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Institute of Government
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA**

Analysis of Potential for Consolidation: Claxton, Bellville, Daisy, Hagan, and Evans County

Final Report

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Introduction

The governments of Evans County and the cities of Bellville, Claxton, Daisy, and Hagan engaged the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government in May 2017 to assess the feasibility of governmental consolidation. Over the past several months, the leadership and staffs of the county and cities have worked closely with the Institute of Government research team to provide financial, political, and operational information about their governments. Through interviews, a review of financial documents, and case studies, the researchers examined the opportunities and challenges associated with consolidation in Evans County, Georgia. This report analyzes the feasibility of full consolidation as well as options for functional consolidation of fire protection and law enforcement, the two functions with the greatest opportunities for increased efficiency and cost savings.

For all the participating governments, there are examples of collaboration within and between the cities and the county. Evans County and the cities of Bellville, Daisy, Claxton, and Hagan have successfully increased service efficiency and effectiveness by combining functions such as recreation and economic development. City and county staff wear many hats, performing roles related to their job descriptions as well as those required for day-to-day operations. To the extent possible, this report presents examples of cooperation and creative pairings of staff roles in existing and previous functionally consolidated services and shows how they relate to the challenges and opportunities of future consolidation.

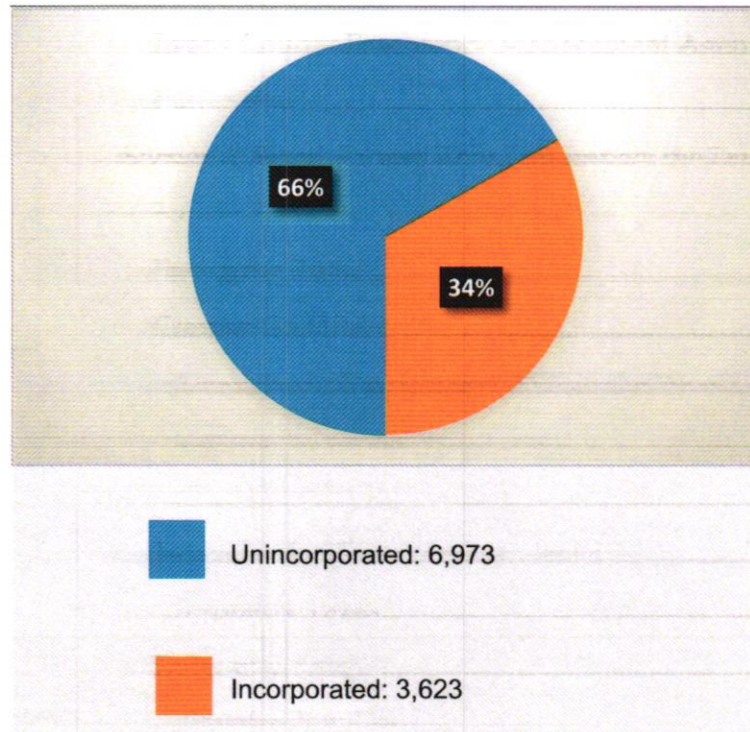
The first section of this report reviews the economic and demographic characteristics of the study area. The second section summarizes the various government services currently provided in Evans County. The third section discusses opportunities and challenges to full consolidation. The fourth section has a narrower focus, discussing opportunities and barriers for functional consolidation of fire and law enforcement. While the report does not offer specific recommendations for or against consolidation, it provides a roadmap for understanding ways in which full or functional consolidation of governments in Evans County might be achieved.

Section 1: Demographic and Socioeconomic Summary of Evans County

As the table and figure below indicate, a little over one-third of Evans County's population lives in the four cities, while the remaining two-thirds live in the unincorporated area. This trend appears to have remained fairly stable over the past three decades.

Population, 2010

Jurisdiction	2010 Population	Percent of Total County
Evans County Unincorporated	6,973	65.8%
Total Incorporated	3,623	34.2%
Evans County	10,596	100.0%



Racial diversity in Evans County is comparable to the rest of the state. According to the 2015 five-year American Community Survey (ACS), across all of Evans County, 58 percent of the residents are white and 30 percent are African American. The City of Claxton has a larger minority population, with 49 percent of the residents identifying as white and 40 percent as African American. The population across Evans County is slightly older than that of the state as a whole.

According to the Georgia Department of Labor, goods-producing sectors in Evans County, including agriculture, construction, and manufacturing, are vital to the local economy, providing almost half of all jobs in the county. Service sectors, including retail, education, and health care, are also important, comprising approximately 35 percent of jobs. Government makes up a smaller portion of employment, about 15 percent. The unemployment rate in Evans County in May 2017 was 4.4 percent, slightly lower than the state rate of 4.9 percent. The

unemployment rate in Evans County has historically been lower than that of surrounding counties including Tattnall and Bulloch. The median household income in Evans County is \$37,865, according to the 2015 five-year ACS.

Section 2: Overview of Various Services

Evans County and its cities have a history of collaboration. The Appendix contains a table based on the 2014 Service Delivery Strategy Agreement outlining how the governments of Evans County arrange for the provision of services. This section provides an overview of select functionally consolidated services in Evans County. Functional consolidation does not require changing the basic governance structure that people are accustomed to. Rather, a functionally consolidated service allows the two governments to retain their unique identities, and both entities contribute funds to the service.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF CLAXTON AND EVANS COUNTY

Economic development activities are conducted by the Economic Development Authority of Claxton and Evans County (EDA) and the local chamber of commerce. The EDA is a joint authority that was created in 1971 and is a good example of cooperation, including jointly appointed members and coordinated economic development activities countywide. The EDA does not receive operational revenues from any government entity in Evans County; however, both the City of Claxton and Evans County contribute in-kind support. The EDA earns revenues from land sales in an industrial park located in the unincorporated part of the county, along US 280 between Hagan and Bellville. The county also gives a portion of revenue generated from a special-purpose local-option sales tax (SPLOST) to the authority for capital expenditures. The county and the EDA entered into an agreement concerning how SPLOST funds were to be spent. Both the City of Claxton and the county contribute to the chamber of commerce from their general funds.

EVANS COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

A long-standing example of collaboration, the Evans County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) was created in 1957 from the formerly known civil defense departments for the City of Claxton and Evans County. The Evans County EMA is authorized by state law to take actions necessary to provide for the health and safety of residents during periods of emergency or disaster in Evans County.¹ Hagan, Bellville, and Daisy do not fund the EMA.

The EMA director is a county employee who has historically worked out of city offices and, per the 1998 Service Delivery Strategy, is funded by the county and the City of Claxton. According to the agreement, Evans County and Claxton contribute equally to the agency from their

¹ Georgia Emergency Management Act of 1981, amended December 1992.

general funds, but Claxton is allowed to subtract in-kind funds for housing, utilities, and building maintenance. However, recent conversations have centered on how the county can assume full responsibility for covering the EMA director's salary and appoint a current qualified county employee as director, potentially saving money on benefits. Possible scenarios for emergency management being overseen by existing public safety personnel are discussed in Section 4 under public safety.

PUBLIC WORKS

The public works function in Evans County is a model of successful collaboration, from shared equipment to shared personnel. Public works functions are performed by the Evans County Roads Department and the Claxton Public Works Department. The two departments have historically assisted one another with road maintenance. The Claxton Public Works Department patches potholes, makes utility cuts, and mows rights-of-way in the city, but contracts out paving. The Evans County Roads Department is responsible for road maintenance in the unincorporated area. In addition, it performs road improvements, traffic street signage production and installation, and mowing of rights-of-way in the other cities. Daisy, Hagan, and Bellville put in requests for certain segments during contracted road paving projects overseen by the county and are included in Evans County's bid process.

Section 3: Fiscal Factors That Can Impact the Decision to Consolidate

In a full governmental consolidation, the newly created unified government's financial condition is essentially the combination of the finances of the governments that have been merged. This section describes the possible fiscal factors that can impact the decision to consolidate.

Upon consolidation, all assets and liabilities are combined and transferred to the new unified government. Below is a brief overview of the fiscal status of Evans County and the cities within the county. Because these governments provide different services, their financial conditions are not perfectly comparable. For example, Evans County's budget includes all the constitutional officers who serve the entire county, and the City of Claxton's budget includes two large utilities (natural gas and water services).

Using data from the UGA Tax and Expenditure Data Center and the governments' budgets and consolidated annual financial reports (CAFRs), the analysis includes both cross-sectional (annual) and trend data to show changes over time. The following analysis is not meant to be a definitive statement on the financial condition of any of the Evans County communities but simply provides some insights into questions that public officials and the public may want to consider when evaluating the feasibility of consolidation.

BUDGET FORMAT

Evans County and the cities use traditional, line-item budget formats for their annual operating budgets. This type of budget is relatively easy to understand and increases fiscal accountability. The governments also have the same fiscal year (July 1st through June 30th), which would make a transition to a consolidated government easier. However, the governments use different financial management software systems. Transitioning the governments to all use the same system or developing a new financial system could be an expensive one-time cost.

