



## City of Madison

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June 23, 2016

Mayor Paul R. Soglin  
Members of the Common Council

Re: Report on Dispatch Services, CC File # 36267

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

In November of 2014 the County Board eliminated the Public Safety Communications Center Board and replaced it with an advisory committee. This change eliminated the direct governance role of the systems' users, including the City's Police Department, Fire Department, Information Technology Department and the Traffic Engineering Radio Shop in the operations and practices of the Communications Center (Comm Center). The Common Council has directed those agencies to report on the effect this change on city services.

Over the past year there have been limited impacts on the City. However, concerns remain about the lack of voice in the operations of the center. The new Advisory Board has met on roughly a quarterly basis, but its role differs greatly from the predecessor Center Board. The new board is basically a recipient of limited information, with no decision making authority. The previous committees, including the Technical Committee, Operating Practices Committee, and Sub Committees such as Radio Protocol, Dispatch and others, are now "Work Groups". This new structure is much less formal, membership and lines of communication are unclear. Meeting notifications and minutes are irregular and do not appear to follow normal committee practices. This increases the already difficult nature of having input into operations and practices.

The makeup of the new Advisory Board is as follows:

- Madison Fire Dept Representative
- Madison Police Dept Representative
- Madison Radio Shop Representative
- Madison Information Technology Representative
- Sheriff Department Representative
- Dane County Technical Service Representative
- Dane County Land Information Office Representative
- Dane County EMS Association Representative
- Dane County Fire Chief's Association Representative
- Dane County Police Chief's Association Representative

Previous Committees under previous governance followed open meeting procedures/requirements. Examples of past meetings include:

- Technical Committee (Legistar posted meeting 11/21/2014)
- Fire/EMS Radio Protocol workgroup (Legistar posted meeting 2/26/2015 – no posted minutes)
- Medical & Fire Dispatch Review and Steering Workgroup (Legistar posted meeting 8/14/2014)
- Operating Practices Advisory Committee (Legistar posted meeting 11/14/2014)
- Police Dispatch and Review Steering Committee (Legistar posted meeting 9/3/2014)
- Pre-Alert Work Group (Legistar posted meeting 1/27/2015)
- Radio Protocol Committee (Legistar posted meeting 10/13/2015 – no minutes)

There have been some positive developments. Most notably, changes requested by the MFD Operations Chiefs can and have been more quickly addressed. However, this positive working arrangement is entirely dependent on the individual Assistant Operations Manager assigned to work with the Fire Department. A future staff change in the Comm center could result in a very different working relationship.

## **MADISON FIRE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS**

The Madison Fire Department's Chief of Operations works closely with the Public Safety Communications Center Assistant Manager of Operations assigned to Fire and EMS for all County Fire and EMS Agencies. This Assistant Manager has been very responsive in addressing issues as they arise and works to quickly resolve any problems that he is made aware of.

With the change in governance, changes requested by the MFD Operations Chiefs can and have more quickly been addressed. Currently this has been a positive change but it is entirely dependent on the person assigned as the manager interfacing with the MFD and the resources funded and priorities set by the Director. If funding, assignments, protocols or priorities change within PSC, there is not a formal mechanism in place to address issues that may arise in the future.

## **PROCESS TIME IMPROVEMENTS**

Prior to its dissolution, the Comm Center Board initiated a Pre-alert pilot program to reduce response times. Implementation has continued and process time has improved since changing to dispatching of units prior to completing Emergency Fire Dispatching Questions (EFD). The initial protocol had called for the call taker to complete the entire EFD protocol prior to dispatching a unit. Currently, units are being dispatched for fire calls after address verification and determination of the nature of the call. EFD is continuing after units are dispatched and updates to responding units are given as necessary.

Additional improvements are anticipated when an automated component is implemented in the first quarter of 2016.

The MFD was the first fire department in Dane County requesting that all fire calls be dispatched as quickly as possible. The initial pre-alert pilot modified the dispatch point to happen after 4 questions were asked; name, call back number, location and emergency. Prior to the pre-alert pilot, units were

not dispatched until the entire emergency fire protocol (EFD) was completed.

Currently, the 911 center asks the location and type of emergency and dispatched fire related calls at this dispatch point and then continues on with EFD, allowing for first responders to begin moving to the vehicles and getting enroute to the call. Dispatchers will quickly “downgrade” or change the type of responses if through further questioning fewer or different resources need to be sent.

