

DATE: August 24, 2017

TO: Hon. George J. Abdallah, Jr.
Judge of the Superior Court and Advisor to the San Joaquin County
Grand Juries
c/o Teresa Martinez
180 E Weber Avenue
Stockton, CA 95202

FROM: Bret Hunter, CMC
City Clerk, City of Stockton

SUBJECT: CITY OF STOCKTON'S RESPONSE RELATING TO COUNTYWIDE DISPATCH
FOR FIRE "TWO ARE NOT ALWAYS BETTER THAN ONE", CASE NO. 0616

The following Minutes Excerpt is a true and exact motion of the Stockton City Council at its regular meeting of August 22, 2017:

14.1 17-3935 APPROVE BY MOTION THE RESPONSE TO THE 2016-2017 CIVIL GRAND JURY REPORT FOR COUNTYWIDE DISPATCH FOR FIRE, CASE NO. 0616


Approve **Motion 2017-08-22-1401**:

1. Adopt the City Council's Response to the 2016-2017 Civil Grand Jury Report for Investigating Case No. 0616 - Countywide Dispatch for Fire, Two Are Not Always Better Than One; and
2. Authorize the City Manager to sign the response on behalf of the City Council and to transmit the response to the Presiding Judge of the San Joaquin County Superior Court.

Moved by: Susan Lenz, seconded by Jesús Andrade.

Vote: Motion carried 5-0

Yes: Jesús Andrade, Christina Fugazi , Elbert Holman, Susan Lenz, and Susan Lofthus.
Absent: Michael Tubbs, and Daniel Wright.



BRET HUNTER
INTERIM CITY CLERK



CITY OF STOCKTON

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

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August 22, 2017

Presiding Judge
San Joaquin Superior Court
222 East Weber Avenue
Stockton, CA 95202

CITY OF STOCKTON RESPONSE 2016-17 CASE NO. 0616 – COUNTYWIDE DISPATCH FOR FIRE

The City Council and the employees of the City of Stockton are strong in their conviction to provide the best service to the Stockton community. This includes emergency response services, which greatly impact the quality of life of residents. The City recognizes that developing a regional dispatch services model, while potentially beneficial, is complex in nature and requires a strong governance structure, collaborative efforts and data driven strategies to ensure success.

The City finds that the Grand Jury report (Case No. 0616) did not provide an accurate account of the status of the City's dispatch services, nor did it offer useful recommendations moving forward. The narrow viewpoint should be taken in stride given that the City currently administers the dispatch services for 76% of the population of San Joaquin County including the City of Stockton, Lathrop-Manteca Fire District, City of Lodi, City of Manteca, and the City of Tracy through a Joint Powers Authority (San Joaquin County Regional Fire Dispatch Authority-SJCRFDA). This successful collaboration is due to the efforts put forth by each of the participating jurisdictions. The City will continue to dedicate resources and energy to improving the dispatch services, infrastructure and coordination within our existing dispatch model.

It is interesting that the Grand Jury did not discuss a regional dispatch center that includes emergency medical dispatch services. An effective regional model in many areas of the country includes more than just fire dispatch services. The County currently contracts with the private, for-profit American Medical Response (AMR) and their dispatch center, Valley Regional Emergency Communications Center (VRECC). AMR provides transport services in the County and VRECC provides emergency medical dispatch services in the County and fire dispatch for those agencies not part of the existing regional fire dispatch authority, SJCRFDA. There is duplication of resources in having these two centers. The

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lack of a shared governance structure and concern over the San Joaquin County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Agency's proclivity for power and control eliminate any consideration for a truly effective regional dispatch center.

In accordance with Sections 933 and 933.05 of the California Penal Code, the City Council of the City of Stockton offers responses to the Grand Jury Report on the above-referenced case as follows:

COMMENTS ON BACKGROUND

The Grand Jury report mentions Stockton's outdated CAD system and its lack of automatic vehicle locator (AVL) equipment. However, on October 18, 2016, the City Council approved the purchase of the Fire Department module for the current Tiburon/TriTech software system that is utilized by the Stockton Police Dispatch. This creates an ideal system where both emergency response Departments (Police and Fire) will be on an integrated system, thereby benefiting from economies of scale in needed server and backbone infrastructure, training, and technical support. This system includes AVL equipment. The system is currently being implemented and is expected to be completed by January 2018. The Grand Jury further indicates that the City's new CAD system will be obsolete in less than four years. There is no evidence to suggest this and in fact, the average lifespan of a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system is in the range of 7-10 years. The Grand Jury report expresses concerns that the CAD system currently being implemented will not be fully compatible with the County's dispatch center, Valley Regional Emergency Communications Center (VRECC). This is simply not true. VRECC uses TriTech CAD. TriTech is the parent company that owns the Tiburon/TriTech CAD system used by the City.