ENTERPRISE FUNDS

Adhering to Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) accounting standards, Evans County, the City of Claxton, and the City of Hagan use governmental and enterprise funds for financial management. Enterprise funds reflect finances of government services that are expected to pay their own way or those that are “run like a business” (e.g., water, natural gas). Customers pay the full cost of the benefit they receive through user charges and fees under enterprise funds. These services are accounted for separately from general government services like fire and police for which individual benefit and cost cannot be closely matched.

Evans County has an enterprise fund for its solid waste system. In addition, the county maintains a number of separate funds for emergency medical services, judicial related activities (e.g., Jail fund, Drug Abuse Treatment Fund, Law Library Fund, etc.), recreation, E-911, and hotel/motel tax revenue. These funds allow for individual activity cost accounting but do not necessarily act like an enterprise fund in that they do not involve a business-like operation and are not necessarily designed to be fully financed by the fund revenue.

Claxton has several enterprise funds for its utilities including natural gas, solid waste, and water and wastewater. Evans County does not have a separate fund for unincorporated services because nearly all the services funded from the general fund are countywide. The City of Hagan has a water and sewer enterprise fund.

CLAXTON GAS UTILITY

The City of Claxton is a “gas city” that provides natural gas to customers both inside and outside the city limits. The presence of municipal utilities can be a challenge to full city-county consolidation. Gas utilities require both personnel to operate the system and periodic capital investment in equipment and facilities. Georgia law allows the city to either subsidize the operation of the utility with tax revenues or to place proceeds from the gas service into the general fund in any given fiscal year. A variety of other mechanisms can be used to fund the utility, including the following:

- Revenue bonds, which are repaid from the proceeds of the gas service
- Loans from various other governmental entities
- Direct funding from different tax sources

Additionally, gas rates both inside and outside the city can be different owing to a variety of factors. All of this contributes to the complexity of determining how to treat the assets and liabilities of this ongoing operation.

Operate as a Department Within the New Consolidated Government

Customers of the gas service contribute at different levels to the investments the government makes in its infrastructure. In some years, city tax payers may have also done so. By assigning this service to the newly consolidated city-county government, any revenue produced by the gas utility would serve a broader countywide population. Based on available data, the Claxton gas utility appears to currently be debt free, but it is hard to predict when and if debt-financed funding will be needed to enhance infrastructure in the future. The governments may decide that the potential benefits of a consolidated government absorbing this service outweigh the risks, particularly if it is deemed equitable by a majority of citizens and stakeholders (voters, ratepayers, holders of any debt, stewards of the service, etc.).

In the event that concerns arise about how the service will be managed going forward, however, two other options may be viable: operating as an enterprise fund or creating an authority. Details about these options are presented below.

Operate as an Enterprise Fund

First, a consolidated government inheriting the gas service from the city could treat the gas utility purely as an enterprise fund from the date of consolidation going forward. Revenues from the gas utility would only go back into funding the gas service and would not be used to lower taxes in the consolidated government. Conversely, this would mean that shortfalls in the revenue of the gas system would result in higher rates that could not be mitigated by tax revenue.

Create an Authority

A second option would be to create a local government gas authority that serves the area concerned. The authority would operate as a separate local government entity from the consolidated government. However, the consolidated governing authority could be allowed to make appointments to the governing board of the authority. The authority would focus solely on the operation of the gas utility, and funds generated by the service would have to be reinvested in the service. One possible downside to the authority option is that it would not have the power to back any financial arrangements with the taxing power of a city or consolidated government, potentially rendering it unable to obtain interest rates or loan amounts as favorable as a full-service local government.

REVENUES FOR GOVERNMENTAL ACTIVITIES

The local governments in Evans County rely on a variety of revenue sources. This variety helps stabilize their tax bases and limit sharp fluctuations. For Claxton, the largest revenue sources

are the charges from utilities, property taxes, and sales taxes. The charges for utilities are spent to run those utilities. The county relies primarily on property taxes and sales taxes to run governmental operations.

The City of Bellville's primary revenue source is its SPLOST because it does not levy a real property tax. Consequently, it only receives revenues from the motor vehicle property tax. While the City of Hagan does levy a real property tax, the revenue from sales and use taxes is nevertheless by far the city's largest revenue source. Like Bellville, the City of Daisy does not levy a real property tax, and like Hagan, sales and use taxes account for the vast majority of its revenues. However, like Claxton, Daisy does collect revenue for its water utility operation.

Property Taxes

Property taxes, although one of the least popular taxes, are a critical source of revenue for local governments. Property taxes also have the benefit of being very stable from year to year for two reasons: Assessed values typically do not rapidly change, and collection rates are very high. Millage rates are the tax rate on the assessed value of real and personal property. Property tax revenues are calculated by multiplying the millage rate by the assessed value of the property. If property values increase and millage rates stay the same, then tax revenue increases, and vice versa.

The table below lists the millage rates for the five governments in Evans County over the last five years plus for the year 2009 as a historical reference. The varying millage rates indicate differences in responsibilities and access to revenue sources across the five governments. The millage rates for all of the local governments in the county have remained fairly stable, with the rates for both Evans County and Claxton showing a slight increase over the time period.

Millage Rates 2009–2016

Year	Evans County Unincorporated/ Incorporated	City of Claxton	City of Bellville	City of Daisy	City of Hagan
2016	9.065/11.563	8.060	0.00	0.00	2.390
2015	9.764/12.024	8.060	0.00	0.00	2.390
2014	8.330/10.440	8.090	0.00	0.00	2.390
2013	8.440/10.330	8.000	0.00	0.00	2.390
2012	8.490/10.300	8.000	0.00	0.00	2.390
...					
2009	8.350/10.460	8.000	0.00	0.00	2.350

Source: Consolidated Tax Digest, Georgia Department of Revenue

The millage rate for the incorporated area of Evans County is higher than that of the unincorporated portion due to an insurance premium rollback. The rollback to the unincorporated taxpayers is based on the insurance premium tax the county receives each year from the state. In the unincorporated area, the rollback in 2016 was 2.498, while there was no rollback in the incorporated area.

Full governmental consolidation tends to be more politically acceptable when the jurisdictions to be unified are more alike than they are different in terms of their fiscal capabilities. In this regard, that average amount of assessed value in the jurisdiction on a per capita basis can be an indicator of the relative fiscal capacity of the jurisdictions. The following table presents assessed values and property taxes levied in the various jurisdictions in the county and the values/amounts per capita.

Based on the data, the amount of assessed property value per capita is fairly similar among the jurisdictions with the exception of Bellville, where the property values per capita are substantially higher than the average for the other jurisdictions. The taxes per capita in the various jurisdictions can differ substantially based both on the different service obligations of the governments and the amount of commercial or industrial property, which will tend to increase the amount of taxes paid per capita.

Assessed Values and Property Taxes, FY 2015

	Assessed Value	Millage	Tax	Tax Per Capita	Assessed Value Per Capita	Percent of Total Assessed Value
Hagan	\$18,067,471	2.39	\$43,181	\$43.97	\$18,399	8%
Daisy	\$2,901,003	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$20,146	1%
Claxton	\$41,154,443	8.06	\$331,705	\$140.32	\$17,409	18%
Bellville	\$4,739,396	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$38,532	2%
County Incorporated	\$65,570,838	11.563	\$758,196	\$302.31	\$26,145	29%
County Unincorporated	\$159,333,644	9.065	\$1,444,359	\$172.15	\$18,991	71%
Total	\$224,904,482					

Source: Consolidated Tax Digest, Georgia Department of Revenue

DEBTS AND ASSETS

Outstanding Debt

Institute of Government faculty searched data from the Local Government Finance Survey held by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for fiscal year (FY) 2015 for any outstanding debts of various types (i.e., revenue bond debt, long-term debt, and lease purchase). Based on

this search, only two of the governments—Hagan and Claxton—appear to have outstanding debt.² The amounts and types are shown in the following table.

City of Hagan Debt, FY 2015

RB -\$ outstanding @ end FY – Water/sewer	\$1,534,933.28
LTD-\$ outstanding @ end FY – Law Enforcement	\$1,746.00
LTD-\$ outstanding @ end FY – Public Buildings	\$43,305.00
LTD-\$ outstanding @ end FY – Highways, streets, drainage	\$75,000.00
LP-\$ outstanding @ end FY – Fire Protection	\$157,123.00
Total	\$1,812,107.28

City of Claxton Debt, FY 2015

LTD-\$ outstanding @ end FY - Water/sewer	\$358,341.00
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Notes: RB=revenue bond; LTD = long-term debt; LP = lease purchase.

In addition to bonded indebtedness, local governments may also have other liabilities related to obligations under state or US law. One such liability is the cleanup, closure, and postclosure costs for a sanitary landfill (p. 16, 2015 CAFR). In this respect, Evans County reports a long-term liability of more than \$500,000. However, because the landfill serves the entire county and its cost will be borne by the Landfill Enterprise Fund, this liability would not be impacted by governmental consolidation.

