

Running Head: Emergency Operations in the City of Sylvester

Fire Department Consolidation for the City of Sylvester and Worth County, Georgia:

What needs to be considered?

Jody L. Yarbrough

Sylvester Fire Department, Sylvester, Georgia

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

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

Signed: _____

Abstract

The problem was the Worth County Board of Commissioners approached the City of Sylvester with a request to consider consolidation. The purpose of the research was to identify the areas to be considered for fire department consolidation. The paper used Evaluative and Descriptive Research to develop a list of key areas to be considered in a proposed consolidation of departments. Research questions utilized were:

- a. Which types of cooperative efforts are most common in the fire service?
- b. What are the potential strengths to be realized in cooperative fire service situations?
- c. What are the potential pitfalls which threaten cooperative fire service?
- d. What are the processes to consider in a possible fire department consolidation for the City of Sylvester and Worth County?

The procedure included a review of literature, internet searches and telephone interviews. Results and recommendations identified the keys areas to consider in a fire service consolidation.

Table of Contents

Certification Statement	2
Abstract	3
Table of Contents	4
Introduction	5
Background and Significance	8
Literature Review	10
Procedures	23
Results	24
Discussion	32
Recommendations	36
Reference List	39
Appendices	
Appendix A	40

INTRODUCTION

The challenges facing the American Fire Service are at an all time high and climbing. What was once thought of as a problem only for larger departments or other states has begun to reach all departments and affect all states. Standards for service have increased, the need for all hazard approaches have grown, and the challenges now greet the fire service across the board. What started as a simple effort to “fight fires” has evolved into a widespread business of planning for, responding to, and recovering from the effects of fires and other emergencies. As our society has evolved, the challenges we encounter race ahead at an even faster pace. These same challenges now face more fire departments than ever.

Fire Departments have always been proud and boastful of the fact they “do more with less”. While staffing levels and training requirements have increased, funding has decreased. A transition has occurred, which has led to less people volunteering and the fire service has felt this crunch. Budgets have been reduced, staffing reduced and services limited. The opposite has occurred in our response areas as populations have increased, coverage areas expanded and the hazards which are encountered multiplied. The entire face of the fire service has changed over the past four decades.

Code and building improvements have led to a reduction in working structure fires. Fire prevention and safety education have proved successful as well. Expanded services such as hazardous materials responses, emergency medical services, the need for specialized rescue, and the need for incident management and safety have pushed departments into new areas, all while receiving the same base funding.

For years the public safety community was viewed in some ways as untouchable. The budgets and staffing were safe. The need would always be there for our services. A reduction in fires and an increase in the demand for services have challenged us in the way we respond. Budgets have been reduced and staffing levels have followed. The economy across the United States, and even the World, has been felt in some ways by all

departments. From dwindling budgets and volunteers to an increased demand for services, we are being challenged at an all time high to “do more with less.” This is requiring departments to consider options as never before. Planning and future impact are vital to each decision made. Departments are adapting to and overcoming these challenges in a multitude of ways.

“City leaders will be looking for cost savings and cost sharing in the future, and they will be looking at different methods and alternatives. We in the Fire Service can be the cause of it, be a part of it, manage it or fight it, but it is upon us. Your position may be lonely and unpopular, but who should know the fire protection needs and alternative methods of delivery better than the local fire chief?” – Charles Rule, retired Fire Chief, Manteca, California (Snook, 1997).

One area under consideration at an increasing trend is the cooperative service of departments. This spans from mutual aid between departments to consolidation of services. Cooperative service delivery is not new to the fire service, dating as far back as the 1930’s it has been considered within the American Fire Service. After World War II, England used a cooperative service approach to revise all fire departments and reduce their numbers from the thousands to less than two hundred. The benefits of each type of cooperative service must be examined and the best fit for a department determined by the fire chiefs and governing bodies involved.

Cooperative services ultimately lead to a varying form of consolidation for fire departments. Webster (Webster , 2011) defines the word consolidation as the process of uniting: the quality or state of being united; *specifically*: the unification of two or more corporations by dissolution of existing ones and creation of a single new corporation. Fire departments must analyze the need for cooperative services and the possible consolidation of services. The types of cooperative services, along with the processes needed to make them succeed, must be planned for and researched.

The Sylvester Fire Department (SFD) is no different than any other department across our county, state or country. We face similar challenges and must continue to evolve to meet the needs of our community. Economic challenges face our community and inevitably our department. Meeting the needs of our community must continue while we are also faced with a reduction in the local workforce and economy. We must continue to “do more with less.”

The Sylvester Fire Department’s mission statement (Sylvester Fire Department Operations Guide, 2010) is *“To identify and respond to the needs of the citizens of Sylvester while providing them the highest level of protection from all hazards.”* This led to the motto of *“Keeping Sylvester Safe”* and evaluating all areas of the department to ensure we were meeting that motto and ultimately the mission.

The Worth County Board of Commissioners approached the City of Sylvester about the feasibility of consolidating fire services. As part of the commitment to the community, the department identified the need to follow its mission statement and research the area of consolidation. The lack of knowledge and information available to make an informed decision about consolidation would not allow the department to potentially respond to the needs of the citizens as tasked. The purpose of the research was to identify the areas to be considered for fire department consolidation. The paper used Evaluative and Descriptive Research to develop a list of key areas to be considered in a proposed consolidation of departments. Research questions utilized were:

- a. Which types of cooperative efforts are most common in the fire service?
- b. What are the potential strengths to be realized in cooperative fire service situations?
- c. What are the potential pitfalls which threaten cooperative fire service?
- d. What are the processes to consider in a possible consolidation for the City of Sylvester and Worth County?

The procedure included a review of literature, internet searches and telephone interviews. Results and recommendations identified the keys areas to consider in a fire service consolidation.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The SFD is a combination, all-hazards department with 14 career and 4 volunteer members with one full-time administrative staff. The department staffs one engine company (2 personnel) and one ladder company (2 personnel) out of a central, main station and currently has an Insurance Services Office rating of 4 since 2009. Sylvester covers 6 square miles with a daytime population of over 10,000 (Commerce, 2006) residents with nighttime reducing to approximately 6,000. Sylvester is home to the public school system of the county, as well as all major industry within the county. All city, county and state infrastructure is located within the city limits. There are 4 state highways and a federal highway which interlace the city and county and provide for a heavy volume of traffic flow. The City of Sylvester is located in Worth County in the southwestern portion of the state.

