



County of Hamilton

DUSTY RHODES
AUDITOR

COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
138 EAST COURT STREET
CINCINNATI, OHIO 45202

THE "SHARED SERVICES" FANTASY

By: Dusty Rhodes, Hamilton County Auditor

"Shared services" refers to communities and government offices teaming up to take advantage of economies of scale to deliver required services. The state administration continues to offer it as something new and wonderful, as a possible way for counties, cities, village and townships to try and deal with the state's excessive and extreme cuts in local government funding.

The reality is many have been sharing services for years. Most local governments and public offices always work together as often as they can. They do not need to be encouraged to do so. It is not an original or real solution to the loss of long standing, significant state support.

Our office was among the first to participate when then Clerk of Courts Jim Cissell proposed a combined county mail facility in 1992. When the City of Cincinnati closed down its Weights and Measures Department in 1996, our staff took over that responsibility in the City – and did it with no additional staff.

For many years key County network servers along with the County Commissioners' agenda system was supported through a joint operation with the City of Cincinnati. During the past year the City expressed the desire to conclude this service. So much for depending on another government entity.

County Administration turned to us for help. I immediately asked our talented and professional Information Technology staff to assist. They have been working on the project for several months and the transition of support will be completed soon. The County will have better control of these systems and services and some modest savings are anticipated.

"Shared services" is a noble concept but it is not innovative nor is it a panacea. It certainly can not replace the funds state government has taken away from local and county governments. Local governments help each other all the time. Let us not call the commonplace special.

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