

# Town of Athol

## Community Compact – Regionalization Best Practice Update

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December 27, 2017

### Best Practice #2: Regionalization / Shared Services

The Town of Athol developed a second best practice geared towards developing inter-municipal partnerships where cost-benefit and service improvements could be realized. The most successful recent example of regionalization of services is a continuing partnership between Athol, Orange and Royalston in the North Quabbin Animal Control program.

Originally proposed by a former police chief, the pilot program has proven successful to the point that the three towns have continued the arrangement for a third fiscal year. The regional animal control officer position was supplemented with two part-time assistant ACOs in fiscal 2018; all funded in the town of Athol's operating budget with pro rata assessments paid by Orange and Royalston.

Since its inception, North Quabbin Animal Control has also worked to leverage grants, donations and assistance from Franklin County Regional Technical School to advance an expansion of its facility on Thrower Road in Athol. The project will provide additional dog kennel space, an area for cats and additional office and storage capability. The walls, roof and subsurface drainage and plumbing are complete with the balance of work expected to be finalized in 2018. The town of Athol has appropriated \$12,000 towards the remaining capital work and interior finishes.



The Town also engaged in good-faith efforts at other regionalization projects that did not come to fruition, including:

- **Shared building inspection with the town of Orange:** two meetings were facilitated through the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, but, a lack of obvious benefit to the communities led to discontinuing the effort in early 2017.
- **Shared public safety dispatch with the city of Gardner:** after a two-year effort to advance the concept, in early 2017 voters at a special town meeting overwhelmingly stated their desire to maintain locally-based dispatch. Ultimately, while the regional plan was not achieved, the study of this topic yielded enough political fortitude to finally merge two local dispatch centers (fire/EMS and police) into a single, modern communications center that dispatches all emergency responders in Athol effective in October 2017.



The Town believes that the best practice for regionalization has been met through the success of the North Quabbin Animal Control program, and, embraces the Community Compact program as a blueprint for success.

The Town plans to review and assess whether a new or amended compact and updated best practices will be advanced for consideration in the upcoming fiscal year.

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