The Grand Jury report makes a claim that prior to the renewal of the County's agreement with American Medical Response (the operator of VRECC), the City of Stockton was offered a no-cost replacement for our obsolete CAD technology by County EMS. They go on to say that there were conditions attached to this offer and that the offer was turned down twice and is no longer on the table. The City has researched this claim by examining records, questioning the last four Fire Chiefs, the last several Deputy Fire Chiefs and several other Fire Department personnel. There is no evidence that such an offer was ever made. It is somewhat irresponsible for the Grand Jury to mention a seemingly generous offer without providing any indication about the conditions attached to the offer.

The Grand Jury report mentions a report the City of Stockton commissioned in 2014 regarding fire dispatch services. They mention one option in the report that discusses moving to VRECC and possibly saving \$1.25 million. They do not mention that the report also provided several concerns over this option including lack of performance standards, loss of local control, lack of acceptable governance, and uncertainty regarding costs and reliability of sustaining VRECC, a private company that is highly dependent on ambulance service and rates.

FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1.0 San Joaquin County Fire Dispatch, Stockton Fire or VRECC

- F 1.1 The City of Stockton is spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to replace their obsolete CAD technology with a solution that will be end of life in less than four years from the date of implementation.

***Response:** The respondent does not agree with this finding. On October 18, 2016, Council approved the purchase of the Fire Department module for the current Tiburon/TriTech software system that is utilized by the Stockton Police Dispatch. Ideally, both emergency response Departments (Police and Fire) should be on an integrated system, thereby benefiting from economies of scale in needed server and backbone infrastructure, training, and technical support. There is no evidence to suggest this software system will be obsolete in less than four years. Additionally, the average lifespan of a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system is in the range of 7-10 years.*

- F 1.2 The vast majority of fire agencies are in favor of a single countywide emergency fire dispatch center; they agree it would be in the best interest of the citizens and the County of San Joaquin.

***Response:** The respondent cannot comment on behalf of other jurisdictions, but the City agrees that regional dispatch centers can be very effective if the proper governance structure is established. Conversely, regional dispatch centers without a proper governance model can fail, putting public safety at risk.*

- F 1.3 There is disagreement as how to organize, operate and fund a single countywide fire dispatch capability. This has led to a failure to pursue creation of a single countywide fire dispatch center.

***Response:** The respondent cannot comment on behalf of other jurisdictions. The City, along with the Cities of Lodi, Manteca and Tracy and the Lathrop-Manteca Fire District have established a regional fire dispatch agency with a goal of working toward a regional dispatch center for all fire agencies within San Joaquin County. This is a successful model because each agency is part of the governance. VRECC is an example of a regional dispatch center that is governed by only one agency. The VRECC model creates problems for the City. The agencies served by VRECC cannot hold them accountable for performance issues, cannot develop policies for them to follow to improve service or require reports to provide information about potential system improvements. By way of contrast, the operations agreement between the City of Stockton as the dispatch provider and*

SJCRFDA requires the dispatch center to meet the national standards for call processing times or face penalties or potentially termination of the agreement. The City is accountable to the agencies served.

- F 1.4 The City of Stockton has not developed a schedule to replace its outdated core UHF radio technology that supports city public safety agencies. This exposes the city to outages of the radio technology impacting public safety.

Response: *The respondent agrees with this finding. The City of Stockton, in 2005, signed on to San Joaquin County's Master Radio Communications Plan. This plan was developed to improve systems, regional communication and share resources. Unfortunately, progress related to this plan has been limited and needs have changed over the last several years with the advancement of technology and radio capabilities. While the City continues to partner with the County, the City must examine other alternatives for improving radio infrastructure. The City is currently working with a consultant to develop a project schedule and plan to replace outdated core UHF radio technology that supports City public safety agencies. The plan will be developed with regional interoperability in mind. It is anticipated that a schedule will be in place prior to December 31, 2017.*

- R 1.1 By Oct. 1, 2017, the Stockton City Council complete an evaluation of financial and operational feasibility of Stockton Fire utilizing VRECC's CAD/AVL technology.

