

ONTARIO COUNTY PROPERTY TAX SAVINGS PLAN 2021



A CONTINUING LEGACY OF SHARED SERVICES

*Chris DeBolt, County Administrator
Adopted December XX, 2020*

Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction.....	1
Part I: A Continuing Legacy of Shared Services.....	2
Part II: Panel Recommendations for Implementation in 2021.....	3
Part III: Conclusion and Certification.....	7
Acknowledgement.....	8
Appendix A County-Wide Shared Services Property Tax Savings Plan Summary	
Appendix B Certification	
Exhibit 1 Property Tax Savings Plan 2020 – Vote Justification	

Introduction:

Chapter 59 of the Laws of 2017 required the Chief Executive Officer of Ontario County (for purposes of this legislation, the County Administrator) to convene a panel to develop and approve a County-Wide Shared Services Property Tax Savings Plan to find opportunities to share and coordinate services among and between the County, Cities, Towns, Villages and School Districts in Ontario County. Fire Districts and BOCES were subsequently added. All Ontario County municipalities, school districts, BOCES and Finger Lakes Community College participated on the panel.

In December of 2018, the NYS Department of State issued a County-Wide Shared Services Initiative Guidance Document for 2019 – 2021. The guidance summarized the planning process for counties in order to meet the intent of the law through December 31, 2021. The guidance remained similar to the planning process in 2017, however the formal timelines were removed and final plans are to be submitted to the Department of State by the end of the calendar year with new shared services projects.

Ontario County convened a Municipal Summit/Shared Services Panel Meeting on November 18, 2020. Representatives of the County's municipalities, school districts, BOCES and Finger Lakes Community College were invited. County staff were also present that will help facilitate any projects including the County Attorney, Director of Human Resources, Director of Finance, Director of Emergency Management/Fire Coordinator, Director of Information Services and Director of Sustainability and Solid Waste. Due to the COVID pandemic beginning in March 2020, most all of the projects planned for 2020 were not implemented. The Interim County Administrator provided an overview of the planning guidance, recommendations from the NYS Dept of State contact person and its requirement for shared services projects. The intention for the 2021 plan is to utilize the 2020 projects and try to move those forward.

To meet the requirements of the law, the County Administrator:

- 1) Convened two (2) panel meetings on November 18 and December 30, 2020 respectively. Attendance and participation at these publicly noticed meetings by panel members was very good.
- 2) Will submit this plan on November 19, 2020 to the Ontario County Board of Supervisors, individually by email and collectively by filing with the Clerk to the Board.
- 3) Will conduct three (3) required public hearings, via Webex, in December. Said hearings will be appropriately noticed in accordance with law and recorded.
- 4) Intends on convening the Shared Services Panel December 30, 2020 to vote on this Property Tax Savings Plan.
- 5) Upon affirmative vote by a majority of the panel, will submit said Property Tax Savings Plan to the NYS Department of State by the end of 2020 and shall post the Shared Services Plan on the County website.
- 6) Shall conduct a virtual public presentation of the Shared Services Plan.

Part I: A Continuing Legacy of Shared Services

Chapter 59 of the Laws of 2017 required a dialogue on Shared Services to develop a property tax savings plan over a very short, four month timeframe. Many public officials across New York State rightly felt that their efforts on shared services across the decades were left unacknowledged by this legislation. Ontario County staff were able to compile a long list of collaborative efforts by the County and its municipalities dating back to the 1959 formation of the County-wide Workers' Compensation pool (Attachment A). We note that the list is not exhaustive. We did include actions taken solely by the County to control property tax rates. It is noteworthy that the following four actions by the Board of Supervisors over the years resulted in a real savings of \$1.78 per \$1,000 on the County tax rate through 2017. (Public/private partnership at the Landfill; Sale of the Home Health Agency medallion; Privatization of the Substance Abuse Counseling Clinic and Sale of the Health Facility.)

These savings were realized over a time period where the portion of the County budget under the control of the Board of Supervisors dwindled to under ten percent (10%) due to the increasing expenses associated with programs and services mandated by the State of New York.

Ontario County municipal representatives commit to continuing efforts to control the property tax associated with the portion of their budget under their control. We join with other public officials across the State to ask the State to identify ways to decrease the impact on local property tax rates caused by existing mandated programs and services and cease adding them to the burden on local government. Perhaps continuing dialogue on greater efficiency, increased use of technology, elimination of duplicative services, shared equipment and buildings among State agencies and localities and better coordination of services could help us jointly achieve the property tax savings reduction we all seek. In addition, real State incentives for inter-county cooperation and dialogue and regionalization of continuing services may also contribute to the goal of property tax savings and control.

