

MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE WORK SESSION OF JANUARY 12, 2017

Mayor Strazdas called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The following Councilmembers were present: Richard Ford, Jim Pearson, Patricia M. Randall, Claudette Reid and Terry Urban, Mayor Pro Tem Nasim Ansari and Mayor Peter Strazdas. Also present were Kalamazoo County Consolidated Dispatch Authority Executive Director Jeff Troyer, City Manager Larry Shaffer, Deputy City Manager Rob Boulis, Finance Director Bill Furry, Public Safety Director Richard White, Technology Services Director Devin Mackinder, City Attorney Randy Brown and City Clerk James Hudson.

CENTRAL COUNTY DISPATCH AUTHORITY: Mayor Strazdas introduced the topic "Consolidated Dispatch Authority - 911" and recognized Councilmembers Reid and Pearson as valuable Council Representatives on the Authority. He added that City Attorney Randy Brown would be explaining the "off-ramping" option.

Councilmember Reid referenced the Kalamazoo County Commissioners action to hold a Special Election, May 2, 2017, to consider a ballot issue that would raise the current 42-cent surcharge to \$2.30 on all devices such as cell phones, landlines and tablets that are not data only in Kalamazoo County that can access 911 Dispatch. She indicated that there are other issues important for the communities that provide 911 Dispatch to address such as what to do with the funds once dispatch services are funded by the \$2.30 surcharge instead of the general fund. She reported with one landline with multiple phones is charged \$0.19 plus \$0.42 to support Consolidated Dispatch development, and the next generation 911 upgrade will cost approximately \$24 per person or \$80 per household per year. Discussion followed.

Councilmember Pearson indicated that Portage City Council has always been resistant to Consolidated Dispatch, so this Council asked for an "off-ramp" process which is explained on Page 14, Section B, of the Intergovernmental Agreement, and is taken from the 911 Act. One of the reasons for the request for an "off-ramp" option was to address the situation where a bad Executive Director might be hired, but he noted that the person chosen by the Kalamazoo Countywide Consolidated Dispatch Authority is Executive Director Jeff Troyer, who is present for this discussion tonight. Discussion followed regarding budget projections, the potential Portage citizen share of the budget responsibility, the number of call takers and dispatchers required to handle matters and the question of what to do with an approximate 0.25 reduction in the millage rate for Portage citizens.

Executive Director Jeff Troyer indicated that the first year has been one of planning. He outlined the timeline for the Consolidated Dispatch Authority, and noted that a process is in the works to search for a permanent facility which will need to be settled upon, renovated and/or redeveloped. He mentioned that a formal contingent plan was adopted today and put in place to meet the target date of the end of April 2018, but does not allow for a permanent space.

Mr. Troyer emphasized that the key advantages of this approach are: it puts Consolidated Dispatch in a position to strategically and operationally respond with future technology; it will be more cost effective than five Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP's); it will reduce upgrade costs; currently three of the 5 PSAPs' share the majority of the technologies; there are many systems that have to be continually upgraded; public safety is multi-dimensional; criminals and

emergencies do not have boundaries; one location instead of five enhances the resiliency, redundancy and reliability and plays a key role on fire responses; and consolidation will allow Public Safety Answering Point Technology. He said the system will be ready once the service providers have the ability, but it takes time. He stressed that in order to migrate to the next generation of technologies, the other PSAP's have to be on board or they will block progress.

At the request of Mayor Strazdas, Public Safety Director Richard White reviewed the Dispatch and PSAP Division cost projection and the Public Safety Budget reduction if Portage joins Consolidated Dispatch. He outlined the projected changes in personnel services, operations/maintenance, lost revenue, recurring expense/assets, cost of positions needed and the one-time cost of pay-out. He summed up the Budget costs that would be eliminated showing the Total Communications Budget of \$1,212,594 minus \$749,213 equals \$463,381 for the first year and the additional one-time cost of approximately \$171,500 added in; thereafter, the future total would be \$644,713. He reviewed the additional duties of Dispatchers that will remain as a Public Safety responsibility and a recommended solution to maintain those duties now performed by Dispatchers. He introduced Communications Supervisor Victoria Rose, Senior Deputy Police Chief of Operations Nick Arnold and Senior Deputy Police/Fire Chief of Administration Daniel Mills, who were present for the meeting.

