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**DALTON AND HINSDALE, MASSACHUSETTS
POLICE DEPARTMENT CONSOLIDATION STUDY
JUNE-AUGUST 2022**

INTRODUCTION

The Towns of Dalton and Hinsdale have jointly requested that Municipal Resources, Inc., (MRI) analyze, assess, and make recommendations about potential models of governance, management, and administration of a shared/collaborative law enforcement service organization within their adjoining communities. The following report discusses consolidating police services for the two communities and offers for consideration a comprehensive and balanced planning model that may meet the desired needs of the two communities. Based on reasonable cost restraints, identified by examination of existing approved operating budgets, the recommendations found below attempt to satisfy the demands and expectations of both communities.

With that goal in mind, the focus of this report suggests what the future state of a single/merged agency would look like rather than the current models associated with two separate police agencies. MRI recognizes that each community and their police departments have their own identities, culture, and customs that must be considered at this juncture. MRI's role is a sterile, unbiased third-party approach to data analysis. Beginning with a clean slate, the following is designed to advise what a police organization serving a combined population should consist of in 2022. MRI has recommended staffing levels, policies, procedures, various equipment, schedules, and budget expectations with a valid and expected outcome based on industry standards and best practices.

The difficult component that is out of MRI's purview is the political will needed to navigate through the intangible nuances of a community's perceived loss of independence, reduced oversight and supervision of a consolidated agency, loss of identity, and the anxiety of change. Opponents can also assume that the personal nature of policing in their community may be lost, that response times may not be lowered, and that costs, especially to the smaller

community of Hinsdale, may increase. These are the true challenges that must be addressed before the reality of consolidation of the Dalton-Hinsdale Police Departments can proceed.

The Towns of Dalton and Hinsdale requested that MRI identify what a consolidated Dalton and Hinsdale Police Department would need to provide services to the two communities at a desired/expected level of satisfaction. Dalton has a twelve full-time person police agency that functions 24/7/365. The Town of Hinsdale has five full-time officers that also function 24/7/365, supplemented by part-time staff. Both agencies are challenged by minimal staffing, especially when absences occur for training, vacation, court, illness, or any other situation that causes officer absence.

Complicating the environment and historic reliance on part-time police officers is the 2020 Massachusetts Police Reform legislation that essentially mandates that police officers must be full-time certified and graduated from a Massachusetts Police Training Committee (MPTC) sanctioned training academy. While this report does not dive into the reasoning or the rationale, it is now law regardless of opinions or sentiment; all police agencies within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts must now comply with the law by employing only full-time certified police officers. For the smallest of agencies like Hinsdale, this is a significant problem. Five officers are the absolute minimum needed to support a functioning 24/7 police agency. Any vacancy means overtime by a full-time certified officer, no longer part-time! The concept of consolidation is a uniquely local issue with specific concerns, expectations, and even disappointments that, despite careful and thoughtful planning, may not immediately be resolved.

On the national level, government decision-makers have long discussed the concept of combining limited police resources to provide adequate police services to their communities. Consolidation is often viewed as an appealing idea, particularly to smaller agencies and their governing bodies. It is anticipated that the outcome will produce a higher array of police services, lower response times, reduction of overtime, eliminate duplication of efforts, and lower overall operating costs. Those in favor of the concept suggest that resources and capacity will be enhanced while the quality of policing should rise under consolidation because of more efficient and coordinated use of human resources enabling more flexibility to meet hours of peak demand. Additionally, it is expected that there will be enhanced training opportunities, improved management, as well as overall supervision possibilities. Fiscally, the combined purchasing power allows some comfort to the taxpayers supporting the service.

Those apprehensive about the concept of consolidation fear the loss of community independence, identity, and reduced oversight and supervision of a consolidated agency. Concern may also center upon the belief that the personal and intimate nature of policing in

their community will be lost, that response times may not be lowered, and that costs to the smaller community may increase. The challenge often centers upon the continuing demand for enhanced police services and the overt reluctance by the community to pay for it! Failing to maintain what is deemed as appropriate staffing levels often impacts the delivery of basic police services, particularly community policing and problem-solving activities, into a more reactionary policing model.

In the past, various approaches to enhance policing services have placed reliance on technology or other non-human resource strategies, which have proven insufficient to overcome the deficiencies, resulting in some negative reviews of regionalization, consolidating, or sharing of police services. As if to support the importance of local control of policing within the United States, there are over 18,000 law enforcement agencies with over 900,000 police¹ officers in comparison to Canada, where there are 80 law enforcement agencies, Japan with 50, and England with 40. In the United States, more rural/suburban communities view their police as the providers of a wide variety of services, many having nothing to do with law enforcement, and therefore, it is much more personal, resulting in substantial trust in the agency and a very parochial attitude about the delivery of police services.

Most consolidation studies fall under at least one of five approaches, such as the “functional” model, where two or more agencies combine certain functional units, like emergency communications, investigation, and/or record maintenance. Another model offers a “cross deputization,” where jurisdictions may authorize each other's officers to pool resources and improve regional coverage. Forming a “public safety” concept where governments unite all police, fire, and emergency medical services agencies under one Public Safety Director umbrella is yet another, although rare, approach especially in the Northeast. A “local merger” is where two separate police agencies form a single new entity to deliver law enforcement services to a geographic area rather than a jurisdictional one defined by town lines, and a “shared police chief” service model that has two agencies being led by one police chief.

Any discussion of consolidation by the community is likely to be accompanied by presumptions, either positive or negative. In MRI’s experience, some of the positive expectations may include the belief that a consolidated agency may have a greater capacity to respond to crime as well as greater organizational efficiency, flexibility, and cost savings. The negative conceptions may involve current employees, whether supervisory or line officers, who may feel threatened by consolidation, and potential increased costs, particularly because of the start-up expenditures of reorganization, planning, standardizing equipment, and the possible need for a new facility

¹ US Department of Justice



that will house the combined agencies. At the forefront of nearly all consolidation efforts is the overall governance of the newly created agency has been formed. Described below, the consolidation of law enforcement and police services in Dalton and Hinsdale will not be a cost savings to either agency. In the best-case scenario, at the existing level and expectation of police service delivery in the two towns, Dalton *may be able to remain “cost neutral”*, however, Hinsdale is *most likely going to experience a cost increase* no matter what decision is made.

THE SERVICE POPULATION

The Towns of Dalton and Hinsdale are in Berkshire County. Both are referred to as “transition communities” lying between the very rural areas of Berkshire County and the Pittsfield statistical metroplex. Dalton has a 2020 census population estimated at 6,700 with Hinsdale having an estimated population of 1,900. Both towns operate under a Select Board form of government with a Town Manager or Administrator who has the responsibility of overseeing the daily operations of each department through the various department heads. Additionally, they are responsible for the development and presentation of each Town’s operating budget to the Town’s Select Board on a fiscal year basis.

Demographics

The population density of Dalton is estimated to be 290 inhabitants per square mile. Information gathered from the U.S. Census revealed that the racial makeup of the town was 98.1% White, .01% African American, Hispanic, or Latino .13% while 0.01% were of Native American origin, and .06% Asian. The gender makeup of the town was 47.7% male and 52.3% female.

The population density of Hinsdale is also estimated to be 290 inhabitants per square mile. Information gathered from the U.S. Census revealed that the racial makeup of the town was 98.1% White, .01% African American, Hispanic, or Latino .13% while 0.01% were of Native American origin and .06% Asian. The gender makeup of the town was 47.7% male and 52.3% female. Clearly, both communities are nearly identical in demographic composition.

