



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: County Executive Office
Department No.: 012
For Agenda Of: 8/28/18
Placement: Departmental
Estimated Time: 1.5 Hours
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department: Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer
Director(s): Matt Pontes, Assistant County Executive Officer
Contact Info: Matt Pontes, Assistant County Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Public Safety Dispatch Center Report

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence:

As to form: N/A

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Not Reviewed

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Receive and file an update from staff on Public Safety Dispatch alternatives;
- b) Consider options for Public Safety Dispatch;
- c) Provide staff with conceptual direction on a recommended Public Safety Dispatch alternative and direct staff to return within 60 days with further financial and timing information to fund the selected option; or
- d) Provide other direction, as appropriate; and
- e) Determine that the above actions are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(4), because they consist of the creation of government funding mechanisms or other government fiscal activities which do not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment.

SUMMARY

This Board letter provides new options for consideration regarding the County's Public Safety Dispatch operations. Since the Board's last review of dispatch in July 2017, changes have occurred that warrant consideration of additional alternatives. It also provides a brief update on information requested by the Board at the July 2017 presentation.

BACKGROUND

Existing Structure. The Santa Barbara County Public Safety Dispatch Center is managed by the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office, which provides dispatch services for the County's EMS, Fire Department and Sheriff's Office. In addition, the dispatch center currently dispatching services for the City of Guadalupe (Fire/EMS/Police), and several County Departments.

The 24/7 Public Safety dispatching is a critical County function. The staff at the dispatch center are committed to the delivery of multi-discipline services and have a long-standing history of delivering excellent service in large complex emergencies and disasters. This report is not a criticism of their commitment or the work that they perform daily for our communities. Review of our dispatch operations is a reflection of our reality: as the scope, frequency and scale of disasters increase, their work becomes more critical.

In addition to the Santa Barbara County Public Safety Dispatch Center, there are six other dispatch centers (aka Public Safety Answering Points "PSAPs") in operation within Santa Barbara County. The City of Santa Barbara, City of Santa Maria, UCSB, Montecito Fire, Vandenberg Air Force Base, and the City of Lompoc all have stand-alone PSAPs. At this time, none have any real-time electronic connection to one another.

Previous Alternatives Considered : In July 2017, your Board heard the Public Safety Dispatch Center Report that was assembled by Deltawrx Management Consultants LLC (DELTAWRX) a consultant hired by the County of Santa Barbara Fire Department that analyzed the current emergency and non-emergency dispatching environment in the County Public Safety Dispatch Center. They provided two options for the Board's discussion:

- **Alternate #1** recommended an optimized operations in the current joint-agency facility and provide improvements under direction of a newly created position filled by an experienced civilian director. This option would allow stakeholders in the Sheriff's office, Fire Department and EMS to have input into governance, management, staffing, process improvement, and recommended technological improvements. This alternative was silent as to whether the civilian director would report the Sheriff's Office or another entity. The Sheriff expressed his strong preference that joint operations continue under the Sheriff's Office. The additional annual operating cost was estimated at \$1.1 million.
- **Alternative #2** moved Fire and EMS to a newly re-constructed alternate location adjacent to Fire Headquarters. The existing Sheriff's Office-managed dispatch center would act as the Primary Dispatch center and transfer Fire and EMS-related calls for service directly to the new Fire / EMS dispatch facility. This alternative included a physical presence of the additional Fire / EMS

operational area partner agencies and the ability to have space available to operate extended dispatch operation. This alternative was estimated to cost \$8.6 M to construct, with an additional, annual operational cost estimated at \$2.8 million dollars. The Board directed staff to pursue the viability of this alternative.

Information Requested. In addition, the Board requested that staff provide further information, which is briefly discussed below.