Worth County Fire Rescue (WCFR) is a combination department with 10 full-time, 12 part-time and approximately 40 volunteer members with no administrative staffing. The department responds from 14 stations located throughout the county. One station (located in the City of Sylvester) is staffed by 2 personnel, who respond with either one engine or one rescue or both as needed. The remaining stations are all staffed on a volunteer basis. WCFR enjoys an ISO rating of 5/8b at 2 stations located within or just outside the city and an additional 12 stations which receive a 10 rating (since 2010). Worth County covers 570 square miles with a population of approximately 22,000 (Brooks, 2011).

Sylvester and Worth County are considered rural areas and reside in the bottom tier of economically challenged communities within the state. The SFD has expanded its role to include all hazards (fire, rescue,

hazardous materials, medical and prevention). WCFR provides a similar all-hazards approach on a county-wide basis. WCFR also serves as the Emergency Management Agency for the county.

Based on recent accomplishments in the consolidation of recreation services within the county, the Worth County Board of Commissioners have recently approached the City of Sylvester about the feasibility of consolidating fire services. This same concept was discussed in 2002 and again in 2005 but was not pursued. Both previous processes only were discussions between governing bodies with some research put into the 2005 effort. That research has not been located. The only information currently available is the minutes of City of Sylvester Council meetings where the process was briefly discussed. The SFD was tasked with determining what options were available in regards to cooperative service and to recommend priority areas to consider. This is in line with the department's mission to identify and respond to the needs of our community. The department must consider the current and future benefits to consolidation. The research additionally relates to the Executive Leadership course of the Executive Fire Officer Program. Conducting this research will also allow the department to consider consolidation as it relates to the four following National Fire Academy Operational Objectives:

1. Reduce risk at the local level through prevention and mitigation.
2. Improve local planning and preparedness.
3. Improve the fire and emergency services' capability for response to and recovery from all hazards.
4. Improve the fire and emergency services' professional status.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review focused on materials from the local library, the city and department, the internet and the Learning Resource Center. The literature review focused on answering the research problem and the four following research questions:

1. Which types of cooperative efforts are most common in the fire service?
2. What are the potential strengths to be realized in cooperative fire service situations?
3. What are the potential pitfalls which threaten cooperative fire service?
4. What are the processes to consider in a possible consolidation for the City of Sylvester and Worth County?

The research included interviews which were utilized as part of the data collection. Interviews were conducted with Craig Tulley, Fire Chief, Colquitt/Miller Fire Department; Michael Coleman, Fire Chief, Tifton/Tift County Fire Department; and Charles Wasdin, Fire Chief, Hazlehurst/Jeff Davis Fire Rescue. The results of the interviews will be utilized in the results portion of the research paper.

Which types of cooperative efforts are most common in the fire service?

Fire Department Consolidation – Why & How To Do It Right, published by the Volunteer Fire Insurance Services (VFIS, 1994) was utilized to review the six types of consolidation they identify.

- Informal mixing and matching which allows for technical specialist to assist with short term projects or problems.
- Combining to share specialized services through an agreement or contract for the services. This may include apparatus, specialized teams, maintenance, training or information.

- Creating a process for hiring specialized staff for specific services addresses common needs. Examples may include inspections, investigations, or public safety education.
- Functional consolidation where departments remain separate but duties are combined or shared. A joint training facility is one example.
- Partial consolidations where departments remain separate but specific agreements are used to handle specific challenges. Sharing of equipment and personnel may be accomplished under a partial consolidation.
- Operational consolidation, or a merger, where separate fire departments are combined into one unified department. This usually occurs through a legal process.

No matter the approach, the best interest of the public is identified as the driving motivator (VFIS, 1994).

McGrath Consulting Group (McGrath Consulting Group, 2011) also identified six common types of fire department consolidations. There are a few differences brought out by McGrath. They address:

- Administrative Consolidation where two or more departments remain separate but they combine some administrative function. One fire chief managing all the departments is an example.
- Functional Consolidation again addresses the combining of specific areas such as dispatch or training but allowing the departments to remain separate.
- Selected Geographical Consolidation allows departments to consolidate efforts in specific locations, such as where incidents are lower, but to remain separate in larger incident areas.

- Merger Consolidation where a larger department absorbs another smaller department and the result is a single, combined fire department.
- Operational Consolidation combines all aspects of the departments but allows them to remain legally separate. This allows the departments to provide common services as if they were one department.
- Full Consolidation takes both departments into one both physically and legally. This allows the department to function as one and to erase any department and/or political boundaries.

In “Making the Pieces Fit” (Snook, 1997) three forms of consolidation are described. They follow the others in describing functional consolidation where the duties of the departments are combined such as training and dispatch. Both departments remain separate but they work together on these common areas. Operational Consolidation allows the departments to remain legally separate but allows for their operations or administrative functions to be combined. The advantage highlighted is the ability to move personnel and equipment across jurisdictional lines to facilitate need.

The key difference in reviewing “Making the Pieces Fit” (Snook, 1997) is that consolidation is one of five areas viewed upon as Cooperative Services. The idea of Mutual Aid is discussed as a first potential step in providing services. Mutual Aid allows for fire departments to request assistance on a needed basis based on the incident. Several concerns with Mutual Aid are addressed including time delays and the closest unit not being dispatched. Mutual aid is listed as a part of cooperative service but not a solution. Automatic Aid is the second form of cooperative service discussed. This allows the closest unit to be dispatched upon the initial request for assistance. This reduces time delays but may not answer the question overlap of services or resources. Consolidation, as addressed in three forms, is the third cooperative service reviewed. There are many factors to be considered in consolidation and they will be addressed later in this research. Contracting for service, possibly the most popular form of cooperative service, is fourth in the review by “Making the

Pieces Fit” (Snook, 1997). Contracting takes the form of consolidation but only on a by contract basis. This allows for departments to remain separate and still provide needed services such as training, prevention, inspection, investigation or maintenance from one another. This may result in an improvement in services while maintaining cost control. The fifth and final approach reviewed is that of a merger. Webster (Webster , 2011) defines a merger as absorption by a cooperation of one or more by others; *also*: any of various methods of combining two or more organizations (as business concerns). Departments are combined legally and the result is a new, unified department. The merger may be the last step in a cooperative process and follows on many of the previous four areas.

In summary, the term cooperative fire service is used interchangeably throughout his document to describe the varying forms of consolidation. Consolidation is but one of those cooperative processes. The approach taken by departments considering cooperative service must be beneficial to the needs of the department.

What are the potential strengths to be realized in cooperative fire service situations?