None of the local governments in Evans County are burdened by general obligation debt. This is significant because general obligation debt must be backed by the government's pledge to raise property taxes by an amount sufficient to cover the debt as the need arises. Such an obligation would tend to put off citizens who might otherwise be in favor of governmental consolidation, particularly citizens who might believe they would be obliged to pay for debts that they had not voted for. In addition to the absence of general obligation debt, the debt that does exist is primarily related to utilities and would be paid for by charges for utility services. Consequently, only customers of the utility will be asked to pay the debt.

² In 2010, Hagan put in a new sewer system using revenue bonds, and the city previously operated its own fire department until 2014, when it consolidated with Evans County.

Assets

The burden of debts is relative to available assets. Based on the same 2015 DCA Local Government Finance Survey data, the Institute research team identified the amount of assets (e.g., cash, securities, etc.) that the various local governments in the county have available for their use. These are outlined in the following table.

Assets, 2015

Bellville	\$178,794.00
Claxton	\$3,953,681.00
Daisy	\$115,882.00
Evans	\$6,920,489.19
Hagan	\$373,345.75

Debt-to-Asset Ratio

Generally speaking, the governments in Evans County are in a strong fiscal position with regard to their debt-to-asset ratios. This is particularly true for the governments without any debt, but it is also true for the City of Claxton, which has assets that are substantially greater than its existing debt.

FRANCHISE FEES

Some revenue sources are unique to municipal corporations in Georgia. Franchise fees are the primary source of revenue that can only be collected by municipal corporations (with the exception of cable franchise fees, which can be collected by county governments as well as city governments). Currently, the cities in Evans County collect approximately \$250,000 annually in franchise fees.

Franchise Fees Collected, FY 2015

City	Amount
Claxton	\$194,729.00
Daisy	\$6,805.00
Bellville	\$7,648.00
Hagan	\$42,776.00
Total	\$251,958.00

Source: Department of Community Affairs, Local Government Finance Survey

Were the cities in Evans County to consolidate with the county government, the resulting unified government would be eligible to act as a municipal corporation for the purpose of collecting revenue. Franchise fees are essentially rental compensation by a private utility company for use of a city's public rights-of-way. Franchise fees can be collected from gas, electric, cable, and telephone utilities. Franchise fees are paid as a percentage of retail sales by the utilities. The percentage rate for the fee is negotiated but is typically limited by state law.

Estimating franchise fees for areas that do not currently collect these fees can be difficult as some utilities will not release information on sales in particular areas and some may not be able to parse these data at the level of geography that is needed for the purpose.

As a consequence, the Institute of Government research team developed a regression model that uses data available about the area of interest to estimate the likely franchise fee revenue. A regression model is a way to relate an input set of data to the factor (franchise fees) that one is trying to estimate. The input data are data on factors that might logically be related to the variable one is trying to estimate.

The regression model uses data on population and on different kinds of property values (e.g., residential, commercial, industrial, etc.). Logically, the more people there are in an area, the more utility services will be purchased, and the greater the amount of property there is in the area, the more the utility service will be used. The regression model uses statistical methods to estimate how impactful or predictive the inputs are on the output estimate. To build the model, the Institute researchers collected population and property value data as well as the franchise fees paid to 32 cities in Georgia. The data were only available as a total amount for franchise fees, and not broken down by type of fee. Based on the coefficients produced by this model and data on the population and property values in the unincorporated area of Evans County, Institute of Government faculty were able to estimate the total amount of franchise fees that one could expect to collect from the unincorporated area after consolidation.

Because the model estimate is for all franchise fees, including cable fees, which the county already collects in the unincorporated area, the Institute team had to adjust the basic estimate by the amount of cable franchise fees that the county collects (i.e., \$8,142).

In addition, the model estimate includes gas franchise fees. Normally, if the gas utility was a private corporation, the cities of Evans County and the county as a whole in a consolidated government would be able to collect gas franchise fees. However, because gas is currently provided by the City of Claxton, the total franchise fee estimate must be adjusted based on an estimate of what the gas franchise fee amount would be in the unincorporated area were the gas utility to pay such a fee.

To make this adjustment, the City of Claxton staff provided data that allowed the Institute research team to estimate gas sales to customers in the various service areas. This task was

complicated by the fact that the gas utility serves customers in Claxton, in other parts of Evans County, and in adjoining counties, Bryan and Tattnall. Moreover, customers are organized by routes rather than by strict jurisdictional service areas. Hence, the estimate of the proportion of sales in the unincorporated area is not exact.

Institute of Government faculty used the data provided by the City of Claxton to identify the extent of possible gas sales in the unincorporated area and then estimated potential franchise fees from these sales figures. This estimated gas franchise fee for the unincorporated area (i.e., \$42,554) was then subtracted from the total franchise fee estimate for the unincorporated area to arrive at a final estimate of the amount of additional revenue that a consolidated government in Evans County could collect from franchise fees. The table on the next page shows this calculation.

Calculation of Franchise Fee Estimate

Factors	Study Area
Assessed Value Residential Property	\$65,394,243
Assessed Value Commercial Property	\$16,325,982
Assessed Value Commercial & Residential	\$81,720,225
Assessed Value Industrial Property	\$28,292,489
Assessed Value Utility Property	\$0
Total Assessed Value	\$110,012,714
Population	7,285
Base Estimate of Additional Franchise Fees	\$452,713
Cable Franchise Fee	\$8,142
Estimated Gas Franchise Fee	\$42,554
Final Total Estimate of Additional Franchise Fees	\$402,017

TRANSITION COSTS

When two or more governments consider full consolidation, it is important that they also consider transition costs. Transition costs may vary depending on two factors: (1) what is promised by the new consolidated government charter and (2) the policy choices made by the new unified government. Transition costs and benefits could include the following:

- The cost of equalizing personnel fringe benefits to the higher benefit level
- The cost of equalizing personnel salaries to the higher salary level
- The cost and savings from the consolidation of specific departments or functions

- The savings from freeing up personnel currently engaged in intergovernmental coordination
- The cost of planning for and developing new policies and ordinances for the consolidated government
- The new revenue available because the consolidated government is able to collect franchise fees
- The loss of revenue due to only having one government that can collect financial institution taxes

Should Evans County and its cities seek to consolidate, additional steps such as interviews/conversations with departmental managers and IT staff, surveys and focus groups with departmental managers, and surveys of currently consolidated departments could be used to inform the transition costs calculation.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS TAX

Both cities and counties are permitted to levy a tax on depository financial institutions that have offices within their respective jurisdictions. Thus, a bank or other financial institution located in a city can be taxed by both the city and the county because it is located in both. However, upon full governmental consolidation, there would only be a single unified jurisdiction. As such, only one tax could be levied on financial institutions.

For FY 2016, Evans County collected \$27,675.75 from the financial institutions tax. In the same year, the City of Claxton collected \$25,573.25 and Hagan collected \$7,353.00. Because a unified city-county government would be able to continue to collect the financial institutions tax on all the institutions in the county, it would be able to collect the current county amount of this tax but not the city portion. Thus, full governmental consolidation would result in a reduction in total city-county revenue of approximately \$32,926.

SALARY AND BENEFIT EQUALIZATION

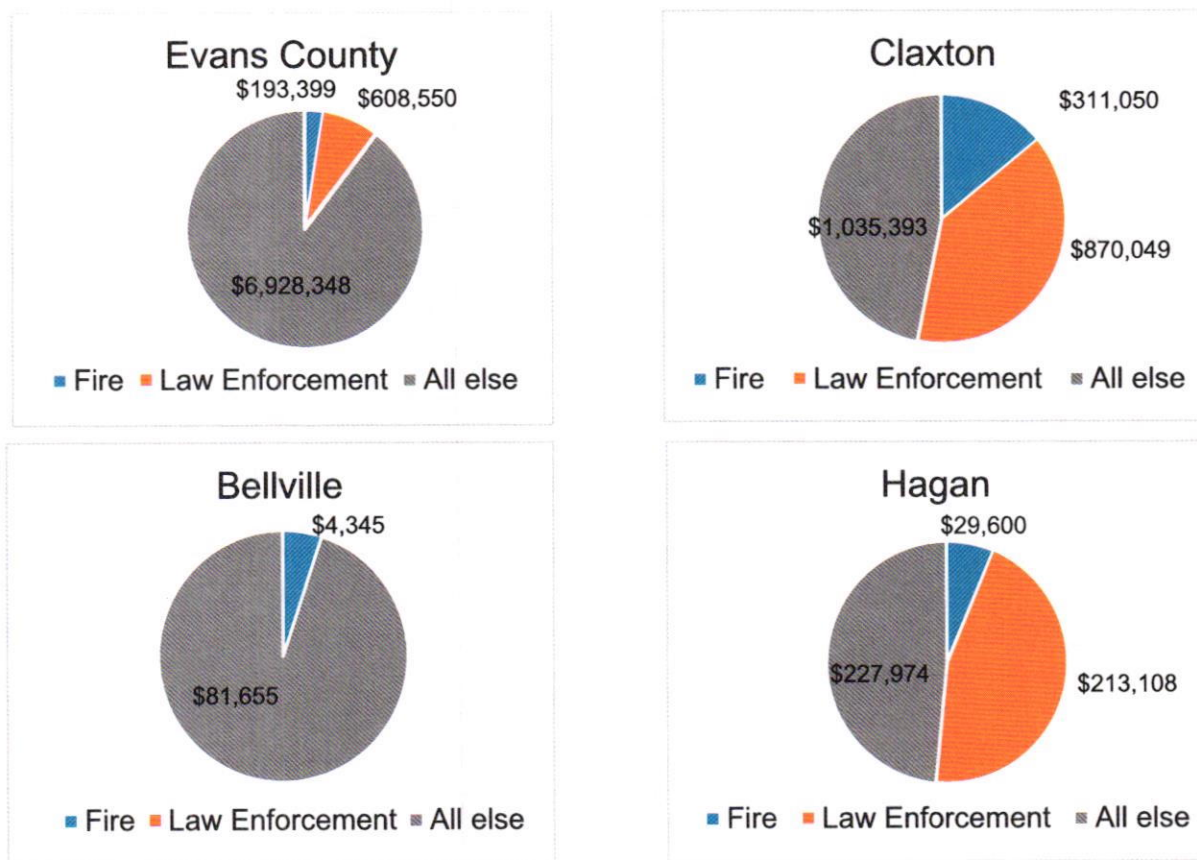
When governments consolidate, they typically need to equalize salaries and benefits so that the employees of the unified government are treated fairly and equitably. The equalization of salaries and benefits typically takes place over a couple to a few years. Although the unified government could choose to equalize to the lower level of salaries and benefits, this has never occurred in any consolidation studied by the Institute of Government. Instead, governments have chosen to equalize salaries upward to the level of maintained by the government paying the most generous salaries and benefits.

