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Cicero's deputy supervisor suggests police merger

By **Catie O'Toole / The Post-Standard**

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Cicero, NY - Cicero's deputy supervisor shocked the town's police chief tonight when she recommended letting residents vote this November on whether to fold their police department into the Onondaga County sheriff's force.

Deputy Supervisor Jessica Zambrano said numerous residents brought up the issue as a way to save money when she and fellow Democrats, Supervisor Judy Boyke and Councilor Lynn Jennings were campaigning last year.

"There's a good chance police consolidation with the sheriff's office could go on the ballot in November," Zambrano said.

"I have personally not made up my mind whether I'm for or against police consolidation, but I think we owe it to the residents of this town to look at that issue," Zambrano said. "I really want to fulfill that campaign promise and look at it."

Cicero Police Chief Joseph Snell said town officials had not discussed the issue with him before tonight's board meeting.

"I'm disappointed," he said, adding that he is against the idea of consolidating.

"I think the town of **Cicero Police Department** is probably the most fiscally conservative police department in Onondaga County," Snell said. "We provide an excellent service."

Snell said his officers know what's going on in the town and know the problems by providing community policing.

"We provide a very personal level of service that the sheriff won't provide," Snell said. "We're a very community focused department. And I believe the community will support us."

Cicero police has 14 full-time officers, including the police chief; and 10 part-time officers who are paid hourly and do not receive overtime, Snell said. They have three or four patrol cars on the road at any given time, the chief said.

"What happens with the sheriff's office coming in is if you contract two cars per shift, that's what you're going to get -- two cars per shift," Snell said. "It's a contract. At the end of the contract term you have to negotiate another contract. You lose control. You're paying a fixed fee over the next several years."

Snell told board members tonight that even if the police department consolidates, the town would still have to pay for patrol cars and equipment that need to be replaced.

By the end of this year, Cicero expects to have two police cars with more than 125,000 miles. By the end of 2011, Snell said five more police cars are expected to have more than 125,000 miles.

Both Cicero police and the county sheriff's office replace vehicles after they reach 125,000 miles, Snell said.

Cicero police currently have nine marked patrol cars, three unmarked cars and a van. Snell said the van was purchased new in 2008 using a state grant.

At tonight's meeting, the Cicero town board gave Snell permission to seek bids to buy two new patrol cars. Zambrano was the



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Cicero Town Deputy Supervisor Jessica Zambrano

only board member to vote no.

Both Zambrano and Boyke said the town must look at ways to consolidate services. Boyke said it's important the town finds ways to save money, especially with a tough budget year ahead.

Committees will be formed to review the issue of consolidation, she said. Anyone interested in serving on an advisory committee can call the supervisor's office at 699-1414.

"Whether we have an advisory group or put it on the ballot in November, I think it's up to the residents in the town to decide (whether the police department consolidates)," Zambrano said. "My concern is the residents in the town. This was the issue that was brought up more often than anything else."

The Clay Police Department consolidated with the sheriff's office in 2008, a move that saved taxpayers \$1 million.

Snell said he does not think consolidating the Cicero Police Department will save taxpayers money.

"If there is any cost savings it would be very insignificant, but I guess we'll have to wait and see what the town board chooses as far as police protection for the community," Snell said. "Public safety is important to us and the safety of these residents is important to us. I hope for the sake of the town board, it's the same for them."

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