There are many positive aspects to cooperative fire service. In his research on fire department consolidation, Battalion Chief Jason Long (Ling, 2001) states, “The consolidation of fire departments in almost any community would mean cost savings for the taxpayers. Savings in construction, administrative personnel, equipment, apparatus, staffing, and training are just a few of the areas where a savings would be seen. These are also key areas where an improvement in service would prove vital to the newly organized department.”

The basis seen in most research focuses on those two main features, cost savings and service improvement. In “Why and How To Do It Right” (VFIS, 1994) there are several factors to be considered as strengths for cooperative service. These strengths vary based on the organizations involved and the type of cooperative services which are being utilized. The strengths are also determined based on the point from

which it is considered. The view from the political aspect may be, and in most cases is, totally different from that of the fire service manager.

The most common strength according to “Why and How To Do It Right” (VFIS, 1994) is that of the desire to provide the services citizens need and deserve. Consolidation may be an alternative to increase use of resources and staff, limit financial increases, improve external programs and increase the ability to specialize and provide needed services. Consolidation can lead to a reduction in overlap, a decrease in duplicate services and a potential savings from these areas. It may also improve the fire department operations and safety as more focus may be placed on the operations aspect. “Consolidation can result in a new organization that places more resources on the fire ground, a vital interest in a fire protection environment” (VFIS, 1994). Master planning for the future may also be a benefit.

In “Managing Fire Services” (ICMA Institute, 1988), the following reasons are identified as benefits to using some form of cooperative effort to provide fire services:

1. To make us of qualified personnel
2. To make use of existing facilities
3. To achieve economies of scale
4. To eliminate service duplication
5. To organize services in the most logical way, rather than have them constrained by jurisdictional or area limits
6. To remove politics from service delivery
7. To meet citizen demands

“Consolidation improves the efficiency and effectiveness of fire departments” (Snook, 1997). Consolidation allows for better use of resources, reduction of duplicative efforts and greater flexibility and capability. The standardization of operating guidelines, combined with increased personnel and equipment available, makes

the fire scene more efficient and safe. Current trends indicate that providers will pursue cooperative agreements at an increased rate (Snook A. J., 2000).

In summary, the benefits to cooperative service are directly attributable to the reasons for consolidation. The strengths to be realized are a key component to deciding which type of cooperative service is best.

What are the potential pitfalls which threaten cooperative fire service?

The pitfalls of cooperative fire service found within simply the process of combining are sometimes more daunting and stop the combination before it even begins. The list of challenges are long and found throughout the process. Consolidation is often touted as the ultimate solution to resolve a fire department's economic problem. It has also been characterized as the death of a fire department's culture and tradition. It is possible neither of these is true (Coleman R. J., 2008). "Consolidation is often like marriage; good ones last forever and bad ones end up in court" (Coleman R. J., 2008).

Considerable time and effort must be spent defusing those against consolidation. Policy makers, administrators and members of the organization must be involved at every stage of the discussion (Snook A. J., 2000). "Fear of change is a compelling concept. For most of us, when we get up in the morning, get ready for work and leave for the office, we have a behavioral pattern based on the expectations that things are going to be the same as they were yesterday. When you start to consolidate, you start to change that" – Ron Coleman (Snook J. a., 1997).

"Making the Pieces Fit" (Snook J. a., 1997) identifies the "big four". The first is turf which is often referred to as our area of comfort. It may be our response area or our work area. It comes along with the people we see each day, the equipment we use and the stations we work at. There is a feeling of ownership

that comes with our turf. The acceptance of new ways and cultures leads many to feel threatened. Simple issues can become a pitfall. The attempt to hold on to our past can become a major hurdle to overcome.

Power is addressed next. The concept of who is in charge and who will be in charge can be a critical one. Who will be the chief, who will assume positions in the command structure, who retains their rank? The power is also crucial when addressing the future of the organization. Does one department absorb the other or is a new department formed?

Third is the pitfall of politics. There are both external politics from governing bodies and officials and the fire service politics within the departments. Politics must be addressed with solid data and planning. Both internal and external politics are motivated by decisions that increase their services and are positive for the public. Open communication, good planning and effective strategy are all key to effectively dealing with politics.

The fourth and final area identified by "Making the Pieces Fit" (Snook J. a., 1997) is that of control. Control primarily in the form of the policy makers. These policy makers have many of the same concerns as the members of the departments. The key difference is the policy makers either have control, want to maintain control or do not want to lose control over services delivered. Failing to recognize the control over the operations of the department and its effect on the services provided to the citizens can be the largest pitfall. In most consolidation efforts that fail, this control from the policy makers is the primary cause.

In "Why and How To Do It Right" (VFIS, 1994), the process of change is identified as a key potential pitfall. The fire service is full of tradition. The attempt of a consolidation process often brings about change as emotions can become involved early in the process and create turmoil from the onset. Several other factors which must be considered are the timing of the consolidation, far too many differences in the departments, lack of support from those involved, fear of loss of control by politicians, and poor communication. Internal

roadblocks can be as simple as the name of the new department, the patch of the new department, the color of the trucks for the new department and the choice for the leader of the new department. These can also prove to be major pitfalls.

Lochard and Olsen (Lochard & Olsen, 2006) identify 14 “Watch-Out” situations which may pose concern and must be dealt with. They are listed below:

- More than one operating system or plan is being utilized. All parties involved must be on the same page.
- Not having a conflict resolution plan in place which will address the almost inevitable conflict that may occur. The plan must address how acts of conflict will be addressed and be made known to all involved.
- A rumor control plan must be installed. There must be a plan to address any and all rumors which may attempt to slow or change the consolidation.
- The chief and members of the command staff must be selected on the basis of their competency and character.
- The cultures of both departments must be integrated. There does not need to be a battle of future identity.
- The plan and any agreements for consolidation must be made available to those involved.
- “Deal Killers” must be identified and resolved prior to consolidation. Failure to do so will only allow them to surface later.
- Leaders do not acknowledge and address the challenges that will be faced.
- There is no plan for the transition. This must be written and agreed upon.

- The basis for the consolidation is not fully disclosed. Everyone involved must know why the consolidation is taking place before it occurs.
- Elected officials are not supportive of the consolidation. There must be full support from those involved.
- Elected officials attempt to get involved in operational issues. They must focus on the policy of the organization and stay away from the operations.
- Elected officials become involved in the efforts against the consolidation. This can only serve to further complicate the efforts.
- The consolidation is rushed. Time and effort must be placed on the front side of the consolidation process to ensure that it is successful.

In summary, the potential pitfalls which a cooperative service faces are many. Often the process of change is the largest pitfall of all. The pitfalls must be considered early and a plan prepared for dealing with them established. Communication may very well be the best way to overcome them. The pitfalls may very well be recognized by establishing a “watch out’ list.

