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Memorandum

TO: Massachusetts State 911 Department
FROM: The Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public Management
DATE: September 8, 2021
Subject: Feasibility Study for Hopkinton, Hudson, Grafton, Marlborough, Southborough, Westborough to establish or join a Regional Emergency Communication Center District.

1. Background

As part of its inter-governmental services agreement (ISA) to provide the assistance to the State 911 Department in its PSAP regionalization and RECC development efforts (ISA executed on January 23, 2019 and extended in June 2020), the Center presents this proposal to provide planning service to assist the Towns of Hopkinton, Grafton, Marlborough, Southborough and Westborough to study the feasibility of establishing a Regional Emergency Communication Center (RECC) or to join an existing RECC and to provide recommendations for the best option for the five (5) communities.

2. Overview

Methods for collecting information will rely upon interviews, on-site assessments, and document review. The process was as follows:

- Kick-Off meeting with the principals from all five communities
- On-site visits which included interviews with the community police and fire chiefs and their designated personnel. If town managers request an interview, that interview will be scheduled
- Collection of relevant data from each site, including:
 - Equipment used
 - Staffing levels and training
 - Capacity/ability to accommodate Hanover
 - Research/planning
 - Current financial costs for dispatch services
 - Call volume
 - Additional administrative benefits
- Analysis and preparation of the report
- Review of draft report with Hanover Communications Team
- Completion of final report

3. Proposed Project Plan

Conduct a Kick-off Meeting

The Center project team will conduct a kick-off meeting with the public safety chiefs and town managers to engage all levels of the team prior to undertaking tasking. This meeting will include following:

- Meet principals of the project team;
- Review statement of work and identify any additional direction for administrative process regarding the contract;
- Review project deliverables, appropriate electronic format, and timeline; and
- Present timelines for community PSAP visits.

The results of this initial meeting will ensure a clear pathway to success.

On-Site Visits, Interviews with Personnel, and Data Collection

The project team will conduct on-site visits and assessment of the emergency communications/dispatch centers of each city/town to observe operations, facilities, and equipment. The assessment will include the current ECCs' adherence to 1) NFPA 1221 Standard for the Installation, Maintenance, and Use of Emergency Services Communications Systems, specifically Chapter 7 and 2), Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) best practices. A checklist will be developed for these purposes. The Final Report will include a comparison to accreditation references specific to ECC from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) and the Commission of Fire Accreditation International (CFAI). During the site visit, the project team will also collect information on the amount and condition of existing equipment, systems used, methods, and practices, including, but not limited to:

a) Equipment:

- Current technology, radio systems, telephone systems and software being utilized.
- Current interoperability capability of communications within and between the six community.
- Provide the ability to share currently separate applications between each town such as, but not limited to, CAD systems, mapping systems, and radio systems.
- Compatibility of current radio systems, mapping, telephone, and related equipment at each current center and identify required equipment at new regional center.

b) Staffing:

- Personnel structures and costs for each of the six town's Emergency Dispatch Center.
- Number of personnel working each shift as well as specific job descriptions.
- Identify the core and supplemental services provided by current communications personnel.

c) Logistics:

- Identify whether a satisfactory arrangement can be made with existing regional emergency communications centers or with neighboring communities to establish a RECC with each city/town regarding governance, procedures, accountability, service, standards, and control.
- Identify how a regional center would affect the array of services provided by the municipalities' Emergency Dispatch Center.

