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INDIVIDUAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REPORT

*In Response to a Request for Technical Assistance*

*By the*

Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin, Police Department

August 30, 1973

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Prepared by:

Public Administration Service  
1313 East 60th Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60637

(Per Contract J-LEAA-015-72)

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I. PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

A. **Consultant Assigned:**

George T. Felkenes  
Professor of Criminal Justice  
University of Alabama  
Birmingham, Alabama

B. **Date Assignment Received:**

July 16, 1973

C. **Date of Contact with LEAA Regional Coordinator:**

July 19, 1973

D. **Dates of On-Site Consultation:**

July 31—August 3, 1973

E. **Individuals Contacted:**

Tom Forsythe, Sheriff  
Wood County

Allen L. Spencer, Chief  
Wisconsin Rapids Police Department

Lloyd DeTienne, Chief  
Marshfield Police Department

Edward Heiser, Sergeant  
Wisconsin Rapids Police Department

Cylon Miller, Chief  
Wisconsin Rapids Fire Department

Theodore Stewart, Chief  
Prince Edward Police Department

Reinhart Steege, Chief  
Nekoosa Police Department

Donald Penza, Mayor  
Wisconsin Rapids

Roy Elmhorst, City Engineer  
Wisconsin Rapids

Nickolas N. Ryshkoff—Karr, Consulting Engineer  
Candeub, Fleissig & Associates

**II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM****A. Problem as Per Request for Technical Assistance:**

Assistance in conducting a survey to ascertain the extent to which support services can be functionally consolidated among seven police agencies in the Wisconsin Rapids area.

**B. Problem Actually Observed:**

As stated.

**III. FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM**

See attached consultant's report.

**IV. DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION**

See attached consultant's report.

**V. RECOMMENDED COURSES OF ACTION**

See attached consultant's report.

CONSULTANT'S REPORT

## INTRODUCTION

The organization of police service in the United States is complicated by overlapping functions, duplication of activities, and fragmented jurisdictions. Only about 1,000 of approximately 40,000 police forces have more than 10 sworn personnel and only a handful of departments could be classified as large. With the great number of smaller agencies, coordination of police activity among the small departments tends to be informal and sporadic at best even for those agencies which are contiguous and overlapping.

Political boundaries do not stop the escape of criminals nor assist to any great extent in the performance of normal law enforcement functions. The political boundaries in effect hinder the operations of police but not the criminal who is completely free to travel from one community to another without regard to predefined, invisible lines.

The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice has noted that many departments resist change, fail to determine the shortcomings of existing practices and procedures through research and analysis, and are reluctant to experiment with alternate methods of solving problems. In only a few of the largest police agencies have there been changes and innovations to face squarely the demands of fragmentation, duplication, and overlapping of police functions, tasks, and services.

The vast majority of local governments deem themselves capable of administering a complete law enforcement program within their respective jurisdictions regardless of size, financial resources, or proximity to other police agencies. The question now confronting the small community is can it afford to have an all-purpose, small police force side by side with or in close proximity to other similar police forces. In actuality the all-purpose, small force never really existed and will probably not exist in the future.

Interagency cooperation is absolutely essential in today's governmental environment. Such cooperation can only be achieved successfully by formal means and not by the traditional method of informal agreements to render service in specified crisis situations. In short, a fundamental change in the traditional police organization is necessary by eliminating duplication of traditional police functions and activities while still retaining the local identity and control. The worst features of overlapping jurisdictions and fragmentation of services must be subject to interagency control. It is just too expensive in terms of money and manpower to build and maintain separate facilities and have separate communications, records, training, purchasing, maintenance facilities, jails, and dispatch operations. Cooperative staff and auxiliary services will assist in solving this problem.

### **The Nature of the Technical Assistance**

The Chief of Police, Allen Spencer, of the Wisconsin Rapids Police Department, initiated a request to determine the feasibility of developing some kind of mechanism between the various police departments in Wood County and the Wood County Sheriff's Department to cooperate in development of a countywide consolidation of selected police functions. It was also suggested that the Wisconsin Rapids Police Department (WRPD) and the Wood County Sheriff's Department (WCSD) share a common police facility.

