

**DEPARTMENT OF STATE**  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**TOWN OF WATERFORD – PUBLIC SAFETY (POLICE SERVICES)**

Community Profiles

Saratoga County is situated in the southern part of the North Country region of New York State. The county and the Town of Waterford are both of average size and have average fiscal metrics, as measured by revenues obtained from federal and state aid.

<b>2005</b>	<b>Saratoga County</b>	<b>NYS County Average<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Town of Waterford</b>	<b>NYS Town Average</b>
<b>Population</b>	200,635	192,424	8,515	9,326
<b>Revenue from State and Federal Aid</b>	25.1%	26.1%	10.4%	14.2%

<sup>1</sup> Excludes New York City

Background

Financial data showed that total costs for the town’s police department were increasing yearly. Annual employee benefit costs (e.g., pensions and health insurance) accounted for most of the increase, but changes in government accounting standards for retirement benefits drove a portion of the increase. Because the tax base in the Town of Waterford was essentially static, the anticipated annual increases meant that property taxes would have to increase. The Town’s police services contract was ending and it was an appropriate time to consider the issue of contracting outside the town for police services.

The proposal was to transfer policing responsibilities from the Town of Waterford Police Department to the Saratoga County Sheriff. The Saratoga County Sheriff’s Office would assume all responsibility for delivering police services to the Town of Waterford, including 911 dispatching. The Town Board would provide oversight of the services and negotiate the parameters of a new contract after a three-year period. Contracting with the Sheriff’s Office was expected to lead to a 25% reduction in the Town portion of the household tax bill while providing the same scope and quality of services. This could be accomplished by reducing overtime payments and assuming increasing liability costs as a result of the economy of scale of the county-level operation.

Outcome

Officials in the Town of Waterford initiated a public forum in December, 2004, leading to referendum, to consider a proposal to eliminate the Waterford Police Department and contract with the Saratoga County Sheriff’s Office for police services. In April 2005, voters rejected the proposal in the ensuing binding referendum for a number of identifiable, but non-measurable reasons. These included comfort and satisfaction with the existing police department and skepticism that the projected cost savings would actually occur.