Finance & Purchasing Director Bill Furry reviewed the impact on the General Fund and outlined the line items affected by a 0.25 millage reduction.

In reference to Page 14, Section B, of the Intergovernmental Agreement, City Attorney Randy Brown explained that "off-ramping" is possible six months after notice is provided. Moreover, he indicated that once the obligation is imposed, the City has thirty days to give notice to get out of the obligation in six months; and, once it is installed if the City wishes to withdraw, by State Statute, there has to be a notice and a public hearing and the City has to wait until January 1 of the following year to get out of the obligation. Discussion followed regarding the Transition Plan, the impact on the current employees and the desired ratio of Call Takers to Dispatchers to Supervisor.

In answer to Mayor Strazdas, Mr. Troyer indicated that the devices that will carry a surcharge fall into two categories, prepaid and postpaid. He indicated that prepaid devices have a weighted average and are handled by the State; postpaid devices are wireless and landline devices; and he advised everyone to look at their bill because every system is different, and check which devices are currently carrying a \$0.42 charge since those are the devices that will be charged \$2.30 if the measure passes in May. For businesses, he indicated multi-line surcharges are addressed in the Statute: the first ten devices pay a separate surcharge, but after that, the business pays one surcharge for each of the next 10 devices. Mr. Troyer indicated that the phone bills go to the address, for transients, visitors and wireless providers, so Mom and Dad will pay for their student. For landlord and tenants, the surcharge on the phone bill goes to the serviceable address, so this could be the landlord. Discussion followed regarding the breakdown and responsibilities of staff, the importance for Consolidated Dispatch with regards to safety, back-up plans, the ballot proposal and how to have an impact on the quality of the service.

Mr. White indicated that one of the elements of law Enforcement/Fire Accreditation is Communication, so this has to be addressed, or Portage will lose its accreditation. Discussion followed.

The following Portage citizens asked for clarifications: Phil Stinchcomb, 1607 Belaire, Charles Agosti, 1723 Romence Road and Mindy Tai, 1620 Romence Road. Discussion followed.

Councilmember Urban had questions about the proposed surcharge increase, the response from City Council if it passes, and whether the City can still “off-ramp” down the road if it has concerns. He also said the city might better benefit Portage taxpayers by looking at continuing to reduce the city's debt or putting the cost savings into programs or services that have been cut in recent years such as cultural programs.

Tom Haroldson, MLive Reporter, asked what the Council plans to do with the surplus in the General Fund that would result from the 0.25 millage roll back. Mayor Strazdas reminded him that he believes if there is any excess, the taxpayers have a right to it. He added that the city is not in dire straits where there is a need to take that money.

Mr. Troyer responded that this is a Countywide Public Safety Dispatch with a total of 48 employees which includes Dispatchers and Call Takers, for a total of 60 staff members that could be up and running in late April 2018. He mentioned that the Authority is still looking at several potential locations for a permanent facility. He said there would be a set aside for Capital Improvement each year which includes updates, but not included in the Budget are computers for Fire Trucks and Police Officers, but the IP Network is being built out. He said that there are at least five advantages to consolidated dispatch, including being better able to respond to future technologies, such as 911 text, videos or pictures; cost effectiveness; and improved coordination of mutual aid responses such as emergencies. Discussion followed. Mr. Troyer mentioned that part of the buildup will be hardware, phone systems, etc., and Portage is capable of being upgraded to the Intrado Viper System. Discussion followed.

Mayor Strazdas asked Mr. Troyer what other counties have done, and are they property tax based or user fee based. Mr. Troyer responded 67% comes from user fees, not technically a tax, and the rest comes from the General Fund. He then shared that St. Joseph and Ottawa Counties have passed a millage to fund Consolidated Dispatch. Discussion followed.

ADJOURN: Mayor Strazdas summed up and adjourned the meeting at 9:28 p.m.

James Hudson, City Clerk