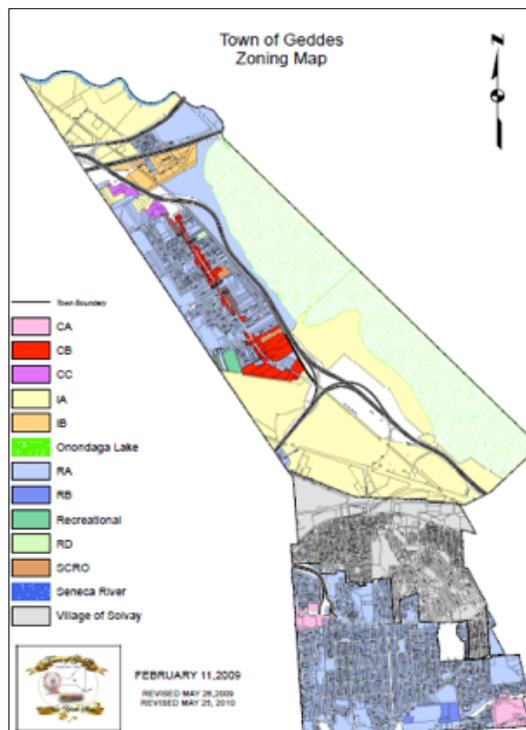


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Each of these departments are directed by administrators. The current Town structure is depicted in Figure 2. The Town Board has oversight of six departments, while the heads of clerk, tax, justice, and highway departments manage the daily operations of their own departments. Each full time position at the Town is unionized, although the highway and the police departments operate under separate unions. With the exception of the highway department, all departments are located within Town Hall at 1000 Woods Road in Solvay. The highway department is located in a facility on Terry Road, in the western portion of the Town.

The Town consists of 12.2 square miles and is bisected into two areas by the Village of Solvay and the New York State Fairgrounds. As shown in Figure 3, the two areas within the Town's jurisdiction include Lakeland and Westvale. Lakeland, located to the north of the fairgrounds, borders Onondaga Lake and is largely residential and commercial land, and is also home to the industrial and manufacturing properties that remain within the Town. Further south is Westvale, which contains a dense population of residential housing and commercial retail development.

**FIGURE 3**



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## NEIGHBORING MUNICIPALITIES

### The Village of Solvay

The Village of Solvay is located in the center of the Town of Geddes, but is a separate government with its own Village Board, mayor and service departments. With a population of 6,584 and a median resident age of 38.6 years, Solvay has a younger population and a lower median income than Geddes. Solvay has a much higher proportion of rental properties in the Village, with an owner occupancy rate of 53.4% (US Census Bureau). Highway, police, and other Town departments must travel through the Village to provide Town services, yet have no authority or responsibility in the Village itself. A major unique factor to the Village is the municipal electrical system that operates for Village residents and businesses known as the Solvay Electric Company. While the majority of Onondaga County is served by National Grid, Solvay Electric offers much lower rates benefiting thousands of residents and businesses. This proprietary funding is also a major source of revenue for the Village.

### The Town of Camillus

The Town of Camillus borders the Town of Geddes just to the west. With a population of 24,167 and a median household income of \$50,198, Camillus is very similar demographically to the Town of Geddes. Geddes and Camillus are connected by the major roadways of Milton Avenue and West Genesee Street (Route 5) as well as the I-690 and I-695 highway systems. The Town is comprised of largely residential property, as well as commercial land. There are several retail developments that draw shoppers and visitors from neighboring municipalities, including the Town of Geddes (*Cameron Development, 2014*). The Town's population is concentrated on the eastern most section that borders Geddes, while further east are hundreds of acres of agricultural land.

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## Onondaga County

Onondaga County encompasses the city of Syracuse and its surrounding Towns and suburban communities, including Geddes, Solvay and Camillus. The County offers a wide variety of human and physical services that operate in the Town of Geddes and beyond, including wastewater treatment, recycling and compost, regional infrastructure and planning, and administration of federal health programs. The population of Onondaga County is 468,387 people with an average household income of \$53,593 (US Census Bureau). Figure 4 provides a map of Onondaga County and all Towns and Villages located within the county.

**FIGURE 4**



## CURRENT COOPERATION AND CONSOLIDATION IN GEDDES

### Diesel Fuel Purchasing agreement between Town & Solvay Union Free School District

A current partnership allows the Solvay Union Free School to purchase diesel fuel that is then sold to the Town to operate their vehicles. Initiated in 2007, this agreement has been renewed each year. Greater volume allows the school district to purchase fuel at a lower price. Bills are distributed on a monthly basis to the Town and the amount charged is a direct reimbursement of the amount paid for gas used by the Town.

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### **Lakeside Fire District Diesel Fuel Purchasing Agreement with the Town**

The Lakeside Fire District has permission to use fuel stored at the Geddes' highway facility for its trucks. Bills are submitted to the fire district each month to cover the cost of the fuel used by the fire district. Again, higher volume of fuel purchases helps the Town and district obtain lower prices.

### **Highway Department Shared Resources Agreement between Solvay & Geddes**

An unwritten agreement between the Town Supervisor of Geddes and Mayor of Solvay allows either party to provide highway department personnel and equipment when requested by the other municipality. This assistance is provided free of charge, in return for help when the other municipality has a need for highway department resources. This agreement prevents each municipality from having to purchase or rent equipment or hire workers that they only occasionally require.

### **Brush Cleanup Agreement**

An agreement exists between the Village and Town for Geddes to handle all brush cleanup and processing (which includes Christmas trees) at the Town's highway department facility. Bills for this service are submitted to the Village on a monthly basis at a rate of \$7.50 per pickup truck load and \$15.00 per dump truck load of brush and debris that is brought to the Town facility by Village DPW personnel. This agreement was made when the previous site where the Village processed brush was developed for an alternative purpose.

### **Talks between Geddes & Camillus Police Departments**

Ongoing discussions are underway regarding the possibility of merging the police forces for the Towns of Geddes and Camillus into one department. Currently a study is underway with funding from Onondaga County to analyze the costs and benefits of a merger for both municipalities and their residents. The results from this study are expected to be released in July 2014.

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### **Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund**

The Village of Solvay and Town of Geddes are sharing the costs of this service, which creates an electronic archive and records management system that is accessible for both the Town and the Village. The two municipalities agreed to share the cost of this software that will include all zoning maps, subdivision maps, and GIS information in an electronic format. This technology allows for more efficient organization and prevents files from being lost or damaged. The agreement is a five year contract that was required in order to receive a grant from New York State to assist paying for the program.

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# NYS LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY PROGRAM

## **LGe Grant Overview**

Governor Cuomo officially introduced the LGe Program in FY 2012-2013 as a continuation of the now defunct Shared Municipal Services Incentive (SMSI) Program. The LGe Program “provides technical assistance and competitive grants to local governments for the development of projects that will achieve savings and improve municipal efficiency through shared services, cooperative agreements, mergers, consolidations and dissolutions.” In a time when local governments are forced to consistently provide the same level of service with smaller budgets, LGe seeks to promote innovative solutions involving cooperation. Specifically, LGe grants are designed to aid local governments with the planning and implementation phases of cost saving projects.

Prior to funding, municipalities must evaluate their proposals. The evaluation must include a study of the current services provided, an assessment of the future service demands of the community, and a cost benefit analysis of the value of these services to residents. The Department of State has made several case studies available on their website in order to aid the development of proposals.

## **LGe Funding Opportunities**

Applications for this funding cycle are due at 4:00PM on June 16, 2014. There is \$4 million in funding for potential grants. The LGe program is looking to spend 90% of this for implementation projects with the remaining 10% for local government efficiency planning projects.

All LGe Grants are reimbursement grants and require a local match. Grants for planning projects will fund up to \$12,500 per local government involved with a maximum of \$100,000 per project and require a 50% funding match from the local governments. Grants for

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implementation projects will fund up to \$200,000 per local government with a maximum of \$1,000,000 per project and only require matching funds of 10% of the total project cost.

LGe grants may be used to fund consultancy services, legal services, capital improvements required for functional consolidation, or costs associated with personnel transitions. Grant applications are reviewed and scored out of 100 with special scoring consideration for projects that involve the “dissolution or consolidation of local government entities”; “complete functional consolidation of local government service; or assist “financially stressed local governments” that have an operating deficit over 10%.

Additional information on application review can be found in Appendix A: NYS LGe Grant Application and Instructions. All information in this section pertains to the 2014-2015 funding cycle.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

*“Local government collaboration is an inescapable feature of the future of public administration”*  
Bingham & O’Leary, 2006

Government collaboration holds much promise for alleviating the budgetary concerns of local governments and presents new opportunities for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of service provision. Government collaboration can help to eliminate redundancy within government and to address service demands that span municipal boundaries. This short literature review below outlines the considerations local officials must keep in mind when developing collaborations.

Drawing from Wood and Grey (1991), Thompson and Perry (2006, 25) outline five factors that influence the outcomes of collaboration efforts:

**Governance-** Avoiding misunderstandings and resolving conflicts is easier when collaborating parties “jointly make decisions about the rules that will govern their behavior and relationships” (24).

**Administration-** Parties need to clearly define their anticipated roles and responsibilities to ensure collaboration “achieves the purpose that brought the organizations to the table in the first place”(25).

**Organizational Autonomy-** Collaboration requires autonomous parties to balance their own interests with their collective interests. Collaborating partners are usually autonomous which requires special attention to guarantee that parties are communicating and sharing information as well as holding each other accountable.

**Mutuality & Interdependence-** Each party involved in a collaboration needs to derive some benefit while adding value. Collaborations need to allow parties to satisfy their counterpart’s interests, without marginalize their own interests.

