



CITY OF EL PASO DE ROBLES

"The Pass of the Oaks"

RECEIVED
SAN LUIS OBISPO
SUPERIOR COURT

DEC 21 2020

December 16, 2020

Presiding Judge Jacquelyn H. Duffy
Superior Court of California
1035 Palm Street, Room 355
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408-1000

BY _____
DEPUTY CLERK

RE: 2020 San Luis Obispo County Grand Jury Report re: Joint 911 Dispatch

Honorable Judge Duffy,

We are in receipt of the 2020 San Luis Obispo County Grand Jury reported titled "Joint Agency Dispatch – Better Together?" We were requested to provide comments on Recommendation R1:

Recommendation R1: The Cities of Atascadero, Grover Beach, Paso Robles, Pismo Beach and San Luis Obispo, should each request a proposal from the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff and Cal Fire to provide contract dispatch services and present it as an option in future budgets.

As required by California Penal Code Section 933, the City of Paso Robles is responding directly to you, with a copy to the Foreperson and the Board of Supervisors. Please accept this letter as the response of both the Council and the Mayor. The Council authorized me, by minute action at its meeting of December 15, to forward this response to you.

The Cities of Atascadero, Paso Robles, and San Luis Obispo, as well as Cal Poly, recently conducted an extensive analysis of our individual 911 communications operations, and the cost/benefit of a regionalized approach. Citygate Associates was selected to conduct the study, which was completed in May 2020. As noted in the Grand Jury Report, the analysis found that such a consolidated dispatch center was not fiscally or operationally advantageous to Paso Robles.

Over recent years, there have also been discussions with the Sheriff and CAL FIRE regarding consolidation. A joint-party meeting among all affected agencies was part of the Citygate analysis. In addition, the Cities of Atascadero and Paso Robles have had discussions over the years regarding the consolidation of dispatch operations for the two cities. The City of Paso Robles remains committed to continuing all such discussions whenever appropriate.

To be successful, however, such discussions have two key requirements:

1. There must, in fact, be an alternative to the current approach that is demonstrably beneficial to all parties; and
2. All parties must be motivated to find mutually beneficial and agreeable solutions to the full spectrum of policy, operational, and fiscal issues that arise in such discussions.

Up to this point, neither key requirement has been met with respect to either Fire or Police dispatch services.

I will turn first to a discussion of joint dispatch for fire personnel and equipment, and then for Police personnel and equipment.

Fire. The City of Paso Robles has received a cost estimate from the CAL FIRE SLU/SLO County Fire Department to provide Fire dispatching services. As noted in the Citygate report, for the City to contract with CAL FIRE would cost more than the City is currently incurring by having Emergency Services Department (ESD) operations be dispatched by our City Police Department. In addition, all of ESD's mobile data equipment (MDTs) and supporting hardware would need to be replaced and would be required to move to the State platform at an unspecified cost and a lack of control by connecting to a Statewide system. Future increases in costs associated with hardware and dispatch services would be at the discretion of the SLU Fire Chief with no board oversight or option for specific services such as quickest route or pulse point. After reviewing the costs cited in the Grand Jury report, several local fire Chiefs under contract with CAL FIRE SLU Emergency Command Center reported that their costs exceeded the reported figures in the Grand Jury report, as other associated costs such as required computer hardware and software upgrades were not included. Five Cities Fire Authority stated their most recent invoice was more than \$155k.

In order to achieve many of the benefits of contracting with CAL FIRE without also incurring the additional costs, the City of Paso Robles and CAL FIRE have now reached an agreement: any time a multi-agency vegetation fire response is required for an incident within the City's primary response area, our Police Department's 911 staff will transfer communications control of the incident to CAL FIRE. Thus, when the primary responders are the City's Police and Fire Departments, communications control will remain in the City. When, however, the primary responders are fire agencies from multiple agencies for vegetation fires, communications control will be assumed by CAL FIRE. We believe this approach achieves the primary goals for joint dispatch of fire operations, without incurring additional costs.

Police. In a discussion with the Sheriff's Office, there were three major considerations that present challenges to a consolidated approach. The first was the high volume of calls that are generated within the City of Paso Robles. Monetary savings achieved by some of the smaller dispatch centers in the County would not scale the same way when applied to the Paso Robles call volume and the additional personnel the Sheriff would need to hire in order to absorb the call load.

Second, there are outstanding questions regarding policy and operational matters with consolidation as considered. The Paso Robles dispatch center provides a high level of service to the community in dispatching Police services; they are part of the Police Department team, well-known by the officers and the community. In addition, the dispatchers have a full range of ancillary duties when they are not engaged in active dispatch. Some of these are purely administrative; others, however, provide them with additional information that can be of value in their dispatch functions. Moving dispatch operations to the Sheriff's Department would lose these advantages (and also require the hiring of additional personnel to cover ancillary duties currently performed by dispatch personnel.) Thus, there are monetary and non-monetary factors that need to be considered when making decisions that could affect the quality of operations in handling both emergency and non-emergency calls.

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And third, the Sheriff's 911 dispatch center does not dispatch fire calls. Thus, consolidating with other jurisdictions would mean de-consolidating dispatching operations for the City. Cooperation between our Police and Fire responders might be negatively impacted, as there would be a decrease in structured coordination and communication.

Summary. As a result, requesting proposals from the Sheriff and CAL FIRE is not likely to achieve the benefits suggested in the Grand Jury report. Instead, a commitment by the involved agencies, an updated analysis by Citygate or other experts, and a series of discussions would be the only way to determine if a consolidation of the City's Police dispatch into the Sheriff's Department's dispatch operation and the required simultaneous consolidation of the City's Fire Dispatch with CAL FIRE would in fact be advantageous for the City of Paso Robles and its constituents.

For the reasons detailed above, it appears preferable for the City of Paso Robles to maintain its existing emergency communications center for now, to continue to provide superior Police and Fire dispatching services to our City as cost effectively as possible. As we have done consistently in the past, we will continue to examine joint dispatch and other options for being even more cost effective in the future.

Please feel free to contact me at (805) 237-3888 or smartin@prcity.com if you have any additional questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Martin", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Steven Martin, Mayor
City of Paso Robles

Cc Lynlee Blackburn, Foreperson, 2019-20 San Luis Obispo County Grand Jury
San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors

DEC 21 2020

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

BY _____
DEPUTY CLERK

Report Title: Joint Agency Dispatch: Better Together?

Report Date: November 6, 2020

Response by: Steve Martin

Title: Mayor, City of Paso Robles

FINDINGS

1. I (we) agree with the findings numbered: n/a _____

2. I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: n/a _____

(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recommendations numbered _____ n/a _____ have been implemented.

(Attach a summary describing the implementation actions.)

2. Recommendations numbered _____ n/a _____ have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)

3. Recommendations numbered _____ n/a _____ require further analysis.

(Attach an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of the publication of the Grand Jury report.)

4. Recommendations numbered _____ R1' _____ will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.

(Explanatory letter attached.)

Date: 12/15/20

Signed: _____

Howard P. ...
Paso Robles City Manager

Number of pages attached: 3