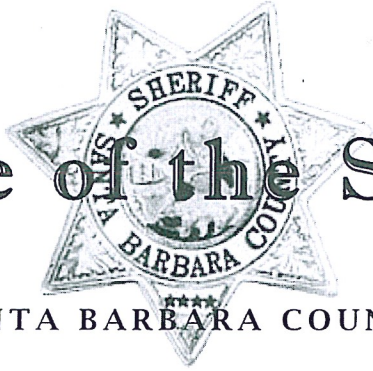


Office of the Sheriff



LATE
DIST

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

BILL BROWN
Sheriff-Coroner

STATIONS

Buellton

140 W. Highway 246
Buellton, CA 93427
Phone (805) 686-8150

Carpinteria

5775 Carpinteria Avenue
Carpinteria, CA 93013
Phone (805) 684-4561

Isla Vista

6504 Trigo Road
Isla Vista, CA 93117
Phone (805) 681-4179

Lompoc

3500 Harris Grade Road
Lompoc, CA 93436
Phone (805) 737-7737

New Cuyama

70 Newsome Street
New Cuyama, CA 93254
Phone (661) 766-2310

Santa Maria

812-A W. Foster Road
Santa Maria, CA 93455
Phone (805) 934-6150

Solvang

1745 Mission Drive
Solvang, CA 93463
Phone (805) 686-5000

Sheriff - Coroner Office

66 S. San Antonio Road
Santa Barbara, CA 93110
Phone (805) 681-4146

Main Jail

4436 Calle Real
Santa Barbara, CA 93110

P. O. Box 6427 · 4434 Calle Real · Santa Barbara, California 93160
Phone (805) 681-4100 · Fax: (805) 681-4322
www.sbsheriff.org

SOL LINVER
Undersheriff

September 27, 2019

Supervisor Das Williams
105 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Sent via US mail and email to dwilliams@countyofsb.org

Dear Supervisor Williams,

Since you will be hearing a presentation on the separation of Public Safety Dispatch functions at the October 1, 2019 Board Meeting, I would like to reiterate some of what I believe are compelling reasons against separation that have been previously presented. I would also like to update you with some additional information that has come to our attention, and advise you of some steps that were taken to explore alternatives to separation and improve our current dispatch services.

As you know our current Public Safety Dispatch Center has proven itself time and time again in handling major critical incidents requiring multiple public safety disciplines. Over the past 42 years the current Public Safety Dispatch Center has handled multiple brush fires and other large incidents, to include the recent Thomas Fire and related debris flow, as well as the Refugio oil spill, the Isla Vista mass murder and the Deltopia civil disturbance. All of these incidents required coordinated dispatching, communications and status management of each of our public safety disciplines: law enforcement, fire services and emergency medical services. Having a consolidated dispatch center was a key ingredient to the exemplary response to these disastrous events.

For many reasons the current trend for Public Safety Dispatch Centers across the nation and throughout our state is to consolidate. As identified in the Deltawrx 2017 consultant report to Santa Barbara County, "This approach is common for public safety dispatch centers and has worked effectively in jurisdictions as diverse as Albemarle County, Virginia; Deschutes County, Oregon; Monterey County, California and Ramsey County, Minnesota."

In fact, in order to advance this trend legislation has been passed in Illinois and Indiana that limits counties to having no more than two Public Safety Answering Points per County. (We currently have six Public Safety Answering Points within our County.)

I am concerned that you have not been provided with enough facts about the benefits of consolidation and the liabilities of dispatch separation. At the same time Deltawrx was

working on its consultant report to Santa Barbara County, they were preparing another report for Chittenden County, Vermont, titled, “*Dispatch Consolidation Roadmap*.” This report articulated many advantages of consolidation that were not included in the report you relied upon in providing direction to explore the separation of our dispatch services. In that report Deltawrx writes, “consolidated public safety dispatching services improves the efficiency with which resources are dispatched to life threatening emergencies.” The report also indicated that executives in Chittenden County said that emergency call times could be cut up to 71 seconds through dispatch consolidation, based on a survey of 16,000 calls made statewide in December of 2016.

The Chittenden County report also identified benefits of consolidation to include the facilitation of interagency communication, cross trained staff that ease the burden of providing around-the-clock shift coverage and the sharing of capital costs. In addition, Deltawrx pointed out that a consolidated dispatch center improves the likelihood of obtaining grants and federal funding that supports interoperability.

In 1977 Santa Barbara County Resolution #77-156 consolidated four different dispatch centers into the Santa Barbara County Public Safety Dispatch Center. Based on this resolution the County Board of Supervisors created and chartered the Santa Barbara County Public Safety Dispatch Center. The county further recognized the benefits of consolidation in 1996 when the new 8,000 square foot dispatch center facility was completed, having been designed for future regionalization.

When compared with the siloed services that existed prior to its creation in the late 1970’s, Santa Barbara County’s current consolidated Public Safety Dispatch Center represents a significant modernization of our county’s ability to efficiently and effectively provide this critical emergency service to Santa Barbara County’s taxpayers.

One of the most compelling reasons for dispatch consolidation is cost savings. The board letter submitted for the upcoming presentation indicates that significant capital funding will be necessary for the construction and equipping of a secondary dispatch center. Additionally, there will be significant increased ongoing costs to operate two separate centers. These expenses would place a significant burden on the County’s fragile budget during very uncertain economic times. The creation of a secondary dispatch center is also the antithesis of the Rebalance component of the County’s Renew ‘22 initiative. How can we ask our employees to tighten their belts if such significant funds are spent unnecessarily?