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**Trust and Reciprocity-** Collaborating parties must believe that each will make a good faith effort at adhering to the agreed upon structure and norms of the collaboration. This implies open and honest communication while at the same time understanding that “partners are willing to bear initial disproportional costs because they expect their partners will equalize the distribution of costs and benefits overtime” (27). Trust can help to ease tension, complexity, and probability of conflict.

Fear of losing control or local identity can impede the ability of two local governments to collaborate or consolidate services (Linden 2011, 157). The autonomy each party holds allows them to bow out of a collaborative effort at anytime. This autonomy also effects accountability. Parties having the autonomy to govern themselves or leave a shared arrangement makes addressing any conflict difficult. (Posner 2002, 524; Milward & Provan 2006).

Collaboration can help smaller local governments reduce personnel costs and increase efficiency of service provision (Bunch & Strauss, 1992). However, benefits are not guaranteed, and “[t]here is a fine line between gaining the benefits of collaborating and making the situation worse” (Huxam & MacDonald 1992, 50). There is no “one best way” of collaborative governance. Arrangements must be designed for the specific parties and their surrounding environment.

Collaboration takes time and all parties involved must understand the guidelines mentioned from the literature to successfully lead their governments to cut costs or increase efficiency. The case studies included in this report provide multiple examples of how local governments all across New York State have cut costs or increased efficiency through collaboration.

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# SERVICE AREAS

This section of the report provides an in depth analysis of consolidation opportunities for the Code Enforcement, Courts, Dog Control, and Healthcare Insurance Provision service areas. The analysis is based on budgetary comparisons, New York State consolidation case studies, and interviews conducted with municipal managers.

## CODE ENFORCEMENT CONSOLIDATION

The first specific service area we analyzed was the Code Enforcement department. Geddes Code Enforcement is responsible for enforcement of the statewide Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Codes (Uniform Code) and the Township's zoning and land use codes. The Uniform Code, originally enacted by the State in 1984, "prescribes minimum standards for both fire prevention and building construction" (NYS Codes administration). Geddes' local laws include ordinances regulating fencing, yard maintenance, and zoning density.

The Solvay and Geddes Codes departments are already partially merged, and Geddes has an opportunity to pursue both cost savings and efficiency gains through additional collaboration. Efficiency gains can be achieved by eliminating redundancies and enhancing service through process improvements. Some of these gains may not translate into immediate budgetary savings, but may result in better and timelier customer service.

Alternatively, Geddes could cede Uniform Code enforcement responsibilities to the County or State, pursuant to Article 18, Section 381 in NYS Executive law. This option would lower workload responsibilities for the Code Enforcement office.

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Our analysis will focus first on opportunities for improvement within the existing Geddes-Solvay office structure, and we will then turn our attention to potential service consolidation with Onondaga County or NY State.

## **COLLABORATION WITH SOLVAY**

Geddes and Solvay have already achieved cost savings by partially consolidating their code enforcement departments. The two municipalities originally consolidated their code enforcement efforts in 1994 after the departure of three Solvay Code Enforcement Officers (CEO). Six years later, that agreement was dissolved and the municipalities handled their respective code enforcement individually until 2012. Solvay's primary CEO left in 2012, and Geddes and Solvay managers once again merged under a single supervisor (Albrigo).

According to the inter-municipal agreement signed in 2014, Solvay will pay Geddes \$30,333 for assumption of Code Enforcement supervision and assistance. This payment equals 31.3 percent of Geddes' \$96,815 Code Enforcement budget for 2014. Compensation was \$9,600 in 2013 and \$4,667 in 2012, so this is a substantial increase over previous years.

There are approximately 12,000 properties in Geddes and approximately 5,000 in Solvay. However, the Village has a higher concentration of rental properties than the Town (53.4% owner occupied in Solvay compared to 76% owner-occupied in Geddes), and code enforcement for rental properties is more time consuming. The supervisory CEO estimates that 60-70 percent of work hours are dedicated to inspection and complaint investigation of apartment buildings.

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The joint Code Enforcement department is currently structured as follows:

<b>Employee Title</b>	<b>Employees in Geddes</b>	<b>Employees in Solvay</b>
<b>Full time CEO</b>	1	0
<b>Part Time CEO</b>	0	2
<b>Full Time Clerk</b>	1	0
<b>Part Time Clerk</b>	0	1

The Geddes office houses the Full Time CEO/Fire Marshall and the Full Time Clerk as well as all Geddes property files. The two Part Time CEOs and the Part Time Clerk are located in the Solvay office, though these employees report to the Geddes supervisory CEO in the office across the street. All Solvay property files are housed in the Solvay office.

### **Cost Comparison**

The neighboring Township of Camillus may serve as a useful standard for comparison with the Geddes-Solvay Code Enforcement office. The two departments have similar staffing levels and salary costs, as can be found in Table 2.

However, a simple comparison of staff levels and salary costs does not offer much insight without taking into account differing departmental workloads and municipal property characteristics.

<b>TABLE 2: COST COMPARISON</b>			
<b>Camillus Code Enforcement</b>	<b>Salary Expenses</b>	<b>Geddes/Solvay Code Enforcement</b>	<b>Salary Expenses</b>
<b>Fire Marshall Deputy</b>	\$ 8,604.00	<b>Fire Marshall</b>	\$ 7,166.00
<b>CEO (FTE)</b>	\$ 56,568.00	<b>CEO (Geddes FTE)</b>	\$ 50,750.00
<b>CEO (FTE)</b>	\$ 44,325.00	<b>Supervisory CEO (Solvay Payment)</b>	\$ 9,600.00
<b>Code Enforcement Clerks</b>	\$ 35,786.00	<b>CEO (Part time, Solvay)</b>	\$ 14,000.00
		<b>CEO (Part time, Solvay)</b>	\$ 19,677.00
		<b>Code Enforcement Clerk (Part Time, Solvay)</b>	\$ 12,802.00
		<b>Code Enforcement Clerk (FTE, Geddes)</b>	\$ 22,149.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$ 145,283.00		\$ 136,144.00

The New York Department of State requires every code enforcement department to submit a Uniform Code Administration and Enforcement Report ([1203 report](#)) annually. This report records the activity of each code enforcement department, including the number of building permits, occupancy certificates, stop work orders, operating permits, and complaints that are issued or acted upon each year.

This information is public record, but we were unable to obtain copies of 1203 reports for Geddes-Solvay and Camillus (or other municipalities). We suggest that the workload indicators from these reports be compared with staffing and salary information to determine the Geddes-Solvay department's relative spending per unit of work output.

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## **CASE STUDY: TOWN AND VILLAGE OF OSSINING, NY**

The Center for Governmental Research (CGR) performed an analysis in 2011 that details the potential benefits of code enforcement consolidation between the Village and Town of Ossining, NY. Both the Town and Village had their own departments responsible for enforcement Uniform Code and local ordinances. These departments both processed applications and permits, perform building inspections and plan reviews, and enforced construction and other codes required by local and state law (CGR Ossining 2011).

The Town's office had two Part Time employees, a building inspector and an administrative assistant. The larger staff in the Village consisted of seven Full Time employees and one Part Time employee. The Full Time staff included a supervisory building inspector, an assistant building inspector, three code enforcement officers, and two administrative assistants. The Part Time Village employee was an administrative assistant (CGR Ossining 2011).

The CGR analysis noted that the Town and Village permit and code inspection services were substantially similar in process and function, and suggested that operational efficiencies could be gained by combining permit application and processing operations that were being performed separately. However, the report noted that this type of shared service environment may complicate the ability of the Village and Town to 'tailor' the enforcement of their unique local codes (CGR Ossining 2011).

The CGR report further suggested that savings of approximately \$60,000 could be realized by combining administrative functions. This cost savings would be achieved by eliminating the Town's Part Time administrative assistant position and downgrading a Full Time administrative assistant to Part Time (CGR Ossining 2011).

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## **CASE STUDY: CODE ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS IN BROOME COUNTY, NY**

This CGR analysis focused on opportunities for regional consolidation and shared services for the 24 municipalities in Broome County, NY. The report performed a baseline analysis of staffing metrics, staff costs, staff time allocation and cost by task, and processing time for code enforcement tasks for all municipal code enforcement departments. This analysis revealed that smaller code enforcement departments had a proportionally higher compensation rate, and had to ‘pay a premium’ to provide basic service coverage. Larger departments are able to absorb costs across staff members and achieve a lower per unit cost of work output (CGR Broome County 2011).

The case study also analyzed the potential of ceding municipal enforcement of the Uniform Code to New York State, pursuant to State Executive Law 381. The report estimated total salary cost savings of \$1.5 million if all 24 municipalities and the County allowed the State to take over responsibility for Uniform Code enforcement. This assumes that 75% of code enforcement activities are related to Uniform Code enforcement, and that municipalities would retain roughly 25% of their employees to enforce local codes.

## **SCENARIO 1: FURTHER CONSOLIDATION BETWEEN SOLVAY AND GEDDES**

According to the inter-municipal agreement (IMA) between Solvay and Geddes, the Geddes managing CEO provides supervision and assistance to the Solvay department. The two departments are not fully consolidated; they share a manager, but maintain separate operations, office space, staff, and records.