Section 4: Narrowing the Focus

This section focuses on the services that may present opportunities for functional consolidation based on discussions with government representatives and available data, namely fire protection and law enforcement. Additional considerations are discussed for alternative public safety delivery models and water and sewer.

The figures below show expenditures for public safety by the governments to illustrate the potential opportunity for cost savings in fire protection and law enforcement.³

Fire and Police Expenditures, Evans County FY 2015, Claxton FY 2016, Bellville FY 2017 and Hagan FY 2016



Daisy did not have data available for expenditures on public safety. Bellville does not have its own law enforcement entity but instead receives service from the County Sheriff.

³ Charts reflect figures from financial documents received from the governments, including actual expenditures for Evans County in FY 2015, Claxton in FY 2016, and Hagan in FY 2015 and budgeted expenditures for Bellville for FY 2017.

FIRE PROTECTION

Interviewees indicated that fire would be a feasible place to start with functional consolidation. The two departments in the county—the Evans County Fire Department and the Claxton Fire Department—are relatively uniform in how services are provided. Economies of scale and savings from improved coordination may result in potential benefits. Possible benefits could include an improved ISO score, better utilization of equipment, and a possible decrease in response times and service overlap.

Up until 2014, Claxton was the primary provider of fire protection service in Evans County. At the time, unincorporated Evans County, the City of Bellville and the City of Daisy contracted with the City of Claxton for service. Hagan also had a small fire department. Claxton's 2014 fire budget was \$300,673, \$125,000 of which came from Evans County. Hagan spent \$42,860 that year. Since deconsolidation in 2014, the Evans County Fire Department has provided fire protection services to the unincorporated portions of the county as well as to the cities of Daisy and Hagan. Claxton retained its own fire department, and Bellville contracts with Claxton for service. For FY 2018, Evans County has budgeted \$216,000 to operate its fire department.

While only two governments currently supply fire services in Evans County, all of the governments except for the City of Bellville report spending some funds on fire services. The following tables show the total and per capita expenditures over the last seven years.⁴

Evans County Fire Expenditures

Year	Expenditures	Per Capita
2010	\$85,144	\$12.21
2011	\$165,646	\$23.76
2012	\$125,000	\$17.93
2013	\$136,481	\$19.57
2014	\$317,443	\$45.52
2015	\$193,399	\$27.73
2016	\$197,100	\$28.27

⁴ Data for years prior to 2015 are operational expenditures as defined in the uniform chart of accounts established by the Department of Community Affairs and reported in the department's Local Government Finance Survey. Data for the subsequent years are drawn from budget documents provided by the governments. Claxton years 2015 and 2016 are characterized differently than DCA survey data (within Claxton budget 2015 is 2014).

Hagan Fire Expenditures

Year	Expenditures	Per Capita
2010	\$10,316	\$10.36
2011	\$12,112	\$12.33
2012	\$8,350	\$8.50
2013	\$17,179	\$17.49
2014	\$42,860	\$43.65
2015	\$26,094	\$26.57
2016	\$26,094	\$26.57

Daisy Fire Expenditures

Year	Expenditures	Per Capita
2010	\$1,228	\$9.52
2011	\$489	\$3.40
2012	\$430	\$2.98
2013	\$350	\$2.43
2014	\$474	\$3.29
2015	\$329	\$2.28

Claxton Fire Expenditures

Year	Expenditures	Per Capita
2010	\$360,267	\$131.20
2011	\$372,506	\$157.57
2012	\$359,975	\$152.27
2013	\$291,995	\$123.52
2014	\$300,673	\$127.19
2015	\$323,977	\$137.05
2016	\$311,050	\$131.58

Before deconsolidation of the fire departments, Evans County contracted with the City of Claxton and expended between \$85,144 and \$165,646 for contracted fire service. In transitioning to its own fire services, the county spent up to \$317,443 per year on the service. However, in more recent years, this annual expenditure has decreased to just under \$200,000. While it is not

possible to say with complete certainty that the deconsolidation was the cause of the increase in fire service spending by the county, the sudden jump in the expenditure level is suggestive.

Per capita, the City of Claxton spends substantially more on fire service than the unincorporated area and smaller cities in the county. Such a higher per capita expenditure is fairly typical because the larger cities in a county tend to have more commercial areas that need fire protection than more rural (e.g., unincorporated) areas. These commercial entities help pay for the fire service through their expenditures on insurance and the attendant insurance premium tax revenue that is provided to the city.

Currently, the Claxton Fire Service expenditures are about a third greater than those of Evans County.

Service Calls

Historically, the number of service calls has been relatively even for the two fire departments, but in recent years the number of calls to the Evans County Fire Department has been growing substantially and calls to the Claxton Fire Department have dropped. As a result, the Evans County Fire Department currently receives a bit more than three times the number of service calls annually as the Claxton Fire Department.⁵ The ratio of calls between the two departments holds true for the more serious calls such as structure fire calls. For example, in 2016 the Claxton Fire Department received eight structure fire calls whereas the Evans County Fire Department received 29.

Fire Service Calls

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Bellville	6	9		
Daisy	9	6		
Hagan	27	14		
Evans County		64	128	203
Evans County Total	42	93	128	203
Claxton	124	118	66	65

ISO Ratings/Protection Class

Prior to the separation of the fire departments, the areas served by the consolidated fire department were rated for insurance purposes as having the same protection class, specifically a 5/9 rating. Protection classes run from 1 to 10, with 1 being the most protected class and 10 being the least or unprotected. The 5/9 rating in the consolidated department meant that the

⁵ Fire call data are based on the calendar year and were obtained from Bulloch County E-911.

areas with sufficient water supply and within five road miles of a fire station were rated as 5 and those without these features were rated as 9. (There may also have been a few areas that were further from a fire station than the required distance that would be rated as a 10 or unprotected.)

ISO Rating Earned for All Properties Located Within Five Road Miles of a City or County Fire Station

	Consolidated Prior to 2014	Deconsolidated 2015–Present
City of Claxton	5/9	4/4X
Evans County	5/9	5*

* Technically, the rating is a 5/10. The 10 rating is for the properties located more than five road miles from a fire station.

After deconsolidation, the two fire departments were rated separately. The new Evans County Fire Department improved its rating to a 5 because a much larger part of the service area is under the Class 5 rating than the Class 9 rating. Essentially, all properties within five road miles of a county-operated fire station are now graded as Class 5. This improvement was made possible because the Evans County Fire Department earned credit for “Alternate Water Supply” by delivering water by shuttle.⁶ As a result, the county reports that it was able to improve the ISO rating for 93% of the unincorporated property owners.

In the most recent ISO rating, Evans County scored 57.58. This score is only 2.42 points away from 60, the threshold for a Class 4 rating. The Evans Fire Department’s ISO credits diverged the most from available credits in the following areas:

- Company personnel, i.e., the number of available firefighters
- Deployment of personnel, i.e., the number and adequacy of existing engine and ladder-service companies to cover built-upon areas
- Water supply system
- Fire prevention programs
- Public fire safety education programs

Of these areas, the first three are relatively expensive to address as they involve significant labor and capital costs, such as hiring numerous additional firefighters, purchasing new engines and fire stations, or extending and upgrading the water supply system. However, consolidation

⁶ ISO’s Public Protection Classification (PPC) rating states the following: (1) The first class (e.g., “ii>” in a 6/XX) applies to properties within five road miles of a recognized fire station and within 1,000 feet of a fire hydrant or alternate water supply. (2) The second class (XX 1Dr XY) applies to properties beyond 1,000 feet of a fire hydrant but within five road miles of a recognized fire station. (3) Alternative Water Supply: The first class (e.g., “6” in a 6/10) applies to properties within five road miles of a recognized fire station with no hydrant distance requirement.

could be useful in improving the last two areas. Under a consolidated fire department, only one fire chief would be needed. The other fire chief could change roles and could use his skills to establish and maintain quality fire prevention programs and public fire safety education programs.

