Next Ord: 1691-10
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VISION STATEMENT
SEDRO-WOOLLEY IS A FRIENDLY CITY THAT IS CHARACTERIZED BY CITY GOVERNMENT AND CITIZENS WORKING TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE A PROSPEROUS, VIBRANT AND SAFE COMMUNITY

MISSION STATEMENT
TO PROVIDE SERVICES AND OPPORTUNITIES WHICH CREATE A COMMUNITY WHERE PEOPLE CHOOSE TO LIVE, WORK AND PLAY

CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
AGENDA
December 7, 2010
7:00 PM
Public Safety Training Room
325 Metcalf Street

Meeting with SCFD#8 Commissioners

A. Presentation by Robert Merritt of mHc Associates *(discussion only)*

CITY COUNCIL
WORKSESSION
DEC 07 2010
AGENDA ITEM A

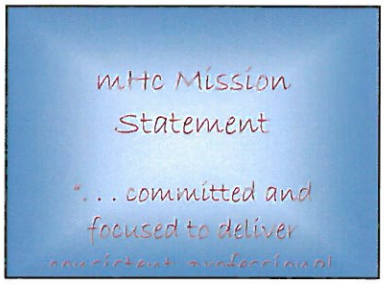
MHC ASSOCIATES

CORPORATE PROFILE

corporate profile

mHc Associates (mHc) is a Washington State firm providing specialized, high quality, professional consulting services to municipalities, districts, nonprofit organizations, and the industrial and commercial community throughout the state of Washington. While programs and services include emergency planning and evaluations for private and public organizations such as schools, churches and businesses, the primary emphasis and focus of ***mHc*** services is provided to municipal fire departments and fire districts.

Because ***mHc*** provides services exclusively in Washington State, the firm has developed methodology and processes that includes *national* criteria from the FEMA; the National Fire Academy, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA); Center for Public Safety Excellence (formally CFAI) and other recognized organizations. Additionally, ***mHc*** provides exclusive evaluation, analysis and recommendations based upon state of Washington criteria from the Washington State Survey and Rating Bureau, current Revised Codes of Washington (RCW's), Washington Administrative Codes (WAC's) specific to emergency services and other local/regional influences specific to Washington.



mHc bases its organizational philosophy and core values on the principles of *honesty, integrity, and service*. The flagship of ***mHc*** services is individualized, custom consulting services focusing on the *specific* needs and issues of the client organization. ***mHc*** encourages creative solutions to complex system dilemmas. The firm recognizes the cultural, economical, operational, legal, and political realities of the local environment. ***mHc*** avoids pre-conceived biases in order to develop and implement imaginative and long-lasting solutions. In addition, ***mHc*** equips its clients with the background, understanding, and confidence to address future problems as they arise.

When engaged, all work progress is measured against a work plan, timetable, budget, and deliverables. During the project, team members confer frequently to discuss progress as well as new or unanticipated issues. ***mHc*** project management methodology ensures that services and activities are efficiently conducted and are focused, coordinated, and logical. All project team members are available for the duration of the project.

mHc provides a wide array of services including;

- *agency administrative/management/operational audits and evaluations;*
- *organizational relationship studies: consolidation/merger/regional fire authorities;*
- *health and safety evaluations;*
- *master planning, strategic planning, and growth management plans; deployment planning; hazard mitigation planning;*
- *customized consulting.*

mHc has forged and maintains close relationships and regularly works with the Association of Washington Cities and the Washington State Fire Commissioners Association providing services and conference instruction and courses.

We maintain an active involvement within the emergency service disciplines and related fields, staying ahead of the rapid changes and issues facing the Washington State Fire Services.

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Experience

mHc began it's services nearly a decade ago serving smaller fire departments, fire districts, school districts and businesses on a part-time basis. In the past six years, ***mHc*** has contracted with a leading national emergency services consulting firm (ESCi) to provide exclusive consulting services for all Washington Fire Service projects.