- *Participation by other fire agencies and partners* – Chief Peterson has discussed this with other fire agencies; area fire chiefs have expressed an interest in joining a regional Fire/EMS dispatch center. A primary interest is in allowing for nearest resource dispatching and a structure of shared governance, such as through a joint powers authority.
- *Financial options and funding sources from these other agencies and partners* – it is too early for exact financial commitments to be made, but some agency staff have expressed a willingness for a financial commitment. The next steps, once an option is clear, is to develop costs and communicate with their elected Boards.
- *Impacts on employees* – Currently there are 32 dispatch positions of which four are vacant. Given the continued need and turnover of dispatchers, it is not envisioned that there would be displacement of dispatchers. All required bargaining processes would be followed if that were to occur.
- *Information technology support issues* – The Sheriff requested funding in the department’s budget for IT improvements. The full allocation was not granted, pending a final decision on dispatch options.
- *Operation and funding of current center, including maintenance and capital costs* – the current dispatch operations budget is \$5.9 million. There is no outstanding capital requests for the current center; on average maintenance costs for the building are \$20,100. Should the new options be selected, there would be required facility changes.

Changes since 2017 Since we last reported to the Board, a few changes have occurred and further discussion with public safety leaders.

- *Need for redundancy:* recent disasters highlight the need for a redundant center in North County. The large investment (\$8.6 M) in a new South County dispatch facility in close proximity to the existing center was re-evaluated. It was thought that some of that funding could be better utilized providing a redundant center in North County,
- *Opening of City of Santa Maria joint police-fire dispatch center:* The City of Santa Maria opened a state-of-the art center that could accommodate adding law and/or fire/EMS form the County for regionalization of either or both services. These could be added to the City’s existing operations, or the services could be housed in available space in the City’s dispatch center. Any option involving the City of Santa Maria would require further discussion and evaluation with city staff.
- *Public Safety ACEO:* The CEO’s office has recently hired a new Assistant CEO dedicated to public safety, who could provide oversight should a combined center be continued.
- *Existing facility:* The existing facility was re-evaluated for space needs. The site could be split into two dispatch centers and expanded.

In addition:

- *Call takers added:* In June 2018, the Board added five authorized positions of “Call Taker” to the Sheriff’s Office for a \$440,000 annual increase (this was a recommendation of the Deltaxr report). The Sheriff’s Office is in the recruitment phase.

- *Importance of Closest Resource dispatching:* The Board also expressed an interest into investigating a dispatch option that provided for “Closest Resource” or “Borderless” dispatching with other Fire / EMS jurisdictions. This feature of dispatching could be attained from any of the options that are under consideration and which might include the use of a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) with the County. Staff will report back to the Board on additional costs and the implementation timing needed once the Board determines the preferred option.

Considerations in evaluation of options

There were several considerations reviewed in the evaluation of additional options. The objective has always been to have a high-functioning, 24/7 dispatch operation that is able to professionally meet the public safety needs of our communities. Staff reviewed the options presented in the context of the following primary considerations:

- Cost and estimated time to implement
- Ability to achieve closest resource or borderless dispatching
- Reliable redundant dispatching opportunity
- Recruitment of dispatchers

Additionally, other factors were reviewed:

- Preferred alternative of the Sheriff’s office, Fire or EMS management
- Complexity or unpredictability of logistics
- Further the State’s intent to increase regionalization of dispatch centers
- Capability for “expanded” fire dispatch

Options to be Considered. For the purposes of this report, staff recommends that the Board consider four options, presented below.

All options presented do the following

- Allow for nearest resource dispatching
- Contemplate a Joint Powers Authority or similar structure to regionalize fire/EMS services. This may not occur immediately but in the medium term,
- Recommend civilian executive director(s)
- Provides for some level of redundancy

	Option 1 Continued joint operations under different governance	Option 2 - Separate Law and Fire/EMS operations; Law regionalized in North County	Option 3 Separate Law and Fire/EMS operations in current location	Option 4 Separate Law and Fire/EMS operations; Fire/EMS at Station 19
Options	Change governance structure TBD – Stakeholders FD/EMS/SO/BOS; potentially add JPA partners	Regionalize law with SMPD in north county/Fire & EMS regionalize in south county, potentially add JPA partners	Use existing facility – partition and/or expand facility, potentially add JPA partners	Create potential JPA w/Fire agencies and reconfigure Station 19 to be used as secondary answering point
Cost	Med \$1-\$6M	Unknown negotiate w/city of SM	Med \$1-\$6 M	High \$8-\$9 M

