

MINUTES
City Council Public Safety Committee

Thursday, October 8, 2020 – 5:30 PM
Transylvania County Emergency Services Conference Room

Members Present: Gary Daniel, Chair, Council Member
Jim Fatland, City Manager
Phil Harris, Police Chief
Bobby Cooper, Fire Chief

Absent: Maurice Jones, Vice-Chair, Council Member

City Staff: Barry Galloway, Interim Deputy Police Chief
Debbie McCrary, Communications Supervisor, Retired
Tom Whitlock, Assistant Finance Director
Denise Hodsdon, Executive Assistant

County Staff: David McNeill, Assistant County Manager
Kevin Shook, Emergency Management Director
Cameron Sexton, Communications Director

A. Welcome & Call to Order

Committee Chair Gary Daniel called the meeting to order at 5:35 PM.

B. Certification of Quorum

Executive Assistant Denise Hodsdon certified that a quorum was present.

C. Approval of Minutes from June 16, 2020 Meeting

Motion by Chief Cooper, seconded by Chief Harris to approve the minutes of the June 16, 2020 meeting as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

D. Police Department Dispatch Operations

Mr. Fatland explained that there are currently five dispatch positions within the Police Department – a Communications Supervisor and 4 Dispatchers – and due to recent resignations and an upcoming retirement, we will be down to just one full-time Dispatcher. He felt that this would be a good time to ask Chief Harris and his staff to take a look at having the County handle dispatch for the Police Department. Currently, the County handles dispatch for everything except for Brevard Police Department. He has asked Chief Harris not to recruit any full-time positions until we thoroughly review this and make a decision.

Chief Harris noted that this has been part of our Department for over 30 years and to take a service that we have provided for so long and transfer it to the County is something that required a difficult hard look from our perspective. He had concerns that our service would go down and our costs would go up so he was initially opposed to it. However, after meeting with OCD several times to discuss what service they would provide to be fair to everybody, he feels that we would be gaining at least as much as we are giving up. He believes that, given our prior partnership with OCD, they will do everything they can to fill whatever gaps we may have in the service. He added that we would gain some additional things from County as they have made purchase decisions over the years that may be a little more expensive than what we have done, but the service provided to our officers will go up. For example, we currently use a Verizon tracking device in our vehicles that allows us to track our officers wherever they are, which cost about \$30 a unit and we pay Verizon a monthly fee. Those units are not really designed for what we need it for. The County has a set up in their patrol vehicles that cost about \$1,000 per vehicle for equipment and installation, but it makes it safer for the officers and that is something we should commit to. It is a one-time \$1,000 cost per vehicle. He said we have discovered some things by this pre-partnership that are probably going to show our officers a little more care and in the long run he thinks this is the right thing for the City and the Police Department to do.

Mr. Daniel asked how does this help the County's operation? Mr. Sexton explained that it brings everything under one umbrella so it increases their efficiency. If they get a call about a wreck within the city limits, they have to gather all the information to send fire and EMS and then they have to transfer that call to the Police Department to send law enforcement. Whereas, if OCD takes the call, they can gather all the information and send all of the resources at the same time, so there is no delay of service. He said it cleans up a lot of those areas of confusion as to "is that a service the Police Department provides?", and instead of having to call a whole bunch of different people, we'll have that information right there.

Chief Harris provided the attached memorandum that outlines how the Police Department's current Communications Center works and how things will work if the service is transferred to OCD. He reviewed the estimated costs as outlined in the memo. He noted that the upgrades recommended by OCD include updating the AVL tracking devices in the vehicles at a total cost of \$17,000. Chief Harris noted that this will make our officers safer and we would be easier to track in real time, which he sees as a big bump in service that OCD is affording us. Mr. Sexton explained that the big difference in the two systems is that currently the jet pack provides your Verizon internet access to the patrol cars and you actually have to log into your computer which then starts the tracking. With this system, it is built into the vehicle and does not require a computer at all. When the vehicle starts, it turns the device on automatically and stays on for a set period after the vehicle is turned off. The device is built to last the life of the vehicle and increases the capability tremendously.

Mr. Daniel asked if there was a timeline for the transition. Mr. Sexton explained that OCD has two major projects underway – a radio system upgrade and a 911 system upgrade and they anticipate a January 1 start date. Mr. Fatland added that if this committee votes to move this forward he expects to take the proposed Interlocal Agreement to City Council on October 19th with a recommendation for approval, subject to approval by the City Attorney. The County Commissioners will then consider it at their meeting on October 26th.

The Committee then took a tour of the Communications Operations Center and looked at one of the County’s patrol cars equipped with the upgraded AVL system.

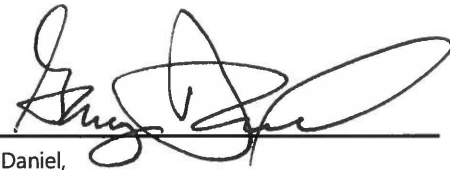
Following the tour and final remarks, Chief Harris moved, seconded by Chief Cooper, to recommend that we move communications operations to OCD and forward the Interlocal Agreement to City Council for consideration. The motion carried unanimously. A copy of the draft Interlocal Agreement is filed with the minutes.

E. Set Date for Next Meeting

It was decided that the Committee would meet again when needed.

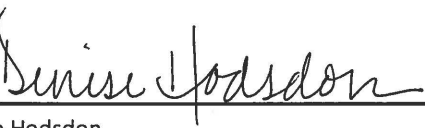
F. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM.

X 

Gary Daniel,
Chair, Council Member

Minutes Approved: April 20, 2021

X 

Denise Hodsdon,
Executive Assitant