Major Fire Service projects in Washington in the past six years include:

- ***Organizational Governance Study*** : City of Monroe/Snohomish County Fire District #3
- ***Leadership and Management Audit***: Cowlitz County Fire District #3
- ***Consolidation/Annexation***: City of Dayton/Columbia County Fire District #3
- ***Consolidation/Annexation***: City of Puyallup / Central Pierce Fire & Rescue
- ***Consolidation/Annexation***: City of Tieton / Yakima County Fire District #1
- ***Consolidation Study***: City of Sumner/East Pierce Fire and Rescue
- ***Consolidation Study***: Graham Fire & Rescue; South Pierce Fire & Rescue; Town of Eatonville
- ***Consolidation Study***: City of Bremerton and Central Kitsap and South Kitsap Fire & Rescue
- ***Consolidation Study***: City of Union Gap and Yakima County Fire District #12
- ***Consolidation Facilitation***: City of Wenatchee and Chelan County Fire District #1
- ***Consolidation Facilitation***: City of DuPont / Lakewood Fire District #2
- ***Regional Fire Authority***: City of Pacific; City of Auburn; City of Algona
- ***Regional Fire Authority***: Whatcom County Fire District #2, #6, #9, #10
- ***Regional Fire Authority***: City of Prosser / Benton County Fire District #3
- ***Regional Fire Authority***: Yakima County Fire district #1 and Yakima County Fire District #12
- ***Master Plan***: City of Enumclaw/King County Fire District #28
- ***Master Plan***: City of Gig Harbor/Pierce County Fire District #5
- ***Strategic Plan***: Washington Fire Commissioners Association Board of Directors
- ***Strategic Plan***: Benton County Fire District #4
- ***Strategic Plan***: Whatcom County Fire District #4
- ***Strategic Plan***: North Whatcom Fire and Rescue

2009

mHc associates

Robert Merritt

[CONCEPTS OF STRATEGIC RESTRUCTURING]

An overview and history of Strategic Restructuring and municipal partnering options – specifically as it relates to the Fire Service in the State of Washington.

The Feasibility of Fire Department Partnership

During the past three decades, fire protection in America has undergone a process of remarkable transformation. Change began in the early 1970s, roughly corresponding with the publication of America Burning by The National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control. Fire departments across the nation began to assume a greater role in the protection of citizens from many more hazards than in the past—quickly expanding from fire suppression to greater emphasis on fire prevention, emergency medical service, ambulance transport, hazardous materials, specialized operations, natural disasters, and (in the recent past) Homeland Security. This was the dawning of the first responder doctrine in the Fire Service in America.

The process of change continues today, although some fire agencies feel that the progress made is not in the spirit of 1973's American Burning. While many goals of America Burning (and of the Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 that followed) have not materialized, the responsibilities, scope of service, and emergency incidents of community fire departments continue to increase. Urban and suburban expansion have reached unprecedented levels across America, yet laws that limit the funding of public services increasingly restrict emergency services in those same communities. Nearly all such tax limit laws trace their roots to California's Proposition 13, passed by voters in that state in 1978.

Well before the date of America Burning and the California tax revolt, private sector businesses recognized the benefit of merger and collaboration as a means to increase efficiency. For years, critics have advised government to reinvent itself and to administer programs more like a business. An increasing number of executive fire officials and policymakers now recognize the moral imperative to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency service resources through a process of strategic cooperation.

Consequently, what was once relatively uncommon in the fire protection industry has become more widespread as fire department leaders react to internal forces promoting maximization of resources and the external drivers (i.e., expanding scope of service, increased populations, rapid community development, and limited capital).

More and more, local fire agencies partner with other jurisdictions to eliminate service duplication and to focus resources on providing essential services. Such strategic alliances between fire protection agencies began in areas experiencing rapid economic development, primarily surrounding burgeoning West Coast cities like Los Angeles, San Diego, Denver, Seattle, Salt Lake City, and Portland. Now, as the economic development that so characterized large metropolitan centers during the last two decades spreads and external forces act to limit the ability of the once isolated surrounding communities to unilaterally react to the change; the strategic partnership of emergency service organizations becomes an alternative more frequently considered by policymakers. Such is the case with the Kitsap County fire agencies involved

with this project that are located in the shadow of the Seattle/Tacoma metropolitan area.

There are over 400 fire protection districts and 270 cities and towns in the state of Washington today. In the past fifteen years, the state of Washington has experienced:

- A remarkable increase in the number of cooperative efforts, consolidations, and fire protection district mergers.

