



**REPORT TO PLANNING AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JULY 17, 2019**

SUBJECT **Process and Steps to Create a Unified Fire Dispatch in the New South Island 911/Police Dispatch Centre**

ISSUE

At the April 17, 2019 Planning and Protective Services Committee (PPSC) meeting a Notice with Motion (Appendix A) was introduced. Following discussion, staff were directed to identify the process and steps to create a unified fire dispatch in the new South Island 911/Police Dispatch Centre operated by E-Comm per the following motion:

That the Planning and Protective Services Committee direct staff to prepare a report detailing the process, including procurement, and steps towards creating a unified Fire Dispatch in the new South Island 911/Police Dispatch Centre as supported by Saanich and, following preparation of the report, the draft report be presented to the area Fire Chiefs for their comment before the report comes back to the Planning and Protective Services Committee.

BACKGROUND

Currently fire dispatch services in the Capital Regional District (CRD) are provided by Saanich Fire Department, Victoria Fire Department, the CRD through contract with Langford Fire Department, and Surrey Fire Dispatch. The CRD fire dispatch services are provided under Bylaw No. 3854.

At the December 2017 meeting of the PPSC, staff were directed to review the potential for a Regional Fire Dispatch model. Staff facilitated a meeting with Victoria, Saanich, Langford and E-Comm to explore models for the unification of fire dispatch services within the region.

Based on that input from the dispatch focus group in early 2018 that had full participation of all agencies including E-Comm, the required components of a regional fire dispatch centre were determined to be as follows:

- Post disaster facility with seamless back-up at another site in case of systems failure;
- Have four work stations for operations and access to additional workstations for training and major events;
- Compliant with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards for fire dispatch including staffing, training, facility, radios, technology, computer aided dispatch (CAD and records management);
- Staffing ratio of between 1:8,000 and 1:12,000 of dispatchers to annual call volume based on a range of service expectations (3 dispatchers 24/7); and
- Must meet NFPA performance standards and metrics.

Staff presented the requested feasibility report at the March 28, 2018 PPSC and the April 11, 2018 CRD Board meeting and were directed to undertake a cost analysis of the potential regional fire dispatch service out of the Saanich and CRD facilities.

At the April 25, 2018 PPSC meeting, the following direction was given:

That staff be requested to coordinate a meeting between the dispatch providers and the fire chiefs in the region to discuss integration of a regional fire dispatch and to make recommendations on needs and governance.

At this point, the municipalities of Sidney, North Saanich, Colwood, Esquimalt and View Royal had made the decision to receive fire dispatch services remotely from the Surrey Fire Dispatch centre with that transition occurring in September of 2018. As the interests of the individual dispatch centres and fire departments within the region were so disparate and incompatible at that point in time, it was not possible to come to a consensus on what a unified fire dispatch system would look like or make recommendations on a governance model.

In January and February of 2019, the transition of all 911 and police dispatch services in the region transitioned over to the newly constructed South Island 911/Police Dispatch Centre as planned and consistent with the service agreements in place with E-Comm.

In March 2019, the Victoria Fire Department entered into an agreement with the Langford Fire Department to co-locate their fire dispatch services at the fire dispatch facility in Langford due to the loss of back-up dispatch services when the Victoria Police transitioned to E-Comm and to ensure viability and effectiveness of their dispatch capabilities until such time as a long term solution was developed. It is expected that Victoria fire dispatch will be operational in the Langford site around August 2019.

The 2019-2022 CRD Corporate Plan identified the unification of fire dispatch services in the region as a corporate initiative.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1:

That the Planning and Protective Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

That staff be directed to bring forward a budget proposal of \$50,000 within the 2020 Legislative and General Service's budget to complete a feasibility process to look at a unified fire dispatch model for the region that includes E-Comm and alternative options outside of E-Comm.

Alternative 2:

That this report be received for information.