Current restrictions on staff work are an impediment to full consolidation of codes enforcement. According to the supervisory CEO, the currently negotiated restrictions prevent the Geddes

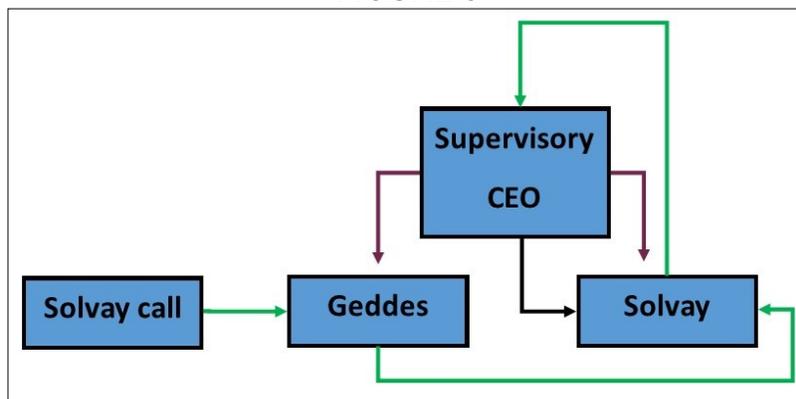
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Clerk from answering any calls, responding to any complaint, or processing any permit for Solvay citizens.

If a call regarding a Solvay property comes in to the Geddes office, the Geddes Clerk forwards the call to the Solvay office. If the Solvay staff have a question or require the supervisory CEO's assistance, they call the Geddes office. If the CEO needs to see the property file, he has to physically go to the 2nd floor of the Solvay offices.

According to the managing CEO, 60-70 percent of staff hours go toward addressing multi-family unit inspections and complaints. Given that Solvay has a high concentration of such rental properties, it is inefficient to have a Full Time Clerk unable to even address such a major aspect of the Code Enforcement department's work. While the details of labor negotiations are beyond the scope of this analysis, we suggest every effort be made to resolve this restriction.

**FIGURE 5**



### **Combining Staff and Administrative Functions**

The benefits and challenges present in the Ossining case study may also apply to further consolidation efforts between Geddes and Solvay. As in Geddes-Solvay, the Town and Village staffs in Ossining perform duplicative administrative services. The Geddes-Solvay staffs currently respond only to complaints from their own jurisdictions (with the exception of the managing CEO). Each member of Geddes and Solvay staff should be trained and able to

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respond to applications, calls, or complaints from both municipalities' residents. A unified system for permit applications and processing may ease the cross-training process. Ideally, the combined service would include online submission, review, and confirmation of approval for permits.

In the Ossining case, the municipalities were able to realize cost savings of approximately \$60,000 by combining administrative support and processing functions across the two departments. This savings was achieved by the reduction of one Part Time administrative support position and the downgrading of another support title (CGR 2011). Without an in depth analysis of Geddes-Sovlay code employee workloads, it is difficult to determine whether the code enforcement department is overstaffed. Staffing levels should be reevaluated using workload indicators from the 1203 Uniform Code report after staff duties are combined and administrative functions have been consolidated.

### **Information Management**

The Code Enforcement department currently maintains paper records for each property. Permits, inspection records, and other activity is tracked by adding hard copies of forms to individual property files. The Code Enforcement department should consider upgrading to digital property tracking software for improved time management and customer service.

Utilizing an electronic system for codes enforcement would better organize and track building inspections and permit applications, ensuring that no tasks 'fall through the cracks' (Williamson Law). The electronic system also allows for faster record retrieval and record retrieval from multiple locations (the Geddes office, the Solvay office, or possibly from the field).

Currently, the supervisory CEO must shuttle between the Solvay and Geddes offices to retrieve records. This management issue would be resolved if Geddes and Solvay jointly purchased and utilized the new software. Electronic software would also allow the Solvay and Geddes staffs to merge their functions (permit application and processing services) without necessitating the co-

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location of staffs in a single office. Finally, digital code enforcement software would eliminate the need to maintain physical files that can be misplaced or damaged.

Williamson Law currently provides municipal software for Geddes' Highway, Clerk, and Tax departments. Acquiring their code enforcement software would cost approximately \$3200, according to their sales manager. The manager also indicated the Williamson Law would be responsible for installing the software, helping tailor the program for Geddes-Solvay, training staff, and loading municipal properties into the database. However, the task of scanning and uploading each property's file information would be the responsibility of the Code Enforcement department.

### **Code Streamlining**

The NY State Uniform Building Code is enforced equivalently across both municipalities, but there are differences in each municipality's local zoning ordinances that complicate the consolidation of administrative code operations. The Broome County case study noted the difficulty in enforcing local codes in a shared service environment, as different municipalities may have conflicting codes or focus their enforcement on different codes. (CGR Broome County 2011).

In order to better leverage the Code Enforcement department's joint efforts, the two municipalities should consider approving a code review to integrate their local zoning ordinances into a unified code system. Alternatively the two municipalities could reconcile their local zoning ordinances and adopt one zoning code for the Town and Village.

Streamlining and unifying the respective local codes would require the joint effort of the planning and zoning boards as well as senior Code Enforcement staff. Presumably, both Town and Village boards would need to pass local laws approving the action. Any move toward local code integration requires both municipalities to be flexible regarding their control over zoning and planning.

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## **SCENARIO 2: CONSOLIDATION WITH ONONDAGA COUNTY/ NEW YORK STATE**

Geddes should also consider collaborating with Onondaga County on code enforcement. NY State Executive Law Article 18, §381(2) allows municipal governments to relinquish local enforcement of NY State Uniform Code. Relinquishing enforcement responsibilities also includes relinquishing administrative responsibilities associated with enforcement, such as submitting the 1203 report of activities to the Secretary of State. If a municipality opts out of enforcement, the responsibility then falls upon the County. Counties are also able to opt out of enforcement, leaving the State with de facto responsibility. However, once a municipality takes advantage of §381 they may at a later date enact local legislation allowing for the re-enforcement of the Uniform Code if deemed necessary.

The Center for Governmental Research found that if all 25 municipalities within Broome County, NY opted out of enforcement of the Uniform Code, it would save those governments upwards of \$1.5 million in reduced administration and enforcement personnel costs (Broome County Case Study, 23). §381 provides municipalities with the opportunity to shift financial burden to the county or State and realize local municipal cost savings.

Exercising the rights granted under §381 requires tough political and administrative choices, as code enforcement staffing levels are typically reduced or eliminated. Loss of control over Uniform Code enforcement may also raise concerns over service quality; local administration may enforce codes more proactively than State or County officials.

Onondaga County Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Travis Glazier, supported the idea of consolidation but was skeptical of the County's own ability to maintain enforcement at an acceptable level for Geddes/Solvay residents. Information on service quality at the County or State level was unable to be located.

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If Geddes decides to exercise §381 and waive the enforcement of the NYS Uniform Code, Onondaga County would become responsible for the enforcement of the Uniform Code for the Town. Currently Onondaga County does not have a full time staff to handle the enforcement of the Uniform Code at the Town level. It is reasonable to expect that enforcement responsibility would then fall to the State. The State Department of Code Enforcement has an office in Syracuse that handles the enforcement of the Uniform Code for several municipalities throughout the Central New York area who have relinquished enforcement responsibility. Contact information for this office can be found in Appendix C.

Opting out of enforcement of the Uniform Code as promulgated by §381 does not impact the local Town zoning regulations. The Town would essentially jettison responsibility for Uniform Code Enforcement and handle only local zoning code issues, lightening the workload of current employees in the Code Enforcement Office. We were unable to obtain the enforcement workload indicators from the 1203 forms from either the Town or the New York Department of State. It is reasonable to assume elimination of administrative and enforcement burdens associated with Uniform Code Responsibilities could lower staffing requirements and other related costs. The Broome County consolidation study estimated that 50-75 percent of code enforcement costs were directly related to Uniform Code enforcement.

## **FINAL RECOMMENDATION**

We have outlined above two consolidation scenarios for the Geddes-Solvay Code Enforcement department. Both scenarios have potential cost or operational efficiency benefits, but there are also costs and uncertainty associated with each.

We are apprehensive to recommend consolidation to the County pursuant to §381. While this option can potentially bring cost savings through reduced enforcement and administrative staffing needs, we were unable to fully explore potential service quality consequences. If the

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Town decides to pursue this avenue, further discussions with the County or State must take place to understand service level specifics.

Geddes-Solvay Code Enforcement department should continue to move toward full consolidation. The departments have merged under a single supervisory CEO, but there are still administrative redundancies. Specifically, the permit application and processing operations, inclusive of administrative support functions, should be unified into a common process, with employees of both departments able to handle applications and calls from residents of either municipality. The evidence from the Ossining, NY case study suggests that consolidation of these administrative functions may lead to a reduction in staffing need.

We further suggest the municipalities jointly invest in code enforcement software to help streamline this process consolidation. The use of property tracking software would allow for shared access to Geddes and Solvay property information without having to physically obtain records from the two offices.

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## CONSOLIDATION OF COURTS

### **CURRENT STRUCTURE OF THE TOWN COURT**

The Town of Geddes and Village of Solvay operate separate courts. Both courts hold their general sessions and arraignments within the Town of Geddes courtroom in Town Hall. The Town of Geddes employs two full-time clerks and the Village employs one full time and one part time clerk. Under the current facility-sharing agreement, the Village and Town split the cost of a printer that is used for both court departments.

The caseloads vary by week for both the Town and the Village, with the Town receiving 130-170 cases and Solvay receiving 90 each week (Lenweaver and Ladouceur 2014). A major factor that influences the higher number of cases received in the late summer/early fall is the New York State Fair, which increases the number of DUI cases handled by the courts (Lenweaver & Ladoucer 2014). Additionally, Town of Geddes police officers have the ability to write tickets in the Village of Solvay, while Solvay police have no jurisdiction outside of Village borders.

The Town of Geddes holds court once each week on Mondays, while Solvay holds court on the first, second, and fourth Thursday of every month. There is one judge who serves both the Town and the Village, and another judge who works strictly for the Town. The Town alternates between the two judges. Solvay operates with the same judge during court each week, and has an additional judge that serves in the event there is a conflict with the usual judge.