What are the processes to consider in a possible consolidation for the City of Sylvester and Worth County?

“Consolidation is not a panacea; it’s a process. As such, it has strengths and weaknesses. Those who wish to engage in consolidation need to pay very close attention to both attributes” (Coleman R. J., 2008). The word consolidation almost always brings about an initial negative reaction when discussed. This is primarily because it is used as an end result and not a process that will lead to success. Examining the facts must be the first step in any consolidation attempt.

While there is no set of directions for a successful consolidation there are processes which make for improving the ability of the effort to succeed. In “Why and How to do It Right” (VFIS, 1994) a nine step consolidation model is used. “Making The Pieces Fit” (Snook J. a., 1997) utilizes a seven step approach. Our review will begin with the VFIS model.

In “Why and How to do It right” (VFIS, 1994) the model appears more structured with a specific approach. The first step identified by VFIS is to determine feasibility. This is accomplished when an individual or small group begins to discuss the possibility of consolidation. As the concept grows, more interested parties are approached for input. A study is then conducted, and along with a plan, is presented to the decision makers. At this time, a clear reason for the consolidation must emerge and topic must be reviewed from all angles. The best way to proceed along with the benefits and challenges must follow. The purpose for consolidation must be to provide the highest level of fire service to the community.

Step two is to form and activate an advisory group. An executive group of the primary stakeholders (fire chiefs and city/county managers) and working groups which will address specialized areas will be needed. These groups should consist primarily of three to eight individuals with knowledge in the area, a specific task to consider and full involvement from all members. The goal of the groups must be to have open communication which considers all aspects, both positive and negative, to the area of consolidation which they have been tasked to review.

The third step is to determine the key needs, issues, requirements and constraints the consolidation face. Data needed and the process to identify this data must be reviewed. All needs must be reviewed and nothing overlooked. Personnel issues as well as operational areas must be considered. Financial and legal aspects must also be reviewed for impact. These areas do not require solutions during this process but must be identified.

Fourth is to develop the goals and objectives for the consolidated department. These goals and objectives will form the future of the department and must be considered very carefully. They will be submitted to the governing bodies for consideration. The goals and objectives must be measurable and should include a timeline for implementation and a deadline for completion.

Fifth is to establish criteria for selecting programs and approaches. There must be a priority to be considered when selecting the programs and approaches used as the process moves forward. The cost vs. benefit, risk vs. gain and end result must be considered. Evaluating the programs and approaches cannot be overlooked as they must be approved before being implemented. A way to ensure projections are conceivable is important.

Sixth is to develop and analyze alternative approaches and programs. If the programs and approaches in step five are not adopted then there must be an alternative. Brainstorming after the initial review may lead to enhanced programs and approaches to solve issues. These alternative options should meet the same review and evaluation as the original programs and approaches. The full range of possibilities should be discussed in order to allow for the most creative and practical programs and approaches to evolve. Sticking out the pre-approved criteria is a must.

Seventh is to formulate an action plan that will describe and guide the consolidation into the new department. It will serve as the road map for implementing the programs and approaches developed and approved in the previous two steps. The action plan should also include a process for evaluating the progress of the consolidation both during and after it is complete. The plan will define the timeline for the consolidation as well as the structure and governing authority for the department. It will explain the relationship to local ordinances and charters, formulate budgets and tax related needs, and the maintenance of the agreement or contract. It will describe the personnel plan and resource management of the new

department. It will define the purpose of the consolidation and include all administrative rules and procedures. The basis for this should be simplicity as all involved should be able to understand the plan.

Eighth is to implement the plan as this is the key to being successful. If all aspects of the model have been thoroughly addressed up to this step then this should prove successful as the plan is implemented. The plan must be implemented as approved and follow the steps which were based on criteria. Planning is the key to successful implementation. Without implementation, the plan is merely a study of what might have been.

Ninth and last is the need to monitor and evaluate the consolidation. This is accomplished by monitoring timelines and deadlines identified in the plan as well as ensuring that goals and objectives are clearly understood. Involvement from all levels of the community is crucial. Revise the plan as needed with criteria established in the plan. Continue to utilize the working groups in the evaluation process (VFIS, 1994).

The process of consolidating utilizes a seven step approach which in some ways mirrors those listed in the model above. Step one is to get started. The idea of cooperative services begins with two fire chiefs discussing the effort. This is followed by seeking support to further investigate the matter from elected officials. Once that is gained there must be a look at two general areas: personnel savings and savings realized from the reduction of duplicated areas. Reductions and eliminations in other areas must be reviewed. A presentation of these findings will need to be assembled. For chiefs with city managers, the areas of control and the long term affect on the city may need to be addressed. The impact on other departments will need to be examined as well.

The second step is that of information and education. Once the process moves forward information must be given to all those involved. Communications must be greatly increased throughout the process both internally and externally. In the lieu of no information, the fear of change will take over. "Making the Pieces Fit" (Snook J. a., 1997) also identifies six phases of emotion as the information is communicated. Shock and

denial, anger, acknowledgement, adoption, acceptance bargaining and commitment may be expected. The media must be considered and involved in each step of the information process. This will allow a larger audience of stakeholders to be educated.

Third in the steps is to conduct a feasibility analysis. Objectives must be identified before starting as well as expectations from those involved. A complete review and evaluation of all departments involved is crucial and will be used in determining feasibility.

Fourth is endorsing a strategic plan. After determining the project is feasible, elected officials should approve developing a short term plan. This plan will most likely be from six months to one year in length. Timelines and goals are clearly outlined in this plan. Communication and the strategic plan will help keep the process moving forward.

Fifth is the formalization of an agreement to proceed. This formal agreement should be based on the finding of the process to this point. This formal agreement step often allows the departments and entities involved to conduct a more thorough evaluation of their willingness to move forward.

After receiving approval of a formal agreement, the sixth step in the process is to formulize task forces to develop action plans and timelines based on the strategic plan. These task forces must have structure and must be assigned goals and timelines for completion. All areas of the strategic plan must be considered and an action plan developed that will meet the needs of the new department and its mission developed. These task forces may lose focus or get off task so a constant reminder of what is to be accomplished and who it will benefit should be given. Dedication is the key.

Last in the process, the seventh step is the final frontier. Time has come to put the action plans and the strategic plan to work. Reviewing, monitoring and evaluating the plan are crucial. Challenges will have to be faced. Communication is the key. Sticking to the goals and objectives identified in the plan is crucial.

