

DEMAREST POLICE DEPARTMENT
Discussions with Bergen County Regarding Possible Merger
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
April 26, 2012

During preliminary discussions with the County, Demarest has presented the required law and public safety services the County must provide for Demarest to consider any police merger with the Bergen County Police Department. The answers provided below as to those services are based on the initial responses by Bergen County officials. The preliminary discussions with the County have resulted in a verbal commitment to provide Demarest and all of the residents with essentially the same public safety services Demarest has indicated it must have. These services, and costs for such services, would be set forth in a formal contract which must be agreed to by all parties in the event a formal agreement was reached **by and between the Demarest Mayor and Council (M&C), the Bergen County Executive and the Bergen County Board of Chosen Freeholders.**

This FAQ will be updated as additional information is gathered.

Q. Why is Demarest looking at merging the police force with another?

A. For many years Demarest has been exploring and discussing sharing/and consolidating services for different municipal services, including police. These investigations have been going on (in fits and starts) with several towns and the County of Bergen. The reasons governing bodies for several years have been exploring shared and consolidated services include potential efficiencies, improved services and monetary savings for the benefit of Demarest taxpayers. With constant changes in laws which effect police operations, it has become more and more challenging to meet the demands in policing Demarest. The M&C and Chief of police have recognized the need to be proactive in their efforts in ensuring public safety for today and in the future.

Q. Are there other shared services relationships Demarest has entered into?

A. Yes. Such shared service arrangements in place currently include: Gas fueling with Cresskill, Bergen County Health Department for Sanitarian and Health Officer, Police, Fire and Emergency Dispatch Services with Bergen County, welfare services provided by Bergen County, shared recycling coordinator with the Borough of Alpine, shared tree pruning contract with the Borough of Dumont, formal and informal sharing for Department of Public Works services with other towns, snow plowing contract with Bergen County for Bergen County roads.

Q. Would Demarest see a change in the level of service?

A. The Governing Body has decided that any discussion for the potential consolidation of Police services would not be pursued unless the potential partner could commit to maintain and where possible improve the existing level of services. Since January 2011, any discussion with neighboring communities and, most recently, the County have made that threshold requirement known during those discussions. Our Chief of Police shares in this belief and has made that his primary focus during ALL discussions.

Q. Would any Demarest Police Officers lose their jobs?

A. The County has committed that all current Demarest Police officers would be employed by the County Police Department and assigned to patrol Demarest. With any merger, if

there are efficiencies to be gained (i.e., less officers needed) this would be accomplished through attrition.

Q. Are the Demarest Police Officers in favor of a merger with the County?

A. The Demarest Police Chief, Deputy Chief and the Demarest PBA are in favor of the merger. In terms of each and every member of the PBA, it is not known if every officer is in favor of the merger.

Q. Would current Demarest officers remain in Demarest?

A. The County Police Department has committed that all current Demarest Police officers would be assigned to Demarest and, wherever practical and feasible, current Demarest officers would continue to be assigned to Demarest. However, just like all current Demarest police officers have the right to seek positions in different municipalities, once employed by the County Police, they would have the right to request the opportunity to work in different departments. In addition, when Demarest Officers are on vacation, or out sick, etc. County Police officers and other current Demarest officers would be utilized to fill in. “New” officers would be trained over time by the Demarest Police Chief who would be assigned as the “Officer in Charge” of the Demarest Substation or Precinct to the County Police Department. Over time and through natural attrition, Demarest residents would begin to occasionally see “new” faces as other County Police officers are trained in policing Demarest, similar to when Demarest hires a new officer.

Q. Will Demarest continue to have a School Resource Officer?

A. Yes. Demarest will have a School Resource Officer as long as the schools require one.

Q. Will Demarest continue to have Special Police Officers?

A. Yes. Demarest will continue to have Special Police Officers. These Specials will continue to assist with the current duties they have been assigned – traffic control, town events, police desk (in Demarest), patrols, etc.