Town of Geddes Court generally operates at a loss or breaks even, depending on the year. Based on figures from the 2013 fiscal year, Town court expenses were \$121,035, while revenue collected was \$121,550 (Geddes 2013 Budget). Revenue from this department is collected through fines and forfeited bail from tickets and arrests made. This resulted in a total surplus for the 2013 fiscal year of \$444. This was the first surplus Geddes experienced in four years due to

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revenue that was higher than expected (Geddes 2013 Budget). The annual financial outcome of the courts operation and whether the result is a surplus or deficit largely varies from year to year. In 2013 the Town received greater revenue than originally budgeted for, however this is not guaranteed to consistently occur each year.

The Village of Solvay court budget is also often difficult to predict. In 2013, Solvay's justice department ended the year with a \$15,500 surplus. In 2012, Solvay courts operations resulted in a \$3,104 deficit. In 2011, Solvay Courts concluded with a \$26,893 surplus (Village of Solvay Budget 2013).

In our conversations with court clerks from the Town of Geddes, concerns were raised about the efficiency of the current system, especially with regard to scheduling conflicts (Interview with Lenweaver and Ladouceur, 2014). Currently the Town and the Village do not have an effective way to communicate when hearings and appointments are set in the courtroom. Occasionally the courtroom become double booked, which causes problems for both municipalities. Geddes has requested that Solvay clerks contact the Town before scheduling times to use the courtroom, but this does not always occur.

Three case studies that were instrumental in shaping our understanding and forming our recommendations for court consolidation are described here.

### **CASE STUDY: TOWN OF DEWITT/VILLAGE OF E. SYRACUSE**

A study was conducted in 2012 to look into the feasibility of court consolidation between the Village of East Syracuse and the Town of DeWitt. These municipalities are not only regional neighbors of Geddes, but have a similar Town/Village geographic dynamic that Geddes has with Solvay.

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Both municipalities currently operate separate court systems. The Town of DeWitt has two justices and four full time clerks, and the Village of East Syracuse has one justice and one full time clerk (Sittig 10, 2012). One of the justices from DeWitt also serves as a backup justice for East Syracuse (Sittig 10, 2012). Consolidation may reduce the number of staff and associated salaries, and thus save money. One major concern with consolidation of staff, if the justice from the Village is brought into the Town court, is that the justice would need a pay increase because the current salary is roughly equivalent to 25% of the salaries earned by the DeWitt justices (Sittig 12, 2014).

Another issue that complicates the possibility of consolidation is the fact that DeWitt's Justice Court earns more revenue than expenses, whereas the East Syracuse Justice Court has higher expenses than revenues (Sittig 10-11, 2012). If they consolidated, the Town of DeWitt might lose its current surplus, which may make consolidation less attractive to them (Sittig 15, 2012). The Village of East Syracuse has a greater incentive to consolidate than DeWitt, because they might be able to join DeWitt and become a part of its surplus-generating court system (Sittig 15, 2012).

The issues that were discussed in this case study include consolidation of staff, addressing pay discrepancies between staff members of different municipalities, and differences in revenue-raising capabilities between the municipalities. We recognize that many of these issues that were raised in the DeWitt/East Syracuse case study also exist in Geddes and Solvay, and must be addressed if a successful consolidation is to occur. Similarities noted in the DeWitt/ East Syracuse study exist between Solvay and Geddes, and there are opportunities to apply the conclusions from this consolidation study to the current municipal court structure in Geddes.

### **CASE STUDY: VILLAGE AND TOWN OF COBLESKILL**

A 2008 study was conducted to determine potential benefits, as well as drawbacks, of consolidating the justice court systems of the Village of Cobleskill and the Town of Cobleskill. When the study was published, the Town used the Village Hall to hold its court, and paid a

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rental fee to the Village (“Village and Town of Cobleskill” 5, 2008). The Village had one elected justice, one acting/appointed justice, and one full time clerk, and the Town had two elected justices and one part time clerk (“Village and Town of Cobleskill” 5, 2008).

New York State law requires Towns, but not Villages, to have justice courts. Thus, in order to consolidate, the Village Court would need to become a part of the Town Court (“Village and Town of Cobleskill” 14, 2008). One of the potential benefits highlighted is a potential cost savings of \$10,000 if the municipalities are able to reduce the number of justices or clerks through attrition (“Village and Town of Cobleskill” 14-15, 2008). Some other benefits of consolidation include making it easier to coordinate cases with the county’s district attorney staff, as well as helping to eliminate confusion on behalf of the residents who are unsure of which court to go to (“Village and Town of Cobleskill” 14-15, 2008). One major concern regarding consolidation is whether or not the Village will lose revenue, since it has the majority of the cases between the two municipalities, and would be consolidating into the Town’s court system (“Village and Town of Cobleskill” 14-15, 2008). However, despite those concerns, it is plausible that consolidation will still be worth it for the Village. The Village could keep all revenues that are generated as a result of fines for violation of Village ordinances, and there is a general belief that net revenues will increase as long as the number of cases remains constant and that consolidation cuts the intended costs (“Village and Town of Cobleskill” 14-15, 2008). The case study of the Village and Town of Cobleskill is important for Geddes because of it shows possible full consolidation opportunities for communities that already have existing cooperation.

### **CASE STUDY: ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY**

A study was conducted in February of this year to discuss the feasibility of consolidating justice courts in the Towns of Edwards, Hermon and Russell in St. Lawrence County. Currently Edwards has two justices and no clerk, and Hermon and Russell both have one justice and one clerk each (“St. Lawrence County” 5, 2014). Under New York State Law, Towns are usually required to have at least two justices for their courts; however, they may reduce that number to

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one via a referendum process, which is what both Hermon and Russell have elected to do (“St. Lawrence County” 5, 2014).

In 2011 these three courts heard a combined total 1,122 cases, and 1,046 in 2010, most of which were traffic related (“St. Lawrence County” 15, 2014). The total number of caseloads is small, and consolidation seems plausible, especially since the costs of these courts have exceeded their revenues over the past several years (“St. Lawrence County” 11, 2014). Furthermore, the costs of operating the courts are exacerbated due to the often overlooked but high indirect costs, such as utilities for the buildings housing the courts (“St. Lawrence County” 12, 2014).

One option for the three Towns to pursue is to co-locate their court facilities, which could be beneficial in reducing the number of trips the county district attorney would have to make to each town, as well as allowing the three towns to reduce the resources needed to maintain and improve court buildings (“St. Lawrence County” 30-31, 2014). One downside of the co-location option is citizen concern over losing a court that is closer to their homes and easier to travel to (“St. Lawrence County” 30-31, 2014).

Another option is to create a regional court facility. This option is similar to the co-location option, but would combine the entire county into one location, which will enable the court to become more efficient through using economies of scale to hire a more professional staff, as well as have the option to reduce the number of justices and overall staff members through attrition (“St. Lawrence County” 35-36, 2014). This option requires the cooperation and buy-in of many municipalities, some of whom might be reluctant to relinquish control of their own justice court due to fears of increased travel time to a regional court, and the discomfort that accompanies the loss of familiarity with a smaller local court (“St. Lawrence County” 35-36, 2014). Another option for consolidation and saving costs is to share a full time court clerk, who could handle the combined caseload of the three courts (“St. Lawrence County” 36, 2014).

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Several other opportunities for cost savings were investigated, such as the coordination of court scheduling so as to reduce scheduling conflicts and to also reduce the burden on county personnel that have to travel to the different municipal courts to transport prisoners (“St. Lawrence County” 37, 2014).

Another opportunity is to improve the level of technology in the courtroom to improve efficiency and reduce costs, and an example of how this would function is through the installation of video technology. This would enable justices to conduct video conferences with county prisoners, and thus reduce time and transportation costs (“St. Lawrence County” 38, 2014). Although these are not larger consolidation projects such as sharing staff or merging courts, they are short-term collaborative efforts that can be taken between municipalities to increase cooperation and help improve efficiency in areas like scheduling.

This case study was important in assisting our analysis of the court structure of Geddes because it revealed several different consolidation scenarios that create cost savings, as well as shorter term collaborative efforts that municipalities could take as steps toward long term consolidation.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the following sections, three scenarios for the Town of Geddes to follow have been outlined with the objectives of increasing efficiency, expanding collaboration and consolidation between Geddes and Solvay, and reducing costs. The first two scenarios are feasible in the short-term, and the last could be a long-term consolidation goal. The scenarios can be implemented individually, but are meant to be interpreted as a “step system” in which the short-term scenarios are implemented first to pave the way for a smoother transition into the long-term scenario.

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## **RECOMMENDATION 1: UNIFIED SCHEDULING SYSTEM**

One of the issues that became apparent upon investigating the current court systems in the Town of Geddes and the Village of Solvay is the problem of scheduling conflicts (Lenweaver and Ladouceur 2014). The clerks of both municipalities no longer work in the same office due to space limitations, which has had the negative effect of reducing communication between the two court departments, especially in regard to scheduling (Lenweaver and Ladouceur 2014). The Town of Geddes requests Solvay share its scheduling plans with them in order to avoid conflict, especially since Geddes has technical ownership of court facilities, but this schedule sharing does not always occur (Lenweaver and Ladouceur 2014).