In summary, there is a basic format to follow in preparing for a successful consolidation. From the initial stages of gathering information and determining feasibility to gathering stakeholders and formulating plans to implementation and evaluation, the key is communication and dedication.

PROCEDURES

This is an evaluative and descriptive research project used to evaluate the areas to be considered for fire department consolidation. The research examined the types of cooperative efforts, strengths of those cooperative efforts, pitfalls which may threaten those efforts and the processes to be considered in possible consolidation. The research began at the Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy and continued with materials available at the department. The research included the use of periodicals and prior Executive Fire Officer Applied Research Projects. Magazines and internet searches also contributed to the project.

The research project also utilized interviews with the city manager for the City of Sylvester and local fire chiefs who have guided or been directly involved in consolidation within their respective departments, and a review of reports and consolidation plans from across the country. A review of the literature and resources available provided guidance in identifying processes to consider in potential consolidation for the City of Sylvester.

Interviews were conducted with Debbie Bridges, City Manager for Sylvester. Mrs. Bridges was selected because of her 33 years of experience in city government as well as her direct role in management for the city. The purpose of the interview was to obtain additional information and valid input for the research questions. The interview was conducted at the Sylvester City Hall building. Interviews were also conducted with Chief Michael Coleman with the Tifton-Tift County Fire Department, Chief Charles Wadsworth of the Hazlehurst-Jeff Davis Fire Department and Chief Craig Tulley of the Colquitt Miller Fire Department. These chiefs were selected based on their experiences in the consolidation of their respective departments. Those departments are similar in operations to the departments in Sylvester and Worth County. The purpose of the interviews

was to obtain additional information and valid input for the research questions. The interviews were conducted both in person and via phone.

The questions for the interview (Appendix A) allowed input from each person interviewed in a similar format. Although the questions were the same, the area of expertise allowed the results to have discipline specific responses. All of the participants interviewed were chosen because of their direct knowledge of past consolidation efforts in their respective communities and the similarities of their cities to Sylvester and their counties to Worth.

LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

This research paper is not without limitations. As this research was beginning there was a proposal to consider consolidation of the City of Sylvester Fire Department and Worth County Fire Rescue. This proposal was initiated by the Worth County Board of Commissioners. This proposal was delivered to the Mayor and Council of Sylvester for consideration. As of this research there has been no further approval to consider the consolidation. This limited access to the information needed for evaluation from Worth County Fire Rescue, as well as negated a full survey of the members of each organization.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The evaluative and descriptive research process led to the information needed to indentify the processes which needed to be utilized in a possible consolidation of the Sylvester and Worth County Fire Departments. All aspects of the research proved valuable in answering the questions addressed in this paper.

The literature review looked at answering the questions of:

- a. Which types of cooperative efforts are most common in the fire service?
- b. What are the potential strengths to be realized in cooperative fire service situations?

- c. What are the potential pitfalls which threaten cooperative fire service?
- d. What are the processes to consider in a possible consolidation for the City of Sylvester and Worth County?

Review of the available literature started by examining the types of cooperative efforts that are most commonly utilized in the fire service. Throughout this research the terms cooperative fire service commonly was interchanged with consolidation. The research revealed several different approaches to cooperative service with some form of consolidation being the most utilized. They can be combined or viewed from the following areas.

Mutual Aid is a written or oral agreement between and among agencies/organizations and/or jurisdictions that provides a mechanism to quickly obtain emergency assistance in the form of personnel, equipment, materials, and other associated services. The primary objective is to facilitate rapid, short-term deployment of emergency support prior to, during, and/or after an incident (Georgia Emergency Management Agency, 2010).

Mutual Aid is sometimes considered the first cooperative process between agencies and may be used as a benchmark in determining further cooperative efforts. While a part of the process, Mutual Aid is not a solution. Concerns with time delays and the proximity to the incident of the responding department are inherent in Mutual Aid (Snook J. a., 1997).

Automatic Aid is another form of cooperative service which allows the closest unit to be dispatched. This is similar to selected geographical consolidation where incidents are handled based on proximity to the closest available units (McGrath Consulting Group, 2011).

Varying forms of partial consolidation are discussed in cooperative service. Informal mixing and matching, combining to share specialized services and creating a process for contracting for or hiring specialized staff to address common needs are such examples (VFIS, 1994). Partial consolidations are also used

to address specific target areas such as the sharing of equipment and personnel. Functional consolidations address the combining of specific areas such as dispatch or training while allowing departments to remain separate (McGrath Consulting Group, 2011). Administrative Consolidation, where departments remain separate but they combine administrative functions, is also considered to be a form of the functional or partial consolidation.

Mergers or operational consolidation is where separate fire departments are combined into one unified department. This usually occurs through a legal process (VFIS, 1994). There are also mergers where a larger department absorbs smaller departments into their operations. These full consolidations allow the department to function as one and erase any department or political boundaries. Mergers are often the last step in the cooperative process and follow many of the cooperative processes already discussed (Snook J. a., 1997).

The potential strengths to a cooperative fire service were addressed next in the research. The benefits for almost every cooperative process are purely dependent on the departments involved and more specifically the reasons for cooperative service. Two primary areas can be seen in the review of most successful cooperative processes, service improvements and cost savings. The benefits realized are also dependent on the view from which the cooperative service is considered. The political aspect will see it politically. The fire chief will see it from a management point of view. The members of the department will see it from the angle at which it affects them. The members of the community will see it from their end as the customers.

The greatest strength of the cooperative processes may be it provides the services that the community needs and deserves. Consolidation improves efficiency and effectiveness of fire departments (Snook J. a., 1997). It can be considered an alternative to staffing and resource needs, limit or reduce financial needs, improve external and specialized programs, and improve fire ground operations. The cooperative process also organizes services in the most logical way, rather than having them constrained by jurisdictional or area limits

(ICMA Institute, 1988). It also serves to reduce the amount of politics in the service delivery. The current trend is to develop and participate in cooperative efforts.

The potential pitfalls which threaten cooperative fire services compile an extremely long list. Just beginning the process, or even discussing it, can be a pitfall in itself. Both time and effort are key factors to the process. Again these can be potential pitfalls if not enough of both are put in to make the process work. There must be involvement from every level involved, at each stage of the discussion (Snook A. J., 2000). Open communication is the key. Change, or the fear of it, may be the biggest pitfall of all. Without communication the fear of change will only increase. There must be a significant investment in defusing the rumors and those against the consolidation. Scientist Kurt Lewin may have stated it best, "If you want to truly understand something, try to change it (Romero, 2011)."

