



Robert E. Antonacci II, CPA  
Comptroller

COUNTY OF ONONDAGA

Office of the  
*County Comptroller*

John H. Mulroy Civic Center, 14th Floor  
421 Montgomery Street  
Syracuse, New York 13202-2998  
(315) 435-2130 • Fax (315) 435-2250  
[www.ongov.net](http://www.ongov.net)

James V. Maturo  
Deputy Comptroller/Accounting

Thomas R. Schepp II  
Deputy Comptroller/Audit

1) How many County-funded fire departments are there?

*Answer – There are no “County-funded” fire departments. Fire departments are primarily funded via property tax dollars at the town and village level. From time to time, individual fire departments may secure grants for specific purchases of equipment. However, the day to day operations of fire departments are not funded via County government.*

2) Will a centralized fire district be devised to protect the whole of Onondaga County?

*Our review of the Consensus draft report does not reveal the specific structure of any recommended consolidation of fire services.*

*The “Initial Steps” of the draft report recommend individual fire districts coordinate purchasing, shared training and response preparation, lobby for the expanded presence of residential sprinklers in new one- and two-family homes, and centralize specialized response teams (pp 30-31 of draft report). While this office is not sure what lobbying for residential home sprinklers has to do with consolidation, many of the other recommendations are already in place to one degree or another.*

*The intermediate option of the draft report calls for the creation of an authority (ironically a new layer of government between the taxpayers and the fire departments) to coordinate fire services to take over the administration functions of the individual fire districts (pp. 31-32 of draft report). This would be done with a goal of consolidating and reducing the number of fire districts.*

*The long-range option of the draft report includes the creation of a metropolitan fire department covering the densely developed areas immediately surrounding the City of Syracuse, while remaining areas would be allowed to opt-in as circumstances change (p. 32 of draft report).*

3) How many County-funded ambulance & rescue companies are there?

*Answer – There are no “County-funded” ambulance or rescue companies. Some areas have contracted with companies to provide ambulance services such as Rural-Metro in the City of Syracuse. Other areas have volunteer non-profit organizations like WAVES or NAVAC provide ambulance services. Others still have ambulance services provided through their fire districts.*

4) Will a centralized ambulance district be created for the whole of Onondaga County?

*Answer – A review of the Consensus draft report shows opposition for a single County-wide ambulance district due to financial considerations. Yet, the preferred model offered recommends the creation of a County-wide entity to set a standard for ambulance service, and contract for ambulance services by quadrants throughout the County (p. 34 of draft report).*

5) Would County Charter be heavily modified?

*Answer – As there is no specific proposal, this question is difficult to answer at this time. In order to incorporate the recommendations of the draft report, it is hard to imagine a scenario where the Charter would not have to be amended. Most recommendations include removing a power from one government entity and giving it to another government entity. If the County is to accept any of these new powers, more likely than not a Charter amendment would be required to the County could accept those new powers.*

6) How would Inland Port proposal affect fire protection?

*Answer – This office has seen no proposals concerning the Inland Port and fire protection. A good place to see how such an operation impacts fire protection would be to look at the airport or the current CSX rail yards. The airport has followed a model of maintaining its own emergency services. CSX regularly trains with the East Syracuse and Minoa fire departments to prepare for emergencies.*

7) How would the finances of a Metropolitan government work? Would suburban tax dollars subsidize the current City deficits?

*Answer – As there is no specific proposal, this question is difficult to answer at this time.*