Q. Will Demarest continue to have all of its crossing guards?

A. Yes. The County Police Department has committed that Demarest will continue to have all of its current crossing guard posts. Any change in posts could only be made through advice and consent of the Demarest Governing Body with input from the schools. All of the current Crossing Guard Posts would continue to be checked daily and police officers would fill in any vacant post.

Q. Will our Schools still have the D.A.R.E. program for the grammar school?

A. Yes. The County Police Department has committed that Demarest will continue to have the D.A.R.E. program. Any change will be made in consultation by the Demarest M&C with the school.

Q. What will happen to the Demarest Police Station?

A. The County has committed to make the Demarest Police Station at Borough Hall the County Police Substation or Precinct for this area of Bergen County. Moreover, the County has agreed that all Incident Reports (Accident and other), and permits (Handicap, gun, etc.) will continue to be available in Demarest. Discussions involved a fee to be paid to Demarest for the use of the police station.

Q. Where would officers report to?

A. Officers would report to Demarest as they do now and the current Chief would be assigned to the Demarest station.

Q. Where is the County police station?

A. The County police station is in Hackensack but they will be moving to Paramus, not far from the Oradell border, later this year.

Q. Would police services still be provided to schools and the Borough for Special Events?

A. Yes. The County has committed that as part of its commitment to “community policing” all of the current services will be provided to the Schools and the Borough.

Q. How will the level of service be monitored?

A. Our Chief of Police is developing criteria that would be established and the results would be reported to the Demarest Governing Body on a monthly basis. Those criteria will include, at a minimum, response times and handling of complaints from Borough residents.

Q. What will happen with the existing mutual aid agreements Demarest has with other towns?

A. The County has committed that all mutual aid agreements will continue to be honored by the County Police Department.

Q. Will patrol cars that are assigned to Demarest continue to have the state of the art equipment the Demarest police vehicles have right now?

A. Yes. All of the vehicles will have the same equipment including defibrillators, mobile data terminals and DVR's.

Q. Would the Officer in Charge of Demarest be available for meetings in Demarest?

A. Yes. The County has committed that our current Chief of Police (and in the future the Officer in Charge - or his designee) will continue to attend Demarest Governing Body meetings and be available for other meetings as is the current practice.

Q. Will the police respond to ambulance and fire calls?

A. Yes. The same response will be provided.

Q. Will there still be a court in Demarest?

A. Bergen County representatives are amenable to continue having a court in Demarest.

Q. What would happen to all of the Demarest police equipment (cars, radios, guns, etc.)?

A. All equipment would be acquired by the Bergen County Police Department.

Q. Will additional meetings of the Demarest Governing Body be held for the public to discuss the possible merger?

A. Yes.

Q. When would a decision be made by the Demarest Governing Body regarding a merger with the County?

A. A timeframe has not been determined. Additional answers need to be provided by the County. Discussions will be on-going with the County and so long as the County does not change its position on services to be provided to Demarest.

Q. What is the cost and savings to Demarest with a merger?

A. A cost proposal is being developed by Bergen County and must be analyzed before any preliminary savings to Demarest can be quantified.

Q. Is there a minimum amount of savings that the Demarest Governing Body may require to go forward?

A. While savings are important during these difficult economic times, the savings will only be considered once the Governing Body are satisfied that the services would be the same or greater for the Demarest citizens.

Q. Besides possible cost savings while staffing and community policing requirements stay the same, what are some of the benefits to Demarest of merging?

A. Officers will get additional training, additional forces will be available when required, overtime costs will be reduced, greater diversity of officers available to the community (e.g. Korean and female officers), and maintenance and purchase of equipment will no longer be the responsibility of Demarest.

Q. Will additional M&C meetings be held for the public?

A. Yes. (See above)

Q. If the merger occurs, what if the services do not meet the standards, set in the contract, by the M&C or by the residents?

A. During the discussions with County representatives, it was agreed by both parties that should services fall short of what is required by Demarest, any potential agreement must have a provision that “makes Demarest whole” by correcting the deficiencies or, in a worst case scenario, providing a transitional period for Demarest to reconstitute its municipal police force. Issues regarding timing, hiring of police officers, purchasing all equipment, costs involved with same, etc. will continue to be considered and discussed.