WHAT WILL A DALTON-HINSDALE CONSOLIDATION LOOK LIKE?

While it is important to note that the MRI staffing model does not rely on the population as the sole variant for calculating staff demands, MRI recognizes that larger populations are typically believed to result in additional workload, but the overall composition of that population is a critical element to consider. For instance, a bedroom community with predominantly residential housing is significantly different from a college community in demands and workload expectations. The next segment of the report is designed to offer advice to the Towns of Dalton and Hinsdale on the needs for staffing based upon a combination of workload demands, and the ability of the Dalton and Hinsdale Police to adequately provide sustained services to the community.

Competent Police Response To Citizen's Requests

The following focuses on a proposed consolidated agency, not the individual agencies of Dalton and Hinsdale. MRI has concluded that the organizational determination of a consolidated police agency is the question at hand, not what the two agencies have accomplished, nor what future expectations are of individually operated police departments. With that focus, just how many police officers are required to adequately provide competent services to a community has always been a topic for debate. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has long tracked police officers per 1,000 residents where the largest police presence is found in Washington, DC, where there are 5.7 officers for every 1,000 residents, followed closely behind by Wilmington, Delaware, with 4.3 officers per 1,000. Obviously, larger agencies have a greater call volume to address, but they also have the flexibility to assign their larger staff numbers to issues as they arise. According to FBI statistics, New England communities with a population under 10,000 residents have an average of 3.0 police officers per thousand residents². Agencies such as the Dalton Police Department, which has 1.80 officers per thousand, with one vacancy, and the Hinsdale Police Department which has 3.7 officers per thousand, do not have the same flexibility to reassign officers as a larger organization. Were the organizations consolidated into a seventeen (17) person police agency, the officers per thousand would be calculated at 1.97 officers per thousand. Highlighted here, the determination of staffing levels for a consolidated Dalton-Hinsdale Police is based upon a total outcome approach considering workload demands, officer availability, and ultimately, the challenges of the police agency to respond to the two communities on a 24/7 basis.

² <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2016/crime-in-the-u.s.-2016/topic-pages/tables/table-24/>

What is the optimum allocation of human resources in a police department is a challenging problem not only for the police manager, but also for town administrators, elected officials, and the taxpayer. No one formula is interchangeable from one community to the next. Likewise, the quality of law enforcement is directly related to the effective distribution of police personnel, especially patrol officers, who represent the most important element in the police service. For this reason, the proper staffing and distribution of personnel should be given prime consideration and be well-conceived by the governing bodies.

While what occurs in one community may have no relationship to another, it is always interesting to note what comparable communities are investing to provide policing services within their community. While each community has a variety of unique dynamics that drive the composition of its police agency, often, they are more similar than not and can offer insight into how a consolidated Dalton-Hinsdale Police would approach the delivery of policing services. As this report focuses on a consolidation of the two agencies, the communities we have compared for this exercise have an estimated population from 7,500 to 9,500 (the approximate combined populations of the two studied communities). This focus may provide the answer to, “What is x community doing” to provide police services to their community.

Calls for Service

Year	Dalton	Hinsdale	Sum if Consolidated
2018	10,481	1,755	12,236
2019	10,487	1,424	11,911
2020	10,717	1,474	12,191
2021	10,892	1,347	12,239

The manner in which law enforcement services are provided by a police department and the types of services that it provides are a reflection of the character and demands of that community. The continuing challenge for a consolidated police department will be the ability to define the appropriate allocation and deployment of officers to meet the demands of the residents of Dalton-Hinsdale. While this report could focus upon crime statistics as the driving factor for determining how many police officers are necessary, MRI believes that is inherently a counter-productive strategy as more crime may dictate more police, but if there is less crime, should there be a correspondent number of less police allowing persons with nefarious intent to fill the void?

In today’s policing profession, calls for service are **obligated functions** to which officers must adequately respond. There are no options for the officers as each call **must** be answered! Many



calls are not criminal in nature, but the police are responsible for resolving the issue regardless of the type of call, and the community's expectations of police are high to do so in an efficient, compassionate, and professional manner. Consequently, one of the key components of the community comparable list is calls for service and the corresponding calls handled per officer.

Today's police are challenged with complicated issues such as mental health, juvenile challenges, and other incidents that are not easily or immediately resolved. If officers do not have adequate time to address the service demands, community satisfaction wanes, and management of risk by the agency increases.

As stated earlier, performing a workload analysis for a police department is not an exact science. One strategy, which was developed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) is based on the premise that suggests an officer's day should be divided into three equal parts including:

- Obligated police officer work or responding to calls for service
- Administrative tasks/report writing
- Proactive community policing and/or preventive patrol

Ideally, an officer should be responding to calls for service and resolving problems for approximately one-third of their day. This is referred to as "obligated" work, as police have no option but to respond to these requests. Police work is recognized as a very paper-intensive profession. For virtually every action an officer performs, there is the necessity to complete a report or form so that the events and subsequent actions are memorialized. It is often the reality that the time committed to report development, and the writing of the report may take longer than the act of resolving the original issue that resulted in the necessity of the report. These report writing/follow-up functions account for another third of the officer's time. The remaining one-third of the officer's time should be committed to community policing or active patrol designed to protect and deter criminal activity, as well as to conduct traffic enforcement initiatives demanded throughout the community. Without high visibility of police officers patrolling throughout the community, criminal activity will fill that void. Today, and in smaller communities such as Dalton and Hinsdale, the community is predisposed to want meaningful interaction with their police officers, even if it is as basic as performing directed traffic patrols throughout neighborhoods.

With this entire premise determined to be true in any community, but especially in Dalton-Hinsdale where policing is required to be more "engaging and personal" a sentiment reiterated repeatedly during MRI's community engagement meetings, one must first gain insight into the

actual availability or optimal use of a Dalton-Hinsdale Police officer. The importance of this segment of the exercise is recognition of the reality that even though a community compensates an employee within a budgeted calendar year for 52 weeks of 40-hour per week employment, they are factually not available for actual patrol duties for all that time. In accomplishing this exercise, some data must be assumed as a consolidated agency does not exist. But the two existing work contracts can be analyzed, and reasonable calculations can be accomplished that allow for the theme to be highlighted. For ease of reading, the figures are shown in rounded whole numbers:

40 hours of work per week X 52 weeks	<u>2080 hours</u>
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By contractual agreement, both the Dalton-Hinsdale Police are entitled to vacation or annual leave. While each contract is unique, they are also comprised of “boiler-plate” nuances that are common to police officers throughout the Commonwealth, especially as they deal with time off benefits related to vacation, bereavement, sick leave, personal leave, and compensatory time off. Newer officers receive generally 80 hours within the first year, with more senior officers entitled to as much as 160 hours. To remain conservative in the calculations, MRI is using 100 hours, or 2.5 weeks as an average:

Average 100 hours combined vacation leave	<u>100 hours</u>
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<u>Remaining</u>	<u>1980 Hours</u>
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The average use of sick time per officer was approximately five days or 40 hours:

40 hours of sick leave	<u>40 hours</u>
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<u>Remaining</u>	<u>1940 hours</u>
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There is mandatory training required by the Massachusetts Police Training Committee (MPTC) on an annual basis. These hours recognize a minimum and do not consider other specialized training that individual officers may have committed weeks attending. To remain conservative



in the calculations, the average time each officer committed to training is calculated at 90 hours. Of course, during these training classes and exercises, the officer is eliminated from patrol activity. Regardless of where this training occurred, off-site or in-house, officers were not engaged in proactive or reactive police initiatives. While training is recognized as a critical component, and in some cases, Massachusetts mandated, the absence of staff due to these needs is an important component for management to gauge.

