

Impact of Consolidating Into a County Fire Department

On the Shadeland Volunteer Fire Department

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Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

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Abstract

The problem is that the Shadeland Volunteer Fire Department may choose to consolidate with all the township fire departments into a single fire department within Tippecanoe County or continue to provide services locally. The purpose of this research is to identify how this consolidation may affect the delivery of services of the Shadeland Volunteer Fire Department if the town were to choose to consolidate the fire department. Descriptive research will be conducted to determine the challenges and opportunities involved with the consolidation of the procedural, physical resource, human resource, and financial aspects of the fire departments, the effects on service quality and delivery, and the lessons learned from the consolidation failures and successes in other organizations? A questionnaire was designed to gather perceptions of fire department members potentially affected by consolidation due to the elimination of township government. The questionnaire allowed rated and open ended responses and was collected utilizing a website. Distribution was through e-mail lists of local Department of Homeland Security District 4 representatives. The data collected showed resistance to any legislated consolidation with an openness to particular parts of consolidation such as functional programs. It was recommended to the SVFD that it not participate in a consolidation at this time. SVFD should encourage and participate with the establishment of a county task force to track and influence legislation and develop a consolidation contingency plan. The task force should also look for opportunities to functionally consolidate in areas that would be mutually beneficial. The SVFD should re-evaluate its opportunity for consolidation as further information is gathered and if the climate for consolidation becomes more favorable.

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Introduction

Within Indiana legislation has been put forth in the past to eliminate township government and consolidate the functions and responsibilities of the township into the county level of government. The problem is that the Shadeland Volunteer Fire Department may choose to consolidate with all the township fire departments into a single fire department within Tippecanoe County or continue to provide services locally. The purpose of this research is to identify how this consolidation may affect the delivery of services of the Shadeland Volunteer Fire Department if the town were to choose to consolidate the fire department. This will be done by conducting descriptive research to answer the following questions. What are the procedural, physical resource, human resource, and financial opportunities involved with the consolidation of Shadeland Volunteer Fire Department into a county fire department? What are the procedural, physical resource, human resource, and financial challenges involved with the consolidation of Shadeland Volunteer Fire Department into a county fire department? What are the advantages and disadvantages to service quality and delivery that may be realized by the consolidation of Shadeland Volunteer Fire Department into a county fire department? What lessons can be learned from the failures and successes in other consolidation processes of multiple organizations?

Background and Significance

The Shadeland Volunteer Fire Department (SVFD) provides fire protection and non-transport basic life support services to the Town of Shadeland. The Town of Shadeland is located

in Tippecanoe County, Indiana and encompasses all of Union Township. The town is a primarily rural territory that borders with the City of Lafayette for approximately 3 miles on its eastern border. The remainder of the eastern border neighbors Wea Township. The southern and western boundaries border Randolph Township and Wayne Township respectively. The northern side is divided from Wabash Township by the Wabash River. All of the fire departments providing coverage to the neighboring areas are entirely volunteer with the exception of the City of Lafayette which is entirely career and Wea Township which has one paid day time employee.

Given current fiscal conditions, both state and local governments are seeking ways to become more streamlined and efficient. This has created a political environment that has made many state officials and some local municipalities or subdivisions consider either functional or jurisdictional consolidation. Past legislation has been introduced to both the Indiana house and senate that would eliminate the township form of government resulting in the possible formation of a county fire department. The newly formed county fire department would include the fire departments of the townships and fire protection districts. A municipality, such as a town or city, is included in the county fire department only if it consents by ordinance or a majority of the freeholders petition to be included. The Town of Shadeland encompasses all of Union Township and is a municipality. The town and therefore the fire department are not subject to the mandatory consolidation into a county fire department under legislation that has been present thus far to the eliminate townships. However, consolidation into the county fire department that would be created in Tippecanoe County is an option if either the town consented by ordinance or by a petition of the majority of freeholders.

Literature Review

Although focus on consolidations is often renewed in challenging fiscal times, consolidations for government services, nonprofit organizations, and especially private business and industry has been an on-going activity for decades. There has been much written regarding consolidations and particularly of acquisitions and mergers of private sector organizations. Although it would be impossible to complete a review of all that has been written in regards to consolidation, acquisition, and merger, a representation of sources from the fire service, government, non-profit organizations, and for profit business was utilized for this literature review. Particularly information was sought in regards to the challenges and opportunities involved with the consolidation of the procedural, physical resource, human resource, and financial aspects of the fire departments, the effects on service quality and delivery, and the lessons that can be learned from the consolidation failures and successes in other organizations?

What opportunities are involved with consolidation? Archibald and Sleeper (2008) cited several reasons that consolidation is considered by government entities. The first of these include improved service delivery from both economies of scale and elimination of duplicated services. The second reason given by Archibald and Sleeper, involves increased coordination and unified leadership by eliminating the fragmentation of government. In areas of the United States with more fragmented government, economic decline and stagnation has been more prevalent (Sleeper, 2004). Fragmentation takes place when there is an absence of a single government with the ability to look out for what is best for the whole region (Sleeper, 2004). This argument is made by Clark (1969) for a county fire service when he claims that a county system eliminates or reduces overlap and duplication. The last reason given to consider consolidation by government

entities is that they can be more socially and fiscally balanced by improved citizen participation, a more equitable distribution of the taxes and services, and the potential for better economic development opportunities (Archibald and Sleeper, 2008). Clark (1969) also alludes to this when he says that having a county wide fire service would provide a larger tax base to allow larger expenditures with less tax payer burden.

More specifically for nonprofit organizations McCormick (2001) gives the following reasons to merge: increased efficiency, improved service delivery, financial stability, market share and publicity, improved public image, a more powerful voice due to increased size, and reduced competition in fundraising. McCormick also adds that a contemporary outlook of mergers is one that views them as an “opportunity for growth, more effective alignment of resources, and a demonstration of stewardship”. This is reaffirmed by Pritchett (1985) when he states that the improved capabilities that can be achieved by the combination of resources result in a greater outcome than can be achieved individually.

Change is at the very core of consolidation and therefore presents its own opportunity. Pritchett (1985) says that often times the conditions present during a consolidation are ideal for implementing certain things because of the re-structuring already taking place. He goes on to explain that employees in the acquired organization expect changes within reasonable boundaries as long as they are appropriate and timely (Pritchett, 1985).

Along with consolidation comes the possibility for increased collaboration among the merging departments resulting in procedural opportunities between the departments. This would be reflected in their standard operating procedures and service programs through shared information and ideas that could benefit the whole. This is not likely in a fragmented form of

government. According to Sleeper (2004), the structure of local government has a direct effect on whether or not communities work together on particular issues and problems or if they remain isolated in their decisions and problem solving. Yet another opportunity is that training procedures and programs can also be coordinated, even to the extent of providing a full time training staff (Clark, 1969).

When fourteen fire departments were merged within Orange County Florida, several opportunities became available. Among these, according to Olsen (1985), was the opportunity to streamline and standardize the communications equipment of the departments. He explains this resulted in a common system with channels to assign and the elimination of individual department channels, therefore allowing interoperability between departments. Apparatus maintenance also improved by the creation of one central vehicle maintenance department (Olsen, 1985). Clark (1969) also suggests that centralized maintenance can lead to less costly replacement and repairs, as well as provide the opportunity for loaner apparatus to be available which is not feasible within smaller departments. Olsen also mentions that other equipment and hoses have been standardized resulting in interoperability and better mutual aid among departments.

The greatest resource and therefore the greatest opportunity of any organization, and particularly for a volunteer organization, are its human resources. Consolidation may present an opportunity to assess the current cultures of the organizations and identify those characteristics that need to be changed or eliminated (Grubb and Lamb, 2000). According to Grubb and Lamb (2000) this cultural change can be accomplished through a plan for cultural design.

Because of all the changes involved with the organizational structure during consolidations, opportunities may be present to re-examine and re-negotiate these structures to make them more streamlined and effective (Pritchett, 1985).

Many opportunities are created simply by the larger size of an organization. McCormick (2001) claims that larger non for profits out compete smaller ones for attracting and maintaining volunteers. Other opportunities McCormick says are created through a larger organization may include the ability to increase member benefits, eliminate duplicate positions resulting in more front line personnel, and expanding membership numbers. This may equate to an opportunity with a consolidation of volunteer fire departments to allow staff to respond in a larger geographical area such as the jurisdiction in which they work in addition to where they live. This may be particularly beneficial in light of the trend of many volunteer fire departments struggling to maintain daytime staffing because of local residents commuting for their jobs (Page, 2004).

Consolidation may present opportunities to save money through finance and purchasing processes and support areas such as human resources and information technology (Grubb and Lamb, 2000). According to McCormick (2001), a well planned merger can produce immediate financial results. In fact he claims that an average of 4% savings occurred simply from merging according to the data of forty separate mergers of non-profit organizations. Specifically in the merger of nonprofit organizations the goal is to realign more resources towards the organization's mission (McCormick, 2001). McCormick explains that this is due to the inherent nature, not to be profitable but to be perceived as a responsible steward of resources to further both the finances and mission of the organization. Capital rationing and business plans in

nonprofits can create these opportunities to increase the ability to fulfill mission by allowing economies of scale (McCormick, 2001). Other opportunities given by McCormick include spreading risk and decreasing debts among the consolidated organizations. More specifically in the fire service, Olsen (1985) explains that the consolidation of fire departments within Orange County, Florida resulted in standardized purchases and stock inventories in order to reduce cost. Chief Holman of the German Township Fire Department said that duplicated services were eliminated and that money was saved during the merger with the Tremont Community Fire Department (Daniels, 2002). Even though manpower and coverage increased 25%, Olsen states that the cost has remained the same and that insurance cost has dropped. Clark (1969) reports that centralized purchasing and considerable savings can result, by citing that Fairfax County has cut some cost by as much as 50%. Finally, the merger of three Portland, Oregon area fire departments was closely tracked and the efficiency and savings predicted by the planning task force were confirmed (Pittard, 1993).

Along with the potential opportunities offered by consolidation, many challenges may exist as well. Even though the consolidation has become commonplace because of the perceived benefits, according to Grubb and Lamb (2000) only about 20 percent really succeed. The former head of Lehman Brothers, Warren Hellman, said “So many mergers fail to deliver what they promise that there should be a presumption of failure. The burden of proof should be on showing that anything really good is likely to come out of one.” (Sirower, 1999).

Archibald and Sleeper (2008) list three arguments against consolidation. Citizen’s choices can be limited by the consolidation of government, particularly regionalization, by limiting the choices they have to choose an area to live which delivers services that meet their

needs more specifically. The flip side of the coin regarding the fragmentation of local governance is that the local governance actually provides better representation and accountability of local preferences (Sleeper, 2004). Another reason cited is that the increased coordination necessary in the consolidated government may actually result in increased cost thus by negating any savings and possibly even increasing cost. Also, the problems of those merged will also be distributed. This is particularly true for a city being merged with suburban areas. This is reaffirmed by Pritchett (1985) who says that problems of the merged organizations can be just as great as their opportunities.

The change involve in consolidation not only presents opportunities, but can also be a challenge. If change is not monitored and managed it can quickly get out of hand (Pritchett, 1985). Pritchett also cautions that implementing changes which are not well thought and planned can result in early failures that may undermine the eventual success of the entire consolidation.

The process of combining procedures and programs and streamlining processes often results in increased red tape and procedural challenges. A loss of autonomy and control to make decisions which may accompany a merger often times is a complaint of supervision of the acquired organization (Pritchett, 1985). New procedures such as by-laws, standard operating guidelines and other programs will need to be merged. According to McCormick (2001), new by-laws need to be created because the merging of by-laws is not effective in the reorganization of the new entity. Gaps in procedural philosophies may also be present creating integration challenges between the organizations (Frankel, 2005).

The greatest challenge in the merger of any organization is that of its human resources. The most essential element of every fire department is its personnel. This element becomes even

more unique when the personnel are volunteers. “Fear of change, loss of autonomy, ego, habit and culture cause non-profits to avoid mergers” (LaPiana, 1995). Although it seems that a degree of resistance to change is natural, that resistance increases depending upon the nature of the consolidation or merger. Volunteer fire departments may be particularly resistant to change because they feel they are beyond criticism because of the amount of time and energy they have vested and because the comrade and fraternity that they have within their individual department (Benoit and Perkins, 1996).

Pritchett (1985) lists the four types of merger as rescue, collaboration, contested, and the raid. He explains how the level of resistance increases with each of these types so that in a raid type of merger, the acquired organizations often have self fulfilling prophecies that the merger will hurt morale, be disruptive, and will create an uncertain future. A concern with government consolidations is the perception that local entities are being forced to regionalize. This was such an issue within the fire service in England that the Department for Communities and Local Government issued a document that clarifies its policy by stating “The Government does not have a policy of regionalizing the fire and rescue service. Government policy is to encourage increased collaboration between fire authorities on a voluntary basis and to consider proposals for merger where there is a clear case based on improved effectiveness and efficiency” (Kemp and Young, 2006). According to Pritchett, the more resistance increases, the more individuals become one sided and attached to only their point of view. Pritchett list six potential problem areas associated with the emotions and behaviors of employees during a consolidation. These include a loss of productivity, lack of teamwork, power struggles, communication deteriorates, commitment waivers and employees leave. Employees may leave because they dislike the new

lines of authority and organizational control (Pritchett, 1985). Pritchett explains that executives may leave because they may lose some authority or status within the new organization.