- An increase in the number of cities and fire protection districts developing and improving cooperative services, consolidations and/or mergers and inter-local contractual agreements for emergency services. Examples are: City of Sumner and East Pierce Fire & Rescue; Cities of Auburn, Algona and Pacific; Lewis County Fire District #12 and the City of Centralia; Kitsap County and the City of Bremerton.

- A constant pace of cities that have annexed into a fire protection district.

- The creation of a legislative vehicle to form a Regional Fire Protection Services Authority (RFPSA).

Many factors have led to the increase in these cooperative agreements, mergers, or annexations. These factors include:

- Recent committee studies and state legislation encouraging or providing incentives for cooperative services.

- State and federal grant criteria requires or allows for higher scoring for entities with cooperative or consolidated services.

- Tax limitation initiatives and referendums that have reduced the revenue available to many counties, cities, towns, and special purpose districts, thereby increasing the need to consolidate activities.

- The Growth Management Act and its implementation in Washington counties that requires long-term planning of facilities and operations by counties, cities, towns, and special purpose tax districts.

- The cost of emergency operations; the cost of purchasing emergency apparatus and equipment; the cost of constructing fire station facilities; and the cost of fire suppression equipment, emergency medical and rescue equipment, and clothing have significantly increased.1

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[1] Clark and Brian Snure, *Mergers and Consolidations.*

Governance

Many public agencies have experienced or are experiencing a period of transformation. Rapid economic development in areas surrounding the major population centers of the nation drives a demand for more sophisticated fire protection and EMS services. Many community fire departments that have existed virtually unchanged for decades suddenly find themselves challenged to anticipate and provide urban-style emergency service.

As communities grow to the extent that previously isolated neighborhoods blend, economies and emergency service demands become interdependent. A small city relies on the suburban resident to support the city's economy, while suburban residents depend on the city for jobs and commerce. The loss of a business to fire or disaster in one community now directly affects the quality of life in another.

A long-standing premise of public policy holds that cities are the most logical service providers in urban settings; however, most logical may not mean the most efficient. As it turns out, the emergency service needs of rapidly developing cities and the surrounding unincorporated areas are most effectively met by larger, regionally based fire protection/EMS agencies. This is because the successful outcome of emergency service is highly dependent on the rapid mobilization of significant numbers of personnel and equipment. Regional fire protection agencies and operations inherently have the ability to field greater numbers of emergency workers and equipment while capitalizing on efficiencies of scale in management and oversight.

On a smaller scale, Central Pierce Fire and Rescue has for several decades 'lived out' the reality of a more community or regional approach to providing emergency services.

Today, fire departments are sophisticated and indispensable channels for all forms of emergency service, including natural and man-caused disaster management, fire and accident prevention, first response Homeland Security, and pre-hospital care. In the process, the role of many fire agencies has transformed to regional emergency service providers. At the same time, numerous states have experienced a public service funding crisis brought on by tax limitation laws or other policy shifts that squeeze the ability of communities to unilaterally finance and manage needed change. However, even communities not directly experiencing a funding crisis are pressured by residents and others to lower cost and increase service.

Additionally, as demands for traditional emergency services grow steadily, additional pressure, legislation, and public expectation have increased with regard to providing additional services such as public education and to adequately training and equipping resources for special operations such as hazardous materials, water rescue, disaster services, high/low angle rescue, vehicular extrication, tactical EMS, Homeland Security, and other specialty services.

Fire departments and fire districts have shouldered the burden of these extra disciplines without any additional funding or support. These unfunded mandates have created growing financial challenges and forced agencies, areas, and regions to provide these services cooperatively with other agencies in joint special operations configurations.

The movement toward more intergovernmental cooperation in the delivery of emergency service goes by many names, including shared services, cooperative efforts, unification, regionalization, consolidation, and/or merger. Formerly, literature and studies concerning such matters in local government have been nearly non-existent and common terminology has not materialized. A recent work, however, concerning the integration of nonprofit agencies (including public protection, public safety, and disaster preparedness) offers some standard terminology and yields insight to driving forces and pitfalls.2

Kohm, Piana, and Gowdy term the establishment of an ongoing relationship between two or more independent organizations as strategic restructuring. The relationship is generally created to increase the administrative efficiency and/or further the programmatic mission of one or more of the participating agencies through shared, transferred, or combined services, resources, or programs. Strategic restructuring may be thought of as a continuum that ranges from jointly managed programs (such as mutual aid agreements) to complete organizational mergers. The typology includes two primary modes of strategic restructuring (alliance and integration), each with two general subtypes. The authors of the study provide a visual representation of the continuum as a *Partnership Matrix*, which has been adapted here for application to fire and emergency medical service.3