Cooperative efforts usually come after years of planning. Most aspects are straightforward. Some are not. The issue that is often most plaguing is the "people" issues that arise during the process. There must be a plan in place to deal with the issues. If not then conflict will arise. Conflict can be a good part of the process if it is planned for and addressed. What may have begun as a solid effort by all involved can become overwhelmed by conflict if it's not properly handled and the entire process can come to an end.

Turf, power, politics, and control are all areas which can become pitfalls as defined in "Making the Pieces Fit" (Snook J. a., 1997). This change often begins with the first area of comfort, the turf. From our stations to our equipment, to the routines of our day, our turf is the one thing which makes up the environment around us. There is ownership and a feeling of comfort in our "turf". Even simple changes can become challenging. Power issues can be as complex as who is going to be chief of the new department or as what seems as simple as what color uniforms to wear. Those who end up with the power are sometimes deemed the winner. Politics are the governing aspect of any cooperative process. Past histories of the governing bodies of the departments involved in a consolidation effort play directly into the potential for a pitfall. Planning is vital when dealing with politics. Control follows and is likely associated with the politics. The

control of the consolidated department may be the key difference in the process being successful. Losing control can cause second thoughts in the process and all parties must be willing to reduce their control in some ways while limiting others.

Winston Churchill once said, "Failing to plan is planning to fail." There are several watch-out situations found in the literature research. Much like the "Watch Out Situations" listed for use in combating wildfires, the watch-out situations to consider in cooperative fire services are often simply a result of poor planning or in many cases simply not being familiar with the environment around you. Lochard and Olsen (Lochard & Olsen, 2006) define 14 such situations which can and do pose as potential pitfalls to the process. They can be summed in five areas.

Planning is critical to any process. There can be only one plan. The plan must include conflict resolution, rumor control, and a plan for transition. If these are not in place, watch out. Staff involvement is a must. The staff must be selected based on competency and character, must integrate the culture of both departments, must ensure that "deal killers" are identified and resolved and must acknowledge and address the challenges that will be faced. If these are not in place, watch out. Communication is a vital key. Communication shall include making the plan and any agreements available to those involved and shall disclose the basis for consolidation so that everyone knows why it is occurring. If these are not in place, watch out. Elected officials are a required component of any consolidation. Elected officials should support the consolidation, should not get involved in any operational issues, and should not get involved in any efforts against the consolidation. If these are not in place, watch out. Finally is the issue of time. The consolidation should not be rushed. Time and effort should be put into the planning of the consolidation, not the recovery from it. If time is not available, watch out (Lochard & Olsen, 2006).

Lochard and Olsen (Lochard & Olsen, 2006) developed 14 “Watch-Out” situations which may pose concern to any cooperative process and must be dealt with in the process. They range from issues with the plan itself to staffing, communications and working with elected officials. Each cooperative process can utilize this list to improve the process and reduce pitfalls.

The final area of research focused on a look at the processes to be considered in a possible consolidation for the City of Sylvester and Worth County. Throughout the process of literature review it became evident the processes utilized for consolidation varied based on the departments involved but all seemed to share the common area of planning. In all of the research the most important factor was the use of a process. The use of a process allows the strengths and potential pitfalls to be identified. The process assists in identifying which cooperative process to follow. The process also allows identification of what is needed in order for the consolidation to be successful.

There are two plans or processes which are commonly identified as the most successful models which to consider. The first is the Volunteer Firefighters Insurance Services “Why and How to Do It Right” (VFIS, 1994). They utilize a nine-step approach for consolidation which places the emphasis on making the process formal from the beginning. The first step utilized determining feasibility of the consolidation process. From there advisory groups are formed to determine needs involved in the process as well as developing the goals of the process. The advisory group then establishes the criteria to be used in the consolidation. Alternative approaches and criteria are developed and analyzed. Then the process of planning begins with the formulation of an action plan to guide the consolidation process. Once all steps to this point are completed the plan is implemented and upon implementation is consistently monitored and evaluated to ensure adjustments are made and alternatives are put into action if needed.

“Making the Pieces Fit” (Snook J. a., 1997) utilizes a similar approach but with only seven steps. The emphasis in their plan is to make use of the fire chiefs to get together and get the process started. This is also accomplished by the governing bodies if needed. Information and education are gathered and compiled for the process. Once sufficient information has been gathered and both chiefs have been educated about the organizations, the feasibility of the cooperative service is determined. If the process is deemed feasible then a strategic plan is developed. This strategic plan outlines the entire process and includes goals, objectives and alternative plans. Once completed an intergovernmental agreement is developed to outline the plan in a formal agreement between governing entities. At this point, there is a formation of task forces to ensure the process is understood and carried out in a successful manner. The task forces implement the plan and monitor it to ensure it is evaluated and adjusted as needed. This assures that the process is carried out as planned and more importantly is successful.

The interviews utilized provided crucial insight into the research questions. An interview was conducted with the city manager for Sylvester, Mrs. Debbie Bridges, to establish a view from one of the governing bodies which may be involved in the process. The interview was conducted at the Sylvester City Hall utilizing the research questions for the research. Mrs. Bridges outlined the two previous attempts at consolidation between the City of Sylvester and Worth County. Mrs. Bridges advised that “the previous attempts were at only a consolidation of the two departments and were only looked at from the city’s view” (Bridges, 2011). “We looked at the strengths of the consolidation but really did not identify the potential pitfalls, we tasked the fire chief with coming up with a plan, no formal process was followed” related Mrs. Bridges.

Interviews were conducted utilizing the questions listed in Appendix A with three fire chiefs whose departments had undergone consolidation from a city and county approach. Their departments represent a similar size and/or structure to those currently found in the City of Sylvester Fire Department and Worth

County Fire Rescue. The questions were formulated to act as reinforcement to the research questions. Two of the three interviewed provided copies of their intergovernmental agreements for review. All three chiefs agreed the benefits were dependent upon the needs of the communities served by the separate departments and reinforced the pitfalls identified by the research. The departments served by the chiefs interviewed also all were involved in some form of cooperative process prior to consolidation.

Charles Wasdin, Chief of the Hazlehurst/Jeff Davis County Fire Rescue, provided valuable insight into the need for monitoring and evaluating the plan. “We originally combined in 1993. The agreement outlined several steps that have not been followed. Fortunately they have worked to the benefit of the department. We definitely need to look at revising the plan to the way we do business today” stated Chief Wasdin (Wasdin, 2011).

Michael Coleman, Chief of the Tifton/Tift County Fire Department, stressed the need for the agreement between departments and governing bodies. “Our departments combined in 2004 through an intergovernmental agreement. We surveyed the existing departments and proposed a plan for the joint provision of fire services. Our intergovernmental agreement has guided us since we combined” stated Chief Coleman (Coleman M. , 2011).