For the Town of Geddes, a process similar to this is an important first step to take because it will reduce the unnecessary burden on the court clerks who must make uncertain decisions about scheduling. Once a court date or hearing is scheduled, and a conflict does arise, the clerk must take even more time to remedy the conflict. Ideally, both courts should had a unified system of scheduling in which clerks from each municipality can review the calendar and see all past and future events, allowing the clerks to work more effectively. This would reduce the burden of scheduling for court clerks, and can be expected to increase cooperation between the two municipalities that can serve as a foundation for stronger collaboration and consolidation opportunities in the future.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2: CONSOLIDATING COURT DATES FOR SOLVAY & GEDDES.**

The proposal aims to redesign the current schedule of Geddes and Solvay courts so that court is held for both municipalities on the same day of the week. As discussed earlier, the Town of Geddes court is held on separate days for the Town and Village. (Lenweaver and Ladouceur 2014). Currently, the Town is responsible for paying for utilities, office supplies and providing custodial services for the courtroom, though the two municipalities share the cost for a printer

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(Lenweaver and Ladouceur 2014). There is an opportunity for scheduling changes to be made to alleviate these conflicts. Under this scenario, Town and Village court would take place on the same date with a time block for each set for one court to be in session, while the second court session would follow directly afterwards.

This type of co-sharing of courtroom facilities has been recommended in other local government settings, including St. Lawrence County. A local government efficiency study funded by New York State concluded there is an opportunity for the Towns of Edwards, Hermon & Russell located within the county to co-share court facilities and reduce the redundancy and cost of providing this service (St. Lawrence County Court Study, 2014). The Town of Geddes and Village of Solvay could create a similar structure, in which court begins for one municipality at 3:30 PM until 5:30 PM, while a short break occurs before the next municipality begins their court session, from 6:00 PM until 8:00 PM. Clerks for each municipality would work during their designated court session, while security would remain consistent for the evening. Municipal judges would alternate as a new court session begins.

The anticipated benefits of this proposal for the Town include reduced expenses for utilities, lighting, and custodial fees that must be paid to currently operate the courtroom two days each week. By consolidating court sessions into one day per week, the Town custodian would be responsible for cleanup in the courtroom after one court day rather than two. There could be more flexibility with holding arraignment hearings on various days, and any transportation of convicted persons to the Onondaga County holding facility for both the Town and the Village would be held on the same evening. This could result in real potential savings, in which officers would be transporting criminals on one evening, and the payments for that time put in by police could be shared by the two municipalities. Without a strong understanding of the exact cost per court date, it would be hard to quantify the anticipated cost-savings at this stage, but this recommendation is expected to improve efficiency and relieve the financial and scheduling burden of hosting court for the two municipalities.

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### **RECOMMENDATION 3: CONSOLIDATION OF GEDDES AND SOLVAY COURTS**

This scenario is recommended as a long term strategy that could provide benefits to the Town and reduce court expenditures each year. The two courts would be merged into the Town's Justice Court, and all personnel would be relocated into one joint department. Ideally, these personnel would be located in one office. With a consolidation of courts, there is an opportunity for the new justice department to reduce the number of clerks to three rather than the four clerks currently employed between both municipalities. This would reduce the personnel expenses by eliminating the total cost of one part time clerk, which is estimated to be \$14,800 per year (Solvay 2013 budget). The number of judges who work for the merged court could be reduced to two, likely maintaining the current system Geddes uses of alternating judge duties each week between them.

A consolidation of both courts would result in sessions being held on the same day each week, with one general session where cases are heard and tried. Three full time clerks would manage court that day; one person sitting alongside the judge to organize cases, another to sign in defendants, and a third clerk that would oversee and step in as needed. Based on court functions, at least two clerks are needed every time court is held (Lenweaver and Ladouceur, 2014). Based on this new proposed office structure, personnel costs would be reduced to \$193,535 overall, compared to the current total expense of \$214,139 for the courts together (Geddes & Solvay 2013 budgets). When adding the total revenue for the Town and Village (\$211,720), this number exceeds the expenses and results in a surplus for the court operation of \$18,185.

Additional potential benefit of consolidation includes the elimination of scheduling conflicts between the Village and Town due to both courts being in one department. This would result in improved communication between all clerks and justices in the consolidated department, and clerks would be able to handle any case that needs attention when a defendant walks into Town hall. This would minimize confusion over which court people must report to have their

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cases handled. They would be able to report to a single court department. When defendants are convicted during arraignment hearings, transportation between the Onondaga County Holding Center and the Town court would be shared by the two municipalities and relieve the financial burden for paying overtime to officers for this service by splitting this cost.

Implementation of this proposal would require attrition to take place, in which a clerk from either Geddes or Solvay retires or vacates the position. Additionally, a justice would need to not seek re-election and a new justice would take over responsibilities for both Geddes and Solvay, along with a second judge. This proposal would allow the Town of Geddes to realize significant cost savings over the long term. Court consolidation, through the elimination of unnecessary salary positions and improved efficiency, would result in a cohesive court system that serves the Town of Geddes and Village of Solvay.

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# CONSOLIDATION OF DOG CONTROL

## **CURRENT STRUCTURE**

The Town's Dog Control unit operates within the Code Enforcement department, and responds to complaints regarding canine bites, barking, and stray dogs. The jurisdiction for dog control also includes the Village of Solvay. The office is staffed by one full time and one part time Dog Control Officer. The full time staff member is on duty from 8:30 AM until 4:30 PM, while the part time staff member is generally on duty from 6:00 PM until 9:00 PM (Albrigo). The unit handles canine issues in the Town and Village; concerns over animal cruelty or issues with other species are handled by the Central New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (CNY SPCA).

A Dog Control official estimated that they receive an average of 10 calls per week (Kulak). The origin of calls is balanced between the Town and the Village, with neither municipality dominating the staff's work load (Albrigo). Pursuant to New York State Agriculture and Markets regulation Article 7, which states Villages are not responsible for dog control service provision, Geddes Township handles all dog control issues for the Village of Solvay (NYS Mgs & Markets, Article 7). Due to this clause the Village does not compensate the Town for its dog control service.

The Town maintains a contract with the SPCA kennel located in DeWitt to impound any dogs captured by Geddes dog control. Each year the Town allocates \$4,500 to the SPCA for this service. The SPCA charges Geddes \$150 for dogs that are not collected after being impounded, though the Town has never been charged the full \$4500 allocation in a given year (Kulak). The total annual cost for providing dog control service to Solvay and Geddes is \$58,300 (Geddes FY 2014 Budget) Of this amount, \$48,700 is provided for personnel salaries (excluding benefits) and \$9,600 is provided for other expenses, inclusive of the CNY SPCA allocation.

**TABLE 3: DOG CONTROL OPERATIONS FOR GEDDES**

Expense		Dog Control Revenue		License Fee (Per Dog)	
<b>Full Time Officer</b>	\$ 37,800.00	<b>Fees/Services</b>	\$ 5,800.00	<b>Spayed/ Neutered</b>	\$ 7.00
<b>Assistant</b>	\$ 10,900.00	<b>Licenses</b>	\$ 3,000.00	<b>Not Spayed/ Neutered</b>	\$ 14.00
<b>Other</b>	\$ 9,600.00				
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 58,300.00</b>		<b>\$ 8,800.00</b>		

There are several case studies that offer insight on strategies to reduce the fiscal burden of a dog control department. The following examples can serve as options for the Town to consider pursuing when examining the cost and service efficiency of dog control for the Town.

**CASE STUDY: CONTRACT BETWEEN TOWNS OF CAMILLUS & VAN BUREN**

The Towns of Camillus and Van Buren, just west of Geddes, share a dog control department. The personnel, equipment, and operations are managed by Camillus, and Van Buren compensates the Town for these services. This inter-municipal agreement, proposed by Van Buren, was enacted in 2009 when Van Buren lost their dog control officer through attrition. (Coogan).

The Town of Camillus receives \$30,900 in annual compensation from Van Buren through their negotiated contract. Van Buren retains the \$15,500 from its dog licensing service, so its net Dog Control expense is a mere \$15,400 (Van Buren FY 2014 budget). The consolidated office is staffed by one full time and one part time staff member from 8:30 AM until 4:30 PM. Officers are on call after business hours and may respond to calls depending on the severity of the complaint.

**TABLE 4: NUMBER OF REGISTERED DOGS IN 2014**

Camillus	Van Buren	Total
3000-4000	1000-2000	4000-6000

The dog control service operates within the Camillus Police Department (Camillus website). This is because Camillus uses penal law, as opposed to ordinances, to regulate dog control. The majority of calls come within the Town of Camillus, due to the high population and number of licensed dogs compared to the Town of Van Buren (Mariano). Table 5 shows the number of calls or complaints the Town of Camillus Dog Control received from the Towns of Camillus and Van Buren. The total number of dogs impounded each year has decreased over time, with generally 100 in 2006 to between 50 to 60 in 2013 (Mariano).

**TABLE 5: NUMBER OF CALLS/COMPLAINTS TO CAMILLUS DOG CONTROL**

Year	Camillus	Van Buren	Total
<b>2013</b>	513	141	654
<b>2012</b>	491	115	606

**TABLE 6: DOG OPERATIONS FOR CAMILLUS & VAN BUREN**

Expense	Revenue	Camillus	Van Buren	License Fees/Dog	Camillus	Van Buren
Full Time Officer	\$ 49,764.00	Fees/ Services	\$ 31,594.00	N/A	Spayed/ Neutered	\$ 7.00 \$ 14.00
Assistant	\$ 6,915.00	Licenses	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,500.00	Not Spayed/ Neutered	\$ 14.00 \$ 24.50
Overtime	\$ 4,172.00					
Dog Kennel	\$ 4,300.00					
Other	\$ 19,203.00					
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 84,354.00</b>		<b>\$ 46,594.00</b>	<b>\$ 15,500.00</b>		

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## **DEWITT/MANLIUS CONTRACT WITH CNY SPCA**

The Towns of DeWitt and Manlius have developed a contract with the CNY SPCA to take over dog control for both Towns. This agreement, signed in April 2014, transmits all responsibility to the Dewitt-based nonprofit (Doran, Post-Standard, 2014).