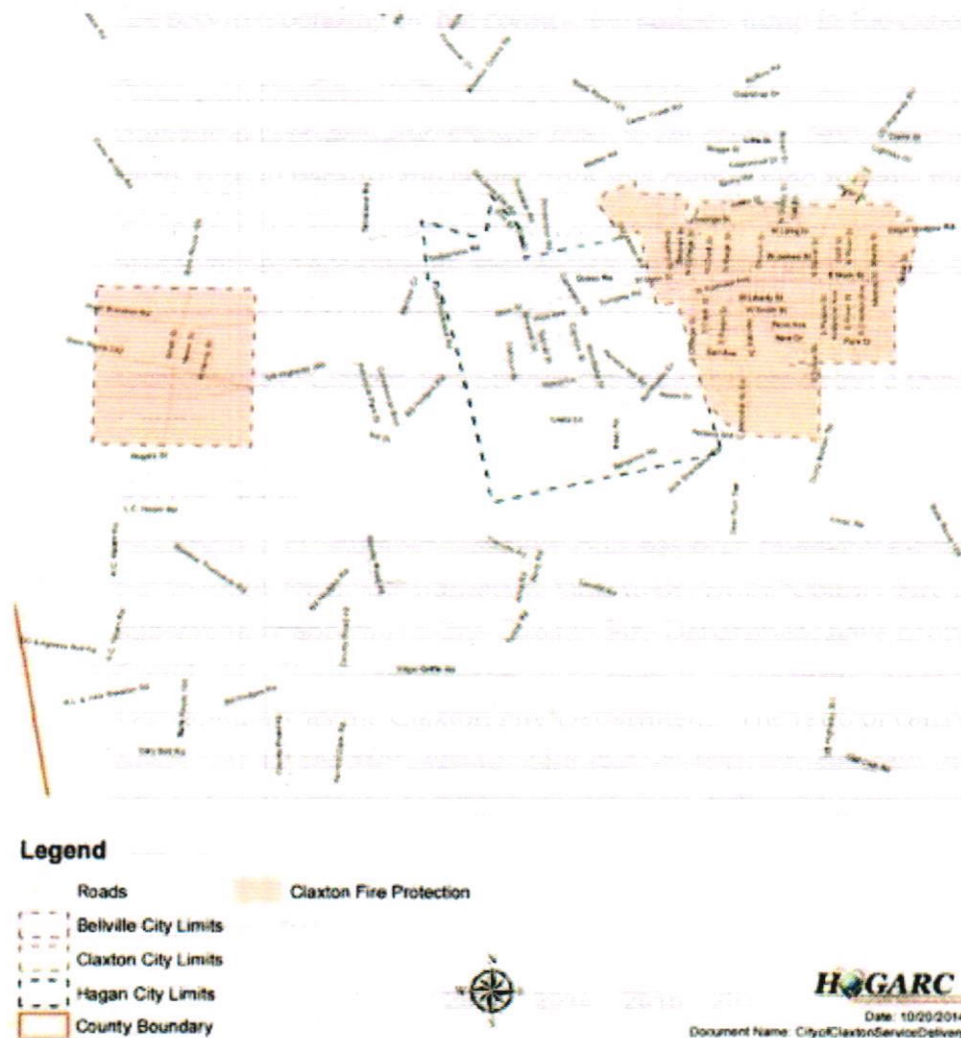
The Claxton Fire Department's rating post-consolidation also improved to a 4/4X. (A 4X is similar to a 9 in that it implies that some properties are more than 1,000 feet from a fire hydrant.) Note that the ability of a city such as Claxton to improve its rating after deconsolidating from a more rural area is not unexpected. This is the case because a large percentage of a department's ISO protection class rating is based on the water supply in the service area, and urban areas tend to have more plentiful supplies of water than more rural areas.

Fire Service Areas

Fire service areas in Evans County could be more rationally configured were they consolidated. The maps on the next two pages show the Claxton Fire Department's service area and fire service areas in Evans County. Based on these maps, the Institute research team made two observations about fire service consolidation.

First, as the first map shows, the Claxton Fire Department must cross the county's fire service area to provide backup service to parts of the Claxton service area, particularly the City of Bellville, which is serviced by the Claxton Fire Department. The protection needs of the Bellville service area could potentially be more efficiently and effectively addressed by a fire station operated by the Evans County Fire Department, which would occur under consolidation.

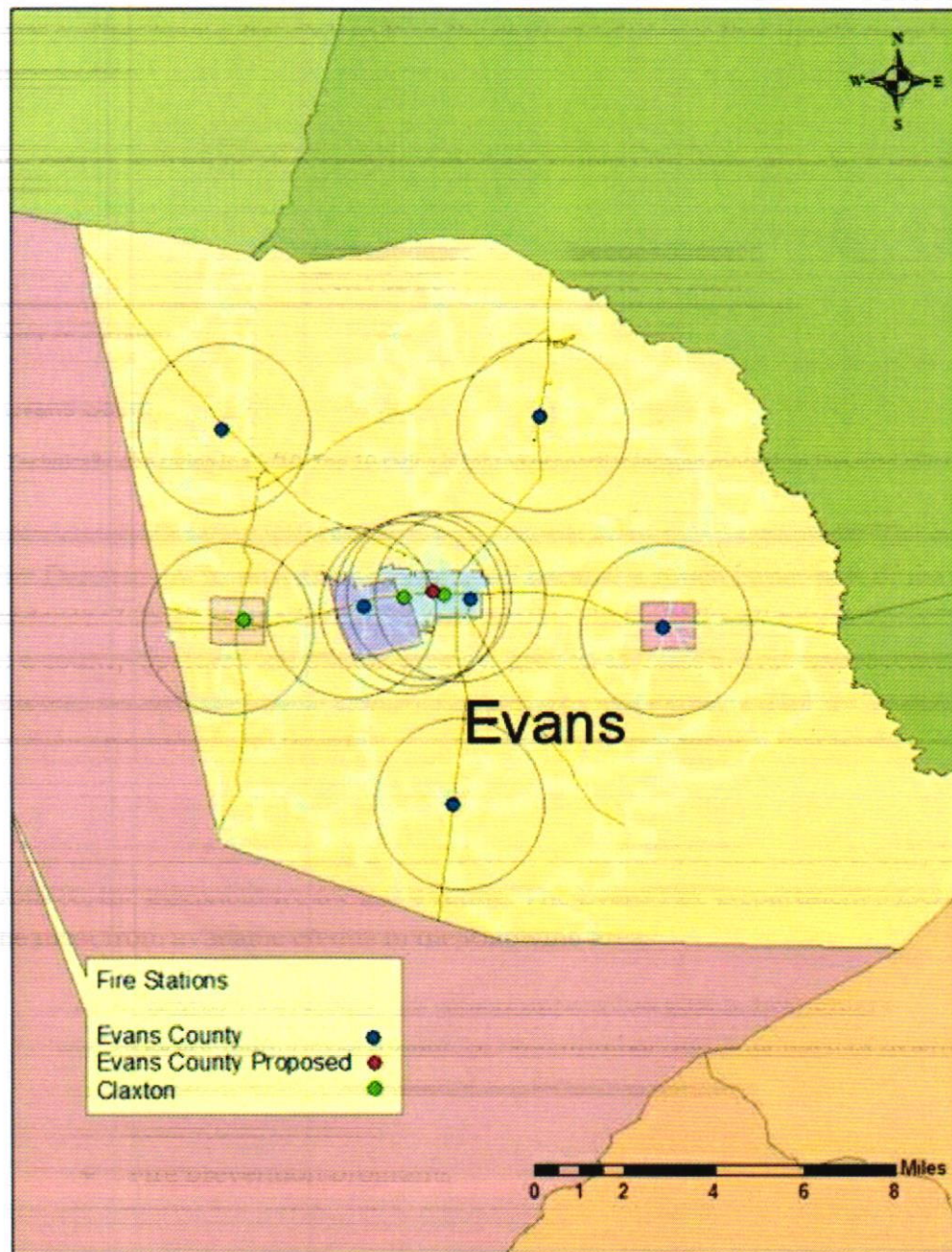
Claxton Fire Protection Areas



Second, in a rational and efficient fire service area arrangement, fire stations are spread out to avoid an excessive amount of overlap among the station service areas. As the following map shows, currently, there is excessive overlap among a number of the fire service areas. (The service areas are approximately 1.5 miles in radius, the distance required by ISO to achieve maximum credit for fire department distribution and response by the first company).

The county has proposed adding another station in Claxton, which would act as the central station for the County under a consolidated scenario. More specifically, if the county builds a fire station in the proposed location (see the red marker on the map), this station would most effectively service the City of Claxton, which is already being served by three to four fire stations in the nearby area.