### Basic Assumptions

The consultant in his analysis of the cooperation and consolidation of the problem made the following assumptions:

1. It is desirable (and in Wisconsin Rapids mandatory) that the maximum practical amount of local control of police services be preserved without a sacrifice of reasonable quality and quantity of service.
2. It is desirable to consolidate and cooperate in providing those police functions that are required for the proper performance of police duties and which are common to most law enforcement agencies.
3. The consolidation of selected activities can occur without a comprehensive reorganization within the agency or the governmental unit (city or county).

Local government will of necessity lose some freedom of individual action when it formally shares services with other governments. This is true in sharing facilities, consolidating records, combining dispatching, and so on. This apparent disadvantage can be more than offset by the result of improving the quality and level of performance of police services. Although economy is a significant factor in consolidation of services, it is a less important consideration than improving the overall quality of service. Also to be borne in mind is the idea that economy is not to be viewed as a prime factor in such an endeavor.

Generalizations made by the consultant in this analysis do not apply with equal force to all functions in all municipal or county law enforcement agencies. In Wood County some of the seven law enforcement agencies are isolated and, as a result, do not have the same needs as those in the two major population centers. For example, the law enforcement function in Port Edwards (two full-time officers), Pittsville (one constable), and Nekoosa (six officers) is largely made up of traffic regulation rather than criminal enforcement, which is more likely to be found in the larger communities, Wisconsin Rapids (41 officers), Marshfield (38 officers), and the Wood County Sheriff's Department (28 deputies).

However, all of these agencies have functions that may be profitably consolidated because small jurisdictions cannot afford to act independently in all police matters. Coordinated or consolidated police activities involve more than several agencies working together in a common venture. As the basis for coordination, there must be a goal of improving the level of police service in the individual jurisdictions and in the collective area.

## AREAS OF COOPERATION AND CONSOLIDATION

Several supportive police activities usually referred to as staff services can be performed on a countywide basis. Among the services that seem best suited for cooperative ventures are recruitment, selection, and training.

### Recruitment and Selection

The police service demands of individual officers a high degree of intelligence, skill in a large number of police areas, complete honesty and impartiality, and above all, possession of sound judgment. An error by a single officer in any of these requirements reflects on the entire law enforcement community. It is through sound police officer recruitment and selection methods that the probability of selecting the wrong individuals for police work is minimized.

Too often the small police department is not in a position to provide complete personnel services. By countywide cooperation, all departments can develop a central coordinated and consolidated recruitment effort. A joint recruitment effort conducted by several jurisdictions would materially assist in satisfying the demand for qualified personnel. Also, *all* agencies and, most important, the total area would reap the benefits of a joint program.

It is possible for several jurisdictions to coordinate and conduct a more extensive and wide-ranging recruiting program by merging available fiscal and other resources which may in themselves be inadequate. More sophisticated advertising and such recruitment techniques as sending recruiting teams to other jurisdictions will increase the number of potential applicants. While it is recognized that some municipalities have officer residence requirements (Wisconsin Rapids and Marshfield in particular), city ordinances should be revised to permit selection from and residence outside of a particular municipality. The sole requirement for residence should be rapid availability (10 to 15 minutes from the headquarters).

A countywide selection test would permit greater flexibility in test development by providing a more standardized format. Group interviews and a central background investigation unit would eliminate the often excessive amounts of time spent by several agencies in these highly technical areas.

It is recognized that there may be a lack of agreement among cooperating agencies on a basic set of minimum standards or qualifications for police officers. However, the police functions which need to be performed throughout Wood County appeared to the consultant to be almost identical; for the new officer, traffic control and basic patrol would be the primary functions.

Less emphasis should be placed on physical characteristics and more on education, general intelligence, and background. The change in focus from physical to mental abilities will eliminate some differences in recruitment standards which now exist among various departments.

