




BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: CEO
Department No.: 012
For Agenda Of: 5/7/2019
Placement: Departmental
Estimated Tme: 1 Hour
Continued Item:
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department: Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer 
Director(s)
Contact Info: Bernard Melekian, Assistant County Executive Officer
SUBJECT: Public Safety Dispatch Separation

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form:

Other Concurrence: Risk Management

As to form:

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form:

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Receive and file an update from staff on Public Safety Dispatch alternatives.
- b) Direct staff to return with a complete estimate of engineering and staffing costs for both of the recommended Regional Fire Communications Facility (RFCF) options:
 - i. Option 1: Expand the existing Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to accommodate a Regional Fire Communications Facility; and
 - ii. Option 3: Build a new facility adjacent to the existing Public Safety Dispatch Center.
- c) Provide other direction as appropriate; and
- d) Determine this action is exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15378(b)(5), which are organizational or administrative activities of governments that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes to the environment.

Summary Text:

At the Board meeting of August 28, 2018, the Board directed staff to determine the feasibility of a physical separation of Law and Fire/Emergency Medical Service, with a regionalized Law function in the north County and a regionalized Fire/EMS function in the south county. The Board further directed staff to determine the feasibility of fully integrating with the current City of Santa Maria operation.

Subsequently on November 13, 2018, staff reported that we would be pursuing three lines of inquiry:

1. Determine which public safety discipline, Law or Fire, should move from the existing Calle Real campus in south county.
2. Determine whether the City of Santa Maria's Call Center represented an appropriate location to house the County's communications facility.
3. If integration with Santa Maria was a feasible option, should the County operation integrate with the existing City operation or lease space within the police facility and maintain a separate operation with technical linkages.

After extensive discussion and analysis, staff determined the following:

1. That the separation of the Law and Fire communication functions is feasible and has potential positive benefits.
2. That the transfer of law enforcement operations out of the existing center is neither cost-effective nor operationally desirable. Further, the relocation of the Fire operation could be more easily accomplished.
3. After extensive discussions with the City of Santa Maria, it was determined that their communications facility would be an ideal site for a redundant back-up center, but that it was not feasible to integrate the County's existing operation with the City's facility, particularly in view of the County's desire to achieve full regional capabilities.

Staff then considered several options and explored two options in detail. Those two options were 1) the expansion of the existing EOC facility to incorporate the RFCF and 2) the construction of a new facility on the property directly adjacent to the existing Public Safety Dispatch Center.

For reasons that will be discussed in detail, staff recommends a complete analysis of both options with a 60 to 90 day turnaround for reporting to the Board.

Background:

Previous Board Actions

The Board's history with respect to this matter is as follows:

- **July 27, 2017:** Received the report from DeltaWRX and directed staff to conduct a more detailed analysis of each of the alternatives presented.
- **August 28, 2018:** Directed staff to conduct an analysis as to the feasibility of "Option 2", the physical separation of Law and Fire, collaborating with Santa Maria. The delay in returning to the Board was due to the intervening Fire and Debris Flow disasters.
- **November 13, 2018:** Received an update from staff requesting additional time to conduct the analysis.

Project Assumptions

- The Regional Fire Communications Facility (RFCF) needs to meet "Essential Services" construction standards.
- That as regional fire and emergency medical partners participate in the RFCF, they will contribute financially to the cost of running the facility.
- Although all of the County's fire chiefs have expressed support for the RFCF concept, none of their elected bodies has taken any formal action as no specifics on cost, location or operations have been yet determined. Such action will be a requirement if regional partnerships are to be built into the funding assumptions.

- There will be two Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs); a primary and a secondary PSAP. The Sheriff will continue to operate the primary PSAP.
- The change will not impact the Sheriff's ability to operate the primary PSAP, and the Sheriff's budget will not be negatively affected by this action.
- Should the EOC expansion option be selected, there will be no loss of space or functionality at the existing EOC.

Barriers to Integration with the City of Santa Maria

The City of Santa Maria invested heavily in a state of the art communications facility within their new police building. Their dispatch center is responsible for both police and fire operations. Their center is unique in several aspects.

- 1) It relies solely on Motorola to provide Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD).
- 2) It is 700MHZ (UHF) which is unique in the County; and
- 3) It is fully encrypted.