Fire Service Areas in Evans County



Fire Service Staffing

Both the Evans County and City of Claxton fire departments rely heavily on volunteer firefighters. Each department is administered by two career firefighters.

Evans County Fire Department

- 2 career staff: fire chief and training officer
- 24 volunteers
- 6 EMS/fire-certified

City of Claxton Fire Department

- 2 career staff: fire chief and training officer
- 20 volunteers

While volunteer staffing can be economical, many communities in Georgia have been challenged in recent years by the difficulty of recruiting and maintaining a volunteer firefighting force. Currently, neither the Evans County Fire Department nor the City of Claxton Fire Department has enough career staff to provide sufficient fire protection service without the volunteer firefighters. Moreover, in order for a career-based department to achieve economies of scale, the department staffing would need to approach a size of 50 or so firefighters. If the fire departments are forced by circumstances to move to a career-based service, it is unlikely that either department could achieve economies of scale on its own. It would be more feasible for a consolidated department to achieve these economies.

Finally, the current career staffing of the departments suggests an unnecessary level of duplication of functions. For example, it would likely be feasible for a single training officer to serve the training needs of the total number of firefighters in the two departments. Similarly, a single fire chief could provide the basic administrative function of a fire department that was the combined size of the two existing departments.

Mutual/Automatic Aid

The City of Claxton and Evans County fire departments have a mutual aid agreement that requires them to back each other up upon request. While such agreements are worthwhile, in comparison to automatic aid agreements (which provide for simultaneous response to fire calls), mutual aid agreements typically provide less credit in an ISO assessment. In cases where the department is relatively close to a better ISO protection class rating (e.g., as is the case in Evans County), an automatic aid agreement could help boost credit for fire department capabilities more easily than trying to increase personnel and deployment.

Consolidation and ISO

The fact that both Evans County and the City of Claxton improved their ISO ratings after deconsolidation might suggest that consolidation is detrimental to the communities' ISO ratings. However, Evans County's rating improved because of a change (i.e., alternative water supply) that could have occurred in conjunction with a consolidated fire department. Moreover, consolidation could potentially lead to further improvements in the ISO rating by providing for better fire station distribution; freeing up resources for fire education and prevention; allowing for shared training, career development, and administrative services; and providing the benefits of automatic aid automatically.

However, note that fire service consolidation could potentially lead to a decline in the ISO rating of the City of Claxton if merging the departments means that the class rating is averaged to the higher level. Addressing this potential downside of consolidation would require additional study. However, ISO does allow for a potential work-around: having two service areas and the associated separate ISO Protection Class ratings while still retaining many of the benefits of consolidated fire services.⁷ While such arrangements are feasible, they can be somewhat cumbersome.

The subsections below discuss the service arrangement provisions for fire protection services in two different Georgia communities. In the first, a city contracts with the county for fire protection. In the second, a combined city-county fire department is governed by a joint Fire Overview Committee.

Dahlonega-Lumpkin

The City of Dahlonega contracts with Lumpkin County for fire services as part of its Service Delivery Strategy Agreement. The city spends approximately \$50,000 a year on fire services. The county has three stations manned by firefighter/EMTs 24 hours a day, one of which is located inside the city limits. Three other stations are volunteer-only facilities. An additional station is manned part time. The fire department also serves the University of North Georgia.

Rome and Floyd Fire Governing Body

The Rome Floyd Fire Department has been unified for more than 35 years. When it began, only the City of Rome had fire stations, and Floyd County paid the city to provide services to the unincorporated area. The fire services are overseen by a Fire Overview Committee, which has fairly equal representation by the city and the county. The committee includes four

⁷ Institute of Government faculty contacted an ISO mitigation specialist and asked about the potential to have a special fire district within a consolidated government (or multiple fire districts that are served by multiple departments). The mitigation specialist said that this was possible. That is, whatever organization is set up as the department and whatever service area is associated with that department would get a protection class rating, so if a community had two departments with different service areas under the same consolidated government, it could get two protection class ratings.

commissioners (two from the city and two from the county), the city and county managers and finance directors, and the fire department managers of both the city and county. The fire department is operated as a city department, and all staff members are city employees.⁸

The operational costs to the individual governments are based on the calls for service and fire response runs. In recent years, these have tended to work out to about a 50 percent cost allocation for each government. The Overview Committee recommends a budget, and the city government manages the budget appropriation. As long as the city does not spend more than 3.5 percent of the total budget, it can manage these expenditures on its own without additional approval from the county government. However, if this 3.5 percent ceiling is exceeded, the city must attain county approval before spending any additional dollars.

When asked whether there have been any rough patches along the way, the fire chief indicated that things have run smoothly for about 30 years. He reported that the cost for the county to run its own fire department would likely exceed its costs under the current service arrangement. He also indicated that things like renaming the department the Rome Floyd Fire Department (rather than the Rome Fire Department) can be important. Similarly, he suggested that having the fire chief attend both the city and the county public safety committee meetings is important to maintaining good relations with both governments.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Based on interviews with department heads and additional research, the Institute of Government team developed two possible alternatives for service provision for law enforcement in Evans County. First, the Sheriff's Department could provide countywide law enforcement. Second, city police services could be extended to all cities or select cities. Under both arrangements, the primary limitation would be the salary differential among the various governments. All positions would need to be raised to the higher salary paid in Claxton.

Sheriff's Office Provision of Countywide Law Enforcement

Currently, three separate law enforcement entities are responsible for service provision in Evans County: the Claxton Police Department, the Hagan Police Department, and the Evans County Sheriff's Department. During interviews, county and city personnel indicated satisfaction with law enforcement services provided within the county.

The Evans County Sheriff's Department provides law enforcement services to the cities of Daisy and Bellville as well as to the unincorporated areas. Evans County also oversees the county's courts and handles 911 dispatching for the county (once calls are sent down from Bulloch County E-911, as the county and Claxton both contract with Bulloch for E-911) as well as for the City of Hagan. The Sheriff's Department has four dispatchers, four jailers, one sheriff, one

⁸ Personal Interview with Fire Chief Troy Brock on June 13, 2017.

detective, and seven deputies and operates on a budget of approximately \$600,000. According to the sheriff, the Evans County Courts hear as many as 90 cases a year. Typical duties include providing traffic control for the schools, patrolling highways in the county, and addressing calls for service, including arrests. The Sheriff's Department also dispatches a car to fires in the county service area.

Claxton has eight officers: the chief, two lieutenants, one sergeant, and four officers, which includes an investigator who handles misdemeanors and services warrants. Claxton's Police Department also includes four dispatchers and a secretary. Claxton dispatchers/communications officers also perform the duties of jailer, completing booking reports, receiving personal property, and completing log sheets. Claxton's annual law enforcement budget amounts to a little over \$1 million.

Hagan has a police department that employs a chief, one full-time lieutenant, and two part-time officers. Hagan also has a court, which is overseen by the assistant city clerk and city clerk, whose salaries are covered in part by the police department's budget, which is a little over \$200,000 annually. Currently Hagan does not provide 24-hour police coverage. If an incident occurs at night, Claxton police step in. The Evans County Sheriff's Department also provides backup in Hagan when needed, and Hagan in turn provides officers for serious events in the county. Hagan also houses offenders either temporarily or for sentences at either the Claxton or Evans County jails.

According to personnel at both the county and the individual police departments, the law enforcement entities work together closely when a call for service requires additional staff. For example, when events take place in Claxton that serve county residents, such as parades, deputies from the Sheriff's Department assist. There is no automatic aid agreement; rather, the individual departments cooperate when needed.

However, the interviews revealed a few inefficiencies that could warrant consideration of having the Sheriff's Department provide law enforcement services in the cities. Personnel at each law enforcement entity indicated they could provide a higher level of service with additional officers. The 2009 update to the 2005 Joint Comprehensive Plan Update includes a short-term work program item to study the feasibility of consolidating all law enforcement agencies in Evans County.⁹ The 2009 update also lists a work program item of expanding the Hagan police force, employing three full-time officers and dispatchers.

Another issue identified in many interviews is officers being hired away by Claxton or the state, which pay higher salaries. Thus, departments are losing experienced officers who cannot be retained due to uncompetitive salaries. Mental health concerns are also on the rise across the

⁹ 2004 Evans County Joint Comprehensive Plan: Partial Update, Prepared July, 2009. Retrieved from www.dca.ga.gov/largefiles/OPQG/2009/EvansCo.BellvilleCi.ClaxtonCi.DaisyCi.HaganCi.Prtl.pdf.

county, and law enforcement is handling additional calls for service. Interviewees from the Sheriff's Department indicated that handling court cases takes up considerable staff time. In addition, interviews revealed potential duplication among the Sheriff's Department and Claxton Police Department dispatcher and investigator positions.