After a test period with the MFD, this change was implemented county wide after results were presented to Dane County Fire Chiefs.

## **MADISON POLICE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS**

Since the change in governance of the Dane County Communications/911 Center in November of 2014 there is no longer a formalized structure in place to facilitate communication and updates regarding daily operations in the many areas the 911 Center is responsible for. Additionally any operational questions, concerns or recommendations for change no longer have a regularly scheduled venue to allow for discussion and accountability. Previously the 911 Center Board as well as the Operating Practices Committee met on a monthly basis and fulfilled this need, as did the various other sub committees.

The most significant impact as a result of these changes has been what could be described as a “disconnect” between MPD and Comm Center staff regarding expectations and issues of concern. Under the current model, the primary point of contact for MPD to address any issues, problems or complaints is the Operations Manager assigned to Law Enforcement county-wide. Although there was ongoing communication by the MPD Lt. liaison to the Comm Center during 2015, it proved to be inefficient and problematic at times due a lack of timely response or correction of the problem. There is also daily ongoing communication between our OIC’s and the dispatch supervisors on duty. This has worked well at times addressing expectations and issues related to a specific shift or incident, but has also been problematic or confusing at times due to the Supervisors or dispatchers not all being on the same page regarding expectations, responsibilities and guidelines set forth by MPD and agreed to by Comm Center management. We again must rely on the Operations Manger to correct this.

In November MPD officers continuing frustration with issues related to the Comm Center resulted in their voicing a concerning theme to the Chief regarding their lack of confidence with dispatch. Reasons included dispatchers loosing track of officers, dispatching the wrong officers to calls, dispatchers not appearing to have a geographic understanding of the City of Madison and not providing all info or updates available. This has led to officers monitoring each other’s status and locations, correcting dispatch, and pulling information directly from the CAD screens in their squads.

During 4th quarter 2015 a trend was identified, mainly on the 3:00 PM-11:00 PM shift, of a high frequency of errors being made by dispatchers along with an observation of lack of experience of those dispatchers. This was coupled with the concerns voiced through the Officer Advisory Council (OAC) of a lack of confidence with dispatch. An email was sent on Nov.11<sup>th</sup> to Comm Center management making them aware of this and asking:

1. Is there anything that can be done to provide more training to this group of dispatchers and supervisors on this shift, in order to provide them with a “bump” in their learning curve?

2. Do the supervisors on this shift have the necessary skill set, training, time and support for the workload?
3. Is it fair for the newest employees to be assigned to the highest call volume shift?

The inquiry and questions did not get addressed until approximately mid December at which time Comm Center management apologized for the delay in their response. It was acknowledged by Comm Center management that a majority of new dispatchers are assigned to the 3:00 PM-11:00 PM shift. They indicated that they would be instituting additional coaching for these employees.

#### 911 Complaint Summary:

During 2015 a total of 15 complaints were received from MPD officers and Supervisors.

- 13 were referred to Comm Center management
- 2 were made as formal complaints.

(6 involved either an officer safety concern or a weapons incident).

These are specific incidents that, once we are made aware of, are then forwarded directly to the Comm Center Operations Manager for investigation, with an expectation that we be informed of the outcome.

The problem of MPD not being included in discussions or consideration of decisions that have a significant operational impact on MPD is best highlighted by the following example:

#### Elimination of "10" Codes

Ten-codes are signals that are used by law enforcement and government agencies in radio communication as numeric code words for frequently used messages. These radio signals were invented to help reduce the use of speech on the police radio. In addition, they add a certain amount of privacy to the transmissions, as one must know the meaning of the signals to understand the discussion. At the August 19<sup>th</sup> OAC meeting, the 911 Center Operations Manager announced that starting September 1, 2015 the Comm center would no longer be using ten-codes. This came as a complete surprise to MPD and was a significant operational change. At the OAC meeting Chief Koval and MPD officers expressed their concern regarding the elimination of using 10 codes. MPD later met with the operations manager and informed him of the significant change this would bring to our officers and other field users. We also voiced concern that it was the OAC meeting where we had first heard of this. It was suggested that that the Comm Center seek feedback from other users of the system via the Dane County Chief of Police Association (DCCOP). This was presented to DCCOP on September 8<sup>th</sup>. DCCOP recommended that this not be implemented at this time and referred to the Dane county radio protocol committee (which still exists but has met maybe once since the abolishment of OPAC & Center Board). As of January 8, 2016 the radio protocol committee has not met to discuss this. We continue to have many concerns and questions regarding this major proposed change in operating practices.

