

Fast-growing township arms itself with studies for future

Ann Arbor News, The (MI) (Published as Ann Arbor News (MI)) - July 3, 2004

- Author/Byline: JOHN MULCAHY
- Page: A3
- Readability: >12 grade level (Lexile: 1410)

Scio Township has spent about \$340,00 on studies since 2000

News Staff Reporter

Scio Township, which grew 30 percent from 1990 to 2000, is examining its public services and charting its future with numerous plans and studies.

Since 2000, the township has spent about \$340,000 on studies of its police services, utilities systems, water and sewer rates, financial systems, job descriptions and pay rates.

Most recently, the Board of Trustees approved spending \$9,800 on a study by Plante & Moran of how best to provide police services.

Besides looking at policing needs, the study will look at whether the township should consider having its own police force, join with some other communities to form a police force, or contract with some agency other than the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Department, Supervisor Spaulding Clark said.

The "natural growth progression," of the township has made it advisable to let outside experts help the township take a look at itself, Clark said.

Evelyn David, member information director of the Michigan Township Association, said the association keeps no data on how much townships spend on studies. However, unless they have elected officials or staff members who are able to deal with the kind of issues that typically studied, it's probably advisable to seek outside expertise.

"I think probably more and more, the way the townships are growing, they are looking to consultants to do that leg work for them," David said.

Scio Township grew from 11,077 people in 1990 to 15,759 people in 2000.

The township currently pays \$86,068 a year per deputy for seven deputies from the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Department. The price is expected to go up to \$91,216 per deputy next year and \$121,892 per deputy by 2010, Clark said.

Last fall, the Sheriff's Department recommended the township contract for eight deputies, but the board settled on seven, he said.

"It really raised the question of how many deputies do we need," Clark said.

The township has also recently started a study of its water and sewer rates, in part as a response to hikes this spring in Ann Arbor's water rates, Clark said. The township gets its water from Ann Arbor, which instituted a system of increasing rates for greater use of water.

The \$20,000 study, by Stauder Barch & Associates, is expected to be done this fall.

The township has generally passed along water rate increases from Ann Arbor to township residents, but did not do so this spring, preferring to wait for the results of the study, Clark said. He doesn't expect water rates to go up much, if at all, though there may be a new "balance" between water and sewer rates, or perhaps a change in the minimum water rate, he said.

"I'm not today looking for any big change," he said.

Along with the water rate study, the township completed a \$73,000 master plan for its water system in 2002 and is doing a \$97,500 master plan for its sewer system. The results of a recently-completed \$108,000 infiltration study to see how much ground water is getting into the township's sewer pipes, will be presented this month, Clark said. The sewer master plan will be done in August, he said.

The water and sewer master plans and infiltration study were done by Orchard, Hiltz & McCliment Inc. of Livonia, the township's engineering firm.

The board likely will adopt the water and sewer master plans and consider any rate changes this fall, Clark said.

Water system upgrades recommended in the master plan include a second connection to Ann Arbor, upgrading water pipes and

connecting the water mains in a loop, Clark said. He expects that work to cost about \$10 million, for which the township will have to issue revenue bonds.

The township is now also looking for a finance director, the result of a study of the township's financial operations, including job descriptions, pay rates and performance review recommendations, by Plante & Moran for \$6,000. Clark said he thinks a financial director is necessary due to the growing complexity of the township's financial operations. The new director, who will be paid \$50,000-\$70,000 a year, will oversee all financial affairs for the township, including those assigned statutorily to the clerk and treasurer.

Plante & Moran is now developing job descriptions, suggested pay ranges and performance review standards for the other administrative positions in the township. Those studies are costing \$23,000-\$26,000 and the results are expected to be presented this month, Clark said.

Trustee Charles Ream said that despite their costs, the studies help the township spend it's money wisely.

"I don't think that our expenditures on studies have been wasted," Ream said. "I think it's important to get information."

John Mulcahy can be reached at jmulcahy@annarbornews.com or at (734) 994-6858.

• *Record: 0415011117*

• *Copyright: Copyright, 2004, The Ann Arbor News. All Rights Reserved.*