DISCUSSION

At the direction of the PPSC from the April 17, 2019 meeting, staff engaged E-Comm as the operator of the new South Island 911/Police Dispatch Centre to ascertain if the facility could accommodate the addition of fire dispatch services and if so what the next steps would be necessary to move the proposal forward.

E-Comm undertook an assessment of the facility and capacity which included the process necessary to incorporate a regional fire dispatch model into the new 911/Police Dispatch Centre which is summarized in Appendix B.

E-Comm, based on initial high level assessment, has stated that they feel that they can potentially accommodate up to six workstations within the South Island 911/Police Dispatch Centre.

In order to accurately determine the scope, feasibility and costs for E-Comm to deliver the services from the new centre, a substantial discovery process would need to occur in order to fully capture and document the minutia and details of each current CRD agency's' operating model. It is anticipated that this study would take approximately six weeks. E-Comm would require the costs for this study to be covered through an agreement. It is anticipated that transition to the new system would take approximately two years from the signing of the agreement.

The draft staff report was sent to all Fire Chiefs in the region for comment as per the April 17, 2019 PPSC motion. The comments received are attached as Appendix C. Feedback received from the fire departments in the region on the draft report covers a broad range of views on a modified fire dispatch model, some support a unified model, some support the status quo, and others support doing a feasibility study but also looking at other options rather than just E-Comm. Based on this input staff adjusted the staff report recommendations to reflect this feedback.

IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Implications

CRD procurement policies allow for sole source contracting with non-profit entities such as E-Comm. E-Comm would prefer to have a single contract versus a service contract with each fire department within the region as individual contracts would be untenable. CRD could act as the procurer of the contract on behalf of the region if requested.

Labour Implications

E-Comm has indicated that if the regional fire dispatch operations were consolidated under contract with them then staff would need to be CUPE 873.

Financial Implications

E-Comm has identified there will be costs of up to \$50,000 associated with the feasibility and scoping study required. Funding for this study can potentially be undertaken by CRD through Legislative and General Services under governance through an Initiative Business Case for 2020 fiscal and service planning.

Once that scoping process is complete then an accurate estimate of costs for E-Comm to deliver a regional fire dispatch service under contract will be presented. E-Comm has stated that this scoping activity could be undertaken in 2020 with reasonable notice if the CRD wishes to proceed.

Facilities Implications

E-Comm has indicated that they will only act as the fire dispatch contractor if the services are delivered out of one of their facilities.

Operations Implications

There will be no operations implications until such time as the decision is made regarding the development of a regional fire dispatch system.

Intergovernmental Implications

The investigation of the potential for a regional fire dispatch service that meets the needs of all fire departments in the region aligns with the 2019-2022 CRD Corporate Plan.

Governance of a regional fire dispatch system would depend somewhat on the model chosen. Staff would report back on potential governance models.

CONCLUSION

The consolidation of fire dispatch services into a regional service delivery model could potentially decrease response times, improve public safety, and would create a number of economies of scale in the areas of staffing, technology, facilities and administration resulting in best value for tax dollars. An operating agreement with E-Comm in the new South Island 911/Police Dispatch Centre would be one avenue to explore to consolidate fire dispatch services in the region. The next steps would be the allocation of up to \$50,000 to complete a discovery, feasibility and scoping process to identify the needs and costing required for a contracted fire dispatch service.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning and Protective Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

That staff be directed to bring forward a budget proposal of \$50,000 within the 2020 Legislative and General Service's budget to complete a feasibility process to look at a unified fire dispatch model for the region that includes E-Comm and alternative options outside of E-Comm.

Submitted by:	Shawn Carby, CD, BHSc, MAL, Senior Manager Protective Services
Concurrence:	Kevin Lorette, P.Eng., MBA, General Manager Planning & Protective Services
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Attachments: Appendix A - Notice with Motion
Appendix B - E-Comm Memorandum – CRD Consolidated Fire Dispatch – E-Comm Initial Assessment
Appendix C - Comments on Draft Staff Report from Fire Chiefs