The cultures of the organizations being merged present a human resource challenge. The potential for failure increases if differences in culture are not identified and addressed during the merger process (Pritchett, 1985). According to McCormick (2001), volunteers often have a perceived sense of loss involving the mission, tradition, and culture of the organization when consolidated. These volunteers and members are emotionally dedicated and committed to the organization's mission (McCormick, 2001). Most mergers fail because they do not assess the impact of integrating the cultures of the organizations, nor do they plan for an organized and efficient integration of those cultures (Carleton and Lineberry, 2004). This is reaffirmed by Pritchett (1985) who states that the prime cause for merger failure is the impact that different cultures of the organizations have on operations.

The leadership of these human resources also presents a significant challenge. During a merger or consolidation leadership positions may often be re-evaluated and changes may be necessary. This presents concerns among leadership whose positions may be dissolved or re-aligned and may deteriorate into a power struggle for positions of authority (Pritchett, 1985). This struggle became evident during the merger of fourteen fire departments in Orange County, Florida. Olsen (1985) said problems arose when the fourteen fire chiefs were asked to become battalion chiefs. Because of the change in perceived stature and position, Olsen said each of them would have preferred to be a deputy chief or assistant chief which obviously was not possible. This problem was also seen in the consolidation of the city of Tifton, Georgia with some of the Tift county fire departments. The City Manager of Tifton, Charlie Howell, said that negotiations

took years to accomplish and said that the greatest obstacles to the consolidation were turf and pride (Page, 2004). McCormick (2001) states that often times negotiations of nonprofit organizations mergers focus on the volunteer's authority, governance, control, and representation. The organizational structure and leadership are some of the critical concerns of the members according to McCormick. As soon as possible after consolidation has been agreed upon, a description of the authority, organizational structure and accountability should be given to all levels of supervision (Pritchett, 1985).

Communication is vital to the daily operations of any organization. People are at the core of communication with their thoughts, beliefs and feelings. This is why communication presents another challenge to the consolidation process. Employees should not be assured that nothing will change or that operations will continue as usual because this results in false hope being raised and a potential violation of expectations that results in employees being alienated (Pritchett, 1985). Employees should be kept current on factual information regarding the status of the consolidation process. Often time's management feels it necessary to limit the amount of information or details to employees because of their own lack of specific information about the consolidation (Pritchett, 1985). Unfortunately this approach may lead to misinformation and rumor mills that can be devastating to the consolidations outcome (Grubb and Lamb, 2000).

Yet another challenge is the amount of time and effort put into the process of consolidation. This cost in terms of human resources includes time spent in negotiations, planning, meetings and achieving buy in of individuals (McCormick, 2001). All of this time distracts from the day to day operations that still need to take place.

Although the natural inclination by most tends to believe that financial savings are synonymous with consolidations and mergers, this may not always be the case. According to McCormick (2001), not only do mergers normally take longer than planned, they also cost more. The cost includes items such as legal fees, inherited debts, consultant fees, printing fees and personnel (McCormick, 2001). McCormick claims the cost of a merger of nonprofit organizations comes in terms of not only finances but also in human resources. Carleton and Lineberry (2004) state that 55-77% of all mergers fail to meet the financial success that was promised when the merger was first announced. Even more staggering is that McKinsey & Company found that nearly 80% of all mergers do not even recover the cost involved in the merger and half lead to either reduced profits, productivity or in some cases both (Fisher, 1994).

“How will consolidation affect the quality and delivery of fire services?” should be the underlying question of any potential fire department consolidation. According to Kemp and Young (2006), the creation of a single Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service will improve the quality of service by tapping into the wider and deeper skill sets provided by a larger workforce. Orange County, Florida has also experienced improved services through consolidation by apparatus being moved up to other stations during major fires or emergencies, therefore allowing a quicker response to all areas of the county (Olsen, 1985). In addition to the improvement of emergency services, Orange County also has seen for an improvement in prevention services through the creation of a Fire Loss Management Bureau (Olsen, 1985). According to Olsen (1985), this has resulted in a 250% increase in inspections and a 100% increase in investigations with only a 6.6% increase in staff. Fire prevention provided on a county wide level also may allow a county staff to provide inspection and investigation services

that may not have been previously available (Clark, 1969). A significant metric used to track fire department service delivery is the Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating. Due partly due to the merger between the city of Tifton, Georgia and Tift County, their ISO rating dropped from a 6 to a 4 (Page, 2004).

Seven tools are given by Grubb and Lamb (2000) to best accomplish merger integration. Leadership readiness whereby the top leaders model the expected behaviors, re-recruiting to gather the greatest level of support, fast track integration, merger communication systems to disseminate timely and accurate information, merger integration teams to plan for smooth transitioning, optimal cultural design to evaluate current cultures and shape a new one and shared action planning to meld together the day to day operations.

The personal stakes and positions of the key decision makers should be kept in mind (Frankel, 2005). McCormick (2001) also agrees with this and suggests that individual meetings should be held with top leadership to address interpersonal issues. According to him planning for the leadership's future role will have a direct impact on the merger talks. He also states that resistance to the merger must first be dealt with at the top because the odds of a successful merger decrease if the leader is not confident a merger is the right direction for the organization. The way this leadership challenge was dealt with in one consolidation of the city of Tifton, Georgia and departments within Tift County, was to allow volunteer chiefs to retain their positions and titles and work within a countywide incident command system (Page, 2004).

The importance of planning for the consolidation cannot be understated. Many organizations do not do adequate planning for consolidation and eight out of ten do no planning according to a Boston Consulting Group study (Zangwill, 1995). Grubb and Lamb (2000), make

the correlation between the 80% that do no planning for consolidation and the 80% of mergers that do not meet their minimum financial goals. A merger design team should be formed with an equal number of representatives from the merging organizations (McCormick, 2001). The individuals on the team should have clearly defined boundaries in regards to time, resources and authority (Grubb and Lamb, 2000). During the initial planning meetings, volunteers should be asked why they are part of the organization and why the organization is important, so that mission is emphasized and personal agendas are diminished (McCormick, 2001). Common ground should be found among the merging parties such as a common mission (McCormick, 2001). The first decision among the merger design team, according to Grubb and Lamb (2000), should be to determine the level of integration of the consolidation. They state that many consolidations immediately choose full integration without even considering other approaches such as partial, tapered which takes place over a longer time frame, or minimalist which allows the organizations to for the most part continue business as usual. Within the fire service what is described as functional consolidation may take place when a central bureau or headquarters provides support services such as training, investigation, public education, recruitment and administering member benefits (Benoit and Perkins, 1996).

The desired accomplishments of the merger should be detailed in a list of strategic objectives (McCormick, 2001). Specifically, Grubb and Lamb (2000) recommend including three easy wins in the first six months on your list of desired accomplishments. They say this will allow some vital success by the new organization that is visible to all involved and which can be built upon. The needs and concerns, potential obstacles, as well as the reasons to merge should be outlined during the initial planning meetings (McCormick, 2001). This is also reiterated by

Pritchett (1985) who recommends that the merger contingency planning address the negative synergy of the problems being brought into the merger by the organizations. An integration room on neutral ground should be acquired in order to be a focal point for all planning and communication involved with the merger (Grubb and Lamb, 2000). The Devon Fire and Rescue Service and the Somerset Fire and Rescue Service in England have followed these principles of creating a merger planning team which they call a project team (Kemp and Young, 2006). Kemp and Young (2006) explain that they have been charged to work on 10 key areas which include information communication technology infrastructure, finance, procurement, constitutional arrangements, organizational structure and human resources, service delivery, physical assets, and corporate branding and identity. Likewise, a consolidation in the Portland Oregon area of several fire departments resulted in a task force being formed with nineteen areas for plans to be developed within prescribed time frames in order to make that consolidation a success (Pittard, 1993).

Fourteen cautions that may impede a successful fire department merger are given by Lochard and Olsen (2006). Lochard and Olsen first caution against having more than one operating system in place. The lines of authority and processes to be used for merging planning should be agreed upon ahead of time. They also caution about not having a conflict resolution plan which all planners sign and also how malicious behavior to sabotage the consolidation will be handled. The lack of a rumor control plan can also be problematic (Lochard and Olsen, 2006). The selection of a senior leadership team based upon politics rather than competency, and elected officials getting involved in operational issues are cautioned against (Lochard and Olsen, 2006). According to Lochard and Olsen, not identifying cultures and not acknowledging

obstacles and challenges both can be pitfalls. They also warn that the lack of detailed plans and rushing the merger with a “worry about it later” attitude can be destructive to the success of the consolidation. The lack of a transition plan and not disclosing all the reasons of the plan can be counteractive to merger success (Lochard and Olsen, 2006). Finally, if elected officials seem reluctant about the merger or if they begin to entertain groups with dissention over the merger, the merger may be headed down a destructive path (Lochard and Olsen, 2006). After reviewing the notes of interviews concerning mergers, Lochard and Olsen found that a lack of leadership was central to the conflicts involved in each of those mergers. They particularly see this when problems are ignored while the new organization is being formed. They recommend the conflict that naturally comes with combining two or more different organizations be dealt with early and not be allowed to grow.

Benoit and Perkins (1996) have given nine lessons to be learned from case studies they have completed regarding consolidated fire departments. They recommend state and provincial government should only set broad goals and evaluate outcomes but not details. It is also suggested by Benoit and Perkins that optimum economies of scale be found. They may not always be on a larger scale due to a lack of accountability and increased purchasing processes. Employees or members should always be consulted regarding the consolidation planning (Benoit and Perkins, 1996). They also caution removing the chief title from volunteer fire chiefs because of the status symbol and resulting conflict. Instead they recommend that the head of the new organization be a director or coordinator of fire services. Benoit and Perkins also suggest selecting a person for this position as soon as possible and possibly filling it externally to eliminate bias. When putting together a board or task force make room for people of conflicting

opinions in order to address all views and eliminate the bigger conflicts that may result later (Benoit and Perkins, 1996). It is also suggested by Benoit and Perkins that regularly scheduled meetings be held and communications take place in order to reduce rumors and allow a two way forum. Layoffs or major staffing changes should be avoided during the consolidation (Benoit and Perkins, 1996). Finally, policies that require little or no financial investment or approval by elected officials should be completed to display some success and establish good working relationships among the merging fire departments (Benoit and Perkins, 1996).

What McCormick (2001) describes as super volunteers, those that have a strong influence on the attitude and decisions of others, should be identified, persuaded and be used to sell the idea to the other volunteers of the organization. He goes on to explain that these super volunteers can also be used to find the potential obstacles to the merger. McCormick states that the most successful mergers will address volunteer concerns through a clear plan before the merger takes place. Pritchett (1985) also recommends that informal leaders be identified and included on the merger planning team and other merger projects because the influence of these informal leaders may have a greater influence on the outcome than some senior executives. He stresses the importance of getting the informal leaders to work for the merger and not against it.

Communication among employees can be a huge challenge to the consolidation process. In order to meet this challenge during the merger to create the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, a communication plan was established to keep employees both informed and engaged through workshops, e-newsletters, face to face staff briefings and consultation on relevant issues (Kemp and Young, 2006). Similarly, in the consolidation of three Portland, Oregon area fire departments communication was vitally important to its success by keeping not

only elected and senior staff well informed, but also employees through various methods in order to prevent rumors (Pittard, 1993). The communication process was also extended to the media which was vital to gaining community support (Pittard, 1993).

In order to avoid volunteers leaving the organization and the loss of productivity, organizations should be merged first and then reorganized (McCormick, 2001). Grubb and Lamb (2000) take a different approach and recommend using a fast track integration, in order to minimize the loss of personnel, the erosion of morale and the possibility of chaos resulting from the consolidation. According to them the chance of success is multiplied by utilizing a well planned fast track integration. Grubb and Lamb explain that this fast track approach increases success because it minimizes the politics, distractions, confusion and wasted time involved in a consolidation. They also explain that the goal is to move quickly from the point of focusing energy and efforts on the merger, to refocusing on the operations and delivery of services of the new organization. Full integration of the organizations can only be completed through fast track integration if it is well planned for in advance of the merger announcement and the start of integration (Grubb and Lamb, 2000).

