



DOUG SPEARS
FIRE CHIEF

Saginaw Fire Department

400 S. Saginaw Blvd. Saginaw, Texas 76179
Tel: 817-230-0412 Fax: 817-232-3731

TO: City Manager Gabe Reaume

FROM: Fire Chief Doug Spears

DATE: July 3, 2019

RE: Fire Department Dispatching

As we have briefly discussed on a couple of occasions I believe it prudent to consider alternative options for fire department dispatching. One of the catalysts for considering other options is the available opportunity to improve our fire dispatch component through a partnership with the City of Fort Worth. Another initiating factor is the acknowledged fire station flooding problem and the on-going discussion about potential relocation of the fire station as a solution being considered. The third initiating factor is the challenge of the Tarrant County Fire Alarm Center, operating as a 501c3 non-governmental corporation, to keep pace with technology and communication advancements and meet the performance expectations that mission critical emergency dispatch necessitates. A change in fire department dispatch service would require adequate time for planning and implementation both for our department and the Tarrant County Fire Alarm Center or TCFAC so it is necessary to consider options and potential direction at this time.

As you are aware our fire department dispatching is currently provided by the TCFAC through an annual contract agreement. In lieu of monetary payment to the TCFAC for dispatch service, we house the alarm center within our fire station and both manage and provide operational supervision of all aspects of the TCFAC. As the number of TCFAC contracting departments has increased, the call volume of each of those departments has also substantially increased as well as the number of TCFAC employees required to serve them, now at 16 (8 full time and 8 part time). Those factors along with the aforementioned technology and communication challenges of the TCFAC make it increasingly challenging for our department to effectively manage and supervise its operation adding to the consideration for alternative options.

Consolidation of emergency services makes practical sense and is common throughout the region, particularly the consolidation of dispatch communication centers. What results is a more cohesive and effective 911 system and emergency service response to the communities served. As a result of our positive and continually evolving relationship with the Fort Worth Fire Department an opportunity has presented itself to partner with the City of Fort Worth (CTFW) for fire dispatching service. More specifically it's an opportunity to contract with the CTFW to provide fire dispatch service to our department.

Our fire department's current mutual and automatic aid agreements with the CTFW Fire Department, our city limits essentially being surrounded by the CTFW, our mutual use of

Medstar as our ambulance transport provider and the regional trend to consolidate emergency communications dispatch make contracting with the CTFW for fire dispatch service a logical alternative from the operational perspective. Contracting with the CTFW also reduces the number of times a City of Saginaw 911 emergency caller for EMS would be transferred, a significant enhancement over current procedure. This is only achievable due to the existing CAD to CAD interface Fort Worth Fire Dispatch has with Medstar.

Partnering with the CTFW is also the best alternative monetarily when compared to other viable options. Merging fire dispatch back into our police department would require an increase in police dispatch staff from six positions to ten resulting in substantial budget impact.

- Four (4) additional dispatchers
- Budget impact of \$246,800 annually (\$61,700 total cost per position)

The PD's current Computer Aided Dispatch or CAD does not meet the need or level of service required for fire dispatching so migration to a new CAD system would be required likely having both initial and reoccurring budget impact.

In the event relocation of the fire station does occur in the future, relocating the TCFAC within the new facility would add approximately \$1.5 million to the construction cost of the project.

Partnering with the CTFW would obviously have some budgetary impact. \$30 per dispatched incident annually is what is being negotiated. The \$30 figure is derived from actual cost for the CTFW per incident to dispatch their own fire department. Estimating 2300 incidents per year for our department, an annual cost is estimated at \$69,000. The CTFW Fire Department also utilizes an automated incident notification feature in addition to the more traditional verbalized incident notification. This is a significant enhancement to the incident notification method we use currently. The automated notification feature does have some initial one time equipment and installation cost and reoccurring monthly data connection fees from our chosen provider. To set up both our fire stations the cost is estimated at \$60,000 (\$30,000 per station). I am currently working to identify the monthly recurring data connection costs.

SUMMARY

Much like our recent migration onto the Fort Worth Regional Radio System which dramatically improved our public safety radio communications and the safety of our firefighters, police officers and citizens, consolidating fire dispatch communications with Fort Worth makes practical sense and offers an enhancement equivalent to the positive impact of the radio project. It is the best option both operationally and economically and will serve as a long term fire dispatch solution. Consolidation of service will strengthen the working relationship between our two departments and more importantly results in a higher level of service to our citizens. I am completely confident in recommending approval to contract with the CTFW for fire dispatch service. Approving for this upcoming budget year beginning October 1 as I am requesting permits the substantial amount of time necessary for the planning and effort required for all three affected entities, those being our city, the CTFW and the TCFAC.