In response to the Board's direction in August and November of 2018, the CEO's staff, in collaboration with the Sheriff's Office, Fire Department and General Services, worked closely with the City of Santa Maria to determine the feasibility of creating an integrated public safety communications center. City and County staff discussed two options:

1. Full integration within the existing City dispatch center.
2. The build out of a separate space within the existing building.

After thorough discussion and dialogue, it became apparent that there are significant barriers to a fully integrated partnership with the City of Santa Maria, the foremost of which is the City's requirement that integration with the City requires the use of the Motorola CAD. The City has invested heavily in their infrastructure and Motorola represents the backbone of their center. Unfortunately, Santa Maria is one of only a handful of fire departments in the state who utilize Motorola. The preferred system throughout the state, including all but one (Santa Maria) of the fire agencies in Santa Barbara County, is TriTech.

It is the opinion of County Fire that the use of Motorola Cad for fire operations is not desirable. The addition of regional partners will serve to compound these concerns. In addition, the system is not conducive to state OES/CAL Fire operations that will bring a multitude of unique agencies to the County during disaster operations. The vast majority of state fire agencies operate on VHF systems and do not use encryption technology. Both of these factors are highly problematic from the perspective of creating a fully integrated system with the capacity to expand during major incidents.

There were also discussions held around building out a new facility within the Santa Maria Police building. This plan entailed building a separate fire dispatch center within the existing facility. However, the City of Santa Maria would supply server space, power back up and environmental controls for Fire/EMS servers. This would allow leveraging the City's technological infrastructure. Ultimately, this plan was determined to be likely to result in significant disruption to Santa Maria Police operations. Additionally, the City did not feel that there was sufficient fiscal benefit for the City.

City of Santa Maria staff indicated that there have been serious discussions concerning developing a new Fire communications facility in the future. This facility would be separate from the current operation presently housed in the police department; however, this project is only a concept.

Staff does recommend the development of a plan to work with the City of Santa Maria in developing a formal agreement to establish Santa Maria Police Department as a redundant back-up communications facility.

Alternative Locations

In addition to reviewing the Santa Maria Police Department, staff searched for alternative sites for housing the Regional Fire Communications Facility (RFCF). The focus of the search was initially limited to existing County facilities to avoid the costs and complications associated with a new construction project. The preferred location for the RFCF would be in the north county, but no appropriate locations presented themselves.

Staff discussed three alternatives:

Option 1: Expanding the Emergency Operations Center

Option 2: Creating a co-located facility within the current Public Safety Dispatch Center or

Option 3: Building a new RFCF in the parking lot directly adjacent to the existing Public Safety Dispatch Center.

Option 2 was eventually discarded for reasons that will be described later in this report.

County Fire and General Services examined options 1 and 2 in detail. Ultimately, all parties agreed that the challenges of expanding/modifying the existing Public Safety Dispatch Center were too significant to justify pursuing this option. The Sheriff's office participated in these meetings. Option 3 is conceptual and, should the Board concur, General Services will study this option in more detail. All of these options have advantages and challenges. A much more detailed analysis, in terms of staffing and construction requirements, will be undertaken in accordance with Board direction.

Option1: Expanding the Emergency Operations Center

Staff from Fire and General Services toured the EOC in March 2019 and found it highly suitable as a site for the RFCF. Constructed to "Essential Facility" standards, the EOC's design and structure allows for future expansion, primarily along the western portion of the building. It is in close proximity to Fire headquarters, County IT resources including fiber-optic cables and has access to generators and Uninterrupted Power Sources. There is ample parking and space to allow for construction activities without disrupting ongoing operations. This project is judged more than able to comply with the County's Zero Net Energy (ZNE) standard.

Expansion of this facility was part of the Capital Improvement Plan approved by the Board on March 19, 2019. The expansion listed on the CIP called for the creation of a call center, expanded Joint Information Center (JIC) opportunities, and sleeping quarters for use during emergency operations. Fire and General Services believe that the old Fire Station 19 offers adequate space for the sleeping quarters. Consequently, the expanded facility could accommodate both the RFCF, the new call center, and would need to provide space for expanded joint information center needs.

The biggest obstacle to the utilization of this space for the RFCF is developing a design that fully integrates the EOC expansion and the RFCF without negatively affecting each other's operations. During emergencies such as the recent Thomas Fire and 1/9 Debris Flow, the EOC was fully utilized. Consequently, the use of an off-site facility (i.e., Station 19) and the costs of rehabilitating that space will be critical factors in evaluating the total costs of the project.

