

Public Safety Committee Meeting May 21, 2019

The Public Safety Committee met Thursday, May 21, 2019, at 5:30 pm in the City Hall Conference Room, 17 S. 8th. Present were Committee Members John Uden, Kathy Wilcox, Ken Gardner and Jeff Erlenbusch. Also present were: Police Chief Doug Colombik, Dispatch Supervisor Lyne Anderson, Councilperson Rick Huber and Human Resources Officer/Recorder Linda Wilkins.

Chairperson Uden called the meeting to order.

1. Request of Citizens

None

2. Committee Member Comments

None

3. Unfinished Business

A. Re-address fireworks issues.

Chairperson Uden commented that he did not want to wait until next year to plan for next year's fireworks display; he would like to plan ahead. He stated he would approach the County Commissioners regarding having the fireworks display at the fairgrounds next year. He requested a volunteer to approach the Fair Board. Committee Member Erlenbusch volunteered to approach the Fair Board. Chairperson Uden said they would bring back information from the meetings to the committee.

4. New Business

A. Presentation by Dispatch Supervisor Lyne Anderson regarding dispatch issues.

Supervisor Anderson reviewed April dispatch call statistics with the committee. The Dispatch Center is currently answering 11 lines. During the month of April, with no call offs by any of the dispatchers, the dispatch center was able to answer 90.3% of 2,449 calls within 10 seconds. April was a good month. She explained to the committee that with the updates in technology to 911 dispatching it will be incredibly difficult for one dispatcher to keep up with call volume. The center will be receiving 911 calls through traditional telephone lines, text messaging, Snap Chat, and video calls. To have one person's attention on all these different types of communication and responding to each call will be impossible. Also, call volume has increased substantially there may be 5 to 10 calls on one incident because of cell phones being possessed by multiple individuals witnessing a single incident. It is imperative that the dispatcher answer all calls quickly because amongst all these calls there may be a call from another individual calling for a completely different incident. She is requesting an additional staff person for the dispatch center.

Chief Colombik explained that dispatchers don't have the administrative staff to back them up like the police officers do, there was a time when a police officer could step in and help out dispatchers, but now the technology is becoming too complex. He believes it is important for the City to have two dispatchers. The 911 Board can assist with the additional funding required for an additional staff member. It is important to get the second station in the dispatch center up and running.

Committee Member Wilcox commented to include an additional staff person in the budget.

Committee Member Uden realizes the increase in calls from multiple callers on the same call.

Supervisor Anderson told the committee the dispatch center is unable to discern from which incident a call is coming from. A grant in the amount of \$371,000 was awarded by the state of Montana to upgrade equipment in the center.

Chief Colombik commented with the advances in technology increasing the incoming call volume the dispatch center cannot remain stagnant. The burn out rate for employees will magnify, but the City needs to move with technology. What is most important is public safety and response. The 911 Board currently has \$341,000 that may be used to fund the additional staff required.

Committee Member Uden commented that the response to call time doesn't address the time spent on a call after it is answered, one call can be time consuming. Fire and Police officers lives are on line.

Supervisor Anderson said there have been instances when a 911 call has to be placed on hold for a few seconds, which goes against all training a dispatcher receives.

Committee Member Erlenbusch asked if the 911 Board was paying wages. Supervisor Anderson stated that this was all part of the inter-local agreement. He then asked if it would be helpful to hire a full time and part time dispatcher. Supervisor Anderson stated that it is not effective to hire a part time dispatcher considering the training time. Also a part time staff is not on the phones with enough frequency to keep their training skills sharp. It costs approximately \$56,000 annually to pay and keep training current for a dispatcher.

Supervisor Anderson stated she would bring these issues to the attention of the 911 Board.

Chairperson Uden asked to let the committee know how things are going as time progresses.

Committee Member Erlenbusch stated that the 911 Board needs to know about the grant money coming for equipment. This will show a savings to the 911

Board in the area of equipment and that money can go toward the personnel.

Chairperson Uden conducted a straw poll for the support of obtaining another dispatch staff person.

Committee Member Wilcox, aye.

Committee Member Gardner, aye.

Committee Member Erlenbusch, aye.

Chairperson Uden, aye.

B. Discussion on adding additional handicap parking signs by the 600 Café

Chairperson Uden had spoken to Gloria Grenz this morning and she doesn't want any additional handicap parking spots. She stated that they have 40-70 people coming for congregate meals and there hasn't been an issue. She thought it would make it difficult on other businesses in the area.

***Committee Member Wilcox moved to table, seconded by Committee Member Erlenbusch and passed by unanimous consent; 4-0.*

5. Adjournment

***Committee Member Erlenbusch moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Committee Member Gardner and **passed** unanimously, 4-0.*

The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



John Uden, Chairperson



Linda Wilkins, Recorder