Part II: Panel Recommendations for Implementation in 2021

Due to the COVID pandemic, projects intended to be implemented in 2020 that were not have been identified to be implemented in 2021. A handful of projects that municipalities did not participate in from the 2018 plan will also be included for those municipalities if interested. Shared services are an ongoing effort in time and place. With many accomplishments already achieved in this community and with gratitude and recognition of the strong working relationships between municipal officials, Ontario County, its municipalities, school districts and community college plan the following projects for implementation in 2021. It is our intention that any municipality that has not expressed interest in a project may do so during project development or implementation.

2021 Projects – Not implemented in 2020 due to the COVID pandemic

1) OnBase

An electronic content management system (aka electronic document storage) that the County currently possesses, where the County and/or Contractor would assist in scanning and storing the documents in OnBase. Records including but not limited to, code enforcement and clerk records that could be retrieved electronically and save municipalities on physical storage space and more efficiently access the information. There would be a cost avoidance for municipalities for not having to purchase the system.

It is estimated that OnBase could potentially save each municipality up to \$10,000 on the following:

- 1) Retrieval time in office and avail staff the opportunity to remotely retrieve documents;
- 2) The cost of supplies including paper;
- 3) File cabinets;
- 4) Photocopying expense; and
- 5) It frees up storage space for other uses and improves the “value” of the file. If stored electronically it is expected files are never lost or misplaced or would need to be recreated in the event of a disaster.

Depending on staff and contract capacity, we anticipate five (5) municipalities participating.

Total estimated savings/avoidance: \$50,000

2) Lifeguard Recruitment and Training

Cooperative effort to recruit and possibly train Lifeguards with municipalities/schools that have pools and/or beaches that hire seasonally or have on-going recruitment needs. FLCC through their Professional Development and Continuing Education program could set up the credit bearing Lifeguard Training course with Red Cross certification in January to have candidates ready to select from in May.

It is estimated this could potentially save \$15,000 collectively from beaches and pools not being opened for lack of a lifeguard and a more efficient recruitment process. We anticipate up to (10) municipalities and schools participating.

Total estimated savings/avoidance: \$15,000

3) **IT Assessments**

County Information Services staff will assess municipality computer networks and security and write up a report with recommendations for improvement. Estimated cost avoidance of approximately \$1,200 to hire an outside contractor to perform an assessment. We anticipate ten (10) municipalities participating.

Total estimated savings/avoidance: \$12,000

4) **Sustainability Projects**

Working with municipalities on projects to effectively reduce, reuse and recycle. Opportunity to participate in cooperative bidding of confidential paper shredding and recycling services. Potential costs savings associated with unique waste disposal event scheduling, participation and reporting (ie - shared/ consolidated ewaste collection events). We anticipate up to ten (10) municipalities and schools participating.

Total estimated savings/avoidance: \$10,000

5) **Firefighter/EMS Training**

Partner with Finger Lakes Community College's synchronous learning capability to deliver classroom Fire/EMS training more efficiently. Firefighters could save on travel expense by remotely and simultaneously participating in classroom instruction at either of the FLCC Main campus, Victor and/or Geneva Campus Center locations. Possible courses include: Blood Borne Pathogens-Refresher, Hazard Communication, Workplace Violence Prevention, SKYWARN, 1st Responder Scene Safety, NIMS ICS-100, NIMS IS-700, Bridging Generation Gaps in Volunteers.

Total estimated savings: \$12,000

6) **School Social Workers**

Ontario County and the nine school districts will create a work group to review the potential for the County to perform School Social Work/Mental Health functions for our school districts. If feasible, possible implementation of a pilot program to occur in the Fall of 2021.

Total estimated savings/cost avoidance: \$75,000 per district

Prior Year Projects - New Municipalities

1) **Health Officers**

NYS Public Health Law requires counties, cities, towns and villages to have a health officer who reports to their Board of Health which is most often the county, city, town or village board. Most towns and villages hire an individual for a stipend to perform the function of the health officer.

Over time, the utilization of the local health officer in Ontario County cities, towns and villages has diminished as the Ontario County Public Health Department oversees the investigation and control of communicable disease. In addition, the New York State Geneva District Office performs environmental health functions in Ontario County. Local code enforcers also have a role in assuring public safety by enforcing their local codes.

The County identified an opportunity in 2018 for 21 out of 26 municipalities in Ontario County to share the services of the health officer. The county intends to enter into an intermunicipal agreement with the remaining interested municipalities willing to share the services of the Public Health Director (PHD) to be identified as their health officer effective 1/1/2021. Each party will also need to do a resolution to this effect. The County will not charge the parties for the service of the PHD which will result in savings across the County.