A prime example of a successful consolidation was the Wayne Township Fire Department in Indianapolis, Indiana. I met with and interviewed former Chief Larry Curl who served on this department in various capacities from Deputy Chief to Chief during all stages of the consolidation process. I also had the privilege of serving on this department during the final stages of the department becoming one corporation. L. Curl (personal communication, August 24, 2010) explained the first consolidations were a result of combining local neighborhood fire departments for the purpose of meeting staffing needs for daytime responses. The consolidations

were driven by a needed improvement in staffing and ISO ratings but were never driven by financial purposes according to L. Curl (personal communication, August 24, 2010). The consolidations were the result of considerable planning over the course of many years. The consolidation effort was led at the time by Chief Richard Lamb, who according to L. Curl (personal communication, August 24, 2010) would put problems before the station District Chiefs to solve. This allowed much of the efforts to come from and therefore be owned by the level of leadership that could make the changes occur. Even with strong leadership in place, he acknowledged some members had resentment against the consolidation and there was some isolated attrition of members (L. Curl, personal communication, August 24, 2010). A headquarters was already in place before the consolidations and was contracted by the township to provide fire services. Headquarters provided financial oversight and sub-contracted each individual incorporated department to provide those services. The consolidation eliminated each station being its own individual corporation governed by their own by-laws and resulted in one corporation governed by a common set of by-laws and procedures. It also allowed for centralized management of all stations by a board of directors and a paid administrator instead of just financial oversight (L. Curl, personal communication, August 24, 2010). Even with centralized management, the groups of officers from each individual station were selected by the members of that station and were responsible for station level leadership including the submission and administration of a station budget annually (L. Curl, personal communication, August 24, 2010). Support services at a centralized level were performed by teams of volunteers. Over time some functions such as fire prevention, training and maintenance began to be provided mostly by paid support personnel. During these consolidations all operational duties continued

to be provided by volunteer personnel. Financially, L. Curl (personal communication, August 24, 2010) said there may have been some economy of scale savings, however budgets always increased from year to year due to the additional levels of services being provided. He also stated that there were considerable upfront costs associated with the consolidation. Equipment benefits were seen when duplicate apparatus were eliminated, such as each station having its own aerial apparatus (L. Curl, personal communication, August 24, 2010). Apparatus were still selected by individual stations, however more guidelines were given in order to standardize equipment parts for ease of the centralized maintenance staff (L. Curl, personal communication, August 24, 2010). A challenge was once incurred when new engines were chosen at the headquarters level for all stations. Because of the lack of ownership in these new engines at the station level, they were never well received and were prone to breakdowns because they were not well cared for by the volunteers who did not like them (L. Curl, personal communication, August 24, 2010). Change was always more successful when leadership at the station level were involved in the decision making process.

Larry Curl now serves as council for the Indiana Volunteer Firefighters Association and is active in lobbying for the needs of the volunteer fire service within Indiana. Even though former Chief Curl was involved with a successful fire department merger he has concerns regarding the effects that township government elimination would have on community fire services. Among these is the ability of the county level of government to be in tune with the needs of all the communities it represents (L. Curl, personal communication, August 24, 2010). He also expressed concern that not every community within a county is likely to have representation on the county council which lends itself to favoritism for the communities and

parts of the county in which the elected officials reside. What potentially is former Chief Curl's largest concern is the lack of input that has been solicited from Indiana fire service organizations regarding any legislation that would eliminate township government. (L. Curl, personal communication, August 24, 2010)

In summary, the process of a merging or consolidating multiple organizations has been completed numerous times by fire departments and particularly business and industry, there seems to be many different views and opinions as to its effectiveness. Particularly within the fire service it needs to be taken into account that the claims of merger success are going to abound compared to the claims of failure. The information reviewed to determine if financial benefits exist is even less definitive when you take into account the differences between volunteer organizations and those with personnel cost that represent a high proportion of the operating budget. Interestingly, many of the same suggestions existed to maximize on the opportunities and minimize the challenges both in the private sector as well as within the fire service. The literature review influenced this applied research project by allowing the researcher to consider more of the obstacles and challenges involved in the merger process. This awareness coupled with the data collected in the research instrument led to a more conservative approach to the recommendations given by the researcher.

Procedures

Fire department consolidations have many different aspects that ultimately may be used to measure its success. These may include measurable improvements in income or expenses, areas of service improvements such as increased inspections or decreased response times and improvements in member services and benefits. However the outcome of any consolidation will

ultimately rely on the individuals at all levels of the merged organizations and their willingness to accept and implement the necessary changes. The thoughts, attitudes and beliefs of these individuals whether based on factual or misinformation will determine their perception of the need for consolidation. Because these perceptions of the affected members within the organization are so important to the implementation of a successful consolidation, I chose to create a questionnaire to find out what perceptions exist regarding consolidation of fire departments if townships are eliminated.

The questionnaire was developed using a service available from Survey Monkey. The format of the questionnaire had some limitations based upon the capabilities available through this service, however all necessary questions were able to be asked. The questionnaire was divided into eight sections. The first section introduced the participant to the purpose of the questionnaire, the background of proposed legislation and asked general questions regarding the participant. Although general information regarding the participant was asked, no personal information was obtained and the questionnaire was completed with anonymity. The second through sixth sections were titled physical resources, procedural resources, human resources, financial resources and service quality respectively and asked specific questions corresponding to the research questions of this project. The seventh section asked questions about the personal perceptions of the participant, followed by the last section which thanked the participant and gave them contact information of the researcher to address any questions or concerns (see Appendix A). All questions were designed by the researcher based upon the original research questions for this applied research project and took into consideration factors learned through the literature review.

The majority of questions allowed the participant to answer on a scale with the choices strongly disagree, disagree, no opinion, agree or strongly agree. Each section also included at least one open ended question to allow further explanation or feedback. It was my opinion that these open ended questions were necessary to avoid missing out on potentially vital ideas and feedback that would otherwise have been restricted by the researchers own ideas, creativity, and thoroughness in the questionnaires design.

Due to the lack of a more precise or financially feasible method of distribution being available, a link to the questionnaire was sent via e-mail to the distribution list of the District 4 training coordinator and District 4 administrative coordinator. District 4 is a subdivision of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security which represents Benton, Carroll, Cass, Clinton, Fountain, Montgomery, Tippecanoe, Warren and White Counties. These distribution list provided the largest venue for distribution which would include all individuals who have received training or signed up to receive information on training through the district, as well as all the Chief Officers of fire departments within those counties. Of the approximately 500 individuals who would have received the e-mail request with the questionnaire link, sixty-four chose to participate. This method of distribution allowed for a truly random sampling of fire service personnel which reflected views from all levels within the chain of command of the fire service. The limitation of this distribution method was that it did not allow a targeted distribution to only those in Tippecanoe County. However all the participants were from Indiana counties that potentially could be affected by a consolidation process of the fire departments in unconsolidated areas if townships are eliminated within the state. The results therefore are representative of the Indiana fire service in which these consolidations may occur. Another

possible limitation was that many of the individuals have participated in the training activities of district 4 and therefore may be more receptive to consolidation since they have already benefited from coordinated regional efforts.

The data was also collected through the service utilized from Survey Monkey. The data was listed with the number of participants that responded to each question and the percentage that answered according to the various selections. The open ended questions simply displayed exactly what the participant typed into the response and therefore had to be organized and interpreted by the researcher.

Results

The research instrument was a questionnaire designed to find out what perceptions existed regarding the consolidation of fire departments due to the elimination of townships within Indiana. Although it was a questionnaire and not a survey instrument for in depth statistical analysis, some interesting trends were none the less observed and valuable information was obtained.

The first section of the questionnaire was used to collect general information about the participants. All participants were from Indiana counties and therefore have the potential be affected by a consolidation due to the elimination of township governments. Of those participants, 91% were within the Indiana Department of Homeland Security District 4 which includes Tippecanoe County and therefore the Town of Shadeland. Tippecanoe county represented 17% of all participants (see Appendix B, Table B1). 94% of the departments represented by the participants were volunteer fire departments and therefore more likely to be subject to the consolidation (see Appendix B, Table B2). Of the participants 62% were in

leadership positions and 40% were chief level officers within their departments. The remaining 38% were all firefighters and/or EMS personnel with 2% not disclosing their positions within the department (see Appendix B, Table B3). In regards to experience levels represented, 11% have five years or less experience, 14% have between six to ten years of experience, 19% have between eleven to fifteen years of experience, another 19% have between sixteen to twenty years of experience and the remaining 31% represent over 20 years of experience each (see Appendix B, Table B4).

The second section of the questionnaire involved questions regarding the physical resources of the fire departments. These physical resources include items such as buildings, fire apparatus and other equipment such as tools, self contained breathing apparatus and personal protective equipment. The questionnaire further broke this equipment down into the existing equipment already owned by the individual fire department as well as new equipment that may be purchased after a consolidation.

The belief that the equipment currently owned by the township fire department should stay with that department was held by a strong majority of participants. The majority also did not think the equipment should be able to be transferred based upon the needs of the new organization. Given an option that the current equipment of a department only be transferred after a potential time frame of five to ten years after consolidation, an overwhelming 75% still disagreed that this should be able to occur. However, in regards to transferring equipment for short intervals to cover out of service equipment or for special assignments, there was a greater degree of receptiveness. Many comments were given regarding the transfer or reassignment of current equipment with the main concerns being the effort placed in choosing equipment for a

specific communities needs and the loss of equipment to either departments with larger call volumes or areas where elected officials reside. (see Appendix B, Table B5)

In terms of new equipment, the majority still believes that any new equipment purchases should remain assigned to the station for which it was originally purchased and that it should not be available for reassignment based upon the needs of the consolidated department. The majority once again believed that the new equipment should be available for reassignment for short intervals such as covering out of service equipment or special assignments. Similar concerns were expressed regarding the reallocation of new equipment due to the equipment being chosen to meet that communities needs. (see Appendix B, Table B6)

When asked about standardizing equipment within the newly consolidated fire department a strong majority believed that there would be significant benefits in doing so. They believed that standardization should occur and that by doing so cross training, emergency response and the quality of services provided would all improve. (see Appendix B, Table B7) Additional comments regarding standardization and the impact of consolidation upon the physical resources of departments were also obtained. Many reaffirmed their support for standardization however some had concerns about where standardization stops, such as if they are next to an adjoining county. They were also concerned about the process for determining the standard by which equipment is selected. Again many had strong opinions and fears that equipment which they worked hard to procure would be reallocated without the best interest of the department for which it was originally purchased. (see Appendix B, Table B8)

The potential for consolidating the procedures and programs of fire departments received strong support. The overwhelming majority think that there should be one common set of

standard operating guidelines for the county fire department as a whole and that these would result in improved response from the departments. This was also believed to be true for a standardized safety program for which most participants believe would both improve firefighter safety and OSHA compliance. Training programs were another potential area of consolidation in which it was believed training levels, opportunities and cross training would all increase. (see Appendix B, Table B9) Concerns regarding procedural resources and programs include, them not working because they would not be specific enough for each individual department, the amount of time required by volunteers to develop and coordinate these procedures and finally the compliance issues involved. On the other hand the benefit of freeing up personnel at the local level and allowing the programs to be coordinated utilizing a larger base of personnel at the county level was also expressed to be a benefit. (see Appendix B, Table B10)

The area of human resources also seemed to be of considerable concern to the participants. The group was split on whether or not recruitment would be increased through a consolidated county fire department. The majority also indicated that it was unlikely that there would be more advancement opportunities as a result of a county fire department being formed. The majority believe that officers positions should not be streamlined nor the chain of command changed within a county fire department. However at the same time participants were again split with regards to new positions being added at the county level for fire department operations and generally in favor of adding positions for support positions such as safety, training or fire prevention activities. What got the greatest response was that most felt the fire trustee should not operate as a fire chief with operational responsibilities nor should they be chosen among names submitted by the Indiana Volunteer Firefighters Association (IVFA). The fire trustee is a position

that is in proposed legislation that would be an administrator accountable to a county fire department board. The last question regarding human resources was whether or not consolidation would result in improved membership incentives and benefits for which participants had no strong opinion as a whole. (see Appendix B, Table B11)

When given the chance to offer a response on minimum qualifications for a fire trustee the majority favored experience averaging between ten to twenty years in the fire service. About half of the participants listed some level of fire officer certification. Some felt a degree in fire science or management should also be required. (see Appendix B, Table B12) As far as selecting a candidate for the fire trustee position, there was three predominant schools of thought. The first was that they should be nominated by the departments, the second was a general election by members of all departments and the last was to have a board in place with some participants recommending it be made up of the current township departmental chiefs. (see Appendix B, Table B13) When asked for additional comments or concerns regarding the human resources within departments several participants expressed concerns that the township fire department chiefs remain in their positions to lead the individual departments. (see Appendix B, Table B14)

Within the realm of the financial resources of the departments the participants were split on whether or not they thought there would be cost savings opportunities. There was no consensus on the cost saving involved with capital purchases such as apparatus or building fire stations. Only a slight majority thought savings might be available for equipment purchases such as personal protective equipment, self contained breathing apparatus and tools. While slightly more disagreed that cost savings were available for daily supplies such as office and cleaning supplies. (see Appendix B, Table 15) There were numerous constructive comments in regards to

the financial resources of the fire departments. Several pointed out that any cost savings may be negated by any personnel cost of administrative staff at the county level. Others are skeptical that any true cost savings can be obtained due to the bureaucracy and that the townships are already good stewards of their money. Others however believe there is the potential to save a lot of tax payer dollars primarily by economies of scale. Several also expressed concern that the smaller departments will lose both funds and proper representation to the larger departments in the budgetary process. (see Appendix B, Table B16)

It was indicated by most participants that the service quality and delivery of emergency services would not improve due to the consolidation into a county fire department. Participants were split regarding whether or not the quality and delivery of fire prevention services would improve. (see Appendix B, Table B17) The comments given regarding service quality were also split. (see Appendix B, Table B18)

The strong majority of participants do not believe the township fire departments should be consolidated into a single county fire department. However if consolidation does occur most participants indicate that they would continue to be a member of the newly formed department. (see Appendix B, Table B19) When asked for additional opportunities or concerns regarding township fire department consolidation a few commonalities emerged. There were several reluctant towards consolidation because they feel the townships look out for the well being of the local community. Quite a few stated they thought money could be saved if the consolidation were properly executed, while at the same time seemed to be hesitant because of the lack of details. Another group believe cost will increase due to increased personnel cost and lack of stewardship with the available funds. (see Appendix B, Table B20)

The results of the questionnaire showed there are many differing and strong opinions regarding the consolidation into a county fire department. In many areas a willingness to work together for the welfare of the department and community seemed to be noticed, however there seems to be a strong resistance that a consolidated county fire department is the way to accomplish it.