## Training

Training is absolutely crucial if a law enforcement agency is to perform its tasks in a professional manner. There is at present a minimum of training conducted by the various agencies in Wood County primarily because of the smallness of the departments and the few qualified instructors in any one agency. There is no minimum police training qualification in Wisconsin and no in-service guidelines. Fortunately the plan is to have a minimum standards law in the State shortly. As is the normal situation in smaller departments, there is little or no training other than on-the-job training which certainly does not prepare one adequately for police work.

In Wood County there is a unique opportunity in that all of the police agencies contacted agreed to the feasibility of having training conducted on a centralized basis within the County. Various in-service training programs can be developed by a central training office and then offered to the various agencies. The areas of expertise now lacking in one agency but found in another can be available to all—a highly desirable situation.

By consolidating the training function, opportunities for supervisory and command officer training can be increased. A well-trained police officer cannot be used effectively if his supervisors do not possess good management skills to complement police skills. Centralized training can give substantial attention to supervisory and management training. It is too often that police officers in command positions are promoted policemen with no more than recruit training and at best an occasional special course.

In short, a centralized training effort will reap dividends for Wood County in all areas from recruit to management to in-service to on-the-job training.

## Records and Communications

Criminal records and communications systems provide the means by which a police agency can learn quickly and efficiently about crimes, can store and retrieve information about persons and crimes, can deploy personnel, and can take other operational and administrative actions. A consolidated records and communications system would be a significant benefit both from financial and manpower perspectives for the small police department.

In Wood County, within seven miles of Wisconsin Rapids, are the following police departments:

Wood County Sheriff (located in Wisconsin Rapids)  
Wisconsin Rapids Police Department  
Port Edwards Police Department  
Nekoosa Police Department  
Grand Rapids Police Department

The Marshfield Police Department is approximately 35 miles from Wisconsin Rapids at the opposite end of the County. The Pittsville Police Department is about 15 miles from Wisconsin Rapids on the road to Marshfield. Each agency operates its own records and communications system. Certainly the five agencies mentioned above in close

proximity to Wisconsin Rapids could be tied into a countywide communications center. Such a step can improve the speed in answering citizen requests for service and in taking appropriate action. Using integrated and centralized communications facilities, personnel can be dispatched in a more orderly way; and the limited number of radio frequencies can be allocated more effectively without costly duplication of facilities and manpower. In only the Wood County Sheriff's Department and the Wisconsin Rapids Police Department four of the eight dispatchers can be freed to perform other duties. It is realized that political realities may prevent consolidation of communications, but there is no reason why it should not work out in the Wisconsin Rapids area.

Another reason for consolidation in the Wisconsin Rapids area is to permit the immediate access to the NCIC terminal now found in the Sheriff's Department. It is one of the two found in the County. Marshfield has the other.

Records systems suffer from the same fragmentation and duplication as the communications systems. More seriously, the problems found in most police records systems hamper successful police activity even more than fragmented communications systems. This happens very frequently because it is the records system which provides the police agency with an up-to-date accounting of past and present activities in an expedient, efficient manner. The sparse, antiquated filing systems found in most small police agencies do not begin to meet this criteria of fast, useful, accurate information. The establishment of a countywide records system and a countywide communications center is fundamental to effective and coordinated police operations.

If certain basic police information is collected on a countywide basis according to common standards and forms and then integrated into a countywide records center, several advantages will result. Detailed crime analyses and traffic studies may be made which might, for example, indicate more effective patrol deployment in high crime areas. The current requirement in Wisconsin Rapids, under the cooperative police officer program, that there must be an equal number of officers on the street during all shifts is especially questionable primarily because crimes do not occur uniformly during a day. A thorough study of police calls-for-service, kinds, arrests made, incidents, etc., by area of the City may reveal that there is really no need to have a specified number of officers on a particular shift because little police work is needed during that time period.

