

SANTA FE COUNTY

STUDY SESSION

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

July 17, 2001 – 3:00 P.M.

2002471

This special meeting of the Santa Fe Board of County Commissioners was reconvened at approximately 3:00 p.m. on the above-cited date by Chairman Paul Duran, in the Santa Fe County Commission Chambers, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Members Present:

Commissioner Paul Duran, Chairman
Commissioner Jack Sullivan
Commissioner Marcos Trujillo

Member(s) Excused:

Commissioner Javier Gonzales
Commissioner Paul Campos

Staff Present:

Hank Blackwell, Fire Marshall
Stan Holden, Fire Chief
Robert Anaya, CHEDD Director
Helen Quintana, Personnel Director
Marcella Salazar, County Clerk's Office

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Upon motion by Commissioner Trujillo and second by Commissioner Sullivan, the agenda was unanimously approved as published.

STUDY SESSION

Discussion of the Santa Fe Regional Emergency Communications Center
[Exhibit 1: Executive Summary and Draft JPA]

Mr. Holden discussed the 1999 ski-area school bus accident, which exposed serious communication flaws in the City and County emergency systems, as the triggering factor to improve emergency communications.

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The City and County, commissioned through joint resolutions, instructed staff to study the problem and recommend solutions. An executive committee was appointed by the respective managers that included the fire chiefs, police chiefs, and the County sheriff. Other City and County departments provided technical assistance and guidance, and legal counsel from both entities provided legal review and guidance on the JPA.

Mr. Holden explained the existing system: the City of Santa Fe provides dispatch services for City police, fire, and County fire. Santa Fe County provides dispatch services for the sheriff's department. The City of Santa Fe is the PPSAP (primary public safety answering point) as designated by the State of New Mexico, and the County serves in a secondary position. That means all 911 calls that originate in Santa Fe County first go to the City. Once the caller location is determined, the call is transferred to the appropriate venue. The City funds the City's dispatch center.

In an operational sense, emergency services are responded to irrespective of boundaries. Because of difficult terrain, San Miguel has trouble communicating with Las Vegas, and the County provides dispatch for the Village of Pecos and the western San Miguel Fire Department. Torrance County and Moriarty run a joint center and Sandoval County runs a joint center with the Town of Bernalillo.

Mr. Holden said operationally there is no question that establishing a Santa Fe Regional Emergency Communications Center is the appropriate avenue. The financial component requires further review. He recommended that the City act as fiscal agent since the greater number of emergency response employees and emergency calls are within the City. During negotiations, the County accepted responsibility to act as fiscal agent knowing that element would be further discussed by the City Council and County Commission. The actual operation cost is recommended at a 69/31 split. The City, regardless of who serves as fiscal agent, has to pay fair market value for space it leases.

Mr. Holden said the working group that was formed to study the concept of creating a regional communications center concluded that one facility would enhance the 911 emergency services to the community. The JPA calls for the creation of a board representing each of the participating funding agencies and consisting of the City of Santa Fe police chief, fire chief, and city manager; Santa Fe County sheriff, fire chief, and county manager; and one member shall represent the community at-large and be appointed by agreement of the City and County managers.

Hank Blackwell remarked that the working group recommends creating the board to avoid political or departmental problems.

Responding to Commissioner Trujillo, Mr. Holden said that County Sheriff Sisneros has been very supportive of the JPA. In fact, when he held the City police chief position, he tried to

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initiate a similar joint agency.

Commissioner Sullivan asked whether County employees' wage levels would be increased to match the City's. Mr. Holden said that item was discussed in the fiscal impact report and there is agreement that the County should increase its dispatchers' salary package. An average County employee earns \$30,500 with benefits compared to the City at \$41,450. He noted that the disparity between the salaries is the main reason the County loses dispatchers following training.

Mr. Holden said the employees were assured that if they wanted to retain their positions, they could. The position of the RECC (Regional Emergency Communications Center) Board is that a few employees will be lost once the authority is operating. He remarked that the single location provides efficiency in time because everyone is housed in the same location.

Mr. Holden reminded the Commission that the new facility is being built with County bond money, and the City will lease space. Mr. Blackwell pointed out that irrespective of the JPA, the safety complex is going to be built and all the County dispatch services will be combined providing for greater efficiency.