Discussion

The Shadeland Volunteer Fire Department (SVFD) may be in a unique position in regards to any proposed legislation to eliminate townships within Indiana. As a result of the elimination of townships, the local government entity that the majority of fire departments receive their authority and funding to operate would also be eliminated. This authority and funding would then be transferred to the county level. This would result in a forced consolidation of all township fire departments of unincorporated areas. Under the past proposed legislation municipalities that are incorporated as a city or town and areas served by a fire territory would be exempted. The SVFD serves the Town of Shadeland which includes all of Union Township and therefore the authority and funding mechanism for SVFD would remain in place. However, the town would have the option to allow the SVFD to be consolidated with a county fire department, which has created an opportunity.

There are strong arguments both for and against consolidation based upon the concepts of representation and accountability verses fragmentation respectively. The summary of the report of Sleeper (2004) seems to be to find a level of government that is large enough to effectively carry out its duties utilizing economies of scale and elimination of the duplication of services, while at the same time being small enough to be in tune with the people's needs by being

accessible to those it represents (L. Curl, personal communication, August 24, 2010). In regards to the fire service within Tippecanoe County I believe the county level of government has the potential to be large enough to be effective, yet small enough to provide proper representation. With that being said I believe for that potential to be fulfilled, significant planning would need to take place. The establishment of controls to guard against the voice of smaller populaces being lost and preference being given to the larger areas or areas where local governmental officials live would also need to be addressed.

The first research question is “what are the procedural, physical resource, human resource, and financial opportunities involved with the consolidation of Shadeland Volunteer Fire Department into a county fire department?”. The second research question is “what are the procedural, physical resource, human resource, and financial challenges involved with the consolidation of Shadeland Volunteer Fire Department into a county fire department?”. I will address both the opportunities and challenges within each of these areas one at a time.

There seems to be considerable opportunity within the local fire service to capitalize on the consolidation of local procedures and programs. Of all the areas researched, the participants of the questionnaire collectively saw benefit and opportunity within this area. (see Appendix B, Tables B9 and B10) Considerable personnel time is spent on administrative issues within volunteer fire departments. This time becomes very valuable when you factor in the demands and constraints on today’s volunteer. Instead of developing duplicate standard operating guidelines, safety programs, and policies for each department a representative group of individuals could collaborate on these written programs to free personnel for tasks that need to be performed at the operational level. Other programs such as prevention, education,

investigation, safety, training, grant writing, and other administrative duties could potentially be performed at the county level to once again free up more individuals at the operational level (L. Curl, personal communication, August 24, 2010). Many times these duties are assigned among limited personnel because they need to be accomplished. In some instances this may result in an important function being assigned to a person without the interest, time, or experience within the particular area. Providing these programs at a county level also would potentially give individuals the opportunity to specialize in one aspect of the fire service. The caution that must be given regarding procedures and programs is that there needs to be mechanisms in place to allow the latitude to specifically apply them within the needs and culture of the local department. Also there may be a sense among the local departments of a loss of autonomy and control over these departmental procedures and programs (Pritchett, 1985).

Although there may be some opportunity in the consolidation of the physical assets of the departments, it also seems to be one of the areas of biggest concern among the participants. (see Appendix B, Tables 5 and 6) The greatest potential opportunity seems to be as a result of the standardization of equipment over time that may increase the interoperability of equipment and training on that equipment. (see Appendix B, Table 7) One of the largest physical assets of each department is its fire station. Since the fire stations in each of the current townships are already strategically located to serve a large geographical area, the elimination of any existing stations would be detrimental to the quality and delivery of emergency services. Another opportunity exists by having a central maintenance facility and the opportunity to loan apparatus during times of maintenance and repairs. Apparatus is currently selected and designed for the needs of the community for which it serves. Considerable time, energy, finances, and pride are put into these

selection processes. The results of the questionnaire showed strong opposition to the reassignment of any of a departments current physical resources and considerable opposition even to the reassignment of any new equipment purchased for the consolidated county fire department. I believe this would be a very contentious point of any future consolidation and would need to be dealt with early in the process through a concise agreement among the departments. My suggestion would be to construct a policy which prohibits the county fire department from indiscriminately reassigning existing or new apparatus and/or equipment without the consent of the local department officers. New apparatus should continue to be selected by the local departments within the given financial resources of the new county department (L. Curl, personal communication, August 24, 2010). Selection processes for other equipment should be designed to allow equal representation from each department (L. Curl, personal communication, August 24, 2010). These selection processes should take into consideration the need for interoperability between individual departments and potential economies of scale in purchasing.

The greatest asset of any organization is its human resources. Volunteer fire departments have a proud heritage of being composed of individuals with a strong desire to serve their communities. Without these committed and giving individuals fire and emergency services would not be available in many small communities. Because of this strong sense of service and community, many participants indicated strong views concerning any changes that may occur regarding organizational structure and lines of authority in a county fire department model. (see Appendix B, Table B11) There was a strong opposition to changing the chain of command within the departments. Given the need for local operational controls at each department or

station within the new department and the opposition to changing command structures, it would not be advantageous to change the command structures within the local departments. This would be consistent with the consolidation lessons given by Benoit and Perkins (1996). There was also a predominant belief that any one hired to lead a county fire department should have only administrative duties and not operational responsibilities. The qualifications desired for this position according to the questionnaire participants predominately centered on considerable fire service experience, management experience and educational credentials either in the form of a degree or fire officer certification. (see Appendix B, Table B12) The selection process of a county fire department administrator or fire trustee as proposed legislation specifies, was also a point of contention. Once again I would support following the recommendations of Benoit and Perkins who encourage hiring a coordinator or director of fire services rather than a fire chief. Based upon the responses of the questionnaire it would be reasonable to establish qualifications and select this person through a county fire board from either external applicants or nominations from the local departments. (see Appendix B, Table B13) Although no clear conclusion could be drawn from the responses of the questionnaire participants, McCormick (2001) stated that mergers within non-profit organizations have resulted in increased membership recruitment, advancement opportunities, and member benefits. If particular programs are administered at the county level, advancement opportunities would be available to specialize in a particular area. Opportunities should also be sought to recruit and screen potential members and seek out additional benefits for members within any consolidation effort.

At the heart of many mergers and consolidations is the perceived benefit of financial savings. Possible cost savings involved with a consolidation seem to be negligible. Apparatus is

purchased infrequently enough and at such intervals that large apparatus purchases seem unlikely. Other equipment particularly personal protective equipment(PPE) and self contained breathing apparatus may have some saving opportunities due to economies of scale. However stocking PPE or other supplies to achieve economies of scale also presents the need for storage space which might involve cost that exceed the savings. Additional costs may occur as a result of the consolidation itself such as printing fees, re-decaling apparatus and legal or consulting fees (McCormick, 2001) This does not even include any personnel costs from hiring an administrator for the county fire department which would on an annual basis negate a large portion if not all of the cost savings seen by the consolidation efforts. A full analysis of all potential costs or savings resulting from a consolidation was beyond the scope of this research project, but should be further investigated by the county fire association.

The third research question is “What are the advantages and disadvantages to service quality and delivery that may be realized by the consolidation of Shadeland Volunteer Fire Department into a county fire department?”. Because of the strategic locations of the current fire stations within Tippecanoe County, it is likely that emergency service delivery would continue to occur from the existing locations. Utilizing the existing service delivery model of volunteer firefighters responding from home to the stations in the event of an emergency, it is highly unlikely that there will be any significant change in service quality. The time and energy spent by volunteer firefighters to serve their community is likely to remain unchanged whether a consolidation occurs or not. (see Appendix B, Tables 17,18, and 19) Potential for improved service quality and delivery may exist for some support functions. Some functions provided at the county level such as prevention, education, training, grant writing and administrative support

may result in improved support of the front line operational activities (L. Curl, personal communication, August 24, 2010). These functions are often difficult for smaller fire departments to adequately provide.

The final research question is “What lessons can be learned from the failures and successes in other consolidation processes of multiple organizations?”. When comparing recommendations and lessons learned from for profit businesses, non-profit organizations, as well as those in the fire service some common lessons and pitfalls can be observed. First, the positions and personal stakes of the chiefs should be addressed. There is going to be reluctance by anyone to eliminate their position and perceived need to their fire department. Keeping the current organizational structure with each department still having a station level chief for fire department operations will reduce this concern so that the more important aspects of a consolidation can be explored (Page, 2004). The importance of planning cannot be understated (L. Curl, personal communication, August 24, 2010). A consolidation task force should be formed to oversee the consolidation. Sub-task force should also be formed to address specific areas such as standard operating guidelines, funding distribution, support services, etc. Each task force should be representative of the departments being merged and be given specific tasks, lines of authority and timelines. (McCormick, 2001) A detailed action plan should be formed by these task force and the consolidation should not be rushed. Avenues of two way communication should be generated to keep employees informed of the status of the consolidation and allow them to have input into the process. The members of the department that have influence on the others should be sought and sold on the objectives of the consolidation (Kemp and Young, 2006). One last but very important lesson is that the greatest success for fire department

consolidation comes as a result of collaborative efforts between departments, such as functional consolidation, and not through legislation (Benoit and Perkins, 1996). If consolidation is mandated, resistance will increase resulting in a diminishing chance for consolidation success (Pritchett, 1985).

Based upon the literature review and research completed there are some potential advantages and disadvantages to the Shadeland Volunteer Fire Department (SVFD) choosing to merge with a county fire department. First, the consolidation of procedures and programs would be advantageous to SVFD by freeing up personnel for operations and receiving support for services which are difficult to provide with limited staff (L. Curl, personal communication, August 24, 2010). Administrative support would also be helpful given the limited time of volunteer officers that work full time jobs. Second, SVFD would receive limited benefit from the consolidation in terms of physical resources and could potentially lose the use of valuable equipment if reassignment were allowed to occur. Therefore it would be in the best interest of SVFD to ensure that any consolidation has a clearly defined policy or article in the by-laws which does not allow equipment to be transferred without our permission. Third, there may be some benefit to the human resources of SVFD if they received support from an administrative staff of a county fire department. Additional benefit could come from recruitment efforts and membership benefits obtained at the county level. Fourth, it is unlikely that consolidation will result in the improvement of the financial resources of the department. The distribution model of the county fire department would have to be closely studied. Also any cost savings due to economies of scale may be lost or exceeded by the salary of a hired administrator. Fifth, the consolidation would probably not change the direct level of service quality and delivery given to

the community by SVFD, but it may result in better support services. Although it is undetermined whether or not financial savings could be seen it is possible that the true benefit would be seen in receiving support for training, safety, fire prevention, fire education, administration, recordkeeping and grant writing (L. Curl, personal communication, August 24, 2010). Finally, the largest lesson learned from other organizations would be the importance of detailed planning and communication (L. Curl, personal communication, August 24, 2010). The planning should be completed by a team representative of all departments, ranks and points of view. Without this kind of planning and buy in the consolidation will occur with greater conflict and dissention. Also, if consolidation with the county fire department is considered by SVFD the process should involve thorough and frequent communication with all members, the town council and the community.

Recommendations

After taking into account the opportunities as well as the challenges that exist within a consolidation process, and researching the perceptions of individuals within the local fire service, several recommendations are being made to the Shadeland Volunteer Fire Department (SVFD).

First of all, given the current information, lack of details available, and resistance that was observed in the questionnaire towards consolidation, it is recommended not to choose to consolidate at this time. Because the consolidation is a result of legislation and not of the voluntary collaborative efforts of departments, I foresee significant personnel challenges that are likely to create a difficult consolidation environment.

Second, I recommend that the SVFD request the Tippecanoe County Fire Association form a task force to track applicable legislation, develop or adopt an appropriate consolidation

model and establish a consolidation contingency plan. The purpose of this contingency model and plan would be to be prepared for any legislation that would eliminate township government. In addition this task force should make effort as a group and through the Indiana Volunteer Firefighters Association to ensure the best interest of the township fire departments are considered within any legislative efforts. The SVFD should select a representative to be on the task force so that if new information is obtained and the climate for consolidation becomes more favorable, the SVFD can re-assess its position on consolidation.

Third, I recommend that the SVFD request the Tippecanoe County Fire Association to have the formed task force study ways in which the township fire departments could functionally consolidate. This would be a voluntary consolidation of individual functions that may be better achieved collaboratively as a group. Purchasing consortiums and shared responsibilities for auxiliary or administrative functions may be some items to consider. Voluntary functional consolidations would not only benefit each of the departments, but also establish valuable working relationships to build upon in the event of a legislated consolidation. The SVFD should participate in any beneficial functional consolidations.

If township government is eliminated by legislation then consolidation may not be an option for most fire departments like it would be for the SVFD. The level of success of the consolidation may hinge upon the willingness of all department's to properly plan and communicate with each other early enough to maximize on the opportunities and minimize the challenges of a forced consolidation. SVFD should be involved with these efforts to ensure its own interest and re-consider consolidation if the opportunities can be capitalized upon.