As mentioned above, our future economy is uncertain. Furthermore, most of the cities within the county have passed or are about to vote on additional sales taxes to address public safety concerns. The county has no such prospect for revenue enhancement in the near future and thus has been placed in a financially disadvantageous position. Now is simply not the time to commit to the spending of millions of dollars in capital and ongoing annual expenses to construct a dispatch system that has less efficiency, less capability, and fewer economies of scale than our present system.

Many of the issues identified in the previous dispatch consultant reports address the lack of funding to the Sheriff’s Office to properly staff the current Public Safety Dispatch Center. The Sheriff’s Office has recognized this and created the Call Taker position. The Board of Supervisors recognized the benefit of this position and agreed to fund five of these positions in the last budget. The Deltawrx report also recommended the funding of additional technical resources for the computer systems within the Public Safety Dispatch Center. The Santa Barbara Sheriff’s Office sought financing for these services, but unfortunately the funding was not available.

The Deltawrx report for Chittenden County identified a 15% decrease in staff required for a consolidated dispatch center. The dispatch split proposal that you will consider on October 1, 2019 identifies a 25% increase in staffing if the current dispatch operation is separated. Our dispatch center is already competing for qualified staff with the five other Public Safety Answering Points within Santa Barbara County, thus this would add yet another dispatch center competing for call takers and dispatchers.

Our county is facing and must soon grapple with some other extraordinarily costly public safety expenses on the horizon. While the Northern Branch Jail is almost complete, required renovations of the Main Jail are likely to cost \$20 million or more. The refit and remodel of the recently obtained Black Hawk helicopter to a Firehawk helicopter will be a significant expense. (Ventura County is in the process of converting two such helicopters and projects that cost at \$7 million each.) Perhaps most ominously, the county is preparing to go out to RFP for the critically-needed public safety radio infrastructure project, which is anticipated to exceed \$40 million. In addition, a New Cuyama public safety building project and a new Probation Department headquarters building are both in the planning processes.

Borderless dispatching has been mentioned as one of, if not the primary reason for dispatch separation, but that is a canard. Our existing dispatch center is fully capable of borderless dispatching in the near future. If funds that have been already been appropriated for a new Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) module are released, and if the allied fire agencies involved will share their resource availability information, closest resource dispatching could begin in a matter of a few months. This concept is in no way tied exclusively to a new regional fire dispatch center.

In fact, I met recently with the various Fire Chiefs within Santa Barbara County at their Association meeting with a draft proposal to immediately implement closest resource dispatching, and to seek their participation in identifying a governance model that could address any fire-related dispatch concerns. This would have the potential to save the county and the cities millions of dollars. Unfortunately, the Association did not want to meet and discuss the matter, indicating they “firmly believe that the direction to separate will benefit the Sheriff’s Department, Fire and EMS services, and more importantly the level of service the public will receive from our agencies.”

Despite our great respect for our colleagues in the County Fire Chiefs Association, we strongly disagree with the notion that separation will provide a better level of public safety service for members of the public. In reality, the opposite is true. The largest overarching concern is the delay and inefficiency that will be built into the delivery of service by adding a secondary Public Safety Answering Point requiring precious additional time to interview the caller, extract information and dispatch appropriate resources. As mentioned above, one community believed that they would decrease their call time by 71 seconds as a result of consolidated dispatch services. This would be in ideal situations. There are numerous occasions where callers are upset, confused or so excited by the underlying circumstances of the 911 call that dispatchers are unable to initially decipher what is happening. Time must be spent calming the caller and extracting the vital information. Transferring such callers to another dispatch center, sometimes twice if the CHP dispatch center was called initially, would further increase their anxiety and extend the amount of time it takes to determine and dispatch the required emergency resources, in some cases by several minutes.

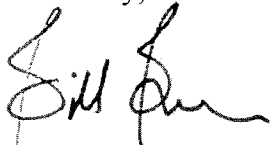
Such delays in dispatching emergency resources are especially troublesome given the stellar record of cardiac arrest survival rates in our county. The 2018 County of Santa Barbara EMS Agency Year

in Review document lists the cardiac arrest survival rates for our county as outperforming the national average over the past three years by an average of 7% each year. Do we really want to build a system that will inevitably impact such achievements negatively, thereby diminishing public safety?

If despite these concerns the Board still wants to move forward with dispatch separation, I would ask you to consider splitting off only the fire dispatch component and keeping EMS dispatching within the current Public Safety Dispatch Center. This would still allow us to complete uninterrupted Emergency Medical Dispatching (EMD) at the primary Public Safety Answering Point, and to not increase the amount of call time before Emergency Medical Dispatching is initiated and emergency medical services are dispatched. This model has been used successfully in adjacent San Luis Obispo County for over 30 years. It would also eliminate delays or premature call transfers in the dispatching of multi-disciplinary calls, such as traffic accidents, shootings, stabbings, assaults with injuries, etc.

In closing, let me remind you that we in Santa Barbara County are blessed to have an outstanding group of men and women serving as Public Safety Dispatchers and Call Takers in our Public Safety Dispatch Center. Despite being understaffed and under-resourced for years, they have consistently provided exemplary service to our communities, often under the most challenging of circumstances. I urge you to reconsider dispatch separation and instead, for a fraction of the cost, provide additional staff and technology to our existing operation, to make an excellent dispatch system even better.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Brown", written in a cursive style.

BILL BROWN
Sheriff – Coroner