Average training for each officer 90 hours

Remaining **1850 hours**

Whenever a Dalton-Hinsdale Police officer makes an arrest or issues a traffic summons, there is the possibility that they will need to attend court proceedings, taking them away from performing tasks within the community. While the vast majority of police actions will not result in trials, officers are routinely in consultation with court officials preparing for the potential trial. Dalton-Hinsdale Police are routinely tasked with attending court, which is fortunately located nearby in Pittsfield. Virtually a week of patrol staff availability is consumed by court activities including trials, case preparation, and pre-trial conferences.

Average time for officer to be in court activity 33 hours

Remaining **1817 hours**

Bereavement and other family leave has been used sparingly in both communities but do have potential impact on officer availability. For the purposes of this exercise, three (3) hours per year are being used.

Average bereavement time 3 hours

Remaining **1815 hours**

Based upon the “one-third principal,” $1,814 \text{ hours} / 3 = 605 \text{ hours}$, it is desired that officers at a consolidated Dalton-Hinsdale Police Department should be committing 605 hours annually to each task demonstrated in the following manner:

- Obligated police officer work 605 hours
- Administrative/Report writing 605 hours
- Proactive community policing and/or preventive patrol 605 hours
1815 hours

Continuing with the exercise, MRI found that the Dalton-Hinsdale Police both are using IMC as their records management system. IMC can produce detailed reports, including when the most demands, or “call for service” (CFS) upon the department exist. A call for service is defined as any event or task that the public requests the department to accomplish. Regardless of the magnitude of the event, or how the police view the situation, the Dalton-Hinsdale Police Department must respond and satisfactorily address the issue. MRI concluded that all officers, often including the Police Chiefs, routinely respond to calls for service and occasionally assume vacant shifts to offset overtime expenditures. However, the exercise is also designed to quantify and articulate the fact that simply because an officer is employed by an agency, does not necessarily indicate that the officer is available to provide patrol services to the community. After the external and internal influences on officer time are calculated, each officer has 1,815 hours annually in which they can deliver police service to the citizens of Dalton-Hinsdale, not the entire 2080 hours for which the officer is compensated. In essence, each patrol officer is unavailable to provide services to the community for at least 6.7 weeks (266 hours) out of each fiscal year creating an immediate shortfall.

Ultimately, the single most important factor in determining adequate staffing for a police agency is what level of service the community desires. Often, this is driven by how much the residents determine to spend on police resources, as personnel is the costliest item in any police budget. While a community determines staffing levels, several questions must be answered by the community, such as how long residents are willing to wait for an officer to respond to a routine (non-emergency) call for service. Do the residents demand a highly visible police patrol presence, designed to deter crime or address those who speed through neighborhoods? Will the community embrace special programs such as School Resource Officers, or temporary assignments to area task forces that may focus on the current opioid crisis or other matters of critical community interest?

To adequately project officer availability, MRI is beginning with the premise that the two agencies combined will have twelve (12) full-time officers from Dalton and five (5) from Hinsdale for a total of seventeen (17) officers. MRI anticipates that four (4) of these employees will be (generally) unavailable for patrol activities, Chief, Lieutenant, and two (2)



detectives, leaving a staff of thirteen (13) assigned to provide patrol coverage at service levels expected by the Dalton-Hinsdale community. Given employee fluctuation that has occurred over the past several years, for the purposes of this study, the patrol staff, including sergeants will be calculated at that foundational number of thirteen (13). This is important as the workload statistical analysis should reflect the number of staff that are designed to respond to calls for service. Adding to the management challenges, Dalton currently has a minimum staffing regulation by policy or contract of two (2) officers per shift. While this could change under a future consolidation agreement, calculations in this report will reflect this current reality. With the patrol area and call for service volume of Hinsdale added to the equation, it would be reasonable for MRI to anticipate future negotiations that resulted in three (3) officers per shift as a minimum. Currently, there are three patrol shift configurations of eight (8) hours each that generally follow 8 AM to 4 PM, 4 PM to midnight, and midnight to 8 AM.

MRI concurs with these shift configurations, focusing the limited resources on the steadily busy daytime shift, and then to the most service demanding period of 4 PM to 2 AM, with a notable decrease of calls for service after 2 AM to 7 AM, which is precisely what MRI would expect to see in communities such as Dalton and Hinsdale. The vast majority of police calls in Dalton and Hinsdale can be categorized as quality-of-life issues, such as crimes against persons, traffic complaints, and assisting the public. Combined with the rather large geographical nature of Dalton-Hinsdale, these challenges combine to pose a significant problem as the agency strives to maintain a high level of responsiveness to the residents of Dalton-Hinsdale.

The following calculations are based upon the proposed consolidation *without* vacancies due to training, vacation, resignations, etc. The patrol calculations are based upon four (4) working sergeants and nine (9) patrol officers. As both communities have come to realize, it would be unrealistic to assume full staffing will be the norm at all times.

Thirteen (13) X 40 hours/week X 52 weeks equates to 27,040 hours.

In other words, *if* each of the thirteen (13) full-time officers were available for patrol activity for 2080 hours per year, those officers can adequately cover 27,040 hours of work in a year. However, as the previous exercise demonstrates, MRI concludes that due to previous contractual obligations and other tasks required of the patrol officers that prevent them from being available for their patrol duties, the thirteen (13) officers are only available 23,582 hours annually.

Thirteen (13) X 1,814 hours annually equates to 23,582 hours

This fact creates a gap of 3,458 hours or 1.6 officers (3,458 hours - 2080 hours = 1.66) that is not filled by obligated patrol duties requiring the hiring of additional staff or a realization that overtime is undoubtedly a prerequisite.

As with any mathematical approach to a profession that must respond to and satisfy subjective consumers, the residents of Dalton-Hinsdale, there are acknowledged shortcomings. MRI suggests caution be exercised in interpreting these results. However, there is ample information within these calculations that should provide the governing officials with abundant evidence that the proposed staffing level of seventeen (17) full-time patrol staff at the Dalton-Hinsdale Police Department would be sufficient, if not slightly below those necessary to provide adequate, *possibly minimum*, staffing levels on a 24/7 basis.

This conclusion is supported by the fact that the Dalton-Hinsdale community enjoys a low crime rate, an enjoyable lifestyle for residents, and a seemingly satisfying police response time to residents' requests. However, any wide deviation from these calculations may result in emerging evidence that the sworn staff could be frustrated with time restraints placed upon them due to a heavy workload and the inability to adequately problem-solve residents' issues. The risk of internal frustration is exacerbated by the calculated shortfall of needed officers to cover the patrol hours adequately. If the workload is not well-balanced, the risk of officer burnout and resultant turnover may represent a significant downside.

When the response to service requests is delayed or ignored due to more serious incidents or a large volume of calls, there needs to be an assessment of the level of services the department can provide. If the backlog becomes too lengthy or clearance rates decline due to the Dalton-Hinsdale Police inability to adequately investigate, or traffic accidents increase due to the agency's inability to perform directed traffic patrols, there must be preparation to make suggestions that may not be embraced by a community accustomed to personalized service. Ultimately, without additional human resources, the community will need to determine the level of service that it desires and can afford.

