

CITY OF
ARROYO GRANDE
CALIFORNIA

July 9, 2013

Presiding Judge Barry T. LaBarbera
Superior Court of California
1035 Palm Street, room 355
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

Dear Honorable Judge LaBarbera:

Please find attached the City of Arroyo Grande response to the Grand Jury report titled: "Consolidation of Public Safety Dispatch Systems." Please let me know if you have questions or would like any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Adams".

Steven Adams
City Manager

attachment

Response to Grand Jury Report Form

Report Title: CONSOLIDATION OF PUBLIC SAFETY DISPATCH SYSTEMS

Report Date: MAY 28, 2013

Authorized Responder and Agency STEVEN ADAMS, CITY MANAGER
CITY OF ARROYO GRANDE

FINDINGS

- I (we) agree with the findings numbered: F1, F3
- I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: F2, F5
(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed;
include an explanation of the reasons.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations numbered _____ have been implemented.
(Attach a summary describing the implemented actions.)
- Recommendations numbered _____ have not yet been implemented,
but will be implemented in the future.
(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)
- Recommendations numbered 1,2 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 publication of the grand jury report.)

- Recommendations numbered _____ will not be implemented
because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.

(Attach an explanation.)

Date: JULY 9, 2013 Signed: 

Number of pages attached 1

**CONSOLIDATION OF PUBLIC SAFETY DISPATCH SYSTEMS
RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY FORM**

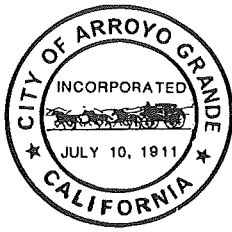
SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

RESPONSE TO FINDINGS:

- F2 It is the City's understanding that computer compatibility issues have been addressed. Therefore, the City does not agree that its citizens are "at risk", but does believe the citizens could be served more effectively with consolidated dispatch services.
- F5 It is not the City's understanding that the Sheriff's Department is prepared to provide fire dispatch.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS:

Attached is the staff report presented to the City Council, which outlines the process proposed to address the recommendations of the Grand Jury. It is the City's intent to resolve this matter within the 6-month timeframe set forth in the Grand Jury report.



MEMORANDUM

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: STEVEN ADAMS, CITY MANAGER *SAA*

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF DISPATCH CONSOLIDATION STUDY
OPTIONS AND GRAND JURY REPORT RESPONSE

DATE: JULY 9, 2013

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended the Council: 1) approve the proposed response to the Grand Jury Report; 2) direct staff to request formal proposals from the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Department and City of Pismo Beach; 3) direct staff to prepare a cost-benefit analysis of the proposed potential options; and 4) direct staff to return with a recommended alternative for consideration.

IMPACT ON FINANCIAL AND PERSONNEL RESOURCES:

It is recommended the analysis be prepared in-house by staff. Therefore, there is no projected direct cost to the City, but will require a measurable amount of staff time from the Police Department, Administrative Services Department and City Manager.

BACKGROUND:

In 2003, in response to an invitation the City received from the City of Grover Beach, the City Council participated in a joint meeting with Pismo Beach and Grover Beach to discuss consolidation of police services. It was determined that full consolidation of police services was not feasible at that time, but joint communications was identified as a desirable initial step to increase coordination and efficiency of public safety services. As a result, a committee was formed composed of a council member, city manager, police chief and fire chief from each of the jurisdictions. An initial study was submitted to the committee on a pro bono basis from representatives from the City of Glendale Fire Department, which assessed the technical facilities and equipment and recommended consolidation.

At the January 13, 2009 meeting, the City Council approved funding to contract with a consultant to prepare a study on providing joint dispatch services. Other jurisdictions in the County were invited to participate to also evaluate the potential for a countywide dispatch center. The study included Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach, Oceano, Paso Robles, Atascadero and San Luis Obispo. Dhillon and Associates

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was selected to prepare the study after a Request for Proposal (RFP) was distributed.

At the June 8, 2010 meeting, the City Council approved the Five Cities Fire Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement (JPA), consolidating fire services with the City of Grover Beach and the Oceano Community Services District (OCSD). However, for consolidation of fire services to operate most efficiently, it was determined that consolidation of dispatch services is also necessary.

The results of the Dhillon and Associates study were also presented to the Council at that meeting. The study provided an analysis of options involving a joint dispatch operation serving Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach and Oceano, as well as contracting for dispatch services with the City of San Luis Obispo. The staffing and cost analysis was based primarily on call volume. Staff identified concerns regarding the ability of some of the recommended staffing levels to address overall service level goals, but felt the study demonstrated that both options could provide viable alternatives that can reduce costs and increase service levels. Therefore, the City Council directed staff to: 1) jointly develop with Grover Beach and Oceano a recommended proposal for a dispatch operation that would serve Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach and Oceano; and 2) transmit a formal request to the City of San Luis Obispo to prepare a proposal to provide dispatch services to Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach and Oceano on a contract basis.