Option 2: Co-Location of Fire and Law operations in the existing facility

It would be possible to separate the Law and Fire functions within the existing building. This model is sometimes referred to as the Austin (TX) model due to the fact that the facility in Austin houses four jurisdictions' dispatch operations under one roof. This permits a sharing of space, administrative functions, and IT resources while maintaining the desired autonomy.

Staff toured the existing facility and conducted a cursory analysis as to the feasibility of co-locating the Fire and Law functions. It was determined that such an model was feasible from a technical perspective but that it presented a number of challenges including construction issues, difficulty in maintaining ongoing operations during construction and developing effective governance processes.

There are aspects of the building's current construction that would be advantageous. Specifically, there are underutilized areas of floor space and a number of balconies that could be converted into offices and administrative support areas. The floor space in the facility is more than adequate for joint operations.

However, there is a marked lack of capacity for office space, IT infrastructure and other support-related functions, particularly as required during major disasters. The cable runs are at maximum capacity and increasing their capacity would be challenging. Co-location would require expanded and improved IT spaces, although this will be a requirement of every option. Depending on the nature of any security concerns, these spaces could be contiguous sharing HVAC, power distribution and back-up power supplies. The design elements required for this space to achieve the appropriate level of redundancy are not currently installed.

One of the challenges with this option is the expense required to analyze the feasibility of expanding this facility which may require specialized consultants given the existing configuration. Specifically, the need to determine the exact construction design as well as determining whether keeping the existing center operational during construction is even possible. This latter concern is perhaps the biggest barrier to implementing this option. Additionally, the expansion would need to push out to the north into an existing parking lot. This would disrupt both parking and the ability to stage construction equipment.

Ultimately, governance remains the primary challenge with this option. The need to make a distinction between the operational requirements of the Law and Fire disciplines is one of the primary drivers of this project. It is not clear whether such a distinction can occur when there is no immediately visible change in the operating environment. Secondly, it is not clear that operating a primary and secondary PSAP under one roof is efficient or desirable. The Sheriff and the Fire Chief have both expressed concerns about this aspect of co-location.

Option 3: Build a new facility adjacent to the existing Dispatch Center

Related to Option 2 was construction of a new facility in the parking lot immediately west of the current facility. This facility would occupy what is currently a parking lot, would allow for easier sharing of IT infrastructure and would permit the current facility to continue operations during construction.

This option contains the advantages of co-location, but permits the existing facility to continue operations within the existing building while construction was underway. There are concerns about the cost of building a new facility from the ground up, but more analysis is required to bring back a meaningful estimate.

The Sheriff is opposed to this option for a variety of reasons, among which are concerns about disruption to the existing operation.

Other Options

Another possible alternative is to find a suitable site other than County-owned property. Subsequent to these initial discussions, the County Executive Office decided to search for existing commercial real estate to determine if there were any suitable properties that might be available for long-term lease. The CEO's office asked the Fire department to submit a list of minimal requirements to General Services. General Services is now in the process of conducting a search to determine if such appropriate locations are available. As of the submission of this report, that search is still in progress.

Should the Board determine that neither of the recommended options warrants further study and no suitable commercial space is available, staff would then begin the process of conducting a search for an alternative location that meets the requirements for the RFCF.

As an additional alternative, the Sheriff proposed that the existing facility be significantly upgraded, as has been recommended in the 2017 DeltaWRX report, and existing operations (Law and Fire/EMS) continue with an alternative governance structure to be collaboratively developed with Fire Partners and jointly implemented.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that both Option 1 (EOC expansion) and Option 3 (a new facility adjacent to the existing center) be evaluated for construction costs and staffing requirements. Both Fire and General Services support this option. Staff proposes to return to the Board within 60-90 days with the following information:

1. Estimated construction costs for expanding the existing EOC to accommodate the RFCF.
2. Estimated construction costs for building a new RFCF adjacent to the existing Dispatch center.
3. Estimated staffing requirements/costs for both facilities.
4. Estimated costs for refurbishing Station 19 to accommodate proposed sleeping quarters.
5. Estimated costs for upgrading the existing Primary PSAP (i.e., Public Safety Dispatch Center.)
6. Estimated impact on the Sheriff's budget.
7. Status report on potential regional partners.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Fiscal impacts of separating Law and Fire/EMS functions and creating a regional Fire Communications Facility have not been updated since the 2017 DeltaWRX report. That information will be provided as the next phase of this work pending Board direction.

Fiscal Analysis:

Attachments:

Authored by:

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