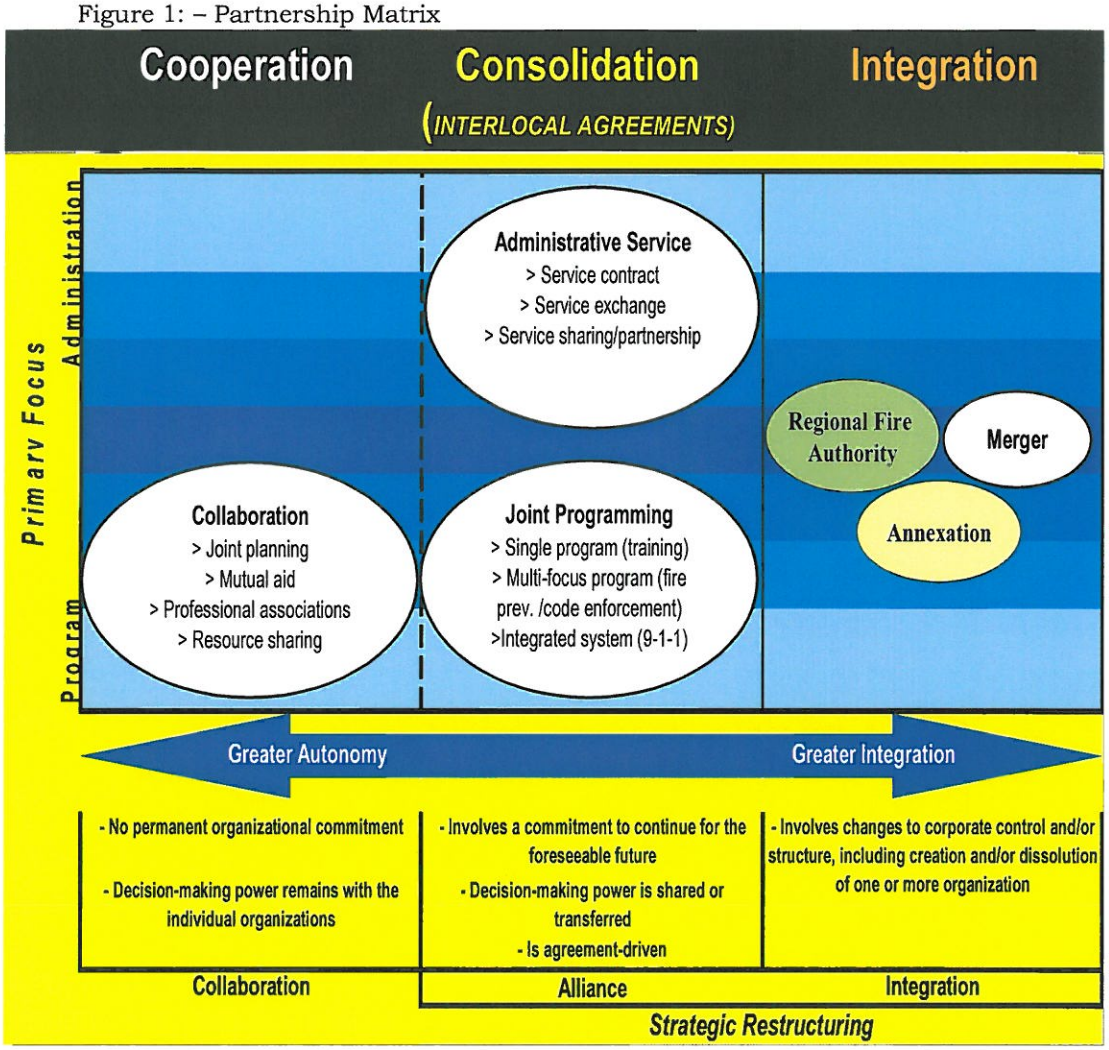
As shown below in Figure 1, the authors of the study carefully divided the level of cooperating into three groups based upon the maturity of the relationship, the depth and breadth of cooperation and the desired outcome of the cooperative effort between participating agencies. Of particular note is the relativity between the level of cooperation and the autonomy of the participating agencies.

