



La Crosse Area Planning Committee

*Metropolitan Planning Organization
Serving the La Crosse/La Crescent Urbanized Area*

Peter Fletcher, Director Jackie Eastwood, Transportation Planner
La Crosse County Administrative Center
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LA CROSSE COUNTY NOTICE OF MEETING

COMMITTEE OR BOARD:	SPECIAL MEETING OF THE LA CROSSE AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING:	WEDNESDAY, September 25, 2019
MEETING PLACE:	ROOM 0430 - ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER 212 6th STREET N, LA CROSSE, WI 54601
TIME OF MEETING:	4:00 P.M.
PURPOSE OF MEETING:	Informational Meeting on potential study of Fire/EMS service sharing among agencies
1.	Introductions and welcome: Chair, Mike Poellinger and Steve O'Malley, County Administrator
2.	Public comment
3.	Overview of the project study proposal: Fire & EMS Service Sharing in La Crosse County by Rob Henken, Wisconsin Policy Forum
4.	Q & A from potential study participants
5.	Discussion about how to pay for cost of study
6.	Confirm participant municipalities and departments, or timeline for decision to participate
7.	Set a project timeline for the study and frequency of meetings
8.	Next meeting of the advisory study committee
9.	Adjourn

NOTICES FAXED/MAILED TO:

NEWS MEDIA

La Crosse Tribune
Other Media

OTHERS

LAPC Technical Committees
Public Participation Process List

DEPARTMENTS

County Administrator
Corporation Counsel
County Clerk
Facilities

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mike Poellinger, Chair
Patrick Barlow
Tara Johnson/Mike Giese
Tim Kabat
Dennis Manthei/Scott Schumacher
Linda Seidel
Tim Candahl
Rolly Bogert/Jerry Monti
Terry Schaller
Joe Chilsen

MEMBERS: Please RSVP to Terri Pavlic, Administrative Assistant for the County Administrator 608-785-9700 or tpavlic@lacrossecounty.org.

***PUBLIC COMMENT:** The Committee may receive information from the public, but the Committee reserves the right to limit the time that the public may comment and the degree to which members of the public may participate in the meeting.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITY: If you need accommodation to attend this meeting, please contact the County Clerk's Office at (608)785-9581 as soon as possible.

The LAPC reserves the right to reconsider issues taken up at previous meetings. Documents are mailed to LAPC Policy Board members; please contact the LAPC office to obtain copies. If you have a disability and need assistance participating in this meeting, please contact Jackie Eastwood at 608.785.6141 or at jeastwood@lacrossecounty.org at least one week in advance of the meeting.

DATE NOTICE FAXED/MAILED/POSTED: September 10, 2019

**This meeting may be recorded and any such recording is subject to
Disclosure under the Wisconsin Open Records Law**



WISCONSIN POLICY FORUM

Fire & EMS Service Sharing in La Crosse County

September 2019

Background

Consideration of shared or consolidated fire and emergency medical services has become commonplace in recent years in Wisconsin and across the nation. In the southeast Wisconsin region, the existence of a highly successful consolidated fire department in Milwaukee County's North Shore – which has seen improved response times and reduced administrative overhead since its creation in 1995 – combined with the already substantial cooperation that exists among neighboring fire departments has prompted several communities to explore consolidation. In fact, the Wisconsin Policy Forum (WPF) has conducted five separate fire and EMS service sharing studies for municipalities in Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha counties over the past seven years, and we are about to launch a similar analysis in Jefferson County.

Among the important potential benefits of fire service consolidation is the opportunity to preserve or enhance fire protection and EMS service levels while also reducing costs. In light of strict property tax levy limits facing Wisconsin municipalities and the substantial share of municipal budgets devoted to fire and EMS services, many communities are facing difficult decisions regarding their ability to maintain existing service levels. Consolidation or enhanced service sharing with neighboring municipalities may offer an opportunity to spread fire and EMS costs across multiple jurisdictions while maintaining (or even enhancing) existing levels of staff and apparatus. For smaller communities, it also may offer an opportunity to secure full-time, professional fire and EMS service capacity at a cost that would not be affordable if pursued independently.

Proposal

WPF proposes a research and facilitation project that would explore how the independent fire departments in La Crosse County might share or consolidate services and/or jointly redesign the fire and EMS service delivery model in the county as a means of enhancing both service quality and affordability. The analysis would be designed to produce a series of options and lay out the fiscal and programmatic impacts of each.

To assist us in this analysis, we would propose the creation of a work group consisting of fire chiefs and administrators from each of the municipal providers that wishes to participate as well as one or more representatives from Gundersen Tri-State Ambulance. The work group would meet regularly throughout the study period to help collect and examine data, define options, and review sections of the final report.