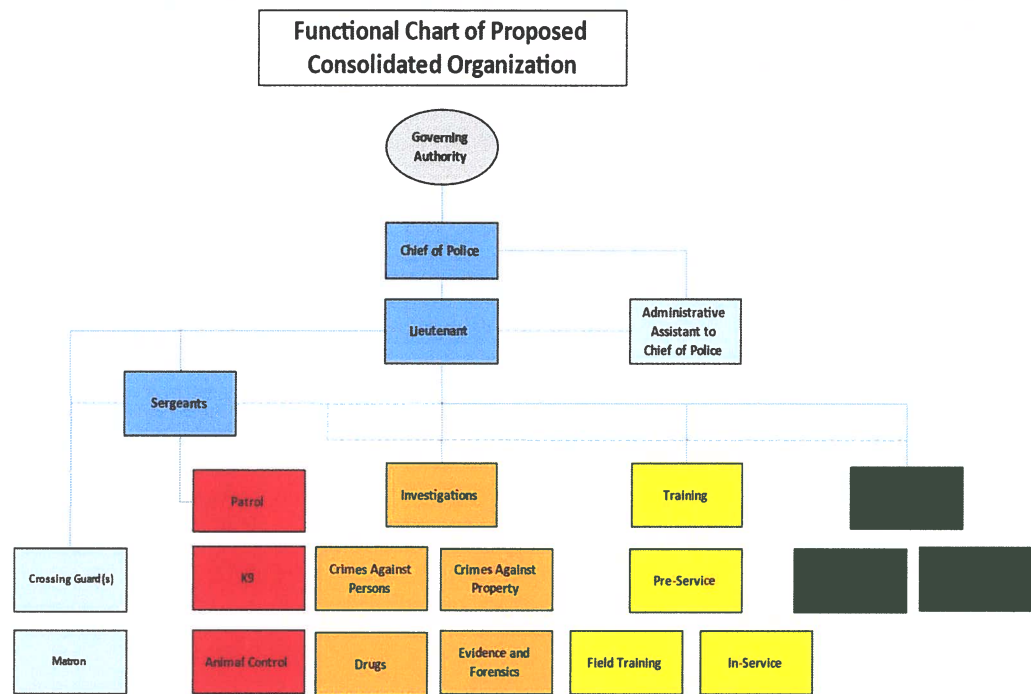
RECOMMENDED ORGANIZATION OF CONSOLIDATED DEPARTMENT

As noted earlier in this report, the consolidation of the Dalton-Hinsdale Police Departments would combine the current twelve officers of the Dalton agency with the five current officers of

the Hinsdale agency for a total of seventeen (17). MRI recommends that the operational structure of the department breaks down to a Chief, a Lieutenant, four (4) Sergeants, two (2) Detectives, and nine (9) Patrol Officers. The four (4) Sergeants are considered “working sergeants”, and their presence makes a total of thirteen (13) officers available for patrol duties. The Lieutenant position would be a new rank for the consolidated agency to assume oversight of some of the myriad tasks associated with the proper management of a police agency. The position of Lieutenant would also be the “second in command” of the department. The Lieutenant position could relieve some of the current and anticipated workload on the chief and address the anticipated increased administrative workload that results from consolidation. The Lieutenant would also be the direct supervisor of the 4 Sergeants. This will add a recommended layer of supervision and accountability.

MRI has recommended that two (2) positions be assigned as detectives. Being able to focus on the conduct of criminal investigations is a significant responsibility of a police department, especially one that is newly consolidated. While it is preferable to prevent a crime from occurring in the first place, identifying perpetrators, recovering stolen property, and successfully prosecuting criminals in court remains the next best alternative. Having two (2) full-time detectives to assume the furtherance of criminal investigations, will potentially free patrol officers previously diverted from active high-visibility patrol responsibilities.

MRI has included a sample Organizational Chart showing the recommended organizational structure outlined above from a broad view. Specific organizational alignment is always at the discretion of the governing authority and chief of police.



Organizational Structure of Comparable Communities

While what occurs in one community may have little or no relationship to another, it is always interesting to note what comparable communities are investing to provide policing services within their respective community. While each community has a variety of unique dynamics that drive the composition of its police agency, often they are more similar than not and can offer insight as to how a Dalton-Hinsdale consolidation may approach the delivery of policing services. MRI focused on agencies that have a combined population that would be like the proposed consolidated Dalton-Hinsdale Police so that the governing bodies and other interested community members could understand how these communities address the delivery of policing services.

The following matrix offers insight into the organizational makeup of comparable communities with similar population dynamics. MRI has been engaging strategies that would reflect the best practices of the profession. However, regions of the country and even regions of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have a uniqueness that needs to be articulated. Consequently, reviewing the organizational composition of communities with similar-sized



agencies may be helpful for the governing bodies of Dalton and Hinsdale to be exposed to by way of this matrix.

In the following, communities in the Commonwealth that have similar populations and police departments by staffing level are compared to a consolidated police department serving both Dalton and Hinsdale. For this exercise, the communities used for comparison were selected by the Chiefs of the Dalton and Hinsdale Police Departments.

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Comparable Police Agencies

This matrix offers additional insight by highlighting the operational budgets of several comparable Massachusetts communities with similar populations. From that data, MRI has determined calls for service that each officer addresses, the cost per resident, and the number of officers per thousand people all during 2021. Again, simply because one community addresses an issue via its unique approach, does not make it applicable to the Dalton-Hinsdale. However, it does offer additional insight into how other communities are committing their resources.

Comparable Police Departments Illustrated by Organizational Structure

Town	Chief	Captain	Lieutenant	Sergeant	Detectives	Patrol Officers	Specialized	Total Sworn	Civilian Staff
Dalton-Hinsdale (proposed)	1		1	4	2	9		17	1FT
Montague	1		1	5	2.5	8.5	2 (SRO)	20	1FT
Ayer	1	1	1	4	2	11	1 (SRO)	21	5FT
Douglas	1		1	4	2	10	1 (SRO)	19	
Adams	1			4	1	12		18	2FT
Monson	1		1	3	1	12	1 (K-9)	19	2 FT
Cohasset	1		2	4	2	12	1 (SRO)	22	1 FT 3 PT
Millis	1			5	1	11	1 (SRO)	19	1 FT
<i>Average</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>1.8</i>

Comparable Police Departments Illustrated by Population, Budget, and Costs

Town	Population	# of Officers	Calls 2021	FY21 Budget	Calls Per Officer	Cost Per Resident	Officers per thousand
Montague	8,500	20	16,000	\$1,850,000	800	\$218	2.35
Dalton-Hinsdale (projected)	8,600	17	12,239	\$1,831,923	720	\$213	1.97
Ayer	8,000	20	18,346	\$3,200,000	917	\$400	2.5
Douglas	8,500	18	13,000	\$1,800,000	722	\$211	2.11
Adams	9,000	17	26,000	\$1,300,000	1,529	\$144	1.88
Monson	8,560	19	32,444	\$1,591,574	1,707	\$186	2.21
Cohasset	8,303	21	10,958	\$3,295,596	522	\$397	2.53
Millis	9,500	19	17,051	\$2,324,389	897	\$244	2.0
<i>Average</i>	<i>8,495</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>18,426</i>	<i>\$2,124,156</i>	<i>988</i>	<i>\$253</i>	<i>2.28</i>

The various graphs below are a visual depiction of the matrix above. As stated previously, MRI believes that the actions of one community regarding their police department’s size and funding are exclusive to each situation. For a variety of intangible nuances that may have more to do with tax bases and spending centers, each community is unique and will vary widely. However, as discussions in the Dalton-Hinsdale communities focus on the concept of consolidation, the nuances unique to each community will come into play as to what defines “unique” for Dalton and Hinsdale. Does the concept make financial sense, will it still embrace the uniqueness of each community, and does the political will to make the difficult decisions exist, and ultimately, what are other communities doing to provide policing services to their community?