Comment [RAM1]: Update figure number

[2] Amelia Kohm, David La Piana, and Heather Gowdy, "Strategic Restructuring, Findings from a Study of Integrations and Alliances among Nonprofit Social Service and Cultural Organizations in the United States", Chapin Hall, June 2000.

[3] La Piana Associates Inc, *The Partnership Matrix*, Strategic Solutions for Nonprofit Organizations, 1999.

Figure 1: – Partnership Matrix



Cooperation

Although it is included as an element of the matrix, cooperation (collaboration) is not considered a form of strategic restructuring. When two or more agencies enter a collaborative relationship, no permanent organizational commitment is made and all decision-making power remains with individual organizations. Interagency collaboration may include participation of fire departments in such activities such as local fire management associations, mutual aid agreements, and interagency disaster planning exercises. As a rule, most modern fire agencies consistently operate in a very collaborative mode, having learned long

ago the value of the practice. Many times, close collaboration between two or more organizations eventually leads to alliance and integration.

Consolidation

Washington State law declares intergovernmental cooperation as a matter of statewide concern and grants cities and special districts broad power to contract with other governmental entities for any function or activity the agencies have authority to perform.

A brief review of RCW's confirms that the state of Washington grants cities, counties, and fire districts the power to cooperatively contract for a broad range of purposes relating to the control or prevention of fire.4 Frequently, such contracts are referred to as intergovernmental or inter-local agreements (IGA's). IGAs permit individual organizations to share resources, improve service, and save money at the program level. Generally, IGA's lead from cooperative efforts to some form or level of consolidation. Depending on the level and the depth of a consolidation, this involves organizational restructuring that includes a formal commitment to continue shared or transferred decision-making power under the terms of some type of formal agreement or contract. However, it does not involve any change to the corporate, franchise, or governing structure of the participating organizations. The consolidation category includes two general subtypes applicable to fire protection—joint programming and administrative service agreements.

Joint Programming

In many cases, joint programming is enough to achieve the cooperative goals of the agencies without considering IGA's or organizational integration. The keys to the success of a joint programming strategy lie in a trusting relationship between partner agencies, the completeness of the agreement that sets up the program, moderately 'like' agencies, and a cooperative approach to the management of the program. Most commonly, fire departments and fire districts enter partnering agreements for programs such as dispatching, firefighter training, fire prevention, public education, closest force response, administrative/support services, purchasing, apparatus maintenance, and command officer programs. Such programs carry the advantage of being low-cost and low-risk improvement strategies. Often, these programs serve as a foundation on which agencies build the experience and trust necessary to implement other programs or strategies.

Administrative Service Alliance

A functional consolidation or an administrative service alliance includes sharing, exchanging, or contracting of administrative service to increase managerial efficiency of one or more of the organizations.5 This strategy joins two or more fire departments or fire department functions through an inter-local governmental agreement (IGA) as provided in RCW 39. The resulting fire

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[4] RCW 39.34 The Interlocal Cooperation Act.

[5] Amelia Kohm, David La Piana, and Heather Gowdy, "Strategic Restructuring, Findings from a Study of Integrations and Alliances Among Nonprofit Social Service and Cultural Organizations in the United States," Chapin Hall, June 2000, page 11.

department may feature a single operational structure and chain of command, or (depending on the IGA) it may result in one administrative structure charged with the management and oversight of more than one agency. Depending on the form of the agreement(s) establishing the organization, employees may remain with the original employer, transfer to one of the other employers, or transfer to an entirely new entity.

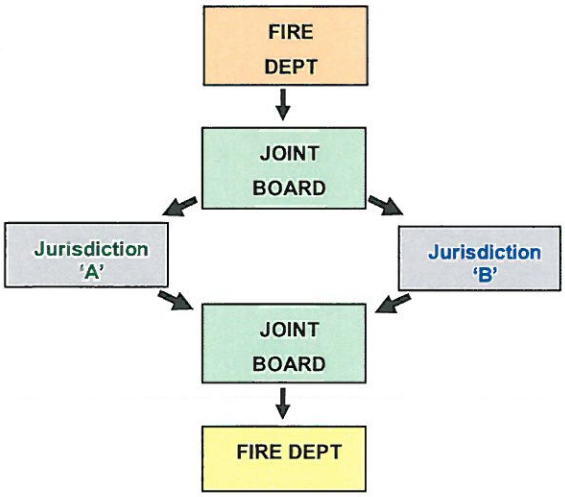
The unique feature of an administrative service alliance is that existing governing bodies are preserved. The management team of the allied fire department reports to each political body, usually through a joint oversight board established expressly for the purpose. The political entities prepare and adopt separate budgets and retain responsibility for overall policy and taxation.