In theory, consolidation of existing city law enforcement entities would reduce duplication, allow for consistent training to officers on policing issues and trends such as community policing, and mean that the Sheriff's Department would have more officers available to patrol, address calls, make arrests, and perform mental health follow-ups. Ideally such a merger would result in both cost savings and a higher level of service. There would be initial set-up costs associated with rebranding vehicles and uniforms, making capital purchases, providing training, and possibly relocating officers and stations. Consistent policies would need to be created and existing policies reconciled. For example, the use of body cameras is required in Claxton but nowhere else. Also, the various law enforcement entities currently have differing policies on taking home vehicles by officers. Additionally, city police would need to be trained in possible constitutional duties should they cover chief deputy and deputy responsibilities. This could possibly aid in reducing turnover should salaries be reflective of current trends.

In the absence of political will for functional consolidation of law enforcement agencies, there may be opportunities for increased coordination in specific program areas such as traffic patrols in front of schools, jails, courts, animal control, and code enforcement. Good interpersonal relationships among individual officers and government staff could lend to such an arrangement.

Hagan-Claxton Police

In this scenario, the two law enforcement entities in the cities of Hagan and Claxton would merge, creating a single unified police department. According to some interviewees, potential advantages to unifying the law enforcement responsibilities stem from geographic proximity and potential staffing efficiencies. This model could be extended to more, if not all, cities in Evans County.

The city limits of Hagan and Claxton are contiguous. Hagan's easternmost boundary and Claxton's westernmost boundary are adjoining with Highway 280 running east-west through each jurisdiction. In theory, combining the two departments would result in more coverage for the two cities. Hagan would also gain 24-hour coverage in a consolidated law enforcement scenario. Additionally, city law enforcement staff of both departments are experienced in community policing and law enforcement issues such as downtown commercial district and neighborhood patrol found in places with a relatively high population density, enabling a smooth transition under a functionally consolidated scenario. The current Hagan police chief works part time for the Claxton police department and is knowledgeable about both cities' ordinances. For example, both cities have package sales, whereas the county does not.

Below are two examples of law enforcement provision arrangements in Georgia communities. In the first, a city is exploring consolidating with the county and contracting for police services. In the second, a city pays the county to provide police services.

Waynesboro-Burke

The City of Waynesboro is exploring having the Burke County Sheriff's Office provide law enforcement services for the city through a proposed Law Enforcement Services Agreement with the county.¹⁰ If passed, Waynesboro police officers would move over to the Sheriff's Department. The contract would last two years, and if services were not satisfactory, operations would return to pre-consolidation status. The contracted agreement would potentially remove duplicative services such as two dispatch departments. A list of services suggests that the law enforcement functions of the Sheriff's Office would be extended to the city, including routine patrol, investigative services, records, and management, among others.

Dahlonega-Lumpkin

Law enforcement services for the City of Dahlonega have been provided on a contract basis by the Lumpkin County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) as part of their Service Delivery Strategy Agreement since 1999. Under this arrangement, the Sheriff's Office provides the same level of police protection, law enforcement, and traffic control to the city as it does to the unincorporated areas of the county. Although the city maintains separate ordinances related to speeding, licensing, loitering, and nuisances, the LCSO enforces these ordinances while upholding constitutional duties. The LCSO provides monthly reports to the city summarizing law enforcement activities from the previous month, and the city provides monthly reports to the Sheriff's Office listing cases closed and fines collected in Municipal Court. As LCSO's services to the city are paid out of Municipal Courts fines, revenues in excess of monthly expenditures are remitted to the county monthly.

According to the city, it pays Lumpkin County \$7,000 a year for policing services, which is used solely for vehicles, guns, and other equipment, not salaries.¹¹ The city also receives law enforcement services from the Georgia State Patrol and limited services from the University of North Georgia (formerly North Georgia College). However, for special events (Bear on the Square, Gold Rush Days, Arts and Wine Festival, etc.), Dahlonega spends \$20,000 to \$30,000 a year on salaries for off-duty sheriff's deputies. The city also has a city marshal who handles special needs such as code enforcement. Although the sheriff has indicated he would support Dahlonega forming its own police department, it would not be cost effective for the city given the existing contract for service.¹²

¹⁰ wjbf.com/2017/09/13/changes-to-law-enforcement-in-waynesboro-burke-county-up-for-vote-soon/

¹¹ Personal interview with Lumpkin City Manager Bill Schmid on September 18, 2017.

¹² www.thedahloneganugget.com/news-subscribers/new-police-force-dahlonega

In recent years, the city council has discussed LCSO coverage in Dahlonega and potentially investigating the following alternatives:

- Keeping the current coverage and contracting with the LCSO for additional coverage provided as able by off-duty officers
- Contracting the LCSO for a specific number of officers or hours of contracted coverage
- Staffing and operating a city marshal's office
- Staffing and operating a city police department
- Installing security cameras
- Contracting security services or using off-duty law enforcement from other jurisdictions

Possible considerations for the cities in Evans County in pursuing contracted police services from a county sheriff's department include increased efficiency and effectiveness: hours of coverage, number of officers, and branding/identity. Without dedicated hours and an adequate number of officers, there is some sense that coverage is not as efficient as a dedicated city police. Additionally, not having law enforcement vehicles marked specifically for city law enforcement patrol beats may give the impression that coverage is not consistent.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Emergency Management and Code Enforcement

Per discussions with county personnel, one area of interest is a combined public safety function in Evans County, specifically combining EMA and Code Enforcement. Code enforcement responsibilities vary but typically include upholding building codes, performing inspections, and issuing and enforcing code violations for nuisances that may or may not involve a structure, such as trash and debris, unmowed grass, and junk vehicles. Although not all code enforcement duties may be a natural fit for emergency management, governments of all kinds facing limited resources have to be creative. Evans County has a track-record of pursuing creative pairings to make service provision in the county fiscally and operationally viable.

Below are two examples of other communities with consolidated public safety functions.

Bainbridge Combined Fire and Police Service

In Georgia, the City of Bainbridge is a good example of consolidated fire and law enforcement. The two functions are combined under a single public safety department. Of 50 full-time authorized positions, six are dedicated to fire service. Staff work from two facilities, with two Decatur County firefighters co-located at a city fire station. Staff receive 10,500 hours of training in police and fire safety, of which 4,371 count toward fire certification. The combined public safety model has some potential challenges, primarily centering on human resource issues such as organizational culture, command and control, and morale. Additional resources, such as

through training, may be required to address these issues, reducing the efficiency benefits from consolidation.¹³

Clayton County Combined Fire and Emergency Management

The combined Clayton County Fire and Emergency Services Department's functions include firefighting, emergency management, public health/medical services, public safety and security. The fire chief also serves as the Emergency Management Agency director. Deputy chiefs oversee various units, including Emergency Management Services (EMS), Fire Fighting Operations, Planning and Training, and Professional Standards. The table on the next page depicts services provided by the Clayton County Fire and Emergency Services Department.

Clayton County Fire and Emergency Services Department Organization

Operations	Headed by Deputy Chief of Operations: fire, rescue, disaster emergency, protecting life and property, emergency medical assistance, and administrative activities
Emergency Medical Services	Headed by Deputy Chief of EMS: emergency medical services, including transport units, community care units, paramedics, and exposure control
Planning/Training	Headed by Deputy Chief of Planning/Training: development, delivery, and facilitation of training programs for new and veteran members of the department covering areas of fire suppression Headed by Deputy of Professional Standards: hazardous material mitigation, rescue specialist certification, emergency medical services, career and officer development
Professional Standards	Headed by Chief Deputy of Professional Standards: fire and EMS accreditation, policy and mandates and revisions, recruitment, new employee hiring and public affairs; also acts as public information officer
Emergency Management Agency Operations	Headed by Deputy Chief of EMA Operations: all activities necessary to protect Clayton's residents from natural, technological, and manmade disasters and other emergencies that threaten the county; EMA coordinates emergency management services for the county
Deputy Chief Fire Marshal	Responsible for fire inspections, new construction inspections and plan review, code enforcement, and fire investigations
Technology Services	Consists of three positions that utilize technology to improve emergency response and care: statistical analyst, healthcare information coordinator, systems analyst
Logistics	Combination of trained fire personnel and county staff oversee facilities management, fire supply, equipment maintenance, fleet maintenance, EMS supply

¹³ Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia. 2017. Analysis of Proposed Consolidation of the City Fire Services Between the City of Bainbridge and Decatur County. Athens: Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia.

WATER AND SEWER

The City of Daisy currently has its own water utility. The current mayor operates, maintains, and performs repairs to the system. The city clerk does billing and collections, which funds the city's water enterprise fund. The utility has approximately 125 customers, more of whom are located outside of Daisy than inside. Approximately 56 are within the city limits. A third party performs meter reading for the city. The city's water contract is expiring at the end of the year when the mayor's term ends.

The City of Claxton provides water and sewerage to customers in the city as well as to the industrial park to the west of Hagan. In 2010, the City of Hagan installed its own sewer system for a little over half of residences and several businesses to better prepare for growth. However, sewer system service maps suggest that the existing service areas somewhat overlap. The Hagan Streets Department head performs water meter reading and maintains the city's water system, which also serves customers outside the city limits. Billing for water and sewer in Hagan takes place in-house. Claxton also has a meter reader serving both water/sewer and the gas utility, including performing repairs and new meter installation. The potential benefit from merging the City of Claxton's water and sewer service, including the future sewer/wastewater treatment plant, with Hagan could also be explored.

