

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
TOWN OF SHELBY – PUBLIC SAFETY (JUSTICE COURTS)

Community Profiles

The Towns of Shelby and Ridgeway are located in Orleans County in the Western region of New York State. The Towns are somewhat smaller in size than average, but display typical fiscal metrics in terms of the proportion of revenues obtained from federal and state aid.

2005	Town of Shelby	Town of Ridgeway	NYS Town Average
Population	5,420	6,886	9,326
Revenue from State and Federal Aid	12.7%	15.8%	14.2%

Background

The Town of Ridgeway and Town of Shelby have a history of cooperation and sharing services, particularly in their respective highway departments. The two towns also share high cost equipment items so each town doesn't need to own a piece of equipment that might get used infrequently. Both the Town of Shelby and the Town of Ridgeway operated two town justice courts employing two justices each and two court clerks each, for a total of eight (8) employees. If consolidated, the total number would be reduced to half or two judges and two clerks. The town boards viewed this consolidation as an opportunity to save tax dollars and that a court merger could lead the way to other shared services opportunities.

Both the Town of Shelby and Town of Ridgeway approved a resolution to establish one justice court for the two towns. A resolution went to public referendum and was approved by a majority of the voters in each of the Towns. The initial arguments presented in favor of the proposal were all related to the cost savings, estimated at \$20,000 per annum between the two Towns. One courtroom would be maintained in the Town of Shelby meaning the Town of Ridgeway Court citizens would have to travel to Shelby, which is one mile distant.

Outcome

The Towns of Ridgeway and Shelby established one justice court with two justices and two court clerks, one representing each Town. The consolidation was done without raising justice's salaries to accommodate increased workloads and there were no collective bargaining issues in that justices are elected officials. Their Court Clerks are not represented by a union. The Town of Shelby did raise their Justice's salary to be on par with the Town of Ridgeway Justice's salary. The Town of Ridgeway gained the most in savings as a result of the merger; however, it should be noted that the one remaining judge in Shelby received a salary increase to bring that salary in line with the Town of Ridgeway's Justice. Ridgeway exceeded their projected savings and Shelby fell short of projections, but nonetheless did realize a savings.