Secondly, inquiring jurisdictions need check only one source rather than several. This alone will eliminate duplication of effort and physical facilities. A countywide records system and a communications component should provide three kinds of information: (1) operational information for field personnel about wanted persons, stolen and recovered property, suspect identification, outstanding warrants, and stolen and wanted vehicles; (2) statistical information for compiling annual or periodic reports to various local, state, and national agencies as well as the general public; (3) administrative information useful in crime analysis and planning, such as the time and location of incidents, work load measurements, clearance statistics, and like information.

In the consultant's conversations with the Wood County Sheriff and the Wisconsin Rapids Chief of Police, there appeared to be a sincere desire to have a totally integrated records-communications complex housed in a single facility and completely

available to each. However, in the other areas within Wood County, there was expressed a reluctance on the part of the police chiefs to develop a central communications facility primarily because of political considerations in the towns and a fear that the distances are too great for effective communications and dispatching. The latter point is subject to dispute because within the Wisconsin Rapids areas, the farthest city, Nekoosa, is only seven miles away. By having 24-hour centralized dispatching and communications services, the entire area will be able to increase its police capability and to use in other ways the personnel relieved of dispatching duties in each agency. The City of Marshfield does pose a problem because of its distance from Wisconsin Rapids (some 35 miles) and a reluctance on the part of the Chief and City Council to give up some of its autonomy.

All of the chiefs, with the exception of the Sheriff and the Wisconsin Rapids Chief of Police, were negative toward developing a central records office for the County, although all would like to have a centralized master name index for immediate access to all police units. For this service, a consolidated communications function is imperative. Because by far the largest number of police records are found in the Sheriff's Office and in the Wisconsin Rapids Police Department, it is suggested that the latter department be given the responsibility of immediately developing a countywide master name index and of beginning to develop plans for implementing a countywide central records and communications capability. The negotiations between the Sheriff and the Wisconsin Rapids Chief of Police should include a division of responsibility for the two functions. In the conversations that the consultant had with appropriate individuals, it was tentatively indicated that the WRPD would develop the records system, and the Sheriff's Office, the communications system for the area. Each of these departments must make every effort to convince the other county municipalities of more efficient and effective police communications and records possible under a consolidated system.

In order to develop the system, the involved agencies may wish to observe the Police Information Network (PIN) of Alameda County, California; the system in the St. Louis County Police Department; or the joint efforts of the Las Vegas Police Department and the Clark County Sheriff's Office, Nevada.

### Computerization

In its efforts to provide better countywide police services, the various agencies, mainly Wisconsin Rapids and the Wood County governing body, should pursue the possibility of computerizing *all* county and municipal records. It would not be economically feasible to lease or purchase computer time for the police records function alone; but if gas, water, and other bills were computerized, along with assessor's notices and police and court records, it might be economically practical for the entire County to lease, time share, or purchase computer hardware. The opportunities are great for the County and Wisconsin Rapids to enter into such an agreement because Wisconsin Rapids is currently planning a new city hall center. Rather than build and then plan to implement an automated county—municipality(s) system, negotiations should now be in progress in anticipation of securing financial support for construction of a computer facility in the city—government complex.

### City—County Facility

The cooperation between the Wood County Sheriff and the Wisconsin Rapids Chief of Police is very good. Each has agreed to the need for consolidation of certain functions while still retaining the identity of the individual agency. Both have agreed and have political support for the construction of a shared police facility revolving around a central records and communications complex. This facility would also house consolidated training and identification rooms.

Because Wisconsin Rapids is now planning a new city complex (a site selection team has been hired), strong consideration should be given to constructing a separate police building to house only law enforcement functions. The peculiar needs of law enforcement—continual training, firearms qualifications, laboratory space, complex communications and records, security, and vast amounts of parking—all dictate that a separate building is highly desirable if not absolutely necessary. In the consultant's interviews with the Sheriff, he indicated that he foresaw no serious problem to securing a county contribution for construction of the centralized facility because there is so little space in the current county complex; the area now occupied by the Sheriff is needed for the county welfare office. In any event, the conditions are favorable for construction of a joint facility. Planning should begin at once in order to economize on planning costs and allow plenty of time to develop workable law enforcement cooperation.

