KENT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Tuesday, February 16, 2016
Room 310, Administration Building
Wyoming Dispatch – Part 2
- WORK SESSION -

Meeting called to order at 7:30 a.m. by Chair James R. Saalfeld.

Present: Commissioners Bolter, Brieve, Bulkowski, Hennessy, Jones, Kallman, Koorndyk, Ponstein, Shroll, Stek, Talen, Voorhees, Chair Saalfeld - 13.

Absent: Antor, Chivis, Mast, Morgan, Vander Molen, Vonk - 6.

(Handouts: 1) Memorandum on Dispatch Questions from Administrator Delabbio, dated February 11, 2016; 2) Information from Commissioner Morgan re: Wyoming's request and the KCDA report; 3) Sheriff Dispatch Cost Allocations with the inclusion of Wyoming; 4) copy of Wyoming Dispatch PowerPoint presentation from January 28, 2016; and 5) Wyoming Dispatch Transition Budget Analysis from the Sheriff Department. All of which are on file in the Office of the County Clerk.)

Introduction

Administrator Delabbio explained that this is a follow-up to the January 28 work session on the City of Wyoming's (Wyoming) request to become part of Kent County's dispatch system. Wyoming's contract with the City of Grand Rapids (Grand Rapids) for dispatch services expires on July 1, 2016. Currently, the Sheriff Department dispatches police and fire services for all communities except Wyoming and Grand Rapids. The answers to questions received over the last two weeks are in Commissioners' packets.

Sheriff Department personnel present include: Sheriff Larry Stelma; Undersheriff Michelle Young; Chief Deputy Kevin Kelley; Sheriff Emergency Communications Manager Matt Groesser; Administrative Officer Randall DeBruine; and Captain Scott Brown. Also present is Wyoming City Manager and Chair of the Kent County Dispatch Authority, Curtis Holt.

Presentation

Chair Saalfeld explained that also in Commissioners' packets is an overview from Commissioner Morgan.

Q & A

Com. Bulkowski: How much will Wyoming joining Kent County dispatch cost the County/Sheriff and where are those dollars coming from?

Mr. DeBruine: The cost is $57,563 for July – December 2016, less the savings of $6,199 for the police, for a net cost of $51,365. The estimated cost for 2017 is $68,191.
Undersheriff Young: The operational changes that would occur with the addition of Wyoming makes the County's dispatch center stronger. The staffing shifts would increase effectiveness by inserting more management into the process. Currently, there is no one between Mr.

Groesser and line staff to cover in his absence. It solidifies CAD administration, which is important to the operation of the dispatch center. Everyone saves a little financially but, operationally, they benefit substantially. It helps balance the two dispatch centers.

Com. Bulkowski: If the merger improves the dispatch center, which serves all the municipalities, why not distribute the costs to all participants as opposed to just the County?
Undersheriff Young: The formula is already in place. Wyoming will be charged the same rate and same discount.
Com. Bulkowski: When the formula was created, such a big community coming in was not anticipated. Everyone benefits except the County (other than having a better dispatch).
Administrator Delabbio: All contracts for dispatch end in 2017 and a new source of sustainable funding will need to be found.

Com. Bulkowski: Where in the budget does the $51,365 come from?
Undersheriff Young: It will come out of the dispatch budget.

Com. Stek: Despite the increase in cost, are we moving in the right direction?
Undersheriff Young: Yes.

Com. Brieve: (Re: Question 4) When the dispatch authority voted, two of the Grand Rapids members voted "no." Is Grand Rapids supportive?
Undersheriff Young: They voted "no," because they could not abstain and they wanted the City Commission to review the report first.
Administrator Delabbio: For clarification purposes, the vote was on the report, not on Wyoming coming into the County's dispatch system.

Com. Bolter: We used to provide fire dispatch to townships at no cost. Do they actually get a *discount,* if they were not paying before?
Undersheriff Young: Some were paying, depending on when they joined the dispatch center. An agreement was in place with four townships and multiple cities to pay for dispatch. There was no agreement to dispatch for the balance of the townships. The old dispatch service looked entirely different from today's service because there was no infrastructure in place for fire dispatch. Now, when a 9-1-1 call comes in, we determine what the chief complaint is and transition it over to a CAD system. Fifteen years ago, the extent of our responsibility for a fire call was to dispatch a fire department, which took about 30 seconds. No monitoring of the service was done. The consolidation conversation began in 2008-2009 as a long-term better move for the County. But, with consolidation comes more work and responsibilities for the center.

Com. Bolter: A fire truck could respond to an accident. The line between fire and police dispatch has been blurred over the years because of the natural progression of how we've become more efficient and cross train.

Undersheriff Young: Absolutely. They are cross-trained especially in the rural township areas. Multiple-type responses are very common because the dispatch call goes to multiple places. This County responsibility and liability has to be well managed.

Com. Bolter: Clarification - the vote that this Board will take is just to agree to bring Wyoming into the County's dispatch system?
Chair Saalfeld: Yes.