Mr. Blackwell remarked that there were other agencies interested in participating in the regional dispatch component and he mentioned the US Forest Service.

Mr. Holden pointed out that one of the real efficiencies will be realized in capital equipment cost by eliminating duplicate equipment funding from federal and state grant dollars. Combined forces will increase funding. There is \$280,000 in state funding that will be received once the JPA is signed and dispatch centers are consolidated. In fact, there is an opportunity for an FY02 state grant of \$280,000.

Clarifying a point, Mr. Holden said the building cost will be 100 percent the County, and the City will lease space. The MIS personnel, director, and equipment are recommended for a 50/50 split. There will be a reduction in personnel; however, County recommends that existing employees be invited to retain their positions. He said attrition would occur irrespective of the JPA.

Mr. Holden said the working group strives to be fair because what's at stake is a public safety component for the community. The fiscal impact was presented as a worst-case scenario.

Mr. Holden said the County needs to make an investment in the dispatcher regardless of this JPA. The City is in a position that it must replace much of its primary safety equipment. "It doesn't make sense for the City to spend \$1.3 million for their capital equipment for their dispatch center and for the County to do the same thing." He said he hopes politics will not jeopardize the public safety.

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Mr. Blackwell remarked that with the call volume and complexity of calls, many of the County's dispatch centers are substandard.

Mr. Holden said the new equipment will enable on-screen tracking and monitoring of an officer's exact location at any time. That increases efficiency tremendously. Mr. Blackwell agreed and added that emergency response has to do with time as the commodity, and the proposal will improve that efficiency.

Commissioner Sullivan asked how the JPA could be terminated. Mr. Holden stated a termination clause in the JPA allows for either party to deliver written notice within 180 days prior to dissolving the agreement. Mr. Holden said initially the County wanted one year for notice; however, the City attorney wanted six months. Operationally speaking, Mr. Holden said the department could be up and running on its own in six months.

"What's the upside risk?" asked Commissioner Sullivan. Mr. Holden said the real cost in operating the regional facility is the personnel and it behooves the two entities to keep the costs at a minimum. The breakdown for personnel is County 31 percent/City 69 percent.

Mr. Blackwell described the entire process from the 911 emergency call to the emergency response arrival.

Worst-case scenario depicts a \$150,000 increase in cost to the County. This amount is not offset by the lease arrangements with the City. Mr. Holden repeated that everyone is going to benefit.

The County volunteer firefighters are very supportive of the regional center.

Mr. Blackwell commented that the facility will serve as an emergency operation center and, in the event of a large-scale emergency, all decision makers will be housed under the same roof.

The Commission voiced its support for the regional community emergency communications center and directed Mr. Holden to include the item at the next administrative meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

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This study session was declared adjourned at approximately 4:30 p.m.

Approved by:



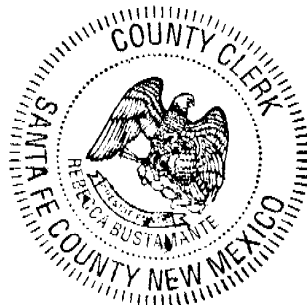
Board of County Commissioners
Paul Duran, Chairman

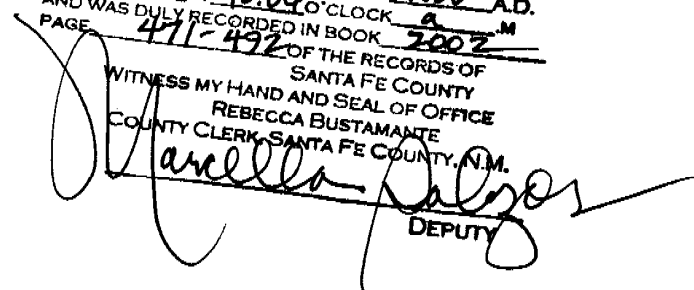
Respectfully submitted:

Karen Farrell, Commission Reporter

ATTEST TO:


REBECCA BUSTAMANTE
SANTA FE COUNTY CLERK



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COUNTY OF SANTA FE
STATE OF NEW MEXICO
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS INSTRUMENT WAS FILED]ss
FOR RECORD ON THE 01 DAY OF Nov AD.
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AND WAS DULY RECORDED IN BOOK 2002 M
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SANTA FE COUNTY
WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL OF OFFICE
REBECCA BUSTAMANTE
COUNTY CLERK, SANTA FE COUNTY, N.M.