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Appendix A

Sample Consolidation Questionnaire

County Fire Dept Consolidation

1. COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT CONSOLIDATION QUESTIONNAIRE

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS FOR THE PURPOSE OF COLLECTING DATA FOR AN APPLIED RESEARCH PROJECT FOR THE NATIONAL FIRE ACADEMIES EXECUTIVE FIRE OFFICER PROGRAM. THE INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE IS CONFIDENTIAL. THE RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE MAY BE SHARED WITH EITHER GOVERNMENT ENTITIES OR FIRE SERVICE ASSOCIATIONS IF REQUESTED.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME IN HELPING ME WITH THIS PROJECT. FEEL FREE TO CONTACT ME IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS WITH THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

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In past legislative sessions, bills (most recently HB 1249) have been introduced to eliminate township government. As part of this elimination of township government all fire departments that are not in municipalities such as towns or cities would be consolidated into a county fire department. The following questionnaire is being used to complete research for an applied research project for the National Fire Academies Executive Fire Officer Program. The goal of this research is to identify the perceptions of fire department members about possible consolidation in regards to the opportunities and challenges of their procedural, physical, financial, and human resources as well as their possible effects on service delivery and quality.

THE FOLLOWING IS WORDING FROM THE FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT FROM THE OFFICE OF FISCAL AND MANAGEMENT ANALYSIS IN REGARDS TO HB1249.

Fire Department Consolidation: The county executive is responsible for providing fire protection in the county, but is not responsible for fire protection in an area served by a municipal fire department, fire protection district, or fire protection territory. The county fire department will include the fire departments of the townships and the fire protection districts.

Assignment of Property and Debt: The consolidated fire department is to assume or receive the personnel, agreements with labor organizations, indebtedness related to fire protection services, and merit board duties. The consolidated city is to assume the powers, duties, agreements, and liabilities of bonds or other indebtedness. Any property, equipment, records, rights, and contracts are to be conveyed to the consolidated fire department.

Pensions: After a consolidation, members of the 1937 Fund are to remain members of the 1937 Fund and members of the 1977 Fund are to remain members of the 1977 Fund. The 1937 Firefighters' Pension Fund and the 1977 Police Officers' and Firefighters' Pension and Disability Fund local boards are dissolved on January 1, 2013, and their powers, duties, and responsibilities transfer to the county's local boards.

Fire Protection in a Consolidated City: In a consolidated city, an unconsolidated township fire department is to consolidate into the fire department of the consolidated city without action by the executive and legislative body of the township.

Fire Protection District: A fire protection district is to consist of all the unincorporated area that is located in the township, but not in an existing fire protection district. A municipality is included in the fire protection district only if it consents by ordinance or a majority of the freeholders petition to be included. The fire protection districts may merge or participate in a fire protection territory. The county legislative body appoints a fire trustee from among names submitted by the Indiana Volunteer Firefighters Association to a four-year term to manage the operations of the fire protection district. The fire trustee must be a resident of the fire protection district, and may not be an employee of the district or a relative of a member of the county fiscal body or county legislative body. The county fiscal body is to set the salary of the fire trustee by ordinance, and the county legislative body is the legislative body of the fire protection district.

*** 1. In what county is your fire department?**

County Fire Dept Consolidation

* 2. What fire department do you represent?

* 3. What is your rank within your department?

* 4. How long have you been in the fire service?

	Years in fire service	
0-5 years	<input type="radio"/>	_____
6-10 years	<input type="radio"/>	_____
11-15 years	<input type="radio"/>	_____
16-20 years	<input type="radio"/>	_____
20 years or more	<input type="radio"/>	_____

County Fire Dept Consolidation

2. PHYSICAL RESOURCES

To obtain information about the opportunities, challenges, and concerns regarding the physical resources of effected fire departments. These physical resources include all assets owned by the fire department including buildings, vehicles, and all other emergency and non-emergency equipment.

1. Existing physical resources

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Existing physical resources should always remain with the department to which they are currently assigned.	<input type="radio"/>				
Existing physical resources should be available to be transferred based upon the needs of the county fire department.	<input type="radio"/>				
Existing physical resources should be available to be transferred, but only after a period of 5-10 years after consolidation has occurred.	<input type="radio"/>				
Existing physical resources should be available to be reassigned for short intervals to cover for equipment that is out of service for maintenance purposes or for special assignments/events.	<input type="radio"/>				

Comments regarding existing resources

County Fire Dept Consolidation

2. New Physical Resources

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
New physical resources should always remain with the department to which they are initially assigned.	<input type="radio"/>				
New physical resources should be available to be transferred based upon the needs of the county fire department.	<input type="radio"/>				
New physical resources should be available to be reassigned for short intervals to cover for equipment that is out of service for maintenance purposes or for special assignments/events.	<input type="radio"/>				

Comments regarding new resources

3. Interoperability of physical resources

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
The standardization of physical resources such as personal protective equipment, self contained breathing apparatus, fire apparatus, extrication equipment, and other tools should occur over time if consolidation occurs.	<input type="radio"/>				
The standardization of physical resources as noted above will improve cross training and emergency response among departments.	<input type="radio"/>				
The standardization of physical resources will improve the quality of services delivered by departments affected in the consolidation.	<input type="radio"/>				

4. What other concerns or opportunities do you feel exist regarding each departments physical resources if consolidation were to occur?

County Fire Dept Consolidation

3. PROCEDURAL RESOURCES

To obtain information about the opportunities, challenges, and concerns regarding the procedural resources of effected fire departments. These procedural resources may include standard operating guidelines, safety programs, human resource programs or any other item type of program or procedure.

1. Procedural Resources

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Individual department's standard operating guidelines should be merged into one set of operating guidelines for all the merged departments.	<input type="radio"/>				
The standardization of operating guidelines among all departments will result in improved response among departments.	<input type="radio"/>				
Individual department's safety programs should be merged for all the merged departments.	<input type="radio"/>				
The standardization of safety programs among departments will improve firefighter safety.	<input type="radio"/>				
The standardization of safety programs will improve OSHA compliance.	<input type="radio"/>				
Training programs should be standardized to allow for greater training opportunities and cross training among departments.	<input type="radio"/>				
The cancellation of fire department training programs will increase training levels of department members.	<input type="radio"/>				

2. What other concerns or opportunities do you feel exist regarding each departments procedural resources and the merging of procedures and programs if consolidation were to occur?

County Fire Dept Consolidation

4. HUMAN RESOURCES

To obtain information about the opportunities, challenges, and concerns regarding the human resources of effected fire departments. These human resources include all current members of the department, future members of the consolidated county fire department, and future positions and structure needed within the county fire department.

1. Human Resources

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
The consolidation will result in increased recruitment opportunities for all departments.	<input type="radio"/>				
Current fire department officers positions should remain the same as they are now (chain of command).	<input type="radio"/>				
Current fire department officers positions should be evaluated and streamlined in the new department.	<input type="radio"/>				
New fire department officer positions should be added at the county level for fire department operations.	<input type="radio"/>				
New fire department officer positions should be added at the county level to accommodate for support activities (ie; training, prevention, human resources, investigation, etc).	<input type="radio"/>				
Consolidation of township fire departments will result in more advancement opportunities among members.	<input type="radio"/>				
The fire trustee should function as a fire chief and have operational responsibilities in addition to the county fire department administration.	<input type="radio"/>				
The fire trustee should be chosen by the county among names submitted from the IVFA.	<input type="radio"/>				
Consolidation will result in improved membership incentives and benefits.	<input type="radio"/>				

County Fire Dept Consolidation

2. What should the minimum qualifications be for the Fire Trustee(administrator of the fire department at county level)?

3. What process should be used to fill the Fire Trustee position?

4. What other concerns or opportunities do you feel exist regarding each departments procedural resources and the merging of procedures and programs if consolidation were to occur?

County Fire Dept Consolidation

5. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

To obtain information about the opportunities, challenges, and concerns regarding the financial resources of effected fire departments. These financial resources include individual departmental budgets acquired through taxes.

1. Financial Resources

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
The consolidation will result in increased saving opportunities in large capital purchases such as fire apparatus or buildings.	<input type="radio"/>				
The consolidation will result in increased saving in other equipment purchases such as personal protective equipment, self contained breathing apparatus, and tools.	<input type="radio"/>				
The consolidation will result in increased saving opportunities in daily supplies, i.e; office and janitorial supplies.	<input type="radio"/>				

2. What other concerns or opportunities do you feel exist regarding each departments financial resources and the cost or savings associated with consolidation?

County Fire Dept Consolidation

6. SERVICE QUALITY

To obtain information about the opportunities, challenges, and concerns regarding service quality delivered by affected fire departments if consolidated into a county fire department.

1. Service Quality

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Consolidation will result in improved emergency response services.	<input type="radio"/>				
Consolidation will result in improved prevention and education services.	<input type="radio"/>				

2. What other concerns or opportunities do you feel exist regarding the service quality being delivered by a consolidated fire department?

County Fire Dept Consolidation

7. PERSONAL PERCEPTIONS

To obtain information about the personal opinions and perceptions of fire service members that may be affected by township fire department consolidation.

1. Personal Opinions

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
Township fire departments should be consolidated into a county fire department.	<input type="radio"/>				
I will continue to be a member of the fire department if a consolidation occurs.	<input type="radio"/>				

2. What other concerns or opportunities do you have regarding consolidation into a county fire department that you haven't relayed elsewhere in this questionnaire?

County Fire Dept Consolidation

8. THANK YOU

Thank you for taking your valuable time to help me with this research project.

Brad Young
Executive Fire Officer Program Participant
2nd Assistant Chief Shadeland Fire Department
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Appendix B

Consolidation Questionnaire Results

Table B1

Numbers of Participants Within Each Represented County

County Name	Number of Responses
Allen	1
Benton	4
Carroll	12
Clinton	10
DeKalb	1
Fountain	1
Hendricks	1
Huntington	1
Montgomery	8
Tippecanoe	17
Warren	4
Wells	1
White	2
Whitley	1
Total	64

Table B2

Numbers of Participants From Each Represented Fire Department

Fire Department Name	Number of Responses
Attica FD	1
Auburn FD	1
Boswell/Grant Township Fire and Rescue	1
Burlington Vol. FD	6
Burrows – Liberty Township FD	4
Camden – Jackson Township FD	1
Center Township FD	1
Chalmers Community Vol. FD	1
Coal Creek Fire and Rescue Inc.	1
Crawfordsville FD	2
Delphi Tri Township Fire Territory	1
Eel River Township Vol. FD	1
Jefferson Center Vol. FD	1
Ladoga FD	1
Lafayette FD	1
Liberty Center Vol. FD	1
New Market Community Vol. FD	1
No Response	1
Otterbein FD	2
Oxford FD	1
Perry Township Vol. FD	8
Pine Village Community Vol. FD	1
Roanoke FD	1
Rossville Vol. FD	2
Sheffield Township Vol. FD	3
Southwest Fire District	1
Wabash Township FD	4
Walnut Township Vol. FD	2
Washington Township FD	1
Waveland Community Vol. FD	1
Wea Township FD	6
West Lebanon Vol. FD	1
West Point Vol. FD	1
Williamsport Vol. FD	2
Total	64

Table B3

Numbers of Participants From Each Rank Represented

Rank	Number of Responses
Chief	13
Assistant/Deputy/Division Chief	13
President/Trustee	2
Captain	5
Lieutenant	3
Training/Safety Officer	4
Firefighter	23
No Response	1
Total	

Table B4

Numbers of Participants Based on Years in Fire Service

Answer Options	Response Count
0-5 years	11
6-10 years	9
11-15 years	12
16-20 years	12
20 years or more	20
	answered question 64
	skipped question 0

Table B5

Participant’s opinion about the use of physical resources which already exist and are currently owned and/or used by their fire department.

Answer Options	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Count
Existing physical resources should always remain with the department to which they are currently assigned.	0	6 (9.5%)	3(4.8%)	15(23.8%)	39(61.9%)	63
Existing physical resources should be available to be transferred based upon the needs of the county fire department.	26(41.3%)	14(22.2%)	9(14.3%)	10(15.9%)	4(6.3%)	63
Existing physical resources should be available to be transferred, but only after a period of 5-10 years after consolidation has occurred.	23(36.5%)	25(39.7%)	4(6.3%)	9(14.3%)	2(3.2%)	63
Existing physical resources should be available to be reassigned for short intervals to cover for equipment that is out of service for maintenance purposes or for special assignments/events.	14(22.2%)	11(17.5%)	3(4.8%)	28(44.4%)	7(11.1%)	63
						answered question 63
						skipped question 1

Additional comments regarding the existing physical resources of the current township fire departments.

Number	Response Text
1	Many of the resources are purchased by the department in volunteer services. The county doesnt make these purchases. So therefore the items that each department has purchased should remain at its current department for the firefighters of that area purchased it for a specific reason. They thought it was needed for their coverage area.
2	All physical resources currently under the control of a dept. and any already committed to buy should stay with that dept. --- period. Also, all monies under the control of Township trustees in their fire funds should be dedicated for future use by the dept. or dept.s they currently have to service their areas. The " County " fire dept. should start with a zero balance. Do you have any idea the many, many ways the different fire dept's and Trustee's have resouces accumulated? Also, many like our dept. are a fire company, a separate privately owned organization, that I am not sure the county would have any authority to transfer resources any where else. In the rural areas, many townships have fire depts. in another county service their area since it may be closer. Which county has jurisdiction over resources of that fire dept.?