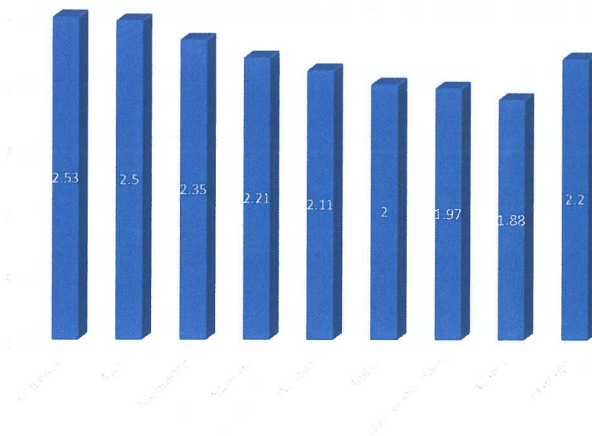
Number of Officers in Comparable Communities

2021



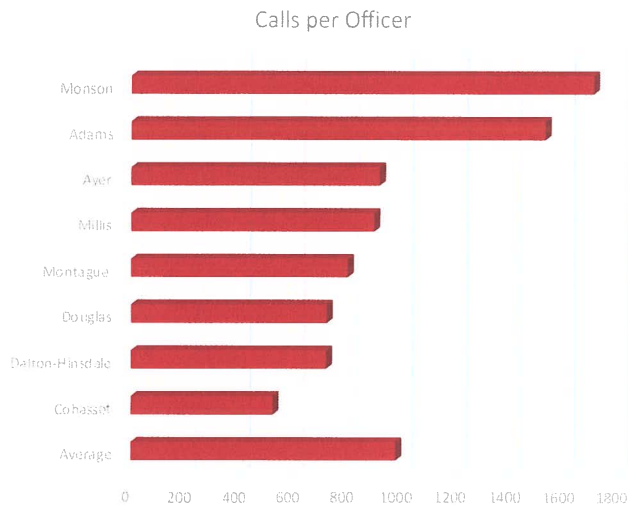
Police Officers per Thousand Residents

2021



Calls For Service per Officer

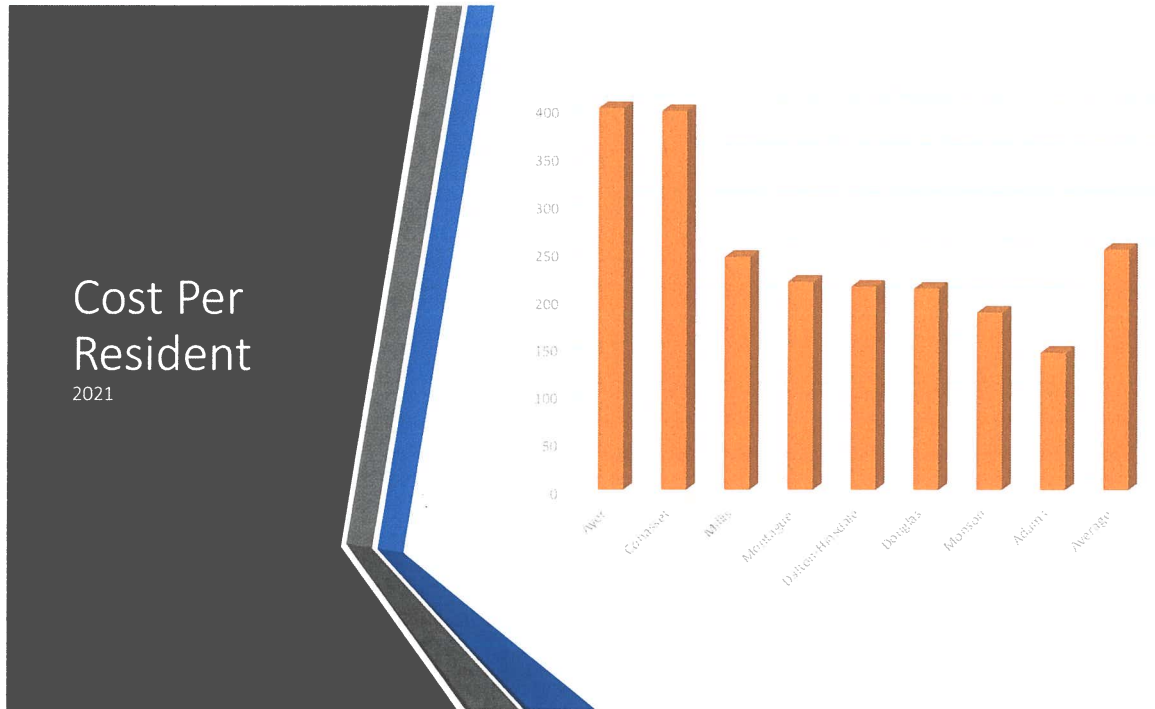
2021



The “Calls For Service per Officer” matrix above reveals that a proposed Dalton-Hinsdale consolidated department would rank next to the lowest at 720 per officer, more than Cohasset at 522, yet slightly less than Douglas at 722 calls per officer when compared to the seven (7) agencies identified by population served. Police need to be available to accomplish more than just responding to calls for service. Additionally, the purpose of the police department, and particularly those who work within the patrol function, is to arrest criminals, reduce crime, reduce the fear of crime, and use proactive problem-solving methods in partnership with the citizens of Dalton-Hinsdale. This is accomplished through active patrol, traffic enforcement, DUI enforcement, criminal investigations, evidence/crime scene processing, and drug enforcement.

Patrol personnel respond to emergency and non-emergency calls for service, and when not responding to these calls, they use non-obligated time to actively patrol the community. Due to the rather random nature of service demands and needs, it is a challenge for police managers to distribute patrol forces effectively. MRI has concluded that high-visibility patrol activities, designed to deter criminal activity will best serve the Dalton-Hinsdale community with this volume of patrol activity. The challenge is being definitive about the number of incidents that were prevented and did not happen as you can’t measure what didn’t happen! However, the objective is to create a high-visibility philosophy regarding police presence, thereby encouraging those with nefarious intent to go to a community with a more passive patrol

strategy. That is a difficult premise to accomplish if officers are constantly “responding” to calls.



CONSOLIDATED OPERATIONS BUDGET

When considering an operational budget for the consolidated police department, MRI reviewed (as a reference), the current FY '23 budgets for both the Dalton and Hinsdale Police Departments. With Dalton being the larger agency, their budget was used as the baseline for our consideration of a consolidated budget. **(Attachment 1)**. Direct dollar amounts were also used from the Hinsdale FY 23 Budget as needed. **(Attachment 2)**.

The Hinsdale, MA Police FY '23 budget totaled **\$413,512.71**. Of that total, **\$357,044.71**, is designated for salaries and **\$50,455.00** for operating expenses. The Dalton Police FY '23 budget totaled **\$1,347,912**. Of that total, **\$1,186,710** is designated for salaries and **\$161,202** for total expenses. This consolidation sample budget is based upon the MRI recommended consolidated police department consisting of 17 full-time officers organized as follows but does not project capital costs associated with fleet purchases and the possibility of a facility.

- 1 Chief
- 1 Lieutenant
- 4 Sergeants
- 2 Detectives
- 9 Patrol Officers

Adding the existing five (5) Hinsdale Officers to the existing twelve (12) Dalton Officers increases the Consolidated Police Department by **46%**. The consolidated budget lists full-time salaries as an aggregate; without separate categories for shift differential, holiday pay, and educational incentive.