Prior to this agreement the two Towns were sharing a dog control officer. The need for the contract arose when the dog control officer stepped down, leaving the dog control position vacant. The contract costs each Town \$22,500 per year (Doran, Post-Standard, 2014). This partnership was mutually beneficial due to availability of personnel capacity at the SPCA, and the geographic proximity of SPCA headquarters in the Town of DeWitt. Last year DeWitt received about 450 calls into the dog control department (Doran, Post-Standard, 2014).

## **SCENARIO 1: COLLABORATION WITH CAMILLUS/VAN BUREN**

### **Merging With Camillus/Van Buren**

As noted in the case study above, Camillus' dog control unit has jurisdiction across both Camillus and Van Buren. In this scenario, the dog control staff of Camillus/Van Buren and Geddes would operate as a merged department. The Full Time and Part Time staff members would join the Camillus/Van Buren operation, with the merged department consisting of four personnel total (two Full-Time and two Part-Time). The new merged operation would cover dog responsibility for Camillus, Van Buren, Geddes, and the Village of Solvay.

Camillus operates its own dog kennel that houses impounded dogs from both Camillus and Van Buren. The current facility has the capacity to hold seven dogs comfortably and nine if necessary (Mariano). The level of demand often depends on the time of year; dog control services are much busier in the spring and summer months (Mariano). This kennel space could potentially be used to house impounded dogs from each of the four municipalities. Geddes

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would no longer need to lease kennel space or impounding services from the SPCA if services were consolidated with Camillus/Van Buren.

Based on average 2012-13 calls for Camillus/Van Buren and the 10 call per week estimate from Geddes, we calculate an estimated average of 4.4 calls per day for a consolidated department. There is the potential to reduce the dog control department to three staff members (two Full Time and one Part Time), thereby reducing personnel expenses for the joint department. The consolidated dog control office would likely be located in Camillus due to its central location within the four municipalities.

There are several challenges in realizing a Camillus/Van Buren-Geddes Dog Control consolidation. The merger will likely result in a staff reduction, so it may be preferable to wait until attrition makes it possible to avoid layoffs. It will take time for such an opportunity to arise, and therefore any potential savings from a merger would be several years down the road.

Another challenge is the limited extra capacity in Camillus' kennel facility. The facility is several decades old, and a merger between Geddes and Camillus dog control may necessitate an expansion or renovation (Mariano). Further financial analysis is necessary before we can conclude that the financial gains from personnel savings would outweigh the capital expenses of a merger.

This proposed merger would also complicate the regulation of dog control issues. Camillus regulates through penal codes, while Geddes utilizes ordinances. A merger would require a common framework for enforcement. Amendments would need to be made to both Town charters to allow for standardized dog control enforcement throughout the jurisdiction of the merged department, resulting in a unified dog control area that can be enforced in a consistent manner. As the Towns of Geddes and Camillus continue to consider merging their police forces, dog control could be simultaneously merged to unite these services into one department.

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Daily hours of operation would remain the same under this proposal, with the major change being that officers would now be on call after hours, and the decision to respond to calls during evening or weekend hours would depend on the severity of the call. Due to a larger municipal jurisdiction, the number of after-hours calls would need to be distributed between the three officers. This may lead to a slower response time for Solvay and Geddes residents after business hours, but likely reduce the expenses for providing dog control by the cost of a Part Time officer salary.

### **Contracting with Camillus/Van Buren**

A similar consolidation opportunity would be to contract with Camillus/Van Buren Dog Control for services. This would mean the dissolving Geddes' Dog Control office altogether and paying Camillus/Van Buren to handle canine issues. Any contract with Camillus/Van Buren would be subject to negotiation, but there is an opportunity for cost savings if the total contract cost is less than \$58,300.

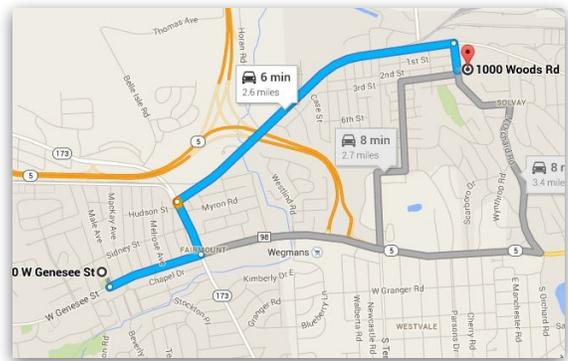
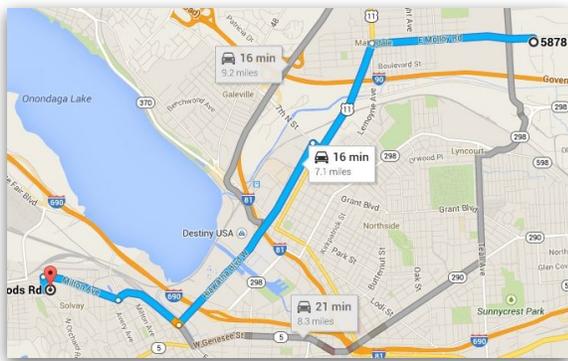
Geddes' Dog Control Officer was unsure of the exact number of annual calls they receive, but gave a rough estimate of 10 per week. This estimate is higher than Van Buren's 2012-13 average of 2.5 calls per week; we would expect any negotiated contract to cost more than \$30,900. Geddes receives four times as many calls as Van Buren, but it is unlikely a contract with Camillus would cost four times more than Van Buren's contract.

### **SCENARIO 2: CONTRACTING OUT TO CNY SPCA**

Town leadership should also consider contracting out to CNY SPCA for dog control services. CNY SPCA, as noted in the case study section, recently signed agreements with Dewitt and Manlius to assume responsibility for dog control for \$22,500 annually. Geddes already allots \$4500 annually for SPCA kennel services. We recommend Geddes open a dialogue with CNY SPCA to assess whether they would be open to picking up another municipality's dog control contract.

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Geddes is geographically further from CNY SPCA than Dewitt and Manlius, but cost savings could be achieved here even assuming a contract surcharge for the extra distance. The maps below indicate the locations of CNY SPCA (right) and Camillus/Van Buren Dog Control (left) relative to Geddes Town Hall. CNY SPCA is located 7.1 miles away in the Town of Dewitt, and Camillus Town Hall is 2.6 miles from Geddes.



Using \$22,500 as a base, a hypothetical contract with CNY SPCA including a 20% distance surcharge and the existing \$4,500 kennel space lease- would cost \$31,500. Geddes could realize estimated cost savings of \$26,700 by eliminating its Dog Control department and contracting out to CNY SPCA. We attempted to contact CNY SPCA to assess the possibility of such a contract but did not succeed; it should be noted that the Geddes contract figures are only estimates.

Contracting out would mean the loss of local control over dog control services and the elimination of one Full Time and one Part Time position. Contracting out will be most achievable if it is pursued during a time of transition or employee attrition. One tactic for addressing this concern is to ensure existing staff members are considered for employment by the contracting organization.

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## **FINAL RECOMMENDATION**

Based on our analysis of these scenarios, we believe contracting out responsibility for dog control to Camillus is the most promising avenue to pursue. This decision is based on feasibility as well as the potential cost savings.

The Town of Van Buren already experienced success in contracting for dog control services with the Town of Camillus, and there is reason to believe a similar contract can be made with Geddes. Upgrades and a possible expansion may be required for the kennel facility Camillus owns and operates, and a joint partnership with Geddes could make this merger attractive for both parties.

Furthermore, the ongoing discussions over merging police services between Camillus and Geddes lead us to believe this would be an opportune time for dog control services to be consolidated with Camillus. Also, Camillus is geographically closer than the CNY SPCA where Geddes currently impounds stray dogs. Geddes would have to negotiate a price below \$58,300 for a contract with Camillus to result in cost savings for Geddes.

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## CONSOLIDATION OPPORTUNITIES IN HEALTHCARE

The costs of providing quality health insurance to both employees and retirees has become a major financial burden on the Town of Geddes, as well as municipalities across the country. This section describes successful efforts in Tompkins County, New York to reduce costs by consolidating municipal health insurance coverage. Comparisons between Tompkins County and Onondaga County highlight how the Tompkins County Consortium can be emulated by Geddes. The section also identifies the necessary actions, potential benefits, and challenges of consolidating health coverage in Geddes with its surrounding municipalities.

### **TOMPKINS COUNTY HEALTH INSURANCE CONSORTIUM CASE STUDY**

In 2007 Tompkins County received a \$266,000 grant from the New York State Shared Municipal Services Incentive program to explore ways municipalities could pool resources and become self-insured (Tompkins County Health Benefits Steering Committee Report). The objective was to assist small municipalities in Tompkins County to leverage their numbers and drive down costs.

In order to coordinate efforts across the 17 municipalities of Tompkins County, the Tompkins County Council of Governments (TCCOG), a board comprised of representatives from each municipality and the county created to aid in addressing countywide issues, appointed a Health Benefits Steering Committee (Tompkins County Health Benefits Steering Committee Report). This steering committee was comprised of TCCOG members, representatives of the county library, Tompkins Cortland Community College, the medical community, the county Health Planning Council and the Controller of the Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga (TST) BOCES (Tompkins County Health Benefits Steering Committee Report). Because the TST BOCES had experience creating a healthcare consortium for the schools in the district, the Controller of the TST BOCES was an especially important part of the advisory committee (Tompkins County Health Benefits Steering Committee Report).

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The Health Benefits Steering Committee established a three phase approach to the issue. During the first phase the committee established a common vision, and hired a consultant to draft a cooperative agreement for the consortium (Tompkins County Health Benefits Steering Committee Report). This agreement was continually reviewed throughout the development process and was adopted by all parties when the benefit plan was established. The second and third phase, plan design and implementation, respectively, created the strategy and operations of the consortium which was then approved by the New York State Insurance Department and the consortium began collecting premiums on January 1, 2010 (Koplinka-Loehr, 2009).

