

Executive Summary

Team Position: Eliminate Municipal Government

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Description of Problem:

- More local governments per square mile than any other state in the US and more than these 8 combined: Arizona, Delaware, Hawaii, Maryland, Nevada, New Mexico, Rhode Island, Wyoming
- Crushing tax burden for families and businesses
- Over 70 school districts with 76 superintendents and totally redundant administrative staff
- Wasteful spending, duplication of services and duplication of positions (e.g. police chiefs, borough administrators, assessors, court personnel, judges, public works, etc.etc.)
- More fire and safety equipment than in all of NYC
- Significant disparity in the way services are delivered to our citizens.

Proposed Solution:

- Consolidation of Bergen County's 70 municipalities into fewer regional structures of approximately 30,000 – 100,000 people
- Consolidation of the administration of school districts to serve 3,500 – 6,000 students
- While maintaining individual town identity

How Will It Work Structurally?:

- Regional administration will provide these government services:
 - Executive
 - Administration
 - Police
 - Fire and EMS
 - Public Works
 - Court System
 - School Administration
- Although not in our team's purview, County government will also have to change
- Analysis of functions performed by the County and the municipalities to determine:
 - Should they remain publicly provided or privatized?
 - Who is best positioned to provide them – municipality, county or state?

Benefits of Proposed Solution:

- Significant reduction of redundancies and costs leading to lower taxes and more efficient government
- Enhanced quality of services through a more experienced and dedicated staff
- Even distribution of services
- Consistency in government reporting
- Increased transparency

Disadvantages of Proposed Solution:

- Large scale implementation introduces risk to achieving goals
- Impact on town employees, i.e. reductions in force

Obstacles to Proposed Solution:

- The history of home rule in N.J.
- Lack of standardization of property assessments
- Revision of tax structure to equalize impact on towns
- Political stagnation – desire to keep things the same

Lessons Learned From Others:

- This is not Utopian
- Others have done this:
 - Louisville, KY
 - Fulton Co, GA
 - Seneca Falls, NY

- Others have never split up:
 - Woodbridge Township
 - Bernards Township

Key Success Factors For Implementation:

- Courageous leaders in the political and civic arenas
- An informed public
- Economic incentives from the state
- Detailed implementation plan with professional project management
- Education and PR Plan
- An engaged county government

Conclusion: Our team believes that this is the only option for solving the crisis and problems which face Bergen County while positioning it for the future. Additionally, New Jersey's current serious financial condition provides momentum for pursuing this solution. Other communities have successfully done this. Before 1896, there were 14 regional entities comprising Bergen County – this could provide a template for going forward.