Table B5 Continued

Number	Response Text
3	This is a thorny issue. If you go down the consolidation route - you must remember that the residents of the townships and the requisite fire departments put a lot of effort into the existing equipment. You would destroy morale to take the 'new' truck that a department/township worked for and invested their resources into getting and simply give it to another station. Over time, this will fade as new apparatus owned by the 'district' come into service. That is not to say that you cannot 'lend' apparatus to cover OOS pieces. That said - even that should be done by the requisite stations - at least during the early phases of the transition to a consolidated department.
4	If all Counties are forced to go to a County wide system, then the newly created Fire Department should be allowed to allocate resources where they are needed.
5	Resources should be able to be kept by the existing agencies. Shouldn't consolidate into one department County wide.
6	Departments have worked hard for getting their equipment and making sure it's properly maintained. Other department may not take care of the equipment and let it go. Then it may become your truck if equipment is moved around and then it becomes a maintenance headache. If a department has equipment out of service you then call for mutual aid and you also notify surrounding departments that you are short on equipment.
7	Township departments spec their equipment to suit the fire protection needs of their township purposefully. Members of that department are trained to and qualified on that equipment. There would be no level of comfort by any member of a township department using borrowed equipment temporarily. The sharing of equipment / assets implies that eventually "common" equipment would be purchased for the county fire department and it would be near impossible to cover all situations and scenarios that are specific to each township with commonly spec'd equipment.
8	I dislike the term "always" as it is permanent. Think that after a period of time this will be a non-issue as the county fire department will be purchasing apparatus for all the fire departments.
9	Consolidation of rural county departments will not be in the best interest of the people living in the county.
10	county fire departments are a bad idea
11	Mutual Aid agreements should cover short intervals of equipment out of service. Members of one department may not be trained on usage of different types of equipment from another department.
12	Some hybrid of the above statements seems most feasible. With so many small fire departments having duplicate resources (2 pumpers, 2 tankers, etc) in order to protect against break down, it only seems logical that a larger, consolidated department could reallocate some resources to eliminate outdated equipment. However, no currently existing fire department should be forced to give up their best piece of equipment just to better equip another station.
13	The home department should be allowed to keep their assets. In the event of another department needing the available resources it should be allocated in the best interest of the public's safety. At no time shall a governing body choose to remove assets from one district and place them in another based on wants.
14	Departments operate for the betterment of the area they serve. Mutual aid is in place for existing fire departments to help other departments in their area. equipment is secured with grant money and fundraised money and would not be fair to move this to other areas.
15	If you have a county king then whom ever is in the political favor will get what ever they want and others will be stripped of equipment and citizens will die for it!
16	This should be left up to the Fire chief of that department or territory if something needs to be done. That Chief can go and ask another department chief or territory if he needs help or assistance with an item that is out of service. I believe if you get only one person handling the vol. fire service in the county you will see a large drop in fire fighters.
17	It would be different

Table B5 Continued

Number	Response Text
18	I think removal of equipment or funding that department members have worked to obtain to give to another department will kill the volunteer spirt and doom the fire service even faster than we are already going down hill. We have trouble getting people to volunteer thier time already so what would thier incentive be to conduct a fun raising activity in one small town if they residents all know it is going to another area.
19	If you do that how can i do my job
20	I don't think anything should be moved from one fire department to another other than if one of the fire departments main trucks goes out of service and another fire department has an extra to give to them until they get there's back from service.
21	If you go to moving equipment around, all of the better equipment will always end up in the area of the person that is making such decisions. This will never work. Look at our county roads, you can tell where the person in charge is from by seeing how the roads are taking care of. You will never have an unbiased person that will treat all departments equally.

Table B6

Participant’s opinion about the use of physical resources which are purchased after the consolidation into a county fire department.

Answer Options	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Count
New physical resources should always remain with the department to which they are initially assigned.	2(3.2%)	12(19%)	7(11.1%)	16(25.4%)	26(41.3%)	63
New physical resources should be available to be transferred based upon the needs of the county fire department.	17(27%)	18(28.6%)	11(17.5%)	14(22.2%)	3(4.8%)	63
New physical resources should be be available to be reassigned for short intervals to cover for equipment that is out of service for maintenance purposes or for special assignments/events.	14(22.2%)	6(9.5%)	6(9.5%)	31(49.2%)	6(9.5%)	63
					answered question	63
					skipped question	1

Additional comments regarding the new physical resources of a consolidated county fire department.

Number	Response Text
1	If it is purchased by the county than the county should be able to reassign it with help and information from the chiefs and firefighters in the county.
2	Why would the County reassign resouces based on need, when the need was already evident by the fire dept. that ordered it originally, to have at their location?
3	If you want the 'new' department to take hold without bad feelings, a strong demarcation line from the 'old' resources and 'new' resources should be drawn. If you want to take it one further - you allow that station to 'opt' to send an older reserve piece that was 'thiers' prior to consolidation in place of the 'new' apparatus.
4	Only for short periods of time to cover out of service vehicles/equipment.

Table B6 Continued

Number	Response Text
5	If a department has equipment out of service you then call for mutual aid and you also notify surrounding departments that you are short on equipment.
6	New equipment should be based on the needs of each area, and constantly reassessed.
7	I think that resources would be subject to the trickle down effect. Those departments making the most runs should have the most current resources.
8	still a bad idea
9	That depends significantly on the type of equipment and how it was funded. If a county wide department standardized on a single brand/type equipment in which everyone was trained on it's use, and funding was from a central source, it would be reasonable to reassign it. If a local department generated the funds to purchase a piece of equipment, it should not be transferable to another department unless that department was willing to initiate that transfer.
10	Again, a hybrid solution seems best. New physical resources should remain where assigned, in general, because firefighters get used to working with the same piece of equipment. Moving equipment around can cause confusion and misuse during an emergency. However, having backup equipment available to put in place of out of service resources is essential. And sometimes it just becomes necessary to reassign specialty apparatus (ladders, brush trucks, etc) to a new station.
11	The purchase of new equipment shall be a department driven based on the communities needs. If a consolidated department's community needs new equipment and it is purchasaed with the budgeted money the county department really has the right and authority to place it any where with in their district. This should be based on the community needs.
12	Who is going to have input and power to make the final call?
13	Sounds a lot like socialism!
14	Good to try
15	No way because we work hard for it

Table B7

Participant’s opinion about the standardization of physical resources for interoperability

Answer Options	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Count
The standardization of physical resources such as personal protective equipment, self contained breathing apparatus, fire apparatus, extrication equipment, and other tools should occur over time if consolidation occurs.	4(6.5%)	7(11.3%)	3(4.8%)	26(41.9%)	22(35.5%)	62
The standardization of physical resources as noted above will improve cross training and emergency response among departments.	6(9.8%)	3(4.9%)	2(3.3%)	24(39.3%)	26(42.6%)	61
The standardization of physical resources will improve the quality of services delivered by departments affected in the consolidation.	7(11.5%)	10(16.4%)	5(8.2%)	21(34.4%)	18(29.5%)	61
					answered question	62
					skipped question	2

Table B8

Other participant’s comments and concerns regarding the impact of consolidation on their fire departments physical resources.

Number	Response Text
1	So what happens when you mutual aid with a dept. in an adjoining county and they standardized in a different method. Where does the "standardizing" stop?
2	Standardization will bring cross training opportunities, the ability to share apparatus and tools and possible cost savings with spare parts and purchase agreements. I do not believe, given the nature of calls most departments who are subject to consolidation run, would have any measureable impact on the quality of service. Quality of service is related to the training and equipment available to responders, not the brand of said equipment.
3	Better bang for the buck when purchasing SCBA's, trucks, or PPE's.
4	Anything standardized will make it easier to train all members to existing equipment and their ability to function anywhere in the county.
5	Cost savings for taxpayers by eliminating duplicate resources.
6	Huge savings and discount when purchasing equipment and apparatus in multiples
7	I don't believe that a single governing body could properly spec equipment for fire protection for an entire county.
8	Most departments are very possessive of their resources as they have worked very hard to procure them and would be hard pressed to pass newer equipment on to other departments.

Table B8 Continued

Number	Response Text
9	Lives and property will be lost due to consolidation of departments in rural counties. If the politions would not stick their nose into things they know nothing about, the state & country would be a lot better off. Lets see, they would not be sticking their noses into anything, would they.
10	Standardizing would certainly make interoperability better between departments, and would allow for mutual aid (then probably known as multi-station response) to function more efficiently. It would also allow for easier cross staffing of stations in the event of a major incident where we would fill in to help cover another station.
11	<p>Standardization of equipment is great, as long as a high standard is maintained. All standardization, over time or otherwise, should lean toward the current department holding the highest standard, not toward the one holding the lowest standard. In other words, don't put the whole county in nomex gear just because that is all one of the current departments can afford.</p> <p>Having the ability to set aside certain apparatus as back ups for the whole county, instead of each station having their own back ups, is probably the biggest cost savings for any countywide, volunteer staffed fire department. Paid departments could see additional savings due to elimination of some command staff. However, shuttering stations should never be considered, as most are incredibly far apart to begin with and response times would be further effected.</p> <p>In a traditionally volunteer county, using any actual financial savings to place two paid firefighter/emts on duty at each station could also go along way in reducing response times. However, these paid firefighter/emts should be hired from the current volunteer roles, without the 35 year old cap typically imposed by PERF. In other words, hiring the 40 year old volunteer, with 15 years experience, to fill a paid position in the newly created county FD will give you a well trained and experienced employee, so why not do it.</p>
12	After awhile the concern for this is mine will wain. If the departments are truly responding to the communities needs they will do what is in the best interest of the whole community.
13	Again this depends on who has input and authority?
14	They WILL close fire stations due to monitary issues and leave to many people unprotected or underprotected. Response times will increase and services will decrease.
15	<p>1. You will loose fire fighters.</p> <p>2. Tax payers in the townshis will not like if fire fighting equipment is move from their area when it was purchased with their tax money from that township. I see a very large fight coming there.</p> <p>3. I believe that you are loosing your checks and balances if State gov steps in and attempts to take over or force local gov to change. or years State gov has been saying it time for local gov to stand up and take care of its own. Now the state gov is attempting to take over and tell local gov how to operate and it appears that state gov cant operate on there own.</p>
16	Probably would be alright I think not sure.
17	<p>The standardization of physical resources will improve the quality of services delivered by departments affected in the consolidation???? I don't think it would improve the quality of our service as much as it would improve firefighter safety. I think all departments train on the gear they have and therefore could deliver good quality service unless it they were assisting another department and were foked to use unfamiliar equipment or PPE.</p> <p>Even though there are some obvious gains to going to a consolidated county wide fire system I think the loss of the individual town fire departments will cause a loss of the feeling that you are part of you community and reduce the small numbers of volunteers we are already seeing.</p>
18	If you consolidat YOU ARE PUTTING PEOPLES LIFE IN YOUR HANDS.
19	I think you would never make everyone happy but, I would not go out and buy everyone the cheapest gear or equipment out there just so everyone has the same things. The tools we use have to be heavy duty and do there job.

Table B9

Participant’s opinion about the impact of consolidation regarding procedural resources such as standard operating guidelines, safety programs and training programs.

Answer Options	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Count
Individual department's standard operating guidelines should be merged into one set of operating guidelines for all the merged departments.	5(8.8%)	11(19.3%)	2(3.5%)	26(45.6%)	13(22.8%)	57
The standardization of operating guidelines among all departments will result in improved response among departments.	5(8.6%)	19(32.8%)	2(3.4%)	23(39.7%)	9(15.5%)	58
Individual department's safety programs should be merged for all the merged departments.	4(7%)	7(12.3%)	4(7%)	32(56.1%)	10(17.5%)	57
The standardization of safety programs among departments will improve firefighter safety.	3(5.4%)	8(14.3%)	6(10.7%)	24(42.9%)	15(26.8%)	56
The standardization of safety programs will improve OSHA compliance.	2(3.6%)	7(12.5%)	11(19.6%)	25(44.6%)	11(19.6%)	56
Training programs should be standardized to allow for greater training opportunities and cross training among departments.	0	4(7.1%)	3(5.4%)	28(50%)	21(37.5%)	56
The consolidation of fire department training programs will increase training levels of department members.	5(8.9%)	8(14.3%)	10(17.9%)	21(37.5%)	12(21.4%)	56
					answered question	58
					skipped question	6

Table B10

Other participant’s comments and concerns regarding the impact of consolidation on the procedural assets and programs of their fire department, such as standard operating guidelines, safety programs and training programs.

Number	Response Text
1	The SOPS would have to be mapped out with the joint cooperation of officers in the county departments. As volunteers it is hard to get everyone together at a time to do this.
2	There are already standardized training guidelines, procedures, etc. Each dept should have the ability to modify these guidelines to best address each one' variable exposures. Most dept.s already do some type of mutual aid training, etc. So what happens when you mutual aid with a dept. in an adjoining county and they standardized in a different method. Where does the "standardizing" stop?
3	If you consolidate departments, you must consolidate the administrative and procedural elements. This means one set of SOP/SOG's, one criteria for NFPA/OSHA compliance and one set of training standards. While having cross training opportunities would definitely be a benefit to forcing departments to work together, I do not see it as a means to get the membership to get better levels of training or certification. We already have a great resource in the IDHS district training centers. With that - we still have firefighters who cannot or will not put in the time to seek additional training. Consolidation will not change that.
4	I don't think one set of operating guidelines would work for everyone.