The unified fire department is funded through the apportionment of cost in accordance with a predetermined formula. Alliances are frequently considered an intermediate step leading to full integration. An advantage of this strategy is that it allows governing boards the ability to negotiate and monitor outcomes for the management of a particular service. This certainty may provide a higher level of comfort in making the decision to unify fire service across a geographical region.

One disadvantage of an administrative service alliance is a perceived complexity of the arrangement. An administrative team that must answer to two or more political bodies may have difficulty reacting to change due to contractual requirements.

A joint oversight board chosen to oversee the new entity would be advisory only and not have authority to commit the respective jurisdictions to any legal or financial obligations without a vote of the full respective elected boards. This allows another layer of local government in which financial or policy decisions may take extended periods of time to reach a final decision. Figure __ reflects the potential struggles of a multi-layered approach to joint governing operations. Successes in these relationships depend a great deal on the founding political relationship and the skills of management. Many IGA's, in effect throughout the nation, are successful in centralizing the administrative service functions and delivering increased efficiencies.

Figure 2: – Joint Board Matrix



Integration
Integration includes organizational changes at the governance levels. The strategy may consist of the creation and/or dissolution of one or more organizations and is generally the result of the maturation of a long-standing cooperative effort between the integrating agencies.

Under certain circumstances in law, multiple fire departments or fire districts may integrate to form a single entity. Integration merges not only programs and organizations, but also the units of government. State law details how political subdivisions may process integrations in Washington.6 Fire departments that exist as independent governmental entities (fire districts) may merge, consolidate, or annex other independent units (fire districts) in accordance with a process set forth in Title 52 RCW. Such is the case with Central Pierce Fire and Rescue. Washington State law does not, however, include a process for the full integration of the individual service elements of city governments (such as municipal fire departments) into other municipal fire departments or into fire districts.

Because integration of fire protection service involves a change in governance of one or more entities, the process is specifically addressed by statute. Single purpose governmental units (fire districts) typically have the power to merge and consolidate with other service providers much more easily. Cities may annex into neighboring fire districts to take advantage of economies of scale and to more effectively plan for an orderly expansion of a city within its urban growth boundary.

There are two legal processes available for cities and fire districts to integrate. The first is by the fire district annexing the cooperative city into the boundaries of the fire district as defined in RCW 52.06.090. The only integration option available to cities that have no joint boundary with an existing fire district is to form a new fire protection entity (fire district) that encompasses all of the desired territory. The second option is new to the state of Washington and comes in the form of a Regional Fire Authority.

Mergers/Annexations
Many states differentiate between the words "consolidation", and "merger", giving special legal meaning and process to each. mHc tends to use the term merger in referring to a type of integration defined by law that joins existing units of government or that dissolves existing units of governments and creates a new regional service provider in their place.

Washington State law gives contiguous fire districts the power to merge. The statute applies only to fire districts, though other provisions of the law do address contracting between cities and fire districts.7 For the purpose of this

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[6] Chapter 52.06 RCW.
[7] RCW 39.34.

report, however, a service contract between a city and a district is considered an alliance and not integration.8 Governance for said alliance is usually provided by a joint advisory board.

Some states provide for a city to annex into a neighboring fire district. This process is very different from a city annexing the territory of a fire district. If a city annexes into a fire district, the fire district extends its service and jurisdiction to the area within the municipal boundaries; taxes for services within municipal boundaries (through a property tax); and governs itself (through an election process provided by statute). There are dozens of examples of cities which have annexed into a surrounding fire district in the state of Washington. In doing so, a municipality no longer has direct input or influence into the level of service its constituents will receive from the fire district. This is decided by the Board of Fire Commissioners of the district which annexed the city.