The Dalton Police FY'23 budget currently funds the positions of Chief, 3 Sergeants, and 8 Patrol Officers. Therefore, to reach the staffing level for this Consolidated Police Department, a newly created Lieutenant's position as well as an additional Sergeant and 3 additional Patrol Officer positions must be funded. For this study, the Detective positions will be considered "assignments" so there is no pay differential from that of a patrol position, and will be budgeted within the Patrol Officer's Salary.

The Hinsdale Police FY'23 budget currently funds five (5) full-time positions; Chief, Sergeant, and three (3) Patrol Officers. When comparing the base salaries of the Hinsdale Sergeant to the lowest-paid Dalton Sergeant, the Dalton Sergeant earned \$26,000 more. The comparison was similar, with the Hinsdale Patrol officer earning approximately \$8,000 less in base pay than the lowest-paid Dalton Patrol officer.

When constructing this Consolidated Police Budget, MRI wanted to produce a budget that illustrated a "High Estimate" of what the true cost might be to combine police agencies/services. Therefore, MRI utilized the salary numbers from the Dalton budget to estimate the salary data for the consolidated budget. Both the Hinsdale and Dalton budget statistics were used to assist with estimating non-salary totals. The Dalton budget was more extensive and descriptive via specific line items and their corresponding cost. The Hinsdale budget was much more of an "overall" budget summary, with fewer specific line items and many items listed under one line item with an aggregate cost. For this reason, MRI was often unable to distinguish or compare "apples to apples" when determining specific cost items referenced. In those instances, MRI used the standard 46% increase in the workforce to determine a consolidated total for these items. This was used in line items such as dues and travel, health clubs, subscriptions, and membership fees.

When setting the salary for the new Lieutenant position, MRI used a 15% base pay increase from the highest base sergeant pay grade. Industry standards vary widely; the most common

increase ranges from 10% to 15%. In addition to the base pay increase, the Consolidated Department must allow for holiday pay as well as contractual education incentives. MRI assumes the Lieutenant will be assigned to the day shift and will not be eligible for shift differential pay. The Lieutenant Salary used, was base pay of \$90,000, plus holiday pay of \$5,700 and educational incentive of \$7,500 (Master’s Degree assumed). The total salary for the new Lieutenant position is \$103,200.

When establishing the salary for the new sergeant position, MRI utilized the current FY '23 Dalton budget information for entry-level sergeant. MRI used base pay of \$76,230 plus a \$9,000 shift differential, \$4,700 holiday pay, and \$7,500 educational incentive (Master’s Degree assumed) for a total salary for a new sergeant at \$97,430.

When setting the salaries for the three (3) new patrol officer positions, MRI utilized the current FY '23 Dalton Budget information for the highest-paid patrol officer. This is due to MRI highlighting that employee seniority is one of the challenges that must be determined before formalizing the concept of a consolidated department. Once that is decided, actual data can be entered. In this exercise, MRI used base pay of \$59,800 plus \$6,410 shift differential, \$3,780 holiday pay, and \$7,500 educational incentive (Master’s Degree assumed) for a total salary for a new patrol officer at \$77,490 x 3, which equals \$232,470. The total cost in salary to add positions is \$433,100.

When constructing the consolidated budget, MRI left the “Gross Overtime” line item unchanged from the Dalton reference budget. With the addition of five full-time officers and the elimination of “reserve officers” due to “Bridge Academy/POST” requirements, the \$31,424 reserve officer line item as well as the \$6,000 Bridge Academy line item were deducted from the consolidated budget. However, due to another resolution that must be addressed regarding what collective bargaining agreements might be in place, or what potential mandatory staffing might be in place, the Gross overtime line item was not changed. The consolidated police budget showed the following: Total Salary: \$1,637,362, an increase of \$450,652, (37.9%)

Total Expenses: \$194,561, an increase of \$33,359, (20.6%)

Total Consolidated Budget: \$1,831,923, an increase of \$484,011, (35.9%)

Categories	Dalton FY'23 Requested Budget	FY'23 Consolidated Sample Budget
Full-time Officer Salaries	\$950,098	\$1,383,198
Reserve Officer Salaries	\$31,424	0
Executive Assistant	\$59,040	\$59,040
Matron	\$1,582	\$1,582
Crossing Guard	\$4,260	\$7,400



Gross Overtime	\$78,078	\$78,078
Gross Court Pay	\$10,027	\$14,100
FSLA	\$4,200	\$4,200
Community Policing	\$2,000	\$2,000
Vehicle Maintenance	\$25,000	\$32,000
Gasoline	\$26,065	\$37,000
Medical	\$4,500	\$6,390
Cell Service	\$5,000	\$7,100
Radio Service	\$2,500	\$11,027
Annual Software Support	\$18,967	\$18,967
Equipment Repair	\$2,250	\$3,285
In-service Training Overtime	\$40,000	\$56,800
Bridge Academy Overtime	\$6,000	0
Professional Tech Training	\$12,500	\$17,750
Ammunition	\$8,000	\$11,360
Supplies	\$10,000	\$12,000
New Equipment	\$14,000	\$15,640
Total Uniform Allowance	\$19,550	\$26,820
Dues and Memberships	\$3,695	\$5,247
Other Purchases	\$3,000	\$3,000
Prisoner Meals	\$175	\$175
Travel	\$1,500	\$2,130
Health Clubs	\$1,000	\$1,420
Meetings	\$500	\$1,000
Total Salaries:	\$1,186,710	\$1,637,362 \$450,652 INCREASE (37.9%)
Total Operations Expenses:	\$161,202	\$194,561 \$33,359 INCREASE (20.6%)
Total Budget:	\$1,347,912	\$1,831,923 \$484,011 INCREASE (35.9%)

CHALLENGES

MRI has conveyed to the officials and community members that taking a blank slate and establishing a police agency that can adequately serve the Dalton-Hinsdale communities is a relatively straightforward endeavor. By engaging best practices of the profession, MRI can determine staffing levels, the organizational structure, the required equipment, facilities, the

budget, and the policies to guide the agency as it delivers professional service. MRI research concurs with the literature related to consolidation initiatives that the overt challenge is establishing the political will of the two communities to make the necessary decisions. When reviewing what “*political will*” means to this discussion, the Oxford English Dictionary definition may fit this project: “the firm intention or commitment of a government to carry through a policy, especially one that is not immediately successful or popular.”

After attending community meetings with Dalton and Hinsdale residents, there were several concerns shared with MRI including, but certainly not limited to:

- What or how existing employees, supervisors, and line officers may be threatened by consolidation
- That response time may become problematic
- Change in the delivery of a service that is very intimate and personal
- Is it possible that consolidation could increase costs due to wage differences, start-up costs associated with radio or other equipment that would be required
- Will there be a need for a new police facility to house the combined agencies
- What about officers in one community that may be in line for a promotion or advanced assignment in one agency, and may find they are outranked for these opportunities by their peers in the other
- What is the name of this agency
- Who is providing direct governmental oversight of this newly created agency

There may be as many questions as there are residents. Some questions may be immediately addressed while others may be more elusive.

It is impossible for MRI to offer solutions to all these questions and concerns as they are as subjective, personal, and representative of unknown sources of opinion. Dalton and Hinsdale will need to jointly navigate through the variety of issues that they themselves will identify as apprehensions. MRI will highlight several challenges that rose to the surface during the site visit. Each challenge identified will require further discussions to arrive at a decision dependent on the aforementioned “*political will*.” In the end, the required compromises and ultimate agreements will rest entirely with the two communities.