Sewer Service Areas for the Cities of Claxton and Hagan



Below we describe an example of a combined city-county water and sewer system and its governing body.

Brunswick–Glynn County Joint Water and Sewer Commission

The Brunswick–Glynn County Joint Water and Sewer Commission (JWSC) was formed to provide a coordinated, planned, and unified potable water and wastewater system for the region.¹⁴ The first intergovernmental agreement began in 1988, with wastewater treatment being provided to Glynn County’s north mainland system. In 2004, the two governments began discussing the renewal process of the original 1988 agreement. Avoiding duplication of resources, preparing for growth, and increasing efficiency were the drivers of the effort to consolidate water and wastewater services.

A formal agreement was signed in 2005 to combine the independently owned and operated water and sewer systems under a separate entity. The local delegation to the Georgia General Assembly introduced legislation to create the Brunswick–Glynn County Joint Water and Sewer Commission as a state agency that would be governed locally. Before the commission was formed, the citizens of Glynn County and the City of Brunswick passed a referendum in 2006 with majority votes to go forward with the consolidation. An operational agreement also received citizen approval that sets forth the terms and conditions under which the JWSC operates and maintains the unified system. The operational agreement was approved and established the JWSC beginning in 2009.

A unified system, with or without a governing body, can potentially lead to efficiencies in service provision. Discussions about the future of Daisy’s water system could include contracting with one of the other cities for all or part of water system service provision. Under functional consolidation, Daisy would not be precluded from transferring water revenues into the general fund. However, if Daisy needs surplus water revenue to subsidize its general fund, functional consolidation would not be as attractive. Also, the potential benefits from merging services with one of the other cities would potentially include lower cost and greater capacity.

Conclusion

This report analyzes the feasibility of full consolidation of the governments in Evans County, Georgia. This report also discussed two possibilities for functional consolidation that may offer the greatest opportunities for increased efficiency and cost savings: fire protection and law enforcement. Through interviews, a review of financial documents, and case studies, the Institute of Government research team highlighted the opportunities and challenges associated with consolidation in Evans County, Georgia. The result is a potential roadmap for

¹⁴ “History of the BGJWSC,” retrieved from <http://www.bgjwsc.org/departments/commission/>.

understanding ways in which full or functional consolidation of governments in Evans County might be achieved.

Before embarking on additional functional consolidation, the governments may benefit from further understanding and resolving the issues that resulted in the dissolution of prior consolidation efforts. The Institute believes that future functional consolidations could be beneficial and result in higher levels of services for citizens, but success depends on strong support from elected officials, senior management, and the affected departmental staffs.

Service	Government/s that Provide the Service	Area that Receives the Service	Funding	Description
Law Enforcement	Evans County	Unincorporated county and the cities of Daisy and Bellville	Evans County General Fund	The Evans County Sheriff's Department patrols the unincorporated areas of the county as well as the cities of Daisy and Bellville. The Sheriff's Department and the city police departments help each other when needed.
Law Enforcement	Claxton	City of Claxton	Claxton General Fund	The City of Claxton provides its own police protection.
Law Enforcement	Hagan	City of Hagan	Hagan General Fund	The City of Hagan provides its own police protection.
Fire Protection	Evans County	Evans County, cities of Daisy and Hagan	Evans County/Daisy/Hagan General Funds; User fees	Provided through the Fire Council; Arranged through Evans County
Fire Protection	Cities of Claxton and Bellville	Cities of Claxton and Bellville	Claxton/Bellville General Funds; Claxton SPLOST & User Fees	Provided through a Fire Protection Agreement; Arranged through the City of Claxton
Jail	Evans County	countywide	Evans County General Fund	The Evans County Sheriff's Department operates the County Jail for all of Evans County. All felony offenders from the city are housed in the jail.
Jail	Claxton	City of Claxton	General Fund	The city of Claxton houses its own misdemeanor offenders and temporarily houses Hagan's offenders before transferring to Evans or another jail.
E-911	Evans County	countywide	General Fund; User fees	Contract with Bulloch County for provision
Natural Gas	City of Claxton	countywide	User fees/Enterprise Fund	Claxton provides natural gas within the city as well as several other areas outside of jurisdictional boundaries including the industrial park and several parts of unincorporated Evans County, northern Bryan County, and southern Effingham County upon request. The city obtains permission from the counties before extending service to future residents as requested.
Sewer	City of Claxton	City of Claxton & some unincorporated	Claxton User fees/Enterprise Fund	Claxton provides sewer service within its city limits, as well as to the industrial park and areas of unincorporated Evans County upon request.
Sewer	City of Hagan	City of Hagan & some unincorporated	Hagan User fees/Enterprise Fund	
Airport	Airport Authority	countywide	General Fund; User fees; SPLOST. Funding from Evans County and City of Claxton	
Superior/State Courts	Evans County	countywide	General Fund; User fees	Handles all misdemeanor and ordinance violations for the cities of Daisy and Bellville, and for unincorporated Evans County; handles all felony cases for the county and cities

Municipal Court	City of Claxton	City of Claxton	General Fund; User fees	Handles misdemeanor and ordinance violations for Claxton
Municipal Court	City of Hagan	City of Hagan	General Fund; User fees	Handles misdemeanor and ordinance violations for Hagan
Economic Development	Claxton-Evans Industrial Development Authority	countywide	Evans County General Fund; SPLOST. Funding from Evans County and City of Claxton (in-kind gas & water)	
Emergency Management	Evans County	countywide	Evans County and the City of Claxton both contribute equally to the agency from their general funds.	The Claxton-Evans County Emergency Management Agency is jointly operated by Evans County and the City of Claxton and serves all the citizens of Evans County. Claxton also provides in-kind funds for housing, utilities, and building maintenance.
Emergency Medical Service	Evans County	countywide	General Fund; User fees	Provided by the county through Evans Memorial Hospital
Garbage Pickup	Evans County	unincorporated county	General Fund; User fees	Evans County provides garbage dumpsters to the unincorporated county and Daisy
Garbage Pickup	Claxton	City of Claxton	General Fund; User fees	Claxton provides curbside pickup to its residents via a contract with a private contractor and city employees
Garbage Pickup	Hagan	City of Hagan	General Fund; User fees	Hagan provides curbside pickup to its residents with city employees
Garbage Pickup	Daisy	City of Daisy	General Fund; User fees	Daisy provides curbside pickup to its residents via a contract with a private contractor
Garbage Pickup	Bellville	City of Bellville	General Fund; User fees	Bellville provides curbside pickup to its residents with city employees
Health Services	Evans County	unincorporated county	General Fund; User fees; state funds	Provided through the Board of Health
Hospital	Evans County	countywide	User fees; state funds; SPLOST	Evans County Hospital Authority
Library	Evans County	countywide	Evans County provides operational revenues from its general fund to operate the Library. Also, the City of Claxton reimburses the Library for their monthly water and sewer cost from the City general fund.	Evans County Library Authority
Recreation	Evans County	countywide	General Fund; User fees; SPLOST	Evans County Recreation Authority
Recycling	Evans County	countywide	The County utilizes revenues generated from sanitation fees and the construction & debris landfill to operate the sanitation department which empties the trailers.	The county provides trailers for tires and white goods at each of its dumpster sites throughout the county to collect recycling.

Recycling	Claxton	City of Claxton	The City of Claxton utilizes general fund revenues to operate the composting facility and recycling center.	The City of Claxton has a household recycling center that serves all residents of Evans County
Road. Maintenance	Evans County	Unincorporated county and the cities of Daisy and Bellville	General Fund	The City of Claxton and the City of Hagan both provide street maintenance within their boundaries, and the county provides road maintenance to the unincorporated areas as well as to the cities of Daisy and Bellville. The county road department provides assistance to both Claxton and Hagan when requested and also plows the dirt roads within each municipality.
Road. Maintenance	Claxton	City of Claxton	General Fund	
Road. Maintenance	Hagan	City of Hagan	General Fund	
Road. Maintenance	Daisy	City of Daisy	General Fund	
Road. Maintenance	Bellville	City of Bellville	General Fund	
Wastewater Treatment Plant	Claxton	City of Claxton	enterprise fund	

EVANS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
CALLED MEETING AGENDA
October 20, 2021 // 6:00 PM

SECTION ONE: PRELIMINARIES

Call to Order, Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance

SECTION TWO: OLD BUSINESS

Joe Tillman Road Closure
Millage

SECTION THREE: NEW BUSINESS

Hospital Authority Members
Reapportionment
Fence Bid

DISMISSAL

Individuals with disabilities who require certain accommodations in order to allow them to observe and/or participate in meetings, or who have questions regarding the accessibility of the meeting or facilities are required to contact the County Clerk at 912-739-1141 Ext. 8 promptly to allow the County to make reasonable accommodations for those persons.

**EVANS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC HEARING AGENDA**

October 20, 2021 // 5:00 PM

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