



## News from the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders

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### Police Consolidation Report Envisions Five Precincts To Serve Somerset County Municipalities Towns Have Final Say About Participation

A task force charged with giving municipalities an opportunity to evaluate joining a regional community-police agency while reducing costs for municipal taxpayers has completed its analysis.

The [group's report](#), presented at a public meeting on April 12, concluded that a five-precinct plan could save taxpayers close to \$44 million over a 10-year period.

However the task force chairman, [Somerset County Prosecutor Geoffrey D. Soriano](#), and the [Board of Freeholders](#) emphasized that each municipality has the final say as to whether it would join a consolidated countywide police force.

"I want to commend the Prosecutor, the subcommittee chairmen and all the committee members for a well-researched, in-depth report," said [Freeholder Mark Caliguire](#), public health and safety liaison. "The Freeholder Board is committed to helping facilitate the next steps in this process if the towns choose to proceed."

"This [final task force report](#) consists of an affirmation that a countywide agency can be formed, organized and implemented and will offer significant savings to its constituent members," Prosecutor Soriano wrote in his report analysis. "However the determination as to whether or not to join a countywide agency has been placed firmly in the hands of the individual municipalities."

The Freeholder Board will set up a transition team to work with interested municipalities to provide technical guidance and assistance in helping them decide whether to join the consolidation plan.

The transition team, to be chaired by Dr. Richard Celeste, will consist of the seven task force subcommittee chairs and a member of the Freeholder Board. Municipalities interested in proceeding are being asked to notify Dr. Celeste by Aug. 1. This will not obligate any town to make a final decision on consolidation; that would only occur once a contract is executed.

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There currently are 19 municipal police departments in Somerset County; Millstone and Rocky Hill are covered by the New Jersey State Police. The report envisions five precincts in the following configuration:

- Precinct 1** – Bedminster, Bernards, Bernardsville, Peapack-Gladstone and Far Hills
- Precinct 2** – Green Brook, North Plainfield, Warren and Watchung
- Precinct 3** – Branchburg, Bridgewater, Raritan, Somerville and Bound Brook
- Precinct 4** – Hillsborough, Manville, Millstone, Montgomery and Rocky Hill
- Precinct 5** – Franklin and South Bound Brook

In a preliminary police-consolidation report by consultant Thomas A. Banker presented in December 2010, a three-precinct plan was suggested, but experience gained in responding to Hurricane Irene last summer convinced task force members that five precincts would be a better option.

In addition to the organizational structure, other task force subcommittees looked at governance, communications and records management, standardization of operating procedures, the use or renovation of host facilities, labor contracts and finance.

The finance subcommittee, chaired by Assemblyman and former Freeholder Jack M. Ciattarelli, projected net savings across the [21 towns](#) totaling \$43,893,043 for the years 2014 through 2023.

The host-facilities subcommittee concluded that the existing Franklin Township police facility would be adequate for Precinct 5. For Precincts 1 through 4, a combination of reuse of existing facilities and new construction was suggested, at a total estimated cost of \$5 million.

The labor-contracts subcommittee reiterated earlier assurances that there would be no layoffs as a result of any police consolidation, and that any reduction in force would occur only through attrition. The committee proposed a two-tiered organization that would preserve rights and benefits for existing police officers and later would bring in new police hires under a comparable collective-bargaining agreement.

The subcommittee addressing communications noted that consolidation of police dispatching already is underway at the county level and most likely will continue with or without the adoption of the police-consolidation model.