Table B10 Continued

Number	Response Text
5	Who and How will the Leader of the Newly created Fire Department be appointed
6	Each department where I live has 1 or 2 people dedicated to procedures and guidelines and for the most part no one else is interested in helping develop such programs. Under a consolidated department that would allow those 6 or 8 people to work on a committee to develop this type of program.
7	Compliance. If not managed properly.
8	If there is to be a county fire department then everyone should be held to the same standards and training. It will make it easier to train all members.
9	consolidation is a bad idea
10	I'm not sure you can merge the existing procedures/programs, but try to come up with the best procedures/programs to standardize on something that will work the best for our situation.
11	In general, standardization of this type is good. However, just as with resources, standardization must occur toward the highest common denominator, not the lowest. Consolidation of training programs sounds good on the surface. The catch is that training still needs to be offered at each individual department, as well as at the county training facility. This allows members of the department the farthest away from the training facility to still get training, without traveling a significant distance to do so. The easier it is for volunteers to get training, the more training they will take advantage of.
12	A working group shall be put into place to review, revise, and rebuild best practices that will be followed throughout the county department.
13	Departments do things one way for a reason. Just because we do it our way doesn't make it the right way for everyone else.
14	1. If local fire departments training together this would help in training, safety, and oer all safety in the community. We are doing this at this time, through are dist levels.
15	Need to be all on the same page, but some career department don't like to work with volunteers.
16	I have not answered all these questions because I am totally opposed to consolidation of fire districts.

Table B11

Participant’s opinions regarding impact of the consolidation on human resources and organizational structure.

Answer Options	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Count
The consolidation will result in increased recruitment opportunities for all departments.	14(25.5%)	20(36.4%)	7(12.7%)	12(21.8%)	2(3.6%)	55
Current fire department officers positions should remain the same as they are now (chain of command).	1(1.8%)	11(20%)	8(14.5%)	15(27.3%)	20(36.4%)	55
Current fire department officers positions should be evaluated and streamlined in the new department.	11(20%)	12(21.8%)	7(12.7%)	24(43.6%)	1(1.8%)	55
New fire department officer positions should be added at the county level for fire department operations.	9(16.7%)	10(18.5%)	10(18.5%)	21(38.9%)	4(7.4%)	54
New fire department officer positions should be added at the county level to accommodate for support activities (ie; training, prevention, human resources, investigation, etc).	6(11.1%)	9(16.7%)	6(11.1%)	27(50%)	6(11.1%)	54
Consolidation of township fire departments will result in more advancement opportunities among members.	16(29.1%)	17(30.9%)	9(16.4%)	12(21.8%)	1(1.8%)	55
The fire trustee should function as a fire chief and have operational responsibilities in addition to the county fire department administration.	24(44.4%)	14(25.9%)	7(13%)	8(14.8%)	1(1.9%)	54
The fire trustee should be chosen by the county among names submitted from the IVFA.	18(32.7%)	12(21.8%)	8(14.5%)	12(21.8%)	5(9.1%)	55
Consolidation will result in improved membership incentives and benefits.	17(32.1%)	8(15.1%)	14(26.4%)	12(22.6%)	2(3.8%)	53
					answered question	55
					skipped question	9

Table B12

Participant’s comments and concerns regarding the qualifications of the proposed Fire Trustee within the county fire department consolidation.

Number	Response Text
1	Minimum of 20 years firefighter experience. At least a Firefighter I/II certification. Has been a fire officer(Trustee should not be an officer on any fire dept under his jurisdiction) Trustee should have financial skills in taxing methods and budgeting.
2	Should not be merger of county fire departments to begin with. FT should be trained to NIMS standards, FF I/II, Instructor I, Safety Officer, and Fire Officer II, with some EMS background, at least first responder.
3	The trustee should be an individual familiar with the operational structure of a fire department but should serve in a political/administrative role. A true county level fire chief, nominated by the leadership of the requisite stations (former FD units) and confirmed by the Fire Trustee should serve as the fundamental leadership for the newly formed fire department. This should be a fixed term position - say 2 or 3 years and then repeat the nomination/confirmation process. There is no reason a Chief could not serve consecutive terms, it just guarentees a review and mechanism for change. As for current officers - its quite simple. If you are building a new fire department, you must take the oppertunity to build it correctly. You are moving from a one station FD to a multi-station operation. It makes sense to re-align your officer positions. In the end - it is most likely that all of the existing officers will have roles to play as officers in the new orginization - albeit with different titles.
4	Fire Officer 2 or higher
5	Should NEVER be allowed to happen!
6	FF 1 and FF 2, EMT-B, at least 10 years of firefighting experience with at least 5 years in upper management-ie Asst. Chief, Deputy Chief, or Chief
7	Fire Officer 1, Hold office as a Fire Chief currently, Possibly some Management schooling, if not a Degree,
8	This should be a business minded person and not an operational person.
9	Extensive training and management skills
10	15 years of fire related service
11	1.High levels of training in fire service 2.High levels of documented experience in fire service 3.College Educaion
12	FF II and EMT –B
13	The fire trustee should have minimum of 10 years experience with fire fighter I/II and fire officer I certifications. A two or 4 year degree in Fire Science or business management. or equivelant work experience.
14	Active Volunteer Firefighter for at least 20 years.
15	five years or more experience
16	10 years as a FF Education of some sort of management
17	Fire Officer 2

Table B12 Continued

Number	Response Text
18	This position should be an administrative one. Not a chief. Not a line officer of any kind. Just someone with an MBA or similar business degree/experienc. This individual must have some link to the fire service, such as experience as a volunteer, but does not need to have years of experience or be a fire officer. The individual needs to know how to run a business, but also needs to know enough about the fire service to fight for the appropriate resources, while keeping line officers from snowballing him with requests. This individual should have no responsibility, other than financial, on any emergency scene.
19	FF 1 and 2 ,Firer officer, stratagy and tatics
20	Bachelor degree in business management/Supervision Firefighter background
21	Fire Officer 1 certification. Atleast 10 years in the county fire services.
22	The Fire Department Chief in my opinion shall have a College degree with a minimum of ten years experience in the fire service. They should have a minimum of Fire Officer 2 level training and a working knowledge of best practices around the country not just regionaly or locally.
23	There should not be a fire trustee
24	NOT A POLITICTION!
25	20 years of paid and volunteer fire service.
26	Certified Fire Officer, Firefighter I and II Certified First Responder or Emergency Medical Technician Minimum of 7 years experience
27	Fire Officer 2
28	There should not be one person running the whole county.
29	I'm not sure at least 20 + years of service.
30	As for the county chief position I think it should be chosen from qualified people within the county and approved of by the members of the departments. Not sure what IVFA has to do with it, don't agree at all there based on what I see on the surface of it at least.
31	20 years, Qailafed in all mines of Firefighting
32	Opposed to fire districts.
33	BA in fire science 10 years minimum experience as a chief officer of a full time FD
34	Should have some firefighting, EMS knowledge of what happens and goes on in the fire/EMS service.
35	Fire Officer I, and some business background. This person should not live within the county and should not have any family that lives within the county. This person needs to be moved every year.

Table B13

Participant’s comments and concerns regarding the process to select and fill the proposed Fire Trustee position.

Number	Response Text
1	First of all, the IVFA should have absolutely no input in selecting a fire trustee. Does the IVFA have any part in selecting a dept's fire chief or any other officer now? Why does the IVFA think it has any right to be involved? The nominees should come from the fire depts involved. As noted earlier, some fire dept's involved may be in a different county.
2	Fire Trustee should be chosen by the members of the departments involved and names should be submitted through the departments, not the IVFA.
3	County Election and or appointment by county executive.
4	No opinion at this time
5	None!
6	Nominations from Township Fire Departments with approval from County Commissioners.
7	I think it should be by either a voting process of all departments in the County or pick from one of the Fire Chiefs in the county.
8	Interview by County Fire Dept. Chief's.
9	Following establishing criteria for the position county fire and government officials should interview candidates
10	Professional qualifications should be established and the position filled based on those along with applicant's ability to work with others and meet goals.
11	General Election
12	Majority Vote by all members.
13	There should be a representative from every effected fire department allowed to input on the selection process.
14	Elected by the firefighters in the departments in that county.
15	This is a bad idea. but if it were to happen then this is a position that should be hired for and has to be a full time paid position.
16	Nominations from membership of participating departments. Election by all members of all of the participating departments.
17	Unsure.
18	best for the job and let the members have a say
19	Qualifications Application Interviews

Table B13 Continued

Number	Response Text
20	Look at using the Emergency Management Director if they have the qualifications. They are already established and have an office and staff that can be used. If not them then have people apply then be hired by the County Commissioners. But have every fire department give their recommendation as to the new hire.
21	A board of directors shall be put into place to interview candidates, asking standardized questions based upon experience and knowledge and a majority vote put into place to appoint the candidate to this level of authority. The board shall be elected officials consisting of Director of county, county commissioners, Sherriff, and Civilian members to make up a group consisting of a seven member board.
22	N/A
23	That all the members of the fire depts. have a vote.
24	elected by the firefighters of the county
25	Vote of all current Firefighters in county
26	Board to hire and fire the Fire Trustee
27	Leave county and loal gov as is and dont mess with it. Let state gov run themselves
28	Resume with Qualifications and certs.
29	As for the county chief position I think it should be chosen from qualified people within the county and approved of by the members of the departments. Not sure what IVFA has to do with it, don't agree at all there based on what I see on the surface of it at least.
30	Opposed to fire districts
31	Should be selected by a board of all local FD chiefs from list of qualified applicants
32	Should be chosen by all of the departments leaders.

Table B14

Other participant comments and concerns regarding the impact of consolidation on the human resources and organizational structure of their fire department.

Number	Response Text
1	So what happens when you mutual aid with a dept. in an adjoining county and they standardized in a different method. Where does the "standardizing" stop?
2	Leave the departments as they are for now. May have gradual merger through purchasing and joint training. Each department should have their own respective chief, so they know the person they are responsible to.
3	If consolidation is seriously considered - the individuals embarking on this *must* sell the idea to the existing membership or you will lose considerable assets in existing departments.
4	Bigger is not always better!
5	Better and consistent training. Better response times and more appropriate equipment being dispatched.
6	Like all consolidations, there will be unhappy people.
7	I think it may bring on conflict due to the wide spread of fire personnel and coverage area. I think the County Fire Departments operate well and should stay as they are.
8	The only problem I foresee is politics weighing in on choosing chief officers
9	Existing debts and equipment should stay with those taxpayers where it originated.
10	It would be near impossible to write procedure or policy that applies to fire protection for an entire county. Said documents would be too general and could compromise fire ground safety.
11	I think that every department should have a chief officer in charge of its department.
12	As a Firefighter/EMT, I'm quite concerned about how this would be received by a significant portion of the current firefighters of all departments. The departments are very independent and operate autonomously. We enjoy having our independence and not having to report to a county wide authority. We can make our own decisions as to how to spend our money to best serve our township and losing that control may become a big issue for a lot of current. As a tax payer, I can see the benefits of having all departments standardized, and assigning resources where needed in the county to provide consistent coverage for the greater good of the county.
13	Once again, my biggest concern is being forced into a position where the high standards I am used to are compromised.
14	concerns in this area is who will be in charge because we have guys that if there in charge we will lose a lot of good firefighters
15	If this were to happen I feel that there might be better communication and better training amongst the fire departments. There would be better on scene coordination on mutual aid calls because everyone would have the same procedures.
16	Each organization shall keep an open mind about this process. There are states all over the country that have had much success with combined departments, Florida, California, Virginia, and West Virginia are a few that have consolidated organizations.
17	It would be a political war zone. nothing good will come out of it.

Table B14 Continued

Number	Response Text
18	If consolidation occurs against the will of the current departments, there will be tremendous resistance to the changes at would occur. Control of the department would be disputed at every level and the interaction between the county department and the sole paid department in the county would be strained as I foresee that department attempting to take control of the county department.
19	You cant force it, it needs to come naturally. We have had intrest but the funding was not there to support it.
20	dont merge
21	Some people won't like it especialy the the city fire dept
22	The only way this could improve membership recruitment is if there was money spent as whole to advertise county fire department activities and the incentives to get new members to volunteer and someone dedicated to the Human resources position to make sure those people don't just show up for the goodies we hand out and then disappear.
23	I feel that if the change to consolidation occurs that it will not benefit the fire departments or county residents. We have worked very hard for the training and equipment that we have and want it to stay in our community. I also feel that the majority of the apparatus would go to communities with bigger populations which would leave the smaller ones out in the cold. I do not feel that changing to a consolidated fire department will benefit the communities.
24	Opposed to fire districts
25	My concern is that by consolidating and hiring more people, this will cost the tax payers a lot more money for a lower service. One paid fireman is twice the amount that our fire department receives in tax money each year. The equipment that we have to use, which is unacceptable, would not be used by any paid fireman. We have approximately 110 runs per year with an average response time of 7 min and 45 sec. If you consolidate, you will not have this good of response times.

Table B15

Participant’s opinions regarding the impact of consolidation on the financial resources of their fire departments.