The results of both options were presented to the City Council at the February 22, 2011 meeting. Due to the cost and staffing methodology utilized by the City of San Luis Obispo, it resulted in an increased cost. No resolution was agreed upon with the City of Grover Beach because consolidation between only the two agencies ultimately resulted in savings to the agency providing the service, but either minimal savings or potentially an increased cost to the agency contracting for the service. The City then began to instead pursue consideration of full police consolidation due to increased opportunity for cost savings, but a proposal by Arroyo Grande was later rejected by the City of Grover Beach.

Staff has more recently approached the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Department, which has expressed an interest in providing dispatch services to other agencies in the county. The City has received a conceptual proposal.

On May 28th, the Grand Jury issued a report titled: "Consolidation of Public Safety Dispatch Systems", which is attached. The report recommends the Arroyo Grande and Grover Beach Police Departments contract with the Sheriff's Department for dispatch services and the Fire Department contract with CAL FIRE. In order to reach agreement on this, they have recommended the agencies hire a facilitator and participate in a joint meeting. Responses to the Grand Jury's report are due by July 29th.

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ANALYSIS OF ISSUES:

There are three primary issues related to consolidation of dispatch services. The most important is the need to enhance capacity and coordination of public safety services. Currently, the Police Department has one dispatcher on duty at most times of the day. During the day shift, there is a supervisor and other support services staff available and trained to provide dispatch services when necessary to supplement the assigned staff. However, off duty staff must be called in when necessary during the evening shift.

This is the appropriate level of staffing based on call volume. However, it provides no ability to handle increased call load during a serious event. This became very evident during the recent power outage. The dispatcher became immediately overloaded with calls. Other staff had to be called in. Neighboring dispatch centers were also overloaded and communication between departments became difficult. If this had been an emergency that required a higher level of response and coordination, the dispatch staffing would have limited the City's effectiveness in responding.

The second issue is that studies have indicated, and staff believes, public safety communications consolidation provides an opportunity to reduce costs and increase efficiency. It has become a commonly utilized approach to providing dispatch services throughout the country.

The third issue is that independent dispatch centers continue to prevent the full benefit of the consolidation of fire services. Calls for fire service in Arroyo Grande are dispatched by the Arroyo Grande Police Department. Calls for service in Grover Beach and Oceano are dispatched by the Grover Beach Fire Department.

An additional issue discussed in the past was particularly evident during the emergency management training in Emmitsburg, Maryland recently attended by representatives from agencies throughout the county. The importance of communication among agencies during disaster response and how much more effective this communication is when staff are able to co-locate in a common facility quickly became obvious.

Due to the proposed upgrades to the Police Station, it will also be necessary to temporarily relocate dispatch operations. Therefore, any change could assist in addressing this issue and should be taken into account when developing an overall strategy.

A number of issues must be evaluated and considered in any consolidation option. These include current and future costs, potential loss of control over costs and service levels, potential loss of control over the assignment of the City's public safety

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resources, and how services are governed and managed. Any decision to outsource dispatch operations will require the City to “meet and confer” with the union.

Staff agrees with the Grand Jury’s findings that some form of consolidation of dispatch services would be beneficial from both a service level and cost standpoint. Staff recommends that the City express a willingness to participate in any joint meeting proposed. However, staff does not believe a facilitated meeting is necessary to discuss the provision of dispatch services by the County Sheriff’s Department because Arroyo Grande and Grover Beach can consider this option independently. It is not necessary to reach agreement between all the jurisdictions in order to proceed. A copy of the recommended Grand Jury response is attached for consideration.

ALTERNATIVES:

Staff believes it is important for the City to proceed with some form of dispatch consolidation in order to address the service level limitations outlined above. Staff recommends the following potential alternatives be studied to determine their costs, feasibility and level of interest by other jurisdictions. If directed to proceed, staff would return with a cost benefit analysis of each option within the next three months, along with a recommendation on how to proceed.