## **NEW YORK INSURANCE LAW ARTICLE 47**

All municipal cooperative health benefit plans (MCHBP), such as the Greater Tompkins County Municipal Employee Health Insurance Consortium, are authorized and regulated by Article 47 of the New York Insurance Law (“Cooperative Health Insurance Purchasing: Article 47 Impediments” 1, 2007). In order for municipalities to self-insure as an MCHBP, they must meet size and reserve requirements contained within Article 47 (“Cooperative Health Insurance Purchasing: Article 47 Impediments” 1-2, 2007).

The size requirements are that at least five municipalities must participate in the MCHBP, with a minimum of at least 2000 current or retired employees (“Cooperative Health Insurance Purchasing: Article 47 Impediments” 1-2, 2007). The reserve requirements are in place to ensure that the MCHBP can pay all of its bills if costs are higher than expected, and include provisions such as maintaining reserves for unearned premium equivalents, claim stabilization, other obligations, and a reserve for payments and claims which must be equal to 25% of the expected value of claims and payments costs (“Cooperative Health Insurance Purchasing: Article 47 Impediments” 2, 2007). The MCHBP must also have a surplus account, which

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should be at least 5% of the premiums collected each year (“Cooperative Health Insurance Purchasing: Article 47 Impediments” 2, 2007).

## **BENEFITS OF CONSORTIUM: COST SAVINGS IN TOMPKINS COUNTY**

The main purpose of the Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium is to reduce healthcare costs, and in the first year of its implementation in 2011, the Consortium saved the participating governments \$865,630 (Appendix B). The savings are the difference between the 2011 Consortium cost of \$26,721,927, and the aggregate \$27,587,556 it would have cost all governments to continue with their own insurance policies, a savings of 3.1 percent (Appendix B). The estimated 2011 rates that the municipalities would have been charged if the Consortium had not gone into effect were determined by the consultants hired to help enact the project, “the consultants estimated what the premiums would have been, based on historical rates, and rates that like-municipalities were charged” (Kippola 2014).

By spreading the risk of high healthcare costs across a larger pool, the Consortium reduced the per person size of the contributions required to cover the costs of the sick and injured, especially for smaller governments (Kippola 2014).

The Consortium was also able to reduce administrative costs by self-insuring rather than purchasing coverage through insurance companies (Kippola 2014). The Consortium hires a single company at a fixed rate to administer the collection of premiums and payment of medical bills (Kippola 2014). Prior to the implementation of the Consortium, the municipalities and Tompkins County would individually negotiate with the insurance companies to determine the administrative cost on a per person basis (Kippola 2014). During the creation of the Consortium, the administrative rates were compared between the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County, and the rates were found to be different, despite being from the same company, using the same doctors with the same care plans, and being located in the same geographic area (Kippola 2014).

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After the creation of the Consortium, requests for proposal were issued for third party administrators of both the health plan and the prescription drug plan, resulting in lower administrative costs than any of the municipalities had previously. (Kippola, 2014). Self-insurance reduces costs by removing the profits collected by the insurance companies, as well as enables the Consortium to invest extra funds to generate future revenues and reduce costs even further (Koplinka-Loehr, 1, 2009). The current structure of the Consortium is that 93% of the premiums collected are used to pay claims, and the other 7% is used for investments, administrative costs, and as a reserve in case of catastrophic and very expensive claims, which is “leaner than any of the municipalities’ prior plans” (Kippola 2014).

Other cost savings included in the Consortium are competitive bidding request for proposal processes to hire third party administrators and auditors (Kippola 2014). The competitive bidding process forces firms to lower their costs or risk losing the contract to other bidders. The Consortium uses audit processes to determine whether or not the third party administrators are honoring their contracts, as well as removing people who do not warrant coverage, such as divorced spouses of municipal employees (Kippola 2014). These audits ensure that the Consortium is running efficiently and does not have any wasteful or unnecessary spending.

The Consortium has also included a wellness program to encourage the employees to make healthier life decisions such as dieting or increasing their amount of exercise (Kippola 2014). It is difficult to measure the results of wellness or preventative programs, and the results, if any, are in the long term. Healthier individuals, however, are expected to have fewer medical problems and expenses. The Consortium intends to monitor the wellness program to determine the long run effects (Kippola 2014).

A major benefit of the Consortium for the participating municipalities, as well as Tompkins County, is the stability of the rate increases. On average, the yearly insurance premiums for the Consortium have increased 9% each year (Kippola 2014). Prior to the Consortium,

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municipalities in Tompkins County experienced more volatile rate increases ranging as high as 17% from year to year in some municipalities (Kippola 2014). The stable growth rates in premiums brought along by the consortium make it easier for municipalities to budget expenses than under their former and more unpredictable healthcare systems (Kippola 2014).

## **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES MOVING FORWARD FOR GEDDES**

The Tompkins County experience suggests Geddes ought to consider collaborating with neighboring municipalities on health insurance coverage. If Geddes does decide to pursue collaboration in this area, there will be numerous challenges and opportunities.

### **Challenges**

As with any complex endeavor involving a host of actors, development and implementation of a healthcare consortium is challenging. Here, we discuss four of these challenges.

### **Resource Constraints**

Creating a consortium is a time intensive process with no assurances of success. The municipalities in Tompkins County took 18 months to develop an initial cooperative agreement, and an additional two years to plan and create the consortium itself. During this time, there were no assurances that the consortium would work as intended and any individual could have pulled out of the negotiations at any point in time.

Geddes is bound to face a similar context if this strategy is pursued. The Town will not only have to invest financial resources, such as hiring a consultant, in order to get the consortium up and running but also a significant amount of time. Tompkins County contains 16 municipalities while Onondaga County is made up of 34. Although not all of the municipalities in the county will be involved in the process, coordinating amongst those who chose to opt into the project will be a time intensive process. Furthermore, this will detract from other ongoing projects and daily operations as a project of this magnitude is bound to attract media attention which Town

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officials will have to deal with and is likely to require coordination with all departments in the Township in order to ensure all workers are on board.

Onondaga County does not have the same level of coordination as Tompkins County. One of the keys to the successful implementation of the Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium (TCMHIC) was the strong leadership and close knit relationships created by the Tompkins County Council of Governments (Koplinka-Loehr, 2009). All the municipalities in Tompkins County were able to jointly set up an intergovernmental group to focus on building the health consortium because of their prior experience working together. Furthermore, the County took a strong leadership role and was able to bring all the key players, both within and outside of government, to the table at the same time.

Onondaga County can build the same kind of institutional relations but, at this point, the level of leadership in the County is not the same, as evidenced by the failure of the Onondaga County Employee Benefits Association (OCEBA). OCEBA was created in 1991 as a platform for municipalities to buy their insurance together in order to achieve discounted rates (“OCEBA Participants” 2014). As opposed to TCMHIC, OCEBA did not attempt to self-insure, rather it looked simply to exploit strength in numbers (“OCEBA Participants” 2014). Still, the plan should have led to significant cost savings for municipalities as they would no longer have to buy insurance individually. Unfortunately, the plan was not able to deliver on its cost savings promised because fewer municipalities than expected signed up citing contractual obligations and the challenges of managing risk as the main reasons (Glazier 2014). Currently OCEBA is still operational but did not achieve the expected cost savings and is comprised of seven Towns and five Villages but does not include Geddes (“OCEBA Participants” 2014).

### **Contractual Obligations**

One of the major challenges Tompkins County faced, and an important reason why OCEBA failed, was each individual municipalities’ contractual obligations. Municipalities may not be free to leave their current plans in order to sign up for the insurance offered through the consortium

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and individual labor unions may prefer to continue to work with private insurance for a host of reasons including familiarity or perceived risks of changing the status quo. Furthermore, insurance companies may lobby officials in an attempt to maintain their lucrative contracts.

In the case of OCEBA, many of the municipalities were interested in joining the program but were not able to break their current long-term contracts or convince their labor unions that the proposed plan would be better than the one already in existence (Glazier 2014). The loss of municipalities undermined the bargaining power of OCEBA as the risk pool was smaller and did not drive down costs to the levels originally expected.

### **Risk Management**

Along with already existing contracts, managing the risk in the new pool is arguably the most difficult part of the consortium. Certain municipalities may have a higher median age or be an otherwise unattractive additions from a risk standpoint. Those entities with a younger population or with a better benefits package have little incentive to join forces leading to a negative selection bias. In order to address this problem, Geddes and all the other municipalities would have to undertake an assessment of their workforce, recognizing that those with high healthcare costs and risk stand to benefit the most from joining the Consortium. Furthermore, in the past the County has been reluctant to partner with municipalities to provide insurance due to the perception that municipalities have older demographics which would lead to higher insurance costs.

### **Opportunities**

Despite the challenges, Geddes stands to benefit from pursuing collaboration on health care coverage. Here we detail several reasons why pursuing health care partnerships may make sense for Geddes.

### **Health Insurance Contracts Set to Expire**

This year, Geddes' healthcare contracts are set to expire, and this presents an opportunity for the Town to move away from its present plans and gear up for a consortium style of providing

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care to its employees. At the very least, the Town can begin a dialogue with its labor union representatives, and better understand how building a consortium with the buy-in of organized labor, might be possible.

### **Get a Head Start and Take Advantage of State Aid**

By initiating collaboration, Geddes can potentially get a handle on controlling its increasing healthcare costs, which increased 9.55% alone in the past fiscal year. Geddes also has the opportunity to receive assistance from the state in the form of an SMS grant to explore a health insurance consortium and collaboration with its neighbors in Onondaga County (Glazier 2014). The Town should act while New York State is still willing to grant them funds to assist in the creation of a potential consortium.