Answer Options	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Count
The consolidation will result in increased saving opportunities on large capital purchases such as fire apparatus or buildings.	13(23.2%)	11(19.6%)	9(16.1%)	17(30.4%)	6(10.7%)	56
The consolidation will result in increased saving on other equipment purchases such as personal protective equipment, self contained breathing apparatus, and tools.	9(16.1%)	12(21.4%)	5(8.9%)	19(33.9%)	11(19.6%)	56
The consolidation will result in increased saving opportunities on daily supplies. ie; office and janitorial supplies.	12(21.4%)	16(28.6%)	7(12.5%)	10(17.9%)	11(19.6%)	56
					answered question	56
					skipped question	8

Table B16

Participant’s comments and concerns regarding the potential impact the consolidation will have on the financial resources of their fire departments.

Number	Response Text
1	Some departments will try to take advantage of the resources of others and obtain equipment that they may not need, but just want. Also, there will always be some "Politics" involved, as each department/ area tries to get financial resources.
2	While you can save money on the equipment, you must also balance that against any costs associated with paid staffing required to handle the additional administrative burden. As of now, most of the administrative work is handled on a part time basis for volunteers. With consolidation, the need for full time admin personnel may kill any savings you might see and end up costing money in the long run. While consolidation can be an effective tool, it is not always the most effective or efficient way to operate. As of today - there is a lot of labor freely given by our citizens as members of the local FD. In a true cost analysis of the balance sheet, these hours need to be accounted for - especially if paid staffing is considered or required.
3	Better savings with the joint purchase power of several departments working together.
4	I don't see a true savings in merging into one county department. For the simple fact you just increased your people cost. You know have a large staff of individuals to oversee and run a fire department that will be getting paid and eligible for benefits paid for by the tax payer.
5	I think these questions for the most part have obvious answers and people that answer them in a questionable manner do so for political reasons and are ignoring the safety of the community in which they live and serve.
6	Consolidation increases bureaucracy and more bureaucracy equates to higher costs / spending. There are individual townships who are good stewards of their money (i.e. NO debt) and there are townships that are not. The townships who are fiscally responsible would be penalized in a consolidated system by assuming debt that exists in other townships. The possibility exists that price breaks would be available for expensed items (non-capital) and office supplies.
7	I think that equipment and apparatus should be standardized as much as possible to increase the savings of purchases.
8	well some areas of this county are well financed and this will leave those areas and be taken to only one area of our county. this is a bad idea
9	Most savings opportunities will come from combining of purchasing power. It is always cheaper per unit to buy 100 new airpacks than it is to buy 30 new airpacks. This overall savings will generally be more noticeable on large items, like trucks, but will be greater over time on smaller items, like office supplies and gear. Consolidation of business operations under the Fire Trustee could also save money by eliminating the need for each current department to have its own letterhead, website, copy machine, and other business tools.
10	We are a small county that only buys one fire truck a year if that between all the fire departments now. So I don't see how we would benefit at all financially from this.
11	By purchasing supplies in Bulk there will be a huge cost savings across the county. The taxpayer dollar will be utilized with more scrutiny. The only thing that concerns me is that most of the money going to the county seat based on political ties.
12	I have never seen a larger government to save any money. looks good on paper but it rarely works.
13	Once again, the political favorites will get all the money and the others will be left out in the cold. once again this is socialism
14	The other increased cost associated with consolidation are higher than the above savings.
15	I believe that the small townships will lose out and they will lose their local Fire Departments if there is a merge. This means long response time in the areas that will lose their fire Departments and this will add to insurance cost to the local home owners.

Table B16 Continued

Number	Response Text
16	The ones with the most money will get the equipment.
17	My Concern - Loss of control over operations or procedures within our own station and abuse from larger departments within the county who would have more influence over position appointments and the whole process becoming political.
18	The finances our township has was taxed and appropriated for use in this township. Consolidation would confiscate all those resources given in good faith by local residents. This income will be transfered to large departments and small departments will recieve very little of their own money.
19	The more government control we seem to get, the more everything costs the tax payers and the lower the sevicees get. How do you propose we can do any different in the fire service.

Table B17

Participant’s opinions regarding the impact of consolidation on the service quality delivered by their fire departments.

Answer Options	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Count
Consolidation will result in improved emergency response services.	15(27.3%)	16(29.1%)	7(12.7%)	11(20%)	6(10.9%)	55
Consolidation will result in improved prevention and education services.	8(14.5%)	14(25.5%)	9(16.4%)	20(36.4%)	4(7.3%)	55
					answered question	56
					skipped question	8

Table B18

Other participant comments and concerns regarding the impact of consolidation on the service quality delivered by their fire department.

Number	Response Text
1	Most areas are rural, the response times will not change, but may actually decrease if equipment is centralized.
2	Consolidation should not result in better service. If it does then we are failing now in properly executing our mutual aid agreements. Education is one area consolidation may provide improvement. It's also one of the area's that may require a paid staffed position to be effective for the county rather than a single FD. Consolidation brings the needs together to form a bigger need. It also means a much larger commitment for those who volunteer. That commitment may be too big.
3	Over time the quality of fire service delivered by the consolidated departments would improve through combined training of personnel with available fire equipment.
4	Small and rural communities will be the losers!
5	I believe that if done right, a lot of money could be saved by consolidating resources.
6	The volunteer ranks are shrinking each day. Consolidation would improve emergency response times and overall numbers responding to emergencies.
7	The benefits of consolidation will far outweigh any disadvantages

Table B18 Continued

Number	Response Text
8	Common education might be a benefit in a consolidated system.
9	Paid positioins will be needed to effectively affect positive results. With the advent of more paid positions comes the further decline of volunteerism throughout the county.
10	Opportunities for mutal aid response is much quicker when there is a single county department among the indiviual stations/departments. I feel there should be some autonomy in the existing departments when and if consolidation occurs.
11	It is unlikely that response services will improve significantly, without major changes to the current volunteer fire service business model. In other words, if each station continues to be manned by volunteers who are not on station but, instead, respond from home, response times and services will not improve. If additional, hard to find training can not be offered on a local basis, specialized skills will not be learned. Therefore, any consolidation must address more than the typical changes in leadership platform in order to effectively improve response quality.
12	In order to increase service, other things need to happen. Just because you consolidate, does not mean that things will improve.
13	If the new consolidated fire department was ran right there could be changes for the good. You could get rid of the good ole boy clubs that are out there now in the small departments. But Some of those are in towns so they would not be included in the consolidation so it might not make that much of a difference.
14	The quality of service to each member of the community shall not change at all. Each organization should already be doing the right thing. If there is a change I would like to believe that it will be in the citizens best interest. I would like to see combination departments begin to form and provide these services and more.
15	When you add bigger government into a field you create confusion and waste
16	It will do nothing but improve customer service for the public.
17	This sounds good on paper but when you add in the human greed factors this will be a political mess and the people we serve, our friends and families, will pay the price.
	Unless there are laws set forth to mandate minimum financing, minimum staffing, and full time paid personnel at each station then there is no advantage or benifit over the current system.
18	I think the residents will get the same service
19	The city departments think that they are better than the volunteers but we are doing the same thing putting water on the red stuff.
20	I don't think it will result in improvement of emergency services becasue as soon as experienced members are not needed to "run" the department we are more inclined to just stop doing much at all and eventually retire all together in which the new department loses experienced people who have the knowledge and I still think we would struggle even more to recruit new new members as a county wide department.
21	Response time wil be slowed by considation.

Table B19

Participant’s personal opinions regarding whether or not consolidation should occur and their continued involvement within a county fire department.

Answer Options	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Count
Township fire departments should be consolidated into a county fire department.	23(41.8%)	11(20%)	8(14.5%)	11(20%)	2(3.6%)	55
I will continue to be a member of the fire department if a consolidation occurs.	7(12.5%)	4(7.1%)	13(23.2%)	19(33.9%)	13(23.2%)	56
					answered question	56
					skipped question	8

Table B20

Other participant’s comments and concerns regarding the impact of consolidation on their fire departments not addressed in any of the previous questions.

Number	Response Text
1	<p>Overall, I believe that township government is now outdated and the cost of delivery of services is high, especially in the rural areas. The savings is not going to be in the consolidation of training, equipment purchases, or moving resources around the county. The savings is going to come from the elimination of overhead for salaries, office costs, mileage, and audit costs for a form of government that provides services that can be absorbed in to the county for a much smaller cost than is currently in effect. Other Township Trustee duties such as poor relief can be handled by the county; cemetery mowing and property line disputes can be included in the commissioners duties. So be honest, emphasize where the savings will really be and not the "smoke and mirrors" approach on training, fire prevention, and the standardization savings. I know this survey is focused on fire services, but the transferring of the other township services will save money also.</p> <p>PLEASE NOTE-I hope the statutes that are enacted to eliminate township do not set up a standardized procedure for all townships in the state to follow for transition. I can guarantee they will not be applicable to all townships or counties. To accomplish this transitional goal, different rules and methods should be applied to counties and their townships based on township budget amounts and county population. I can easily see three levels for transitional implementation. This should be acceptable since the state has different rules for example for 1st and 2nd class cities and towns. One rule for all will be awkward to implement. Different transitional rules to address the different challenges each township has based on it's size would make this transition easier and more acceptable. Granted, all townships within the same county should be treated the same, but a county with a population of 9,000 with 11 townships and all volunteer firemen has different challenges than a county with over 1,000,000 with 11 townships and 2 or 3 paid depts.</p>
2	<p>I am neither strongly for nor strongly against consolidation.</p> <p>I will say that if consolidation is pursued, we need to make sure it is for the right reasons and that we have a sound transitional plan for all parties. This process should be open and public - with all of the pros and cons on the table. Anything less can easily lead to disenfranchisement of the existing membership and an overall drop in service.</p> <p>The key is to remember that we are here to serve our communities in the best way we can. If that means to consolidate - so be it. If that means to take steps toward consolidation without actual consolidation then that is OK too. We do not have to consolidate to unify operating principals, train together and work on standardized equipment. We can do that now - we just have to choose to do so.</p>
3	<p>Bigger is not always better.</p>

Table B20 Continued

Number	Response Text
4	We have a very good and fortunate fire department in Wabash Township. I'm not convinced that the consolidation into a county run fire department would benefit us.
5	Just see this as a more expensive way to operate the departments. It will cost the county more in the long run.
6	Township governments exist for many reasons. There is a relationship established between the township government and the people that it serves. This relationship is strongly considered when decisions are made for creating new parks, cemetery upkeep, fire and EMS service and countless other activities. Fire service consolidation will weaken relationships among the people of a given township due to lack of (very) local government support. People desire to have their fire service tailored to their needs not standardized without their best interest in mind. Consolidation is not a good idea.
7	With the advent of a consolidated fire dept. in Montgomery Co. Indiana, there will be a large amount of misinformation, exaggerated obstacles, and a general anti-change attitude expressed by a majority of the volunteer organization members. I also expect there will be a belief that a majority of the volunteers are well trained and are competent when in fact this is not true.
8	I like the autonomy of fire districts more than a single county fire department. The member fire departments have more input and control than if there is a single fire department. I feel there should still be some control at the fire department level as it exists today. The individual fire department should have some control over their department.
9	If consolidation occurs, the rural volunteer departments will suffer. The volunteers will be treated as less than adequate even worse than they are now. The rural areas will suffer due to this. There is way too much being piled on them from the large city mind thought now. Volunteer firefighters volunteer to help the people in their community that are in need. They have jobs, families, their fire department and the community they protect. Not like the cities where the fire department is their job, and at the end of the shift they go home to their families.
10	How well did consolidation of Fire Departments in other states work that faced similar situations. Is there anything we can learn from them to make this work better when/if it should occur?
11	I have no intention of giving up firefighting, regardless of what the future brings. I do, however, have the typical reservations about consolidation. I can not say whether I would support it or not, because there is not enough definite information on what it will look like, yet. A consolidated department would have to be very impressively run to provide the same level of local service that is currently offered by my department, but not so much to provide the level of service provided by other departments that I am familiar with. That being said, there are still too many questions and not enough answers for me to reach a legitimate conclusion.
12	The opportunity would be there for better service, financial responsibility, and interoperability.
13	I feel that consolidation could be a good thing as long as the person or persons that manage the organization are put into place to manage the organization and not based upon "the good old boy" system. Be very cautious of nepotism and favorites. Members shall be held accountable, and be put into place based on qualifications, experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities.
14	I think that there will be a lot of hurt fire fighters and a lot will quit the departments if this consolidation happens. The fire chiefs will be made because they will feel that they are losing their power. In our county we only have 2 township fire departments so there is not any advantage to do the consolidation here. The rest of the townships are covered by town fire departments. All it is going to do is hurt the town fire departments because they are going to lose the township money. Once the township money goes into the county it is going to be hard to get it back. I am sure the county will still have to contract with the town fire departments like the townships are doing now but I am sure that they will want to do it for a lower cost. I have to deal with the county council for my full time job right now so I know how ours operates. They do not like emergency services because they cost money but do not make any. I know that it is this way at every level of government but it seems like it is not that bad at the local level as it is at the county level.
15	If this occurs then we'll just have to see how it shakes out. But this is one more step closer to the abandonment of the constitution and our rights. Each community has the right to protect itself.
16	It costs too much to consolidate. The increase in admin cost, insurance, personnel, medical. This is not a smart move at this time.
17	If I would continue to be a member of a fire dept. I really don't know a lot would depend on who they would put in the place of the fire trustee or county fire chief.

Table B20 Continued

Number	Response Text
18	Not sure at this time.
19	Once not needed nothing holding me to the department for the most part.
20	You cannot divide a department by paying some and expecting volunteers to show up to do the work. All respect will be lost.