Alternative 1

The first alternative is a concept developed by staff designed to maximize both coordination of ongoing public safety communication services in the South County area and overall disaster response activities. The concept involves consolidating dispatch operations of the City of Arroyo Grande, City of Grover Beach, and City of Pismo Beach police departments. The operation would be overseen by a joint powers authority (JPA), which could also contract dispatch services with the Five Cities Fire Authority. The JPA board would be recommended to consist of the three police chiefs. It is projected that the savings would be sufficient to finance construction of a joint dispatch center and emergency operations center (EOC), which could be located on County property or on acquired property centrally located among the three jurisdictions. County staff would likely be interested in participating in the EOC operations. It would be recommended that the operation be run by a manager that would report to the JPA Board and supervise the dispatch operation, as well as serve as a disaster services manager for the Five Cities area.

To proceed with this alternative, it is recommended that a brief study be prepared by staff to identify costs, potential sites, and other issues. The other jurisdictions would be invited to participate in whatever level they prefer. The results would then be presented to the City Council to determine whether to proceed to seek feedback, make a formal invitation, or submit a proposal to the neighboring jurisdictions.

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Alternative 2

The second alternative would be to contract with the San Luis Obispo Sheriff's Department for police dispatch services. A preliminary cost proposal has been received that appears to result in meaningful savings. It is recommended the City request the Sheriff's Department provide a formal proposal and staff will prepare an analysis of the savings and any other issues involved.

Alternative 3

A third alternative would be to contract with the City of Pismo Beach for dispatch services. This could be on a temporary basis during the Police Station remodel or on a longer term basis. It is recommended the City of Pismo Beach be approached to determine if they would be interested in providing a cost proposal.

Alternative 4

The City could delay the decision pending the results of the parcel tax proposed by the Five Cities Fire Authority. If approved, this could provide an opportunity for funding to contract with the Police Department for overall Fire dispatch and add staffing.

ADVANTAGES:

Based on preliminary analysis, the following primary advantages have been identified for the each of the alternatives identified:

Alternative 1

Staff believes Alternative 1 would provide the most optimal public safety service level enhancement to Five Cities area residents. It would maintain a local dispatch center with local oversight; provide a joint EOC; increase staffing; improve overall coordination of public safety and disaster response services; best address the Five Cities Fire Authority needs; likely reduce costs; and eliminate concerns regarding forfeiting control to a neighboring agency by creating a shared independent facility and agency.

Alternative 2

Contracting for services to be provided by the County Sheriff's Department would provide the most significant increase in overall staffing available for Police Department calls given the size of their operation. It would result in the most feasible option given the interest that has been expressed by the Sheriff's Department. It could also lead to future improvements in overall countywide coordination if other cities joined based on Arroyo Grande's experience.

Alternative 3

In the short-term, contracting with the City of Pismo Beach may enable the City to relocate existing staff to their facility on a temporary basis and continue current operations while the Police Station upgrade is under way. Since the two departments

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use compatible equipment, this option could be implemented with the least amount of one-time costs, time and work. In the long-term, it could serve as a first step to test the success of limited consolidation in order to expand in the future to implementation of Alternative 1.

Alternative 4

Providing dispatch services to the Five Cities Fire Authority would accomplish the goal of consolidating fire dispatch, may enhance staffing, and would maintain services under the control of the Police Department.

DISADVANTAGES:

Based on preliminary analysis, the following disadvantages have been identified for the each of the alternatives identified:

Alternative 1

Alternative 1 is likely the least feasible of the options based on prior feedback from neighboring jurisdictions. It will also require a substantial long-term commitment since it would involve constructing and co-owning a building utilizing long-term financing.

Alternative 2

The primary disadvantage of contracting with the Sheriff's Department is that it does not address Fire dispatch. The Fire Authority would likely have to contract with the City of Grover Beach or CAL FIRE. If Grover Beach ultimately decided to also contract with the Sheriff's Department, it would leave CAL FIRE as the only option. Concerns by the Fire Authority regarding CAL FIRE dispatch involve potential loss of control over local resources given that the Fire Authority is often the first responder to a large CAL FIRE area adjacent to the City, which could impact the availability of resources for local emergencies. Some modifications to equipment may also be necessary.

Alternative 3

Contracting with the City of Pismo Beach for dispatch services would not provide the enhancement in staffing levels available from the Sheriff's Department. Therefore, if there is interest on the part of the City of Pismo Beach, it would likely be recommended only for a temporary basis during construction of Police Station improvements or on a longer-term basis if it was viewed as an intermediate step towards possible implementation of Alternative 1.

Alternative 4

Increasing staffing through funding provided by the Fire Authority would not increase cost efficiency or improve coordination of police services.

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ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

No environmental review is required for this item.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND COMMENTS:

The Agenda was posted in front of City Hall on Wednesday, July 3, 2013 and on the City's website on Friday, July 5, 2013. No comments were received.

Attachments:

1. Grand Jury Report "Consolidation of Public Safety Dispatch Systems
2. Proposed response to Grand Jury Report