Time	6-24 mos	6-12 mos	24-30 mos	24-36 mos
Closest Resource	Yes- w/Min investment	Yes-w/minimum investment	Yes-w/minimum investment	Yes-w/minimum investment
Redundancy	FD would add in north	Yes- full functionality	FD would add in north	FD would add in north
Easier Recruitment	NO	Yes	Easier for Fire and EMS	Easier for Fire and EMS

Option 1 - Continued joint operations under different governance

Similar to previous Alternate #1 from July 2017 except this option explicitly operates under CEO's office. It would require:

- Hire a civilian Director who reports to the Public Safety Assistant County Executive Officer to oversee County dispatching.
- Create a governance structure where Sheriff's Office, Fire, EMS and a Board of Supervisor representative can provide guidance on the functionality of the multi-discipline operation.
- This option retains the current facility, staffing and adds connectivity and space for additional agency partners including through a potential JPA.

This option is likely the least expensive, but allows for enhanced management and accountability through a stakeholder group, a civilian director and involvement of the Public Safety ACEO. Although it will take some time to create, recruit and select a civilian director, it is believed that much of the work once they are on-board could be attained within 24-30 months. This position will ensure all disciplines issues are being addressed, ensuring the *Call Taker* positions are effectively deployed, coordination occurs with the stakeholder group, builds a stakeholder governance model that ultimately could include a JPA, and furthers *closest resource* capabilities (funding, agreements, project details and project equipment costs are assembled and implementation is managed).

This option continues our multi-discipline dispatch efforts, streamlines the lines of authority and the ability to address issues. This option would create a small back-up alternate redundant dispatch capability in North County at the time when technology is upgraded with closest resource dispatching, and with other Fire Agencies being able to join a potential JPA. This option doesn't solve the difficulty in retention and recruitment of dispatchers or designate an area for extended dispatch capabilities. The key to success in this alternative will be the implementation of an experienced, professional civilian director who can establish a governance model that provides for functionally equal governance by the Law, Fire and EMS stakeholders.

Option 2 - Separate law and fire/EMS dispatching operations.

- Regionalization of Law enforcement dispatch services by, combining our Sheriff's Office PSAP with the City of Santa Maria's PSAP integrating a portion of our dispatchers, call takers and a Sheriff Command staff into the existing City of Santa Maria's Law and Fire dispatch operation.
- This option requires financial information and agreement with the City of Santa Maria. This option also allows for augmentation of our current Public Safety microwave radio system as it connects with Santa Maria's towers, systems, consoles and upgraded technologies.
- Santa Barbara County Fire and EMS would combine with other south coast Fire agencies and operate a secondary regional Fire / EMS dispatch center at our existing Calle Real site.

This option separates the Law and Fire / EMS functions has the opportunity to regionalize both disciplines. This option would have a primary answering point with law dispatch (i.e, all 9-1-1 calls received at that point and transferred to the secondary) and secondary with Fire/EMS .

Option 2 would likely take up to 12 months to reach agreement and integrate technology with SMPD and likely provide for easier dispatcher recruitment and retention. Fire and EMS would hire a civilian director to implement the next steps in *closest resource* dispatching upgrading technology and initiating discussions with other Fire Agencies about a potential JPA. If this option is not selected, furthering a partnership with SMPD for a geographic redundant back up dispatch facility would still be advisable. Additionally, this alternative would accommodate a collocated “expanded” dispatch area which would provide exclusive dispatch consoles to address frequent large-scale incidents that can exceed capacity of the primary center.

Option 3 - Separate law and fire/EMS dispatching operations at the existing Calle Real facility.

- Use our existing joint-discipline facility and physically separate (by partition or expansion) the Law dispatching operation from the Fire / EMS dispatching operation.
- The Law portion of the facility would continue to be managed by the Sheriff’s Office and that PSAP would transfer Fire / EMS calls to the other portion of the facility where Fire / EMS would manage that operation.