Com. Bolter: We need a more comprehensive 9-1-1 plan before asking voters for money.
Undersheriff Young: The Wyoming contract by itself has no impact on the other dispatch issues. In terms of looking at the issues overall, even if our long-term goal is to be a one dispatch center, we have multiple steps to take to accomplish it. The number one need is a major communication infrastructure improvement project. That will need to be in place and evaluated before any final decisions are made on the rules of a consolidated dispatch center. Once the system is in, overflow and emergency backup would be handled differently than today. The numerous factors involved make it nearly impossible to tell you today exactly what the end game will look like. Without financially preparing for it, we cannot get to tomorrow - the issue with which the dispatch authority has been struggling. We have taken positive steps forward to get to a better vantage point. We now know what is next - tackling the communication gap. That fix is the largest dollar amount item.
Chair Saalfeld: Commissioner Morgan's overview goes into the whole question of consolidation and/or funding and how to deal with the two.

Com. Jones: Is the Sheriff Department in communication with the local fire departments regarding equipment purchases?
Mr. Groesser: Three communities have asked what should be done if new radios are needed. It is tough to answer when the future path has not been laid yet. They should buy equipment that has good resale value. The problem is finding the dollars to support the purchases.

Com. Jones: Are these types of purchases dependent on whether there is a surcharge or a millage?
Undersheriff Young: Yes. Unless there is another source of funding that has not yet been considered. The radio project will cost tens of millions of dollars. Municipalities have to make purchases that will work with the dispatch equipment.
Mr. Groesser: We have looked a grant opportunities.
Undersheriff Young: Cost estimates include equipment needed community-wide.

Com. Stek: Do we keep track as to when the local jurisdictions will need to replace equipment? We will move to the upgraded technology, it's just a matter of when. Can we resell equipment?

Undersheriff Young: We made investments 3-4 years ago into radios that were not narrow-band capable. It was a substantial amount of work to inventory the systems but now they are updated.
Mr. Groesser: Some equipment can be resold.
Undersheriff Young: We always recommend buying good equipment. It works better in the field and has resale value. Dispatch purchases resale equipment.

Com. Kallman: Is there data or metrics showing that our upgrades are beneficial?
Mr. Groesser: Upgrades can impact insurance ratings (ISO rating). He meets every six months with ISO to inform them of dispatch improvements.
Undersheriff Young: Homeowner's insurance rates have been affected since we modernized the dispatch center and consolidated services. They use response times from the fire department in the ISO rating for a community.

Com. Stek: While the ratings do improve, we have to be careful about making representation that property owners will see lower rates. Private underwriting practices vary.
Chair Saalfeld: We can say, "in theory," they should be lowered. How does Kent County's dispatch technology compare to similarly sized counties in Michigan?
Mr. Groesser: It depends on which components. Some communities take on more responsibility than others. We had problems with response time before the modernization. We focused on quickest response by the most appropriate resource. Some counties have Smart 9-1-1 which cell phone subscribers have to register for and if they make a 9-1-1 call, it can locate them, otherwise it would be the address of the cell phone bill. Some counties have started taking 9-1-1 text messages. As far as solving problems that had the most community impact, that is already done. We now need to prevent a technology gap.
Undersheriff Young: We are leaps and bounds ahead of most large communities when it comes to back-up. We have a "hot" back-up, so, literally within milliseconds, if our center goes down, the call transitions over to Grand Rapids.

Chair Saalfeld: If we did not have the two jurisdictions' systems (Kent County and Grand Rapids) what would the backup be? Another county?
Mr. Groesser: Could be another county or the state police.
Undersheriff Young: We have backhaul from every tower site in Kent County and that has to come to the central location to run the radio system. That is a literal line. So depending on who the backup was and how far away, it could be very expensive.

Com. Koorndyk: I believe that Wyoming deserves an opportunity to be part of the County's system. It makes the County stronger. Both Undersheriff Young and Mr. Groesser do a phenomenal job with what they have. We do need to consider more money for capital if we want to move into the future and give the citizens what they expect when they call 9-1-1. As far as the ISO ratings go, fire is just one factor.

Com. Voorhees: He has always held the principle that the number one purpose of government is the protection of life and property.

Com. Bulkowski: Staffing will go from 50.25 FTEs to 61 FTEs with the inclusion of Wyoming. It has been explained that it takes six months to get a new hire trained. Is it doable?
Mr. Groesser: Our trainers are phenomenal. We began planning for it when we received the letter of intent from Wyoming. We will be on overtime though in July – August.

Chair Saalfeld: Asked Administrator Delabbio to explain the logistics of this issue.
Administrator Delabbio: Next steps include: The contract agreement between the Wyoming and Kent County for dispatch services will go to the Finance Committee. The additional staffing request will go to both the Legislative and the Finance Committees. Both items will then go before the Board of Commissioners at the March 24 meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:24 a.m., Chair Saalfeld adjourned the work session.

James R. Saalfeld, Chair

Mary Hollinrake, County Clerk