



Town of Shelburne, Vermont

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MEMORANDUM

To: CCRPC Regional Dispatching Group
From: Joe Colangelo, Shelburne Town Manager
Date: December 13, 2016
Re: Discussion Points for Dispatch/PSAP Inefficiencies – Follow-Up to Legislative Breakfast

Dispatching and 911 Call Taking

- Dispatching and 911 call taking are two different functions (for the most part)
- Dispatchers talk to public safety employees – police officers, fire fighters, rescue departments
 - Dispatchers tell the public safety personnel where to go (e.g. tell police officer to go to 123 A Street for a possible theft in progress)
- 911 call takers receive the 911 call from the public (typically in stressful situations)
- 911 call center = PSAP (Public Safety Answering Point)
- In Chitt. Co. there are two primary PSAP's (6 total in VT): Williston SP and Shelburne Dispatch
- In Chittenden County there are 8 dispatch centers.
 - Some dispatch centers like So. Burlington and Burlington only dispatch for their police, fire, emergency departments
 - Milton contracts with Colchester
 - Shelburne Dispatch dispatches for 40+ agencies in three different counties

Scenarios

- Scenario #1: Someone Hinesburg calls 911 to report a fire in their living room.
 - Primary PSAP is Shelburne so call goes to Shelburne and then that same person dispatches Hinesburg Fire Department because Shelburne happens to have a contract to dispatch for Hinesburg Fire Department (this is the exception; not the rule)
- Scenario #1a: Same person in Hinesburg calls 911 to report a fire in their living room
 - This time the two Shelburne Dispatchers/911 call takers on duty already are on the phone with other 911 calls. The call then 'rolls over' to the 911 call taker in the state system who has gone the longest without taking a call. Equal chance of the call going to any of the other 5 PSAP centers (geography is not a factor)
 - The 911 Call taker (say in St. Albans) then contacts Shelburne Dispatch whose line was busy with other 911 calls but receives a call from St. Albans on a different line (requiring now the Shelburne Dispatcher to be on two or more calls at once) who then will dispatch out the Hinesburg Fire Department

- Scenario #2: 911 Call from Burlington to report their spouse is having a heart attack
 - 911 Call goes to Williston State Police (unless it gets rolled over to one of the other 5 PSAPs) who then calls the Burlington Dispatch center who then sends rescue.
- Scenarios #3: 911 Call from Bolton reporting their neighbor has a knife and has hurt someone in the house
 - Bolton is in Williston SP's PSAP area but let's say this call rolls to Hartford.
 - Hartford then needs to contact Williston SP to dispatch State Police
 - Hartford also needs to contact Shelburne Dispatch who will dispatch ambulance service
 - There could be a situation in which a 911 call requires the 911 call taker to make contact with three separate dispatch departments to dispatch the appropriate services (rescue, police, fire)

Issues

- Current system is inefficient.
 - (Valuable) time is lost due to the transfers
 - Currently Chittenden County is both over-staffed and under-staffed.
 - 45 total dispatchers
 - Ideal: 32 – 38
 - But the 45 dispatchers are dispersed throughout different municipalities which means there is little back-up support
 - Ideally the person answering 911 call can act as dispatcher to all necessary agencies and therefore able to be in contact with everyone including the member of the public in trouble. This rarely happens with our current set-up.
- Collective Bargaining Agreements
- Governance/Charter
- Funding mechanism
- Chitt. Co. 40% of all 911 calls in Vermont; 150K calls-for-service annually.

Benefits of Regionalization

- Professionalization
 - Give dispatchers ability to be in larger organization with opportunities for advancement
 - General Manager with specialization
 - Better training
- Consolidate Technology
- Likely (yet still unknown) cost control over the long run
- Provides critical number of dispatchers and 911 call-takers in one organization
 - Likelihood of roll-over calls from Chittenden Co. reduced
 - Same caller will take 911 call and dispatch

What's at Stake?

- Lives/Safety - public and public safety personnel
- Cost Containment
- Efficient/Effective Delivery of Service