### Identification Services

Besides photographic and fingerprint classification capabilities, there is little need for a highly sophisticated identification function in Wood County. There is logic in having a separate I.D. capability in Marshfield because of the distance involved; however, in the Wood County—Wisconsin Rapids area, a centralized I.D. capability is desirable. Rather than having two photographic laboratories, two fingerprint rooms, two fingerprint files, or two breathalyzers, a consolidated function would be more economical, furnish better police services, and quite likely reduce the manpower now devoted to these activities in several independent agencies.

A consolidated function will also permit the Wood County area to have the services of a highly trained evidence and I.D. technician who can devote his time to becoming an expert in I.D. tasks. For example, there is no one capable of fingerprint classification in the Wisconsin Rapids area. Through consolidation a single person who has the bulk of his effort directed toward identification could be trained to perform these services areawide. It is too expensive for any one department to have such a capability under the present, noncooperative arrangements.

In short, at present there are a duplication of facilities and a clearly inadequate I.D. capability in the Wisconsin Rapids area. This situation can and should be altered.

### Centralized Purchasing

The volume of equipment purchasing in a police agency is large. The use of centralized purchasing has several advantages. First, lower prices may be obtained through

volume buying; and second, the quality of the products purchased may be improved by reductions on mass purchases which allows a better product to be acquired for approximately the same cost as one or two of a product of poorer quality purchased by a single agency. Also, volume purchases permit the development of higher purchasing specifications because of the number of items bought.

Cooperative purchasing of common items should be conducted for all agencies in Wood County to realize the full benefits of volume buying. The arguments advanced for centralized purchasing within one government have equal validity when applied to more than one government.

#### **General Observations**

These comments refer to the Wisconsin Rapids Police Department. There appears to be a serious deficiency in manpower deployment in the Police Department. There has been no attempt to identify high crime areas in the City nor areas with high calls-for-service. The Chief, even if he did have adequate manpower deployment information, would be prevented from using the men in a most effective manner because political leaders have mandated that a specific number of officers must be on a particular shift at all times. This is a poor practice. Also, the use of platoons is subject to serious question.

There is a question whether the records system is operating effectively because of the numerous forms and apparent excessive number of required reports. Also, too many official departmental records are maintained outside of central records. The issuance of over 10,000 bicycle licenses by the Police Department should be evaluated as to whether this function is a police responsibility.

Fire Department dispatching is done to some extent by the Wisconsin Rapids Police Department. Whether this is effectively accomplished at present is questionable and should be studied in depth. Training in the Department is performed on a haphazard basis. The platoon system could be modified to free departmental personnel from duties in order to attend training sessions as a group. In any event, training needs to be evaluated with an effort toward improvement.