MRI has highlighted some of the identifiable challenges that will need to be addressed such as:

Finances

Dalton has publicly stated that any agreement made for consolidated police services must be “cost neutral” to the Dalton taxpayer. Hinsdale has an immediate challenge as the pay scale of their police officers is well below those of Dalton. While there are a number of equipment challenges that can be addressed through a future structured Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) such as the different makes of patrol vehicles that are in use, some other equipment will need immediate resolution. As an example, MRI noted that each agency has a unique firearm, and it would be imperative that there should be a single firearm designation for a weapon system so that the make, model, ammunition, loading equipment, leather gear, maintenance, and skill training are identical. The interoperability of the communication system’s equipment such as the portable and cruiser radios must be reviewed and if problematic, immediately resolved.

Inventory of all equipment

MRI recommends that precursor steps include a complete inventory of each agency’s property and what can be brought to the consolidation. This includes minutiae such as desks, chairs, lights, notebooks, boxes of paper, etc. Body armor, leather gear, radios, rifles, shotguns, Tasers, inventory of ammunition. A COMPLETE inventory is paramount and crucial to developing a determination of what is currently possessed and what needs to be acquired for consolidation to be successful.

Policy Oversight

MRI is aware that the Dalton Police are currently pursuing Certification under the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission (MassPac); we recommend pursuing this goal with haste. As part of Certification, the application of industry standards to the day-to-day operations of the larger agency contributing to consolidation can serve as a road map to successful change.

Much like accreditation for hospitals and educational institutions, law enforcement accreditation is a self-initiated, voluntary process. It is based on standards reflective of best practices in law enforcement throughout the United States. The benefits of accreditation are widely recognized as improved police effectiveness, identification of problem areas, the development of documentation of performance, decreased insurance premiums, decreased liability potential, and demonstration to the community that its police department runs a state-of-the-art operation. Under a potential consolidation, accreditation will be critical to answering

myriad personnel concerns about recruitment, selection, training, evaluation, and promotion. Accreditation will ensure both communities, and the police officers, that the newly formed agency is guided and performing with a foundation of best practices and procedures in place.

MassPac is a voluntary program consisting of professional standards for police agencies in Massachusetts to meet using policies and procedures that are widely recognized as best practice by the profession.

MassPac offers two programs, the Certification Program currently consists of 159 standards, all of which are mandatory. Under the Certification Programs, the standards largely impact officer and public safety, address high liability/risk management issues, and generally promote operational efficiency throughout an agency. The Accreditation program includes all the Certification standards plus others for a total of 257 mandatory standards. MassPac requires that agencies must successfully achieve Certification before being assessed for Accreditation. All MassPac's standards have been long established by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA) <https://www.calea.org> and provide the framework for standards in the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Program and include the following areas:

- Agency Authority, Jurisdiction, and Use of Force
- Recruitment, Selection, and Promotion of Personnel
- Training, Discipline, and Internal Affairs
- Patrol, Traffic Operations, and Criminal Investigations
- Victim/Witness Assistance
- Emergency Response Planning
- Prisoner Transportation and Holding Facilities
- Records and Communications
- Collection and Preservation of Evidence
- Property and Evidence Control

CONSOLIDATING THE TWO AGENCIES

Most police agencies have strong identities where the officers take great pride, and comfort, and ultimately rely upon their identity. The governing bodies that discuss consolidation, or even the potential, must acknowledge that this initial loss of identity, will take time to adjust to one of a consolidated agency. While no two agencies share an identical law enforcement philosophy, the combination of the two may very well allow for a positive blending. Finally, the culture of the two law enforcement agencies develops departmentally and there will be gaps in

perspectives, attitudes, and those informal coping mechanisms needed to address the daily stress of the profession.

Consolidation and Personnel

Addressing the immediate tangible equipment challenges will be more straightforward than the personnel nuances. Negotiating a work agreement that addresses the addition of personnel to an existing union contract or an entirely new union must be addressed. Within those parameters are how seniority, existing rank structure, shift assignments, vacations, sick leave, and a host of other personnel benefits will function within the newly consolidated agency. Will all employees automatically be accepted for employment in the consolidated agency, or while being given preference, go through a selection process for employment? How will time in service be addressed relative to the establishment of seniority in a consolidated police department?

Police Facilities

MRI found the Dalton facility to be much more operative than found in Hinsdale, although both will require some attention for areas such as ensuring locker rooms for males and females, interview rooms, areas for detectives, and updating evidence retention and public access. However, the lock-up area of the Dalton Police is deeply flawed and has not passed inspection by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for a number of years. If utilized for this purpose, the Hinsdale facility offers a comfortable and functional “sub-station” where community members can meet with the police, establish hours of operation, and allow officers to complete paperwork assignments.

Whether long-range planning would embrace a standalone police station or a public safety facility (fire and police), these decisions are certainly at the discretion of the voting entities; but undoubtedly, with or without consolidation, both communities will require an updated facility at a future date. This reality may be a positive attribute of a consolidated strategy as a combined venture may offer significant value.

Governing Body

One important issue that was identified at both community meetings held at the outset of this project pertained to the immediate oversight of the new agency. How is oversight of the combined agency parsed out to the Select Boards that have historically had 100% control and governing authority? Answering this elemental question is critically important and in desperate need of a solution before implementation.

Several research documents suggest an independent governing board that has direct public oversight over the consolidated police agency. Some type of “Governing Authority” could be created to oversee the Police Chief and to make governmental-level decisions regarding the police department. One example of the tasks associated with this governing authority includes budgeting, local oversight, hiring, firing, and other parliamentary interests. How this body is comprised is truly at the discretion of the two communities but could potentially include the town administrators of both Dalton and Hinsdale as well as one Selectperson and one elected citizen from each community.

A second example could be the formation of a “Police Commission” as the immediate governing authority. A police commission could be made up of three or five total residents from both communities. Legalities, such as how the governing authority is chosen; by election, appointment, or another method should be vetted and agreed upon. MRI would strongly recommend involving Legal Counsel in the discussions to render insight to appropriate conclusions.

There will be no wrong approach, but governance is a critical component of this entire concept and will likely require substantial review by municipal legal counsel. Whatever type of governing authority is chosen, it must have the legal power of oversight of the consolidated police department.

Criminal and Motor Vehicle Prosecution Issues

With governance being addressed, the two communities will need to engage the Berkshire County Attorney regarding any unintended consequences of consolidation pertaining to local ordinances, Commonwealth Statutes, and how prosecution jurisdiction will, or will not, be affected as the result of any consolidation plan.

Other legal impositions that may become effective upon consolidation should also be considered by legal counsel; such as will the combined service population trigger requirements for additional facility enhancements in compliance with MA General Laws Title VII, Chapter 40, Section 34 governing the number of lock-up cells required. If consolidation mandates a change to the number of existing cells, will the addition of lockups trigger the need for renovations to bring current facilities into compliance with industry standards and best practices for detention cells? At what cost?

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

Creation of a Regional Police District

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 41, section 99B-K spells out how two or more police departments could be dissolved and reconstituted into a single regional police district. The towns must be contiguous. Acceptance of the law would be through a town meeting ballot and take effect on a date to be identified by, ultimately, the voters. A Regional Police Commission would be established with two members appointed by each signatory select board. The Commission would have full power over the regional department including selecting the chief of police and establishing the agency's budget. The Commission has the power to acquire property and incur debt. The Massachusetts Department of Revenue would audit the department annually and apportion the associated costs through a formula that includes total equalized value, number of inhabitants, and total mileage of state and local roadways. Dissolution of the agency or separation therefrom must be the result of a town meeting vote with separation allowed one year following a vote to separate.