In administrative alliances or functional consolidations that occur between cities and fire districts, where a joint board provides oversight to the operation, the city sits at the table with the fire commissioners and provides representation and influence on fire protection policies via a joint board. However, the city voter is not allowed to vote on fire district issues.

If a city is annexed into a fire district, the city council no longer has a place on the governing board but the constituents are now a part of the fire district and may vote on fire protection and EMS issues, fire commissioner elections, and/or may even run for a fire commissioner position. RCW 52.04.061 provides a roadmap for such action should both a city and a contiguous fire district cooperatively approach the subject with their voters.

Fire Authority

Some states provide a process for the creation of regional fire protection units called *fire authorities*.9 The process allows existing governmental jurisdictions (cities, counties, fire districts) to create and govern a new entity (the fire authority). Each jurisdiction essentially transfers all or a portion of its respective fire department and emergency medical service into the fire authority and each provides representative officials to serve as the authority's governing board.

The laws of California and Colorado include such provisions. The Orange County Fire Authority (California) supplies fire suppression/prevention and emergency services to 22 cities plus the unincorporated area of Orange County. The fire authority serves an area of more than 551 square miles, including a residential population of 1,333,386. The Poudre Fire Authority (Colorado) was created by the integration of the city of Fort Collins and the Poudre Valley Fire Protection District. The agency serves 235 square miles and a population of

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[8] Ibid, 321.221 and 321.223.

[9] Washington State enacted its own version of fire authority legislation in 2003.

156,608 residents.10 Locally, mHc Associates facilitated Washington State's first Regional Fire Protection Services Authority (RFPSA) for the cities of Algona, Auburn, and Pacific. Subsequently a number of other city/fire district combinations have followed in suit and have either successfully implemented a Regional Fire Authority or are far along in the process,

In all cases, officials of the member governments oversee the management of the fire authority. The mayors of the cities and a representative of the unincorporated county provide Orange County Fire Authority governance. The Fort Collins mayor, city manager, and one city council member serve on the Poudre Fire Authority Board of Fire Commissioners, in addition to two representatives of the Poudre Valley Fire Protection District. The same basic governance model was chosen for the Valley Regional Fire Authority in King County as well.

The state of Washington originally passed fire authority legislation in 2002 for which state fire chiefs, state fire commissioners, and the state labor council strongly supported and lobbied.11 While this important piece of legislation was successfully passed, the Association of Washington Cities and the Association of Washington Counties opposed the original legislation and forced the legislature to pass a lesser version of SSB-5326, which gutted the fire authority bill of its financial mechanism.

Fire officials came back in 2006 and, with the full cooperation of other fire agencies in Washington, successfully revised the Fire Authority legislation. Washington lawmakers passed the new version in 2006. As discussed earlier, three cities in southern King County successfully formed the first regional fire authority in Washington. Effective January 1, 2007, the Valley Regional Fire Authority began doing business with the combined resources of the two city fire departments. Governance for Regional Fire Protection Services Authorities in Washington is provided by representatives of each participating agency as determined by the adopted Regional Fire Authority Plan.

Motivating Factors

When organizations are asked to list reasons for undertaking strategic restructuring, respondents often cite internal decisions to increase the effectiveness and/or efficiency of their organization.12 Notwithstanding the tax limitation issues facing many communities, other agencies undertake strategic restructuring to improve the quality and/or range of service. Least mentioned reasons for restructuring are funding issues; not surprisingly, when funding is judged as a motivator, those involved in the development of an

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[10] Additional information on the Orange County Fire Authority and the Poudre Fire Authority is available at http://www.ofa.org and http://www.poudre-fire.org.

[11] Regional Fire Protection Services Authority – RCW 52.26 (SSB 5326).

[12] Amelia Kohm, David La Piana, and Heather Gowdy, "Strategic Restructuring, Findings from a Study of Integrations and Alliances Among Nonprofit Social Service and Cultural Organizations in the United States," Chapin Hall, June 2000, page 15.

intergovernmental alliance are less likely to mention it than those organizations undertaking complete integration. 13

An alliance may be perceived as less threatening than integration to an organization's autonomy and culture. However, the recognition of imminent financial problems can cause some to take greater organizational risk.