### **Build on Current Cooperation Entities**

Other opportunities that exist for Geddes center on mutual benefits and cooperation with the Town's neighbors. There are not many strong intergovernmental councils that have been established, but Geddes does have the opportunity to build on some existing organizations, such as the Supervisors Association and Mayors Association in Onondaga County (Glazier 2014). The Onondaga County Employee Benefits Association (OCEBA), that was designed to drive down group health insurance costs ("OCEBA Participants" 2014), is another entity that can organize collaboration efforts. Geddes does not currently participate in OCEBA, but should consider joining or consult with them in order to gain firsthand experience about the process.

### **Exploit the Possibilities of Mutual Gain**

Geddes also has the opportunity to sell the consortium to its neighbors due to mutual benefit. Many of the municipalities in Central New York are facing the difficult challenge of paying for rising healthcare costs. If a consortium has the possibility to reduce the costs and to slow the increase in costs, municipalities may have a mutual interest to join forces and create a consortium for the common good and mutual benefit.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

This section has described the possibility of the Town of Geddes creating and joining a health insurance Consortium with its neighbors in Onondaga County to drive down costs and still provide quality care for municipal employees. The case study of the Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium provided valuable insight into the process by which Geddes may lead the creation of a consortium in Onondaga County, as well as the potential cost savings. If Geddes chooses to pursue the creation of a healthcare consortium with its neighbors, as we believe it should, there are several steps it must take.

### **Open Dialogue with Labor Unions During Contract Negotiations**

As was previously mentioned during the opportunities section above, the Town of Geddes will negotiate a renewal of healthcare benefits with the labor unions representing the municipal employees this year. Since labor input is necessary for a consortium to begin, let alone succeed, the critical first step will be to open dialogue with the labor unions so that the best interests of all parties involved can be addressed. Coalition building with the labor unions must happen, and the important first step for Geddes is to make sure that the municipal employee labor unions are willing to work with the Town to build a consortium, before other municipalities can be courted.

### **Geddes Must be a Leader and Establish a Dialogue with its Neighbors**

A health insurance consortium is a collaborative agreement between several municipalities to jointly provide health insurance to their employees. The Town of Geddes needs at least four other municipalities to join its consortium, totaling at least 2000 employees and retirees. Thus, Geddes must be able to open a dialogue with its neighboring municipalities. Since the creation of a consortium is a long process and requires the input of many stakeholders, establishing early lines of communication, in which all the municipalities may voice their ideas and concerns, will help move the process forward. Once willing municipalities are able to negotiate with each other and are committed to the creation of a consortium, the process of establishing the consortium can move forward.

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**Apply for the shared municipal services grant from New York State and hire a consultant to provide a more detailed analysis.**

Once appropriate dialogue and group participation has been established, the next step is to search for funding in order to get the project off the ground. As previously mentioned, the New York State has a local government efficiency program through which it sponsors municipalities seeking opportunities for cooperation. Geddes, along with all the other stakeholders, should apply for this grant jointly in order to explore the feasibility of the consortium more in depth.

As was the case with Tompkins County, Geddes should use the funds from the shared municipal services grant in order to hire a consultant. Specifically, they need the consultant to provide a risk assessment of the employee pool and a concrete set of next steps. The demographics of the population being insured will allow the municipalities to have a better estimate of the level of service available at various premiums. Furthermore, if the risk in the existing pool is too high, the consortium can strategically target municipalities with different risk profiles to mitigate risk and increase savings.

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# CONCLUSION

Local government service consolidation is a useful tool for addressing budgetary concerns, especially in the challenging fiscal environment facing Geddes and other neighboring municipalities. Beyond cost savings, service consolidation can also be beneficial where it improves organizational structure or service delivery processes. However, there is no best way to consolidate local services, and hasty service consolidation may do more harm than good. Broad issues of service quality, staff downsizing, and loss of local control in service delivery need to be carefully considered before municipal managers move forward with service consolidation. Each new venture requires a situation-specific cost-benefit analysis and negotiation with potential municipal partners, but there are several broad elements common across successful municipal collaborations.

Consolidation requires certain managerial capacities. From the beginning, parties looking to consolidate must jointly agree on the way a consolidation will take form. This requires these individuals to be transparent when defining their new roles and responsibilities as well as their interests and desired outcomes. Setting up consolidations in this manner helps to reinforce trusting relationships, which lays the foundation for future collaborative arrangements. Issues surrounding turf, egos, and a fear of losing control can hinder any collaborative efforts between local governments. These arrangements cannot administer themselves; they require a good faith and transparent effort from involved parties to ensure their success. Moving forward with the recommendations, we advise for Geddes to make a good faith effort of applying the five factors from Thompson and Perry (2006) to future consolidations, building partners for future collaborative endeavors.

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The main objective of this report was to provide the Town of Geddes with recommendations to consolidate services in order to realize cost savings and operation efficiencies. Code Enforcement, Dog Control, Courts, and Healthcare Insurance Provision were identified as service areas that show promising opportunities for consolidation.

For Code Enforcement, our group recommends that the two staffs be combined, and administrative functions like permit application processing, be merged into a unified system. Further, the department should consider adopting electronic code enforcement software.

For Dog Control, we recommend Geddes consider contracting out its dog control service to Camillus, as Van Buren successfully did in 2009. Geddes can realize cost savings if it can negotiate a contract for less than the \$58,300 it currently spends.

In regard to Courts, we believe that the long-term goal of consolidating the Solvay Court and Geddes Court will produce salary cost savings through attrition of a part-time staff members. In addition to this long-term goal, we also recommend two short-term steps that Geddes can take in conjunction with Solvay, which include creating a joint scheduling system for both courts, as well as holding court sessions on the same day for both municipalities.

Our group investigated possibilities to reduce the cost of providing the municipal employees of Geddes with health insurance, and researched a healthcare insurance consortium that exists in Tompkins County, NY. The municipalities of Tompkins County have witnessed cost savings, as well as stable premium cost increases, and we believe the possibility of a healthcare consortium with neighboring municipalities in Onondaga County is something that Geddes should investigate further. State funding in the form of grants is available to hire consultants for such research.

As the Town of Geddes begins to consider next steps, it is vital to collect additional data in order to make informed decisions. The quantitative analysis in this report was limited by time

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and resource constraints, and there are several pieces of additional information that the Town should collect before moving forward with implementation.

In some service areas, such as healthcare insurance provision and code enforcement, there is valuable additional information unique to that service area. If Geddes decides to move forward with the healthcare consortium, the Town must first collect demographic information about their insurance risk pool and partnering municipalities risk pools. Secondly, Geddes should analyze each partnering government's health insurance cost structure in order to understand the role that insurance premiums play in inflating costs. In the case of codes enforcement, Geddes can use the workload indicators on the 1203 Uniform Code report to better assess potential benefits of consolidation. Gathering and analyzing this information will help provide a more accurate picture of the potential cost savings and the appropriate structure for consolidation.

On the other hand, there are some overarching performance indicators of which Geddes should be aware. Specifically, the Town should take the time to understand the average workload of its employees, the average time it takes for workers to complete relevant tasks, and the service capacity of partnering municipalities. Deeper analysis would have been possible in the dog control, courts and code enforcement service areas with more detailed workload indicators for these employees. Furthermore, understanding the time requirements of the different types of cases the Town court deals with and the time the codes team allocates to local issues as opposed to the uniform code would have also been extremely helpful.

Geddes should consider using New York State's Local Government Efficiency (LGe) program to further explore the recommended consolidation strategies. The Town can propose a study on one or more of the specific service areas outlined for cost savings and service efficiency if municipal managers are willing to fund 50% of the study cost.

The Township of Geddes has made considerable progress in its consolidation efforts. We hope the recommendations in this report assist Township leaders in identifying additional cost

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savings. Municipal consolidation is a complex and challenging process, but Geddes can continue to improve service delivery for its citizens through further study and deliberate cooperation.

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## APPENDIX A

### **NYS LGE GRANT APPLICATION**

The 2014-2015 Local Government Efficiency Grant Program Application and Instructions can be found at

<[http://www.dos.ny.gov/funding/rfa-14-lge-7/LGE\\_LGEG\\_RFA.pdf](http://www.dos.ny.gov/funding/rfa-14-lge-7/LGE_LGEG_RFA.pdf)>



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## APPENDIX C

### **NYS DEPARTMENT OF STATE, CODE ENFORCEMENT DIVISION**

James King  
315-428-4434

Syracuse Office  
State Office Building  
333 E. Washington Street  
Syracuse, NY 13202

Serving the Counties of Onondaga, Cayuga, Cortland, Chenango, and Oswego

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## APPENDIX D

### **LIST OF INTERVIEWS**

Peter Albrigo  
Codes Enforcement Officer, Town of Geddes

Joyce Ballschmieder  
Comptroller, Town of Geddes

Jamie Colucci  
Former Solvay Village Board Member

Mary Ann Coogan  
Town Supervisor, Town of Camillus

James Ennis  
Former Geddes Town Board Member

Emanuele Falcone  
Town Supervisor, Town of Geddes

Lucy Fox  
Geddes Assessment officer, Town of Geddes

Travis Glazier  
Director of Intergovernmental Relations, Onondaga County

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Jackie Kippola  
Risk Manager, Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium

Mark Kulak  
Dog Control Officer, Town of Geddes

Mike LaFlair  
2nd Ward Councilor, Town of Camillus

Karen Ladouceur  
Justice Department Clerk, Town of Geddes

Barbara Lenweaver  
Justice Department Clerk, Town of Geddes

Melissa Mariano  
Dog Control Officer, Town of Camillus

Tom Price  
Codes Enforcement Officer, Town of Camillus