This option separates the Law and Fire / EMS functions but retains our overall existing joint-use facility. Dispatchers, and Dispatch Supervisors would be separated by a partition or wall and staff would construct additional space to the facility. This option has a cost of potentially \$1 to \$6 million dollars as some construction or build-out of the existing facility would be necessary, and that portion of this option requires further evaluation. Design, construction and system testing of equipment must occur before being operational and that process may take as long as 24-36 months.

Option 3 would achieve the Board’s interest in *closest resource* dispatching, continue with Sheriff’s Office management of Law, and allow for Fire and EMS to hire a civilian director to manage and optimize their operations. This option likely reduces the ability for dispatchers to be used for either discipline, but may provide for faster hiring of dispatchers for Fire / EMS that have a less rigorous background investigation and compliance. This option would create a small back-up alternate redundant dispatch capability in North County at the time when technology is upgraded with closest resource dispatching, and could allow other Fire Agencies join a JPA.

Option 4 – Continue with prior Board direction of pursuing a Fire/EMS center at Station 19. As mentioned above, this Option rehabilitated Station 19, creating a new secondary answering point at a cost of \$8-9 million from Fire District funds. The space identified would be adequate for other fire agencies to operate within a potential JPA, co-locate and achieve closest resource dispatching. This is not recommended at this time given the other options discussed.

Options not suggested at this time. Staff reviewed the following other options or models for dispatch which are not suggested at this time;

- Continuing the status quo.

- The Sheriff has recommended continuing the existing joint-discipline dispatch operations under command of the Sheriff's Office, with an additional general fund allocation to help address personnel and equipment needs. The Sheriff discussed instituting a process where Fire and EMS management would assist in the prioritization of that additional funding.
- Separating Fire / EMS operation by constructing a new Fire / EMS facility somewhere in North County.
- Moving the Sheriff's Office and/or Fire and EMS to empty space within Santa Maria City's Police Headquarters as a measure to save on capital construction costs of a standalone facility.

Next Steps

Staff did not assemble detailed cost breakdowns for each of the options, only providing preliminary estimates based on previous reports and recent understandings of potential scope variables within each of the options presented. After the Board provides conceptual direction, staff will return with further information within 60 days.

Staff will review and report back information, including: 1) Governance structure options, including the potential use of joint powers authority agreements or similar arrangements; 2) Compliance with regulations and best practices for public safety dispatch programs; 3) Training requirements; and 4) estimated costs of initial and recurring expenses.

Any potential changes to the current dispatch operation or the facility are going to take time to plan and implement. Time will be needed to construct agreements, fund and hire a Civilian Director, possibly reconfigure or construct an additional space and further evaluate resources and technology solutions. Staff have had discussions with the Fire Department, EMS and the Sheriff's Office to better understand their current successes and challenges and their future goals.

Fiscal Analysis:

The three new options require fiscal analysis be performed and funding sources identified before ultimately approved. Once the Board directs staff on a preferred option, staff will prepare a more detailed fiscal analysis, which will be brought back to the Board of Supervisors for review.

Staffing Impacts:

All three options recommend that a civilian Executive Director position be established. Other positions will also be analyzed. For new Option 1, it is anticipated that the Executive Director would work with the Public Safety ACEO and an Executive Stakeholder Group to formulate an operational and staffing plan that would be brought forth to the Board of Supervisors for approval. For Options 2 and 3, Fire would be overseeing a civilian director who would do the same. It is recommended that the Sheriff establish a civilian dispatch director, but those choices are ultimately under the Sheriff's authority.

Special Instructions:

N/A

Attachments:

Attachment A: Santa Barbara County Dispatch Power Point Presentation

Authored by:

Matt Pontes, Assistant County Executive Officer

cc:

Eric L. Peterson, Fire Chief

Bill Brown, Sheriff – Coroner

Nick Clay, Director, EMSA