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MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Warren Hutmacher, City Manager
Date: January 10, 2010
Subject: **E-911 Update**

BACKGROUND

The City of Dunwoody executed an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with DeKalb County for E-911 services shortly after incorporation. The agreement calls for DeKalb County to provide E-911 services to the City of Dunwoody at the same level of service that is provided to unincorporated DeKalb County. The cost for this service is equal to the E-911 fees assessed to all wired and wireless phone accounts in the City limits.

DeKalb County currently provides services to the Dunwoody Police Department on the North Precinct channel utilizing the same dispatchers and call takers that service the entirety of DeKalb's North Precinct.

Dunwoody Police Chief Billy Grogan has made the City Manager and the City Council aware of his significant concerns regarding the 911 service provided by the County. The main issue with the County service is related to the fact that our Department is grouped in with the entire North Precinct for DeKalb County. The lack of a dedicated radio channel and corresponding dedicated dispatchers and call takers provides Dunwoody with an unacceptable level of service. The current setup can cause delays in the answering of calls, delays in response times, and safety concerns for the Police Officers who depend on the dispatchers to monitor their well being and be available to them if there is trouble in the field. DeKalb County has also been plagued with significant job vacancies over the past few years that have impacted service delivery as their operation has faced these staffing shortages. From discussions with DeKalb, we understand efforts are being made to fully staff the center, but turnover rates remain high.

ANALYSIS

A staff committee was formed in November 2009 to evaluate all options that would improve the E-911 services provided to the City of Dunwoody.

Staff engaged a consultant to evaluate the projected revenue that the City of Dunwoody would be entitled to if the City collected the E-911 fees in the City limits. Our extensive research projects that the City would collect between \$900,000 and \$1,200,000 in fees annually. Staff recommends using a \$900,000 revenue estimate to evaluate service options. Although we will likely exceed this figure, to be conservative, we have chosen to evaluate options using the low end of the projected range.

Staff has explored the following options:



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1. City of Dunwoody provides its own E-911 services by starting a Dunwoody 911 center.
2. City of Dunwoody partnership with the City of Chamblee.
3. City of Dunwoody partnership with the City of Doraville.
4. City of Dunwoody as a subscriber to the Chattahoochee River 9-1-1 Authority (ChatComm).
5. City of Dunwoody remains with DeKalb County E-911 Center with the County providing dedicated dispatchers and a dedicated radio channel for the Dunwoody Police Department.

Staff has spent considerable time and resources evaluating all five of the options listed above. Past memorandums have detailed the costs and benefits of each option. Staff has narrowed the options to numbers 1, 4, and 5 for your consideration.

ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION

In October 2010, staff recommended the City Council enter into an IGA with ChatComm for E-911 services. The recommendation was based on the following points:

1. ChatComm has a proven record as a quality service provider with dependable leadership.
2. The IGA with ChatComm provides for a fixed cost expense model. The City would be responsible for \$570,000 in transition and startup costs and an annual payment of \$1,200,000 for dedicated dispatch services.
3. The City would be provided with dedicated call taking and dispatch services.
4. The agreement would conclude on August 31, 2014 with the ability to terminate with six months notice with or without cause.
5. The City is a subscriber to the system and would not be responsible for technology refreshes, new equipment, or any unexpected costs.
6. The agreement provides for a service level agreement that is enforced through monetary penalties for non-compliance with the agreement.
7. The agreement provides regular reporting, custom statistical reports, annual reports, and direct access to all call data and reporting information.
8. The partnership with ChatComm would eliminate problems with wireless calls in Dunwoody that are sent to ChatComm currently instead of to the DeKalb County 911 center.
9. The agreement includes advanced technologies and service level upgrades such as Smart 911, automatic aid between the Sandy Springs Police Department and the Dunwoody Police Department, and the ability to implement systems such as video surveillance cameras.

Staff carefully evaluated the option of Dunwoody operating a 911 center on its own. The costs do not considerably exceed that of ChatComm, however, staff recommends a contractual subscriber based system for the immediate future. This arrangement provides firm cost controls with no escalation, while allowing the City to establish firm revenue



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numbers, receive a high level of service, while eliminating the responsibilities on existing staff to manage this service on a daily basis. In the long term, a stand-alone center would better enable the City to control its own future. Once we have certainty related to our revenue stream and if, at a later date, the City becomes the direct provider of Fire and Emergency Services, this issue should be immediately revisited.

UPDATED RECOMMENDATION

At the November 2010 Work Session, Council agreed to delay a vote on the passage of an IGA with ChatComm to provide Councilman Ross with additional time to provide the Council with further information. Additionally, DeKalb County has provided the City of Dunwoody with a proposal for consideration that would enhance the level of service they are currently providing to the City. The City has insisted any new IGA with the County would provide dedicated dispatch services and a dedicated radio channel.

We met with the County in November and have passed several proposals between the parties. None of these proposals has considered a cost structure that would exceed the amount of money collected by the County through the E-911 fee in the City limits.

We provided the County with our latest proposal on December 20th. While our latest proposal does not include a number of elements included in the IGA with ChatComm, it does provide for significant improvements from our current service delivery model with the County. The City has requested a meeting with County officials to finalize our discussions and present this option to the City Council prior to the January Work Session. To date, the City has received no response to either the latest draft or the request for a meeting to discuss the proposal.

At this time, staff recommends setting a reasonable deadline to finalize negotiations with the County to allow the City Council full information for evaluation of the remaining feasible options. Although staff does not want to give the impression of rushing such an important decision, we do believe making a decision on this critical issue is time sensitive due to the unacceptable current service level and the ongoing costs to the citizens and businesses paying the E-911 fee.