Craig Tulley, Chief of the Colquitt/Miller County Fire Department, related the one common comment provided by all three chiefs interviewed. “You can only work for one boss. I answer to the city manager and it works best that way. There’s no way to answer to both the city and county. If there is a problem that needs addressing, the city manager serves as the bridge with the county” (Craig, 2011). “The politics play a major part of the entire process,” added Chief Tulley.

All interviewed agreed the consolidations have made the most improvements in fire service delivery for their cities and counties and the citizens they serve.

DISCUSSION

Every aspect of society has to deal with the financial challenges facing us today. The fire service is facing the same challenges and must adapt in order to survive and move forward. Fire service cooperative service has been and will increasingly become an area all departments must consider in order to provide the service delivery needed by their communities.

For years the Sylvester Fire Department and Worth County Fire Rescue have provided services to the citizens of Sylvester and Worth County. Both departments have continued to improve services to the community and both provide an all-hazards approach. The departments work together when feasible in a cooperative effort on responses and training. Neither department has the staff and equipment to provide for hazardous materials response, and as such must request assistance from outside the county to mitigate these emergencies. Both organizations provide limited rescue functions.

The fire chief for the City of Sylvester serves as the Emergency Management Coordinator for the city. The fire chief for Worth County serves as the Emergency Management Director for the county. Both organizations are similar in administrative structure and organizational function. Both departments are combination departments utilizing paid career staff supported by volunteers. Sylvester currently enjoys an ISO rating of 4 while the County is a 5/8b within five miles of their two stations within and adjacent to Sylvester and a Class 10 in the remainder of the county with 12 stations providing service to these areas.

The Sylvester Fire Department and Worth County Fire Rescue have worked under a Mutual Aid agreement for the better part of the last two decades. In 2009, an Automatic Aid agreement was implemented. The Sylvester Fire Department would provide automatic response to structure fire calls within a five-mile distance to the city limits and Worth County Fire Rescue would provide automatic response to all structure fire calls within the city. This agreement was only in place for five months and was terminated at the direction of Worth County Fire Rescue due to unknown issues. Currently there is only a Mutual Aid agreement in place.

Both governing bodies have been hit hard by the current state of the economy. Worth County has an unemployment rate of 10.5 %. The City of Sylvester has managed to maintain budgetary levels while working on capital improvements to the fire department (Sylvester, 2011). Insurance premiums in the city have remained at their current levels due to the ISO rating. Worth County has reduced budgets to maintain services with fire rescue taking reductions in funding (Commissioners, 2011). Insurance premiums in the unincorporated areas have drastically increased due to an increase in the ISO rating.

Information obtained through the review of literature, personal interviews and review of the supplied intergovernmental agreements suggest there are benefits which may be realized from a consolidation of the City of Sylvester Fire Department and Worth County Fire Rescue. The first goal of the research was to determine which types of cooperative service are most common. The word consolidation is but one aspect of cooperative service. The term cooperative service more appropriately identifies the working relationship between departments.

Indeed the thought of consolidating or merging the fire departments you've called "your departments" for years can cause tremendous anxiety. Cooperative Service spells fear for many fire departments and elected officials, fear of the future, fear of losing identity and fear of losing control. It's a break from tradition in an industry where the only welcome form of progression is generally in the apparatus and equipment" (Snook J. a., 1997)

There must be steps in this cooperative service. Mutual Aid seems to begin the cooperative process for most all departments. This allows for departments to request assistance as needed but allows for delays in getting needed equipment to scenes and can cause overlap in services. Providing Automatic Aid reduces these delays in time but do serve as a long term solution. Varying forms of partial consolidation must be considered as they relate to the needs of the departments involved. Common needs in training, inspections, investigations, education, and maintenance may facilitate the need for these partial arrangements. They are often determined by contract and are based on specific areas. Full consolidation itself allows for all areas of

both departments to be combined. The governing bodies remain separate but the departments combine all areas to form a new, unified department. The last process is that of a full merger. The departments involved are merged into one and legally established under a new department for service provision. The type of cooperative service must be determined by those involved as well as those affected. The research seemed to indicate the cooperative efforts almost act as a form of progressive steps which may build upon one another.

The strengths to be realized from a cooperative service are best derived from the type of cooperative service which has been decided upon. Once a cooperative service has been identified, a list of the strengths to be realized can be more readily identified. Consolidation may be an option which allows for increased staffing, improved response to emergencies, reduction in equipment needs, enhanced service delivery of specialized programs and overall cost benefit for the community. Reductions in budgets and insurance ratings must also be considered. Whichever form of cooperative service that is utilized, the strengths of that cooperative effort must be immediately recognized and supported or the need for them was not truly a need.

Pitfalls in the cooperative service vary and are dependent on the departments involved but one thing is for sure, they do exist. The mere thought of consolidation provokes fears and almost immediately is viewed as a "bad thing" to those involved. This may be largely in part to the negative history associated with the consolidation of other departments. While we often hear the horror stories of other failures, we seldom hear the success stories. The research has identified common pitfalls which will challenge all of the cooperative services, but which are more destructive to the efforts of consolidation and merger. Failure to plan, failure to educate, and failure to involve those involved in the process seem to be the most common. Rumor control must be a top priority as the vast amount of literature addressed it in one form or another. Planning in and of itself seems to be the key to avoiding pitfalls.

Lochard and Olsen (Lochard & Olsen, 2006) identified 14 "Watch-Out" situations which may be pitfalls of the cooperative process and as such must be prepared for and a plan developed to deal with these issues.

Departments considering a cooperative service should prepare their own “Watch-Out “ list based on the potential pitfalls with respect to their plan for a cooperative service.

As for processes to consider in possible consolidation of the City of Sylvester Fire Department and Worth County Fire Rescue, there are many to consider but two which have proven to be successful models across the country. They make use of best practices combined with past experiences to provide a successful roadmap to the process. They are similar in content but vary based on the approach. The process documented in Fire Department Consolidation, Why & How To Do It Right by VFIS (VFIS, 1994) is that of a more formal process which starts with feasibility and directly addresses the use of advisory groups. These advisory groups are formed by stakeholders in the process and are used to develop needs, goals and criteria as well as alternative approaches. These areas are then formulated into an action plan which is implemented and evaluated.