#### Next Steps

On December 15, 2015 MPD staff and Comm Center Management met to have an open and frank discussion regarding identified issues of concern and how to work together to improve things moving forward. Communications Center staff was apologetic, taking responsibility for and assuring us they are taking steps to significantly improve communication and response from their staff.

Regarding the issues with new dispatchers on the 3:00 PM-11:00 PM shift, the Comm Center management stated that they will be doing the following to address our concerns very soon:

- All newer dispatchers and ones that have demonstrated recent issues (about 5 or 6) will be required to be coached by a veteran dispatcher for at least 8 hours. During this time the veteran will provide proper coaching when needed.
- Supervisors will be required to randomly audit dispatchers work either live or recordings after the fact and provide proper coaching/feedback when needed.

MPD has assigned staff to attend Comm Center in-service trainings to educate them on:

- Current MPD philosophies and mission statement.
- How dispatchers can join and assist us with us working on these.
- Address any issue (s) involving MPD and the Comm Center with the goal to improve on these through face to face discussions.

Communications Center staff will continue to attend OAC meetings when requested to interact directly with officers and answer questions or hear their concerns.

MPD will continue to provide ride-along opportunities for newly hired dispatchers to give them some insight into what officers do on a shift and better understand how important a function dispatch serves.

MPD and the Dane County Public Safety Communications Center need to develop more of a partnership approach in all areas, including daily operations, policy making, training, development of new systems etc. It is our belief that all Comm Center employees want to do the best job they can. MPD has the highest volume of calls and radio traffic of any agency served by the Center. As such, it is essential for public and officer safety that we are able to effectively work together, communicate effectively and discuss ways to constantly improve in 2016.

## **TRAFFIC ENGINEERING RADIO SHOP**

The Radio Shop will continue to work with the Dane County Communications Center to insure interoperability between City and County radio systems. As Dane County's new radio system (DaneCom) is now scheduled to be fully operational by the end of 2016, interoperability with the use of the current RF Control Stations will be limited. An interface method called ISSI (Inter Subsystem Interface), is currently scheduled for purchase/implementation in 2018 as part of Phase 3 – P25 Digital System Project. Dane County has indicated that they are willing to take the necessary steps to implement ISSI, the City is now looking at moving up this purchase to 2017 in order to provide a seamless operation between the two radio systems.

## **CITY INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT**

City of Madison IT staff met and worked collaboratively with Dane County Land Information Office and Public Safety Communications Center staff over an 18 month period. The result of this work was a marked improvement of the geographic data the 911 system uses, improvement in identifying the location where calls were coming from, and improvement of the routing of emergency vehicles. The municipalities in Dane County are now using a shared street naming convention and shared master street name database. The next phase of this work which will begin this fall is sending additional data about City of Madison properties to the Comm Center so it can be displayed on

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dispatcher and responder consoles. Information such as location of key boxes, business names, information about hazardous materials and the like.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Comm Center continues to provide basic necessary dispatch services for the City of Madison Public Safety agencies. However, there are several recommendations that would benefit public safety:

1. Standardize the functioning of the “Work Groups” to improve communication, participation and input from the customer agencies. This would include more formal membership procedures, meeting notices, minutes and follow up communications.
2. Improve the training of dispatchers as well as shift assignments so that the least experienced staff are not always assigned to the most active shifts.
3. Develop practices and procedures that promote close working relationship between customer agencies, rather than be dependent on the individual strengths and personalities of assigned Assistant Operations Managers.
4. Continue participation in new dispatcher orientations through ride-along and other activities.
5. Continue the cooperative efforts between City and County IT staff in improving the accuracy and quality of the GIS and address data utilized by the 911 Center’s CAD system and the customer agencies.

Sincerely,

Paul Kronberger, CIO, Information Technology Department

Laura Laurenzi, Assistant Chief, Madison Fire Department

Richard Bach, Captain of Traffic & Specialized Services, Madison Police Department

Dave Nachreiner, Communications Operations Supervisor, Traffic Engineering Radio Shop