- How the capacity for coordination of local and regional police, fire and EMS resources including response to routine events and major disasters.
- Identify the total number of incoming emergency and administrative telephone calls, radio messages and other incidents handled.
- Identify the ability for 911 call surge capacity.

d) Research and Planning:

- Opportunities for improvement to present operations, staffing, training, management, supervision, and governance.
- Potential legal and organizational structures for the regional center.
- Identify what other public safety leaders have identified as benefits of a RECC

e) Financial:

- Personnel structure and costs at Norwood and the anticipated RECC and the personnel costs for staffing of a regional center.
- One-time and recurring operational and capital costs of consolidation and the financial impact on each town.
- Costs to maintain or increase other public safety services, such as lock-up-up monitoring expenses, administrative duties, and walk-in traffic at the towns' Public Safety Facilities.
- One-time and annual financial resources, as well as requirements associated with such funding, from the MA State 911 Department to provide ongoing support and sustainability into the future.
- Conduct cost benefit analysis for each of the six towns

During on-site visit, the project team will conduct interviews with the leadership of the public safety functions in each of the towns. These face-to-face interviews are the most important step in the process to identify elements of a regional dispatch operation, as well as concerns that those community leaders may have with such a set up.

The steps that the project team takes in this process are as follows:

- Utilize a standardized list of questions for the interviews that will elicit the needed information for the study.
- Conduct a structured interview with each Chief and any of their personnel that they want to interview.

The project team will also visit the potential RECCs that the towns may see as opportunities to join to assess their current operational procedures, use of information and communication technology, and dispatch layout.

The steps will include the following:

- Visually assess all communications and IT systems.
- Gather and examine the current operating cost of the RECCs and as well as to identify the cost to join those centers.
- Inventory the existing 911 dispatch facilities, systems, equipment, and dispatch procedures and provide an assessment of current call volumes.
- Examine the current dispatch facilities and validate or invalidate the need for a new physical plant for all purposes, including examination for potential or increased opportunities for cost-sharing in future technologies and dispatch equipment.
- Gather information on present operations, staffing, training, and supervision.
- Identify the RECCs' interest in having Hanover join and the cost of joining.

Analysis and Preparation of Report

After reviewing and analyzing all the available information collected, the project team will develop a draft report. The draft will include preliminary findings and recommendations. Additional information requests, interviews, or inquiries may occur at this time.

Review of Draft with the Towns

The project team will meet with the chiefs, the town manager, and others as they may want to include to discuss the draft report.

Completion of Final Report

The project team may make changes to the draft report, as the project team deems appropriate, and will make any final edits or additions to produce a final report.

Presentation of Report (Upon Request)

If requested by the Town, the project team will make a presentation of the report at a public meeting.

3. Timeline

This engagement will kick-off as soon as an agreement can be reached. It is estimated that the project will last approximately six months, provided that the project team’s requests for meetings, data, and information, are fulfilled in a timely manner. A sample timeline appears below.

Event	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6
Kick-off Meeting	XXXXX					
On-Site Visits, Interviews with Personnel, and Data Collection	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX			
Analysis and Preparation of Report				XXXXX		
Review of Draft with the Town					XXXXX	
Completion of Final Report					XXXXX	
Presentation of Report (Upon Request)						XX

Attachments

- A. Interview form
- B. Technology Assessment Form

Attachment A – Interview form

Interviewee (name) _____
Contact Info (phone) _____ (email) _____
Interviewer _____
Date and Time _____

Interview		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Notes/Comments
Interview Public Safety leadership in the town.		
What do you see as the strengths or benefit of regionalization?		
What do you see the weakness or issue that would need to be over come from regionalization? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key issues to be addressed • Barriers to implementation 		
What recommendations would you make for the successful integration for the call taking and dispatch services of your community to be integrated into a RECC?		

Additional Notes

Attachment B – Technology Assessment Form

Site Location _____
 Technology Contact (name) _____
 Contact Info (phone) _____ (email) _____
 Department _____
 Date and Time _____

Technology Elements	Notes/Comments
Radio System	
1. Manufacturer	
2. Frequencies	
3. Age and Conditions	
4. Interoperability a. municipality wide b. Regional	
5. System Coverage (Gaps)	
6. Tower Sites	
7. Fiber	
8. Number, age and make of mobiles	
9. Number, age and make of portables	
Information Technology CAD/RMS	
Dispatch Number of positions Number of 911 positions Administrative phone system Town wide fiber	
Radio system Maintenance Provider	

Additional Notes