In Making the Pieces Fit by Snook, Johnson and Wagner (Snook J. a., 1997) the process starts on a less formal aspect and begins with the chiefs of two organizations who view the cooperative process as viable options for improvement in service delivery. They educate and inform themselves on cooperative processes as well as all areas of the other’s department. After this review is complete, they determine the feasibility of the process as well as seek out input from the primary governing bodies for their departments. A strategic plan is developed, along with an intergovernmental agreement which outlines the basis for the consolidation. Upon the approval of this agreement, task forces are established to prepare for implementing the strategic plan. The plan is implemented and evaluated for effect as well as needed changes.

Departments must determine the type of cooperative service which best allows for optimum fire service delivery. It should be based on the needs of the community and areas served. The basis must be viable for both departments as this determines the strengths that the cooperative service will have. There are pitfalls to be encountered but they can be minimized and even eliminated with planning and effort. Once the type has

been identified through the strengths it provides and the pitfalls planned for, the process of providing these cooperative services can be decided upon and put in to place.

The responses to the interviews supported the findings of the research with a special direction of the need for planning and intergovernmental agreements which define the process. All subject matter experts identified the common need to ensure the cooperative process fits the community and works within the needs of fire service delivery. Stakeholder support and involvement were discussed as major factors in the development of the process. There was consensus on the need to work under one governing body for the consolidated department.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The citizens of Sylvester expect the Sylvester Fire Department to identify and respond to the needs of the citizens of Sylvester while keeping them safe from all hazards (Sylvester Fire Department Operations Guide, 2010). This is identified in our mission statement and guides our motto “Keeping Sylvester Safe!” The department has been tasked with determining the areas that must be considered for fire department consolidation.

The research clearly demonstrates the areas to be considered. The research also clearly identifies that in order for the types of cooperative processes to be identified they must be examined by those involved. Only then can the potential strengths be realized and potential pitfalls identified. The Sylvester Fire Department and Worth County Fire Rescue should follow the steps which follow as they move forward in considering a fire service consolidation.

- Get started - a review of both departments to include educating the other about the services offered will only strengthen the cooperative process. This review should culminate with a side-by-side comparison of common areas as well as an expanded list of services which the departments individually provide. Information should be gathered about the inventory of the departments and a review of physical needs completed.

- Determine feasibility – after reviewing all information available, the feasibility of the cooperative process should be determined. There should be a determination made as to the type of cooperative service which best benefits the community. The benefits of consolidation should be examined and a decision made with the best interest of the provision of fire services to the community as the key factor.
- Develop an agreement – an intergovernmental agreement should be developed and adopted by both governing bodies. This agreement should outline the types of services to be provided, the lead department in the process and the financial aspects of the process.
- Establish advisory groups – once a agreement is in place there should be an advisory group formed to do the following:
 - Determine the needs of the process
 - Develop the goals of process
 - Establish the criteria for the process
 - Develop and analyze alternative options
- Formulate the plan – a strategic plan should be developed to guide the process. This should include all areas of the department. This plan will serve as the roadmap for the process of consolidation.
- Implement the plan- once a strategic plan is formulated and reviewed, the plan must be implemented. This implementation phase is the most crucial part of the process. The plan must be followed and all personnel involved must be kept informed and educated. Rumor control is a must. Making the plan available to everyone is a key. Changes to the plan should be communicated as soon as possible.
- Evaluate the plan – at the same time as the plan is being implemented there should begin an evaluation of the plan. Each step in the plan should be evaluated to ensure the identified alternatives are not needed. Evaluation must continue after the process is complete and will turn into a regular component. The evaluation process should be identified in the intergovernmental agreement.

It is recommended the City of Sylvester and Worth County explore the benefits to be derived from possible consolidation. The research should be utilized to identify the process to be used as well as the strengths that may be gained. Potential pitfalls should be identified as well as a plan developed to deal with them. A set plan for consolidation should be developed, communicated, and followed.

References

Works Cited

- Bridges, D. (2011, September 6). City Manager, City of Sylvester. (J. L. Yarbrough, Interviewer)
- Coleman, M. (2011, October 26). Fire Chief, Tifton/Tift County Fire Department. (J. L. Yarbrough, Interviewer)
- Coleman, R. J. (2008, December 1). Time to Give a Clean Start to a Dirty Word. CA, USA.
- Commerce, W. C. (2006). *Worth County*. Sylvester.
- Commissioners, W. C. (2011, June). Worth County Fire Rescue Budget. Sylvester, GA, USA.
- Craig, T. (2011, December 20). Fire Chief, Colquitt/Miller County Fire Department. (J. L. Yarbrough, Interviewer)
- Georgia Emergency Management Agency. (2010). *Georgia Emergency Operations Plan*. Atlanta: GEMA .
- ICMA Institute. (1988). *Managing Fire Services*. ICMA.
- Ling, J. (2001). *Fire Department Consolidation, A View From Those Affected*. Van Buren TWP: Ling.
- Lochard, S., & Olsen, D. C. (2006, May 1). Uneasy Alliance. *Fire Chief Magazine* .
- McGrath Consulting Group. (2011). *Consolidation Studies*. Retrieved December 2, 2011, from McGrathconsulting group.com: <http://www.mcgrathconsulting.com/municipal-consulting/fire-ems-police/consolidation-studies.shtml>
- Romero, J. L. (2011). *Quotes About Change*. Retrieved December 12, 2011, from Leadership Skills: <http://www.skills2lead.com/quotes-about-change.html>
- Snook, A. J. (2000, February 1). Consolidations a la carte. USA.
- Snook, A.J. (1997). *Making the Pieces Fit*. West Linn, Oregon: Jones and Bartlett.
- Sylvester Fire Department Operations Guide. (2010, June 1). Sylvester, GA, USA: City of Sylvester.
- Sylvester, City of (2011, June). Sylvester Fire Department Budget. Sylvester, GA, USA: City of Sylvester.
- VFIS. (1994). *Fire Department Consolidation - Why & How To Do It Right*. VFIS.
- Wasdin, C. (2011, October 6). Fire Chief, Hazlehurst/Jeff Davis County Fire Rescue. (J. L. Yarbrough, Interviewer)
- Webster. (2011, December 7). Retrieved December 7, 2011, from Webster-Miriam Dictionary website: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/consolidation>

Appendix A

Interview Questions

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What is your experience with a city-county fire department consolidation?
2. What factors contribute to success of your department's consolidation?
3. What do you feel are the strengths of a cooperative fire department?
4. What are pitfalls which may challenge a cooperative fire department?
5. What are the processes to consider in a possible consolidation?
6. What lessons learned can you share about your department's consolidation?
7. What do you feel are the future threats to consolidation in your department?
8. How did the members of the governing body, the community and your department respond to consolidation?