Total estimated savings: \$2,000

2) **Heavy Equipment Project Description**

Ontario County has a diverse range and size of municipalities and schools with varying sizes of highway departments and equipment inventories. Highway Superintendents have a long standing informal agreement of sharing equipment and resources as necessary, on occasion there are needs for municipalities and schools to rent specialized equipment. It is planned in 2021 if there is a piece of specialized equipment that a municipality or school is in need of and another possesses that equipment, a share could be made in lieu of renting.

Total estimated savings/avoidance: \$25,000

3) **Municipal Employee Training Institute**

A number of municipalities requested training opportunities coordinated by the County that would realize cost avoidance for that municipality. An assessment of existing programs and capacity yielded the following opportunities:

- New Hire Mandatory Training provided monthly
- Excelsior Institute (Manager and Supervisor Training)
- Elective Topics chosen by municipal participants and the County
- Online Safety and Compliance Training

(Conservative estimate that 10% of employees from interested municipalities participate in each category. Average County training expense is \$50 per employee per course for in-person training and \$75 per course for online training.)

Total estimated savings/avoidance: \$25,000

4) **Employee Assistance Program Consortium**

The County enjoys value-added services from its Employee Assistance Program, ESI, such as but not limited to access to numerous online training programs (management development, safety and compliance, personal enrichment) and a personal assistant service. ESI has offered

a competitive rate per employee which saves certain municipalities on EAP costs and offers others cost avoidance for training programs.

All municipalities and schools that did not participate prior would be offered the opportunity to participate. With increased participation numbers, ESI may be able to provide a lower rate. Reimbursement will be sought on actual net savings.

Total estimated savings: \$5,000

5) **Municipal Human Resources Support**

Municipalities have expressed an interest in receiving Human Resources support and consulting from the County. This project can avoid adding staff or contracting. The County believes it can provide the requested services to a few interested municipalities at no cost.

Total estimated savings/avoidance: \$10,000

6) **School Tax Collection**

The County Treasurer discussed providing tax collection services for interested school districts. The districts have software and staff savings and/or cost avoidance as this service will be provided 5 days per week and no new staff will be added at the County.

Total estimated savings/avoidance: \$15,000 per district

2021 County-Wide Shared Services Plan Total Savings: \$256,000

Part III: Conclusion

Shared Services have existed in Ontario County for decades. They are and will continue to be a reality for the cost-effective and efficient provision of municipal programs and services in Ontario County. County representatives will continue to dialogue with representatives of our municipalities and welcome new dialogue with our school districts and fire districts to work to decrease, control and minimize local property tax rates through shared services efforts.

Certification

By my signature below, I hereby certify that the savings identified and contained herein are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christopher DeBolt, County Administrator

December 31, 2020
Date

**Ontario County
Shared Services Panel Members**

Town Supervisors

Theodore Bateman (Hopewell)
Todd Campbell (West Bloomfield)
Jeffery Gallahan (Manchester)
Robert Green (Bristol)
Tamara Hicks (Naples)
Peter Ingalsbe (Farmington)
Frederick Lightfoote (Gorham)
Jack Marren (Victor), Board Chairman
Daniel Marshall (South Bristol)
Catherine Menikotz (Canandaigua)
Daryl Marshall (Richmond)
Kristine Singer (Canadice)
Norman Teed (Phelps)
Mark Venuti (Geneva)
Andrew Wickham (Seneca)
Frederick Wille (East Bloomfield)

FLCC Staff

Rob Nye (panel member)
J. Randall Dempsey
Jonathan Keiser
Debora Ortloff

City & Village Mayors

Steve Valentino (City of Geneva)
Mark Falsone (Bloomfield)
Gary Hadden (Victor)
Brian Hemminger (Phelps)
William Hunter (Clifton Springs)
Michael Buttaccio (Manchester)
Fred Mink (Shortsville)
Bob Palumbo (City of Canandaigua)
Dave LeClair (Rushville)
Brian Schenk (Naples)

School District Panelists

Chris Brown (Marcus Whitman)
Bridget Ashton (Honeoye)
Charlene Dehn (Manchester/Shortsville)
Andy Doell (Bloomfield)
Jamie Farr (Canandaigua)
Timothy Terranova (Victor)
Matt Frahm (Naples)
Matt Sickles (Phelps-Clifton Springs)
Patricia Garcia (Geneva)
Vicky Ramos (Wayne Finger Lakes BOCES)

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