

Fire Dispatch - Comments to CRD PPSC March 28
Agenda Item 6.4

The Planning & Protective Services Report is an excellent basis for making the decisions necessary to implement a Regional Fire Dispatch Centre.

The last paragraph of the report should be top of mind:

Quote: Without exception, fire leaders in the region stated that there would be significant operational and economy of scale benefits to the establishment of a regional fire dispatch system ultimately leading to improved emergency response and firefighter safety. **UNQUOTE.**

You couldn't ask for broader support for a single fire dispatch centre from those best qualified to make such a judgement.

So how can the Region achieve this goal?

There are several steps that need to be jointly taken by the Board, the municipalities and the current Fire Dispatch providers to reach this goal. Some of these steps will require compromises, but the ultimate outcome will be well worthwhile.

First, it would be most helpful if Saanich would extend the existing contracts for the 5 client fire Departments, at existing rates, to allow sufficient time to do the necessary work to establish a regional centre.

Second if Saanich is willing to extend at the current rate or only impose a modest increase, then the 5 client dispatch municipalities should pause any action to relocate their dispatch services to Surrey, so that the necessary planning and decisions can take place.

Third, the report states there will be significant efficiencies with a single centre, including reducing staff requirements. A single centre would require 3 operators during peak loading while 4 operators working in 3 centres are needed to handle the same workload. Staffing efficiencies for one centre versus 2 represent long-term operational savings.

Fourth, a single centre would have a regional view of all fire, HAZMAT, rescue and health emergency incidents. Mutual Aid agreements could allow for "closest hall/closest available apparatus" response to each and every event without regard to municipal boundaries. No one cares what

the sign of the side of a responding Fire Truck says; callers just want a response as quickly as possible. This would be a big plus for the region.

Fifth, the Board and the municipalities will have to set aside local politics when selecting the location of a single dispatch centre site. The report lists 3 potential sites, going into the new 9-1-1/Police Dispatch centre appears to being a non-starter. That leaves Langford and Saanich. It would be best if directors and councils could put aside their local hats, and think regionally. Choose the best site based on which is most suitable, including the current technology, adaptability for Next Generation 9-1-1 and backup arrangements. **It's not possible to have a single centre in two places.**

Sixth, the 9-1-1 Police Dispatch Centre governance model, emulating Metro Vancouver's E-COMM, is a well proven model that could also function very well for fire dispatch, giving all participants a say in setting rates through the CRD. Alternatively, a local 'contractor', either Saanich or Langford, could provide the service through an agreement with the CRD, however there would have to be a provision for input by

all fire services and municipalities to ensure fairness when setting policy and apportioning costs.

The Region has already made a quantum leap forward by moving to a single 9-1-1 Answer and Police Dispatch facility, a single fire dispatch centre will give the Region a top notch Emergency Response System.

Thank You.