Organizations tend to consider the options of alliance and integration when the agencies experience certain events. Often a sudden interruption of the status quo may occur (such as the loss of a CEO, a financial crisis, or a rapid change of the community or service demand) that compels significant change. Other times, forward-thinking individuals of the policy body or administration may champion the idea. These leaders work against their own self-interest, especially in promoting integration. Last, the political or operational climate in which the agency operates may change in a way that forces the agency to change the way it does business.

Success Factors

The success of a strategic restructuring depends on many things. mHc's experience with dozens of alliances and integrations finds that leadership is the single factor that most frequently determines success. A key staff or board member champions the concept garnering the support of the various affected groups (political, labor, member, and community). Good leadership fosters an organizational culture receptive to planning, calculated risk taking, and flexibility. The manner in which leaders promote a trusting relationship between all groups and aid two-way communication between them is essential. The research by Kohm, Piana, and Gowdy identified five factors that most often seem to contribute to the successful implementation of an alliance or integration.14 The five factors are:

- Leadership that believes strongly in the partnership and demonstrates this belief, often by acting selflessly to maintain it.

- Multiple forms of communication to keep all persons (board, staff, members, and community) informed about plans, problems, and benefits concerning the partnership.

- Face-to-face communications with partner organizations in the form of meetings, training, and other forums to build trust and understanding among staff.

- Flexibility through an expectation that even in the best-planned partnership, unforeseen issues will arise, mistakes will be made, and alternative paths will be identified.

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[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid, page 22.

- Early evidence of benefit to assure everyone that they are on the right track, such as better or less expensive employee benefits or improved facilities.

Restructuring Pitfalls

Organizational alliances and integrations also fail. Sometimes law prohibits the idea at the outset. Other times the proposal may be doomed by the unfavorable outcome of a public election or the reality of finance. Four major pitfalls can cause even the most feasible alliance or integration to go wrong. Many think of these pitfalls as the "Four Horsemen" of failed partnerships. Specifically, the four are command, communication, control, and culture.

Command

Undertaking any form of partnership requires effective leadership be demonstrated consistently at all levels. Policymakers and administrators must guide their respective agencies; yet, at the same time, they must cooperate with partner organizations. Differing leadership styles may cause repressed friction at best and open conflict at worst. Problems with sharing control and making decisions sends the wrong message to the members of the organization, which can lead to an unraveling of even the best proposal.

Communication

Silence or limited information from leaders to everyone involved throughout the process about potential or upcoming partnerships breeds fear, mistrust, and misinformation among affected persons. The leadership of collaborating organizations must agree to communicate actively, consistently, openly, and often with all affected groups. Everyone must be provided the same information at the same time. Most importantly, leaders must demonstrate two-way communication skills by carefully listening to (and acting on) the concerns of all constituents.

Control

Frequently, the strategic restructuring process is compared to a marriage. As the saying goes, "Marriage is when two people become as one; the trouble starts when they try to decide which one."15 As in marriage, strategic restructuring often fails because of organizational or personal ego issues.

The tenets of leadership require that someone be in charge; but in the interest of greater good, some of those in leadership positions must agree to yield power. Some who are used to operating in a position of control may have trouble adjusting to new roles that require more collaboration. Personal sacrifice in the interest of community good may not always win out.

Culture

Two schools of thought exist regarding organizational culture. The first camp views culture as implicit in social life, naturally emerging as individuals

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[15] Source unknown.

transform themselves into social groups (tribes, organizations, communities, and nations). The second camp offers that culture is comprised of distinct observable forms (language, use of symbols, customs, methods of problem solving, and design of work settings) that people create and use to confront the broader social environment. This second view is most widely used in the evaluation and management of organizational culture, but the first is no less important when considering bringing two discrete organizations into a closer relationship.

The general characteristics of a fire department encourage the creation of a culture unique to that organization. The paramilitary structure, the reliance on teamwork, and the hazards of the work builds strong bonds between the members who tend to share group behaviors, assumptions, beliefs, and values. Bringing two such groups together with cultures formed through different experiences always results in a change to both organizational cultures. If the partnership is successful, no one culture will overcome the other; instead, a new culture will evolve from the two. If the organizational cultures are incompatible, the partnership will fail quickly.

Leaders must be aware of organizational culture and its role in the wellness of the agency's soul. Early recognition by leadership of the importance of culture to the success of a partnership can help to overcome differences and build on strengths.