The analysis would include the following:

1. Data Collection – WPF would collect and synthesize fire and EMS fiscal and service data from each of the existing departments and from Tri-State Ambulance. To the extent that such data already has been compiled by the departments or their municipal governments, WPF would seek to work with such data. Data collected would include the following:
 - Operating budget data from each department, including wage and benefit cost trends and projections for fire personnel; expenditures on indirect expenses (e.g. uniforms and training); and expenditures on related services, such as administration.
 - EMS expenditure and revenue data from Tri-State Ambulance, including trend data and near-term fiscal projections.
 - Capital budget data, including expenditure trends, projected capital needs, and an inventory of major capital assets.
 - Service-related data including calls for service and service activity (broken down by fire and EMS), response times, and dispatch activity.
 - Personnel-related data, including numbers and types of employees and volunteers and a breakdown and comparison of current personnel procedures.

All data collected for the project would be synthesized and rolled up into a written document that would be shared with the municipalities.

2. Data analysis/development of options – WPF would analyze this data and use it as the basis for developing enhanced service sharing or consolidation options. Options would be developed with the guidance and advice of the work group. Those options ultimately fleshed out would be accompanied by analysis describing potential fiscal and operational impacts and logistics, as well as possibilities for governance and cost sharing. Specific issues to be addressed include:
 - Options for short- and long-term service delivery improvements
 - Current levels of cooperation between the three departments employing full-time career staff and potential opportunities for enhanced operational collaboration and/or consolidation
 - Opportunities for potential enhanced cooperation and/or contracting between full-time departments and jurisdictions housing departments that rely mostly on volunteer staff
 - Appropriate strategies for providing EMS first response and Advanced Life Support services based on acceptable levels of medical service
 - Mix of staffing under various shared services/consolidation scenarios (e.g. paid-on-call, part-time, full-time, and contracted)
 - Possibilities for coordinated equipment purchase, equipment sharing, joint training, command staff
 - Role and potential expansion of automatic response
 - Appropriate station locations based on acceptable response times

3. Final report – WPF would prepare a final report summarizing the collected data, laying out potential coordination/sharing/consolidation options (potentially among different sets of municipalities), and suggesting possible paths toward implementation. This final report would be provided to each of the affected municipalities, and would be released to the public and disseminated with their advice and consent.

Our Credentials

WPF's Board of Directors has committed the organization to conducting research on critical public policy issues facing the state of Wisconsin and its local governments and school districts. In January 2018, we expanded our research capacity and mission via the merger of the Public Policy Forum and the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance. Since 1913, PPF had served as a citizen's watchdog organization, conducting analysis of policy and economic issues pertaining to local governments and school districts in southeast Wisconsin. WISTAX was created in 1932 with a similar mission pertaining to state government and local jurisdictions across Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Policy Forum remains committed to both organizations' legacies of nonpartisan, independent research and civic education.

Local government financial analysis and efficiency initiatives have been the "bread and butter" of both organizations. Our role in researching local government finances and service sharing opportunities has received widespread media coverage and praise by policymakers. This is testimony to the talent and experience of our staff resources.

Specific staff assigned to the Jefferson County project would include:

- WPF President Rob Henken. Mr. Henken has led the organization since 2008. He has held several senior fiscal positions in government, including staff director for a U.S. House of Representatives subcommittee, associate staff for the House Appropriations Committee, and Director of County Board Research, Health and Human Services, and Administrative Services for Milwaukee County.
- WPF Research Director Jason Stein. Mr. Stein joined WPF in May 2018 after 13 years as a reporter for the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and *Wisconsin State Journal*, where he covered state and local government budgets and finance. He has won several national journalism awards and has had two fellowships in financial reporting.
- Contract Researcher Davida Amenta. Ms. Amenta has extensive experience in county government, having held budget, capital planning, and administrative positions at three counties in California and at Milwaukee County. She was the Forum's lead researcher for its analysis of consolidated fire and dispatch services in Milwaukee County's South Shore communities and its analysis of fire/EMS service sharing in three Kenosha County communities and in southern Milwaukee County.
- WPF Fiscal Researcher Ashley Fisher. Ms. Fisher joined the Forum in August 2018 after working as a budget analyst for the Washington State Employment Security Department and a researcher for the state's Office of Program Research. She is the lead researcher for the Forum's broader Jefferson County service sharing analysis.

Additional contract researchers and staff also would participate on the project depending on timing and specific areas of expertise required.

Project Timeline and Budget

We anticipate a projected timeline of approximately four to five months, though that timeline is greatly dependent on the availability of staff from the participating municipalities and their responsiveness to our requests for data. The total cost would be \$23,500 as detailed in the table below. It should be noted that to keep travel costs down, we would make extensive use of video conferencing. The proposed travel/hotel budget is based on an assumption of three to four site visits.

Total project costs	\$23,500
<i>Personnel costs</i>	<i>\$20,500</i>
Executive Staff @\$125/hr	\$10,000
Research/Contract Staff @\$75 hr	\$10,500
<i>Non-personnel costs</i>	<i>\$1,400</i>
Travel/hotel	\$1,200
Printing, design, copying, etc.	\$200
<i>Indirect costs (7.5%)</i>	<i>\$1,600</i>