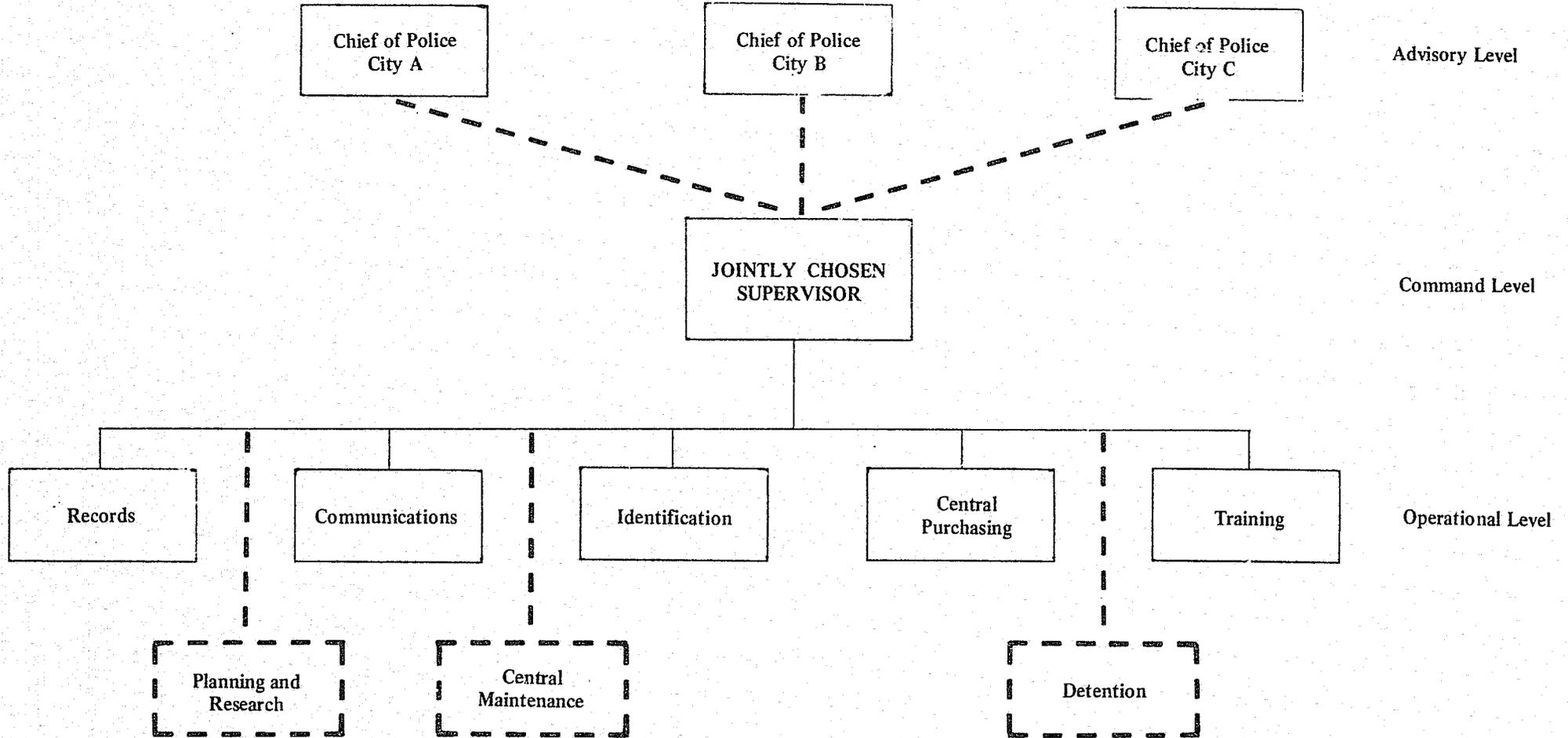
The rank structure and salary inequities that exist in the Department are causing a morale problem. There appear to be inequities in the present departmental organization pattern.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Wisconsin Rapids Chief of Police, in cooperation with the Mayor, should request a complete organization and management survey of the Department.
2. For the previously discussed reasons, a common police facility to be shared equally by the Wood County Sheriff's Department and the Wisconsin Rapids Police Department is desirable; and negotiations should be started immediately regarding location, size, occupancy requirements, shared financial obligations, and similar matters.
3. While still retaining their individual agency identities, the Wood County Sheriff's Department and the Wisconsin Rapids Police Department should begin plans for consolidating:
  - a. Communications.
  - b. Records.
  - c. Training.
  - d. Identification services.
  - e. Centralized purchasing.
4. Every effort should be made to include Prince Edward, Grand Rapids, Nekoosa, Pittsville, and Marshfield in the integrated police network mentioned in item 3 above.
5. The chiefs and political leaders of those governmental units with police agencies should meet and establish guidelines for the provision of consolidated police services for those functions discussed above and any others which the agencies may desire.
6. One of the major difficulties to be overcome concerns who is to supervise the consolidated activities. There is a legitimate interest by each participating (even nonparticipating) agency. It is recognized that some give and take will occur, but an organizational structure similar to that depicted in Chart I will provide for a workable, cooperative relationship and will provide a starting point for discussions regarding the structure.

Chart I

PROPOSED ORGANIZATION FOR  
CONSOLIDATED COUNTY POLICE SERVICES  
WISCONSIN RAPIDS, WISCONSIN,  
POLICE DEPARTMENT



**END**

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