DEPUTY

Santa Fe Regional Emergency Communications Center

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Executive Summary

In 1999 a working group was formed to study the concept of creating a Regional Communications Center for the overall emergency telephone access for the citizens of the City and County. This working group was formed as a direct result of the communication critique performed after the tragic bus accident in March of 1999. It was recognized by all public safety agencies at that time that improving communication between citizens and the agencies and between public safety agencies themselves was paramount to improving emergency responses on future events. It is important that in obtaining emergency services including fire, EMS and law enforcement for the entire county to be handled within one center. Representatives from the City Fire Department, City Police Department, County Sheriff's department, County Fire Department and the current dispatch center have been meeting on a regular basis since that time to work out a master plan and detail the transition into this type of center. The resulting JPA is the start of this formal process.

This report highlights the following developments:

- It is agreed that if all participating agencies were to pool their resources it would better serve the public in the area of response to incidents and communication between law enforcement, fire and EMS responders.
- The county is building a new Public Safety Complex at a location across the street from the Santa Fe County Adult Detention Facility on State Road 14. The complex has been designed to accommodate the additional square footage required for the regional dispatch center.
- The consolidation of dispatch centers reduces the need for a secondary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) (currently housed by County Sheriff) and therefore increases the efficiency of database maintenance and capital equipment needs.
- It is the desire of this committee to effectively meet the current and projected call volumes of today and the near future for the participating agencies within the proposed personnel costs.
- The overall project, including the operational component, has been designed to meet the projected demands well into the next decade.
- It is believed that improved efficiency obtained through improved technology and combining two dispatch centers will decrease the need for additional dispatch personnel in the near future.

Other important findings include:

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- With the consolidation of the center into one facility the community will be better positioned to take advantage of technology upgrades and related grant funding. The state and federal governments has recognized the merit in combined regional facilities and is more likely to offer financial assistance to such centers in the future.
- Staff has recommended the creation of a board to address the operational and financial issues relating to each participating agency. The board with representatives from each using agency will provide the administrative oversight to the Center or District Director and report directly to each governing body.
- A joint powers agreement has been drafted to organize and administer the regional communications center and will outline the shared cost of operating and capital expenses of this center. The costs will be split between the City of Santa Fe and the County of Santa Fe on a percentage basis based on estimated call volumes until more accurate data is available. Details relating to this are still being worked out.
- The cost of capital equipment will be split evenly between the City and County. The personnel cost of the Director and MIS personnel will also be split evenly between the City and County.
- The cost of the building will be born by the County. It is proposed that the City provide an annual lease payment to the County for the actual square footage utilized by the City. Details continue to be worked out.
- It is recognized that the staffing of the Center may include the hiring of existing dispatch employees of the City and County but may not be restricted to these employees alone. This is a matter that is still being discussed and will be of primary concern for the transition process.

The Proposed Timeline

- Currently the proposed regional communications center has been approved to receive a \$280,000.00 grant from the state E911 authority. The state requires an approved joint powers agreement be approved before the end of this fiscal year to receive the funding. In addition the authority has notified the agencies that an additional \$280,000.00 may be available for the next fiscal year for the purpose of consolidating the dispatch centers into one center. Therefore it is imperative that we move forward as quickly as possible with the JPA.
- The County plans to award the construction contract for the Public Safety Complex, including the building of the communications center, at the April 24th BCC meeting.
- The building is currently planned to be completed 360 days from date of award.
- The county sheriff and fire departments plan to move into their respective sections in the early spring of 2003. A few months later, approximately July 2003, the new regional emergency communications center (RECC) would be opened.

- This proposed timeline gives the agencies involved approximately 14 months from the date of JPA approval to opening the new center.

It is with the best interests of the citizens we serve that we bring this plan forward and with everyone's interest in mind we will provide efficient and effective emergency communications for our community as a whole.

Respectfully submitted:

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Curtis Lardy, Chief
City of Santa Fe Fire Department

John Denko, Chief
City of Santa Fe Police Department

Ray Sisneros, Sheriff
Santa Fe County Sheriff's Department

Stan Holden, Chief
Santa Fe County Fire Department