The law allowing for the establishment of a regional police district is quite specific, restrictive, and onerous. By accepting this law, each town gives up not only control of police services but also the selection of the police chief and control of the department's budget. There are statutory mandates for when and how the regional department is established or dissolved. These requirements are probably the reason no Massachusetts jurisdictions, to our knowledge, have yet to accept this law. The lack of use of the police district strategy was verified by the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association. MRI contracted to assist a community in Connecticut who were reviewing a policing organizational option in 2018 as Connecticut also has an enabling statute allowing for a regional policing department. No communities in Connecticut have chosen to move forward with this option as of this writing. MRI would caution that in the event the Regional Police District is disbanded, the involved communities would have to seek alternatives or start a new police department from the ground up.

Under this option, the level of police services and the budget are under the control of the Commission rather than the select board and the voters. Initial start-up costs associated with this option would be higher than other options. While residents would, no question, be the recipient of an enhanced level of police presence and responses, it may come with an unacceptable cost and loss of control.

Shared Procurement, Equipment, and Training

The Select Boards and Police Chiefs of the included towns would work together to coordinate purchases, utilization of equipment, and training. This option requires no changes in governance or structure. A group, to eventually include multiple jurisdictions, may increase purchasing power and the ability to offer more training to officers at a lower cost.

Such an effort is easily undertaken without formal state or local action. There may be small economies of scale to be obtained but most of the larger expenses, such as vehicles, firearms,

and ammunition can now be purchased from established state bids. The larger portion of small-town police budgets is spent on personnel costs which are not addressed with this option. Additionally, this option does not address the fundamental issues of the sustainability of part-time policing agencies that are now faced with the costs associated with the bridge academy today and the full-time academy hereafter, which includes training issues and liability/risk issues, or the costs associated with the delivery of a professional level of police services.

Any costs associated with choosing this option would be minimal and easily absorbed within the department or town budgets.

Expanded Mutual Aid Agreement

Interested area towns would enter into a mutual aid agreement whereby police officers from neighboring communities would have police powers in all signatory towns. Formal requesting of mutual aid would not be necessary, but rather an officer on duty could respond to any community and handle a call for service. The goal would be to improve response times and increase police presence. Major issues include how and when an officer from another town responds or if routine/proactive patrols are provided.

While the initial response to this option may be favorable, there may be hidden issues that could lie just below the surface. Would residents be desirous of being policed by officers they do not know and who are not directly responsible to their chief of police and select board? Is there an agreed-upon level of training for all included officers? What is the formula to determine how many hours a town would need to provide police coverage? What policies are to be followed? How are complaints against officers handled? Would some towns have to hire more officers to provide the required coverage? Would larger towns bear a greater burden for service provision than other partner communities?

Some area departments provide police coverage for many hours a day. Others provide no preventative patrol hours and only respond to calls for service. Towns, which do not currently schedule on-duty hours, would see an increase in the costs of providing such coverage. Based on the very low police department budgets, expenses associated with meeting agreed-upon coverage could increase existing budgets significantly. An agreed-upon formula for sharing the financial burden would need to be negotiated.

Linked Police Departments under an Advisory Board

This option is a modification of the Expanded Mutual Aid Agreement model described above. Under the linked police department model each agency would maintain its own structure and governance, and officers would be able to patrol between signatory towns. The difference here would be an Advisory Board would work to coordinate the budgets, hiring, procurement, and schedules to provide for multiple department integration. The select boards in each community

would still have oversight over their police department and would work with the Advisory Board to avoid conflicts and standardize policing in the region.

Massachusetts statutes allow for police districts and inter-municipal agreements. The Advisory Board model may not be allowed by law. If it could be accomplished on an informal basis there would appear to be a potential for conflicts between the Advisory Board and the various select boards. While the Advisory Board would only be advisory in nature, it would be working toward equity of effort from the signatory towns which may set up the enterprise for failure. Some of the MRI comments from the Expanded Mutual Aid Agreement model apply here as well.

As in the Expanded Mutual Aid model, some department budgets would have to increase to satisfy a negotiated equity formula. Therefore, it would be anticipated that training and personnel costs would increase in most cases. Scheduling and other administrative coordination would require that time be dedicated to these tasks with associated costs. Costs associated with working toward incorporating national best practices into police operations where practicable should be included.

Increase Funding to Hinsdale Police Department

The existing police departments would be maintained but with an increased budget in Hinsdale. The increased funding would consider enhanced salaries and allotting a proper number of hours for training, administration, supervision, and updating police policy and practices to state and national policing standards. This model would acknowledge a desire by residents to maintain a local police department but at the same time acknowledge the fact that if policing services are going to be undertaken by the community, it must be done while considering potential costs implications associated with the vast responsibilities and liability attached to the powers of a police officer. Policy, training, supervision, and accountability must be part of the department's existence. Under this model, the town would seek to establish average rates of compensation from the area as well as selecting the desired level of services to create an updated budget.

Based on information and comments gathered at the community meetings, there does not seem to be the appetite necessary for a substantially increased police budget in Hinsdale to accommodate imposed legal challenges by the Commonwealth on training.

Hinsdale Contract with Dalton for Police Chief Services

This model would have Hinsdale contracting through an Inter-Municipal Agreement (IMA) for the services of the Dalton police chief directly from the Town of Dalton. Both communities would continue to operate their own separate police departments but share a chief. Oversight of each agency would remain the responsibility of the applicable Town. Any contract, therefore,

would have to carefully spell out the oversight by each Town of the Dalton Police Chief, specifically and as applicable.

If this arrangement turned out to be long-term, the police chief could gradually work to standardize the written directives and practices of both departments to move toward national best practices.

Under this option, financial oversight and liability of each department would remain the responsibility of each select board. The services agreed to would only be for the police chief and not the delivery of all police services.

CONCLUSION

With the expressed desire of the Town of Dalton for a “cost neutral” consolidation of policing services, the report describes what a consolidated police agency should consist of and what the cost centers of that agency are likely to be to adequately serve community expectations of police in Dalton and Hinsdale. Though consolidation may be “cost neutral” to the Town of Dalton, without consideration of any other cost center, Police Reform legislation enacted by the Commonwealth will undoubtedly increase the cost of policing in Hinsdale. Several alternatives to a combined police department are offered in a thumbnail for the consideration of each community.

The difficult challenge lying ahead for both communities involves the development and design of the political and governing components to ensure that the expectations of both communities are met, whether under an arrangement of combined policing or one of the myriad options. Town attorneys for the two communities should be consulted for a review in detail, not only applicable enabling General Laws, but also the application of existing collective bargaining agreements to the consolidated police department, and any drafts of any proposed contract between the towns, as applicable.

Unless cost is the only factor driving the discussion of consolidation, the Towns of Dalton and Hinsdale should evaluate the costs of startup and maintenance of a single agency weighed against the potential for improved crime prevention, effective law enforcement, community satisfaction, improved officer wellness, and training, while taking a long view of the overarching potential for improved police services to the towns.

Whether Dalton and Hinsdale move to maintain the status quo or consolidate police services, the successful outcome of the decision will depend almost entirely on community engagement in the extreme. A full engagement process enables the people most affected by the impact of the consolidation decision (to do or not to do) to have a voice. The engagement process should fully involve the people, the departments, and the local government to reach a consensus before a decision is made. Once the decision is made, by having recognized the needs/desires of those impacted in a meaningful way, the likelihood of success and sustainability of the

decision is improved exponentially. In the end, engaging the communities will help Dalton and Hinsdale identify sustainable outcomes; it will demonstrate the commitment to fairness and equity as it relates to this critical public safety feature, and may serve to improve inter-and intra-community relations.

Respectfully submitted,

Municipal Resources, Inc.