Response: *The respondent disagrees with this recommendation. On October 18, 2016, the City Council approved the purchase of the Fire Department module for the current Tiburon/TriTech software system that is utilized by the Stockton Police Dispatch. Once implemented, both emergency response Departments (Police and Fire) will be on an integrated system, thereby benefiting from economies of scale in needed server and backbone infrastructure, training, and technical support. This system was extensively evaluated by, not only the City, but also our partners in the SJCRFDA. The parent company of this system also supplies the system used by VRECC. Furthermore, Tiburon/TriTech will be 100% compatible with VRECC.*

- R 1.2 By Oct. 1, 2017, the Stockton City Council determine the feasibility of cancelling or revising the existing contract to migrate the current Stockton Fire CAD technology to the Stockton PD dispatch CAD system.

Response: *The respondent disagrees with this recommendation. See response to R1.1 above.*

- R 1.3 By Dec. 31, 2017, County EMS in collaboration with the City of Stockton, the Joint Radio Users Group and the San Joaquin County Fire Dispatch Authority develop a taskforce and provide a plan to consolidate into a single countywide emergency fire dispatch center.

Response: The respondent disagrees with this recommendation. A single countywide emergency fire dispatch center requires a strong governance model to be successful. This will require a high level of trust between agencies. Currently, that level of trust is not evident. Based on recent County actions, the City of Stockton is concerned about the role County EMS would have in developing such a plan. As noted above, the City currently administers the dispatch services for 76% of the population of San Joaquin County including the City of Stockton, Lathrop-Manteca Fire District, City of Lodi, City of Manteca, and the City of Tracy through a Joint Powers Authority, SJCRFDA. The City encourages the fire departments in the County that are not already part of the SJCRFDA to seek membership in this already established regional dispatch center.

- R 1.4 By Dec. 31, 2017, the City of Stockton develop a plan to replace the existing core UHF radio technology that supports public safety with San Joaquin core UHF radio technology.

Response: The respondent partially agrees and partially disagrees with this recommendation. The City is currently working with a consultant to develop a project schedule and plan to replace its' outdated core UHF radio technology that supports City public safety agencies. The plan will be developed with regional interoperability and possible redundancy with county technology in mind, but separate from San Joaquin County's current core UHF radio technology plan. It is anticipated that a schedule will be in place prior to December 31, 2017.

2.0 Borders, Automatic Aid and Automatic Vehicle Locator

- F 2.1 Automatic aid agreements between neighboring fire agencies can reduce response times.

Response: The respondent agrees with this finding. Automatic aid agreements can provide better service and improve response time.

- F 2.2 AVL on all fire vehicles and AVL capability at dispatch centers can reduce response times.

Response: The respondent agrees with this finding. AVL provides the ability to dispatch the closest resources and provides enhanced services using strategy and data driven methodologies.

R 2.1 By December 31, 2018 have AVL deployed at the Stockton Fire dispatch center.

Response: The respondent partially agrees with this recommendation. The City has an established timeline to implement the upgraded CAD system by January 2018, which will include AVL capability.

R 2.2 By December 31, 2017 all county fire agencies, develop a plan to fund, purchase and implement AVL on all emergency fire vehicles.

Response: The respondent partially agrees with this recommendation. The City's emergency fire vehicles will deploy AVL equipment by January 2018.

3.0 San Joaquin County EMS Policy 3202

F 3.1 There is disagreement among San Joaquin Fire Chiefs regarding Policy 3202. Some believe EMS Policy 3202 does not allow responders to provide the level of service expected in their communities.

Response: The respondent disagrees with this finding. The Fire Chiefs that serve on the Board of Directors of the SJCRFDA are in agreement regarding Policy 3202. The policy prohibits local determination of an appropriate response to an emergency. In several circumstances, the policy requires a slower response than what each agency may be equipped to provide. Each agency and their elected representatives should have the authority to determine the level of response and the type of resources that will be deployed to address an emergency. A current illustration of concern over the County EMS policies relates to air ambulance. Recently a four-year-old child suffered multiple gunshot wounds. An air ambulance was requested by the Stockton Fire Department. The County EMS is currently considering implementing a policy prohibiting air ambulance in the County. The County's ambulance services provider, AMR, denied the use of an air ambulance in this case. The child had to be transported in critical condition by a traditional ambulance to a hospital 50 miles away taking more than 55 minutes. An air ambulance saves precious time in emergency situations such as this. County EMS should be questioned about their motives for limiting critical services when resources are available to improve outcomes.



KURT O. WILSON
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