

Central Vermont Public Safety Authority

**Strategic Plan
2015 – 2019**



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Strategic Plan

20015 - 2019

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INTRODUCTION

The Central Vermont Public Safety Authority (CVPSA) exists to enhance the safety and quality of life of the people of Barre and Montpelier (total population of 16,907, based on 2010 census). By combining the cities' public safety resources into a single entity, the CVPSA's intent is to provide more efficient and effective emergency response, as well as expand the education and training opportunities currently available to the men and women of public safety. The City of Barre is known as the "Granite Center of the World" and Montpelier is the state capital of Vermont.

The study of regionalizing public safety services in Central Vermont was kicked off in April 2009. Several Central Vermont community leaders gathered to discuss the need for collaboration, cooperation and consolidation given the rapidly rising cost of providing emergency services. There was optimism in the discussion room that something could be accomplished. Some in the room believed budget constraints would ultimately force Vermont communities to work together to deliver public safety services including Barre, Barre Town, Berlin and Montpelier. One person in the room mentioned that "Regionalization is going to be the future in any region specifically our region".

House Bill 892 was introduced in the Vermont Legislature in 2014, this bill created a charter establishing the creation of the Central Vermont Public Safety Authority (CVPSA). This charter was eventually passed by both chambers of the general assembly and was signed in to law by Governor Peter Shumlin on May 20, 2014. A Board of Directors of the CVPSA was established by both Montpelier and Barre and they held their first meeting on August 28, 2014.

The Board of Directors for the CVPSA received an operating budget that was passed by both Cities for FY 16. This first budget led to the hiring of a part time Executive Director. The Board of Directors subsequently worked on developing a plan to regionalize dispatching services in Central Vermont. This plan led to a funding request for dispatcher training in FY 17. The funding request in FY 17 was passed by a 72% approval margin.

Vision

The Central Vermont Public Safety Authority (CVPSA) will provide the Central Vermont area, specifically the City of Montpelier and the City of Barre, with an affordable, integrated, and efficient system of public safety services (fire, police, emergency medical services and dispatching). The public welfare will be enhanced by providing rapid response to emergencies with highly qualified personnel.

The long-term vision for public safety services involves the creation of a unified police and fire/ESM department. By working together in an environment that provides greater professional growth for the employees and encourages retention of personnel can be promoted and costs can be controlled. The merging of administration, management and supervision overseeing operational services within each community is at the center of this concept. Police and Fire/EMS will operate within the communities they do now.

The unified department concept allows for communities to receive the same personalized service they receive now while taking advantage of the services of a larger organization.

A common management structure will oversee all activities within the participating communities, promoting the routine sharing of services. Personnel and equipment can be re-directed as resources are needed. This unification of department resources has the potential to create opportunities, including a diversified career ladder for personnel, a larger department by reducing the loss of personnel between agencies and thereby retaining personnel and helping to recruit new personnel. The unified department concept allows for communities to

receive the same personalized service they receive now, while taking advantage of the services of a larger organization. This concept allows for a modular system of public safety services, so towns do not have to be connected to opt in. Centralized management allows for a greater operational focus within communities. A governance structure responsible solely for public safety can provide the necessary oversight and budget control that will lead to a high performing organization.

Statement of Purpose

The Authority will exist for only one purpose and will have but one management goal: to enable central Vermont Communities to be safer from crime, fire, and medical emergencies through thoughtful, technologically sophisticated communications and responses between emergency service providers and the community.

Principles of Operation

The Board of Directors will follow these principles to successfully implement its purpose over the next three years.

1. **Development and Expansion of Services.** Through the concept of a unified department of police and fire/EMS, services can be offered and individualized within each community. Service delivery will not be homogenized but tailored to the individual needs of a community. Management and administration of services will be centralized; therefore, promoting cost savings. This will enable a large department to operate as a small personalized department.

The cost for services will consider several variables, such as population, grand list, level of services required, and any other pertinent factor that allocates costs fairly. Costs of service can be contained in two ways: by efficient use of qualified personnel, skilled methods of operations, use of appropriate technology; and by increasing revenue from services provided to individuals in surrounding towns where permitted by law. Revenue increases by expanding services will be used for reduction in future appropriations.

2. **Employee Focused.** Embracing a goal of encouraging employee growth through career advancement opportunities, training and active participation in the decision-making process will foster employees who want to work within our unified service. The creation of a larger department will allow employees the opportunity to work in a variety of areas, on different shifts and have better promotion opportunities. Employees perform their jobs every day and interact with the people who receive their services daily. By placing decision making at its lowest level, employees will feel part of the organization. Listening to employees and including them in this decision-making process will cause them to feel comfortable in providing valuable input into making the organization a better place to work and ensure that service is delivered in an optimum way.
3. **Customer Driven Approach to Service Delivery.** Delivering what the communities want for public safety services, and developing plans, or strategies motivated by customer demand or expectations will be how we provide customer service. The CVPSA Board is committed to developing a cost sharing formula based on needs of each community that is fair to both the community and the Authority.

The CVPSA is committed to openly and accurately communicating its operating plans to all interested parties. Those plans which optimize regional services through collaboration among municipalities who participate in governance will be favored. The Authority will gather data and information, explore enhanced means of providing services, and distribute this information with recommendations to members. Recommendations for areas of improvement shall be given to members.

Implementation of the CVPSA vision can only occur when the City councils of both member Cities and other communities vote the ceding of authority over police, fire, emergency medical services

and dispatching to the Authority. The Authority must make formal separate requests of the legislative bodies of the Cities for dispatch, police, fire and emergency medical services as the Authority is ready to begin administering the services. The legislative bodies of each member City shall vote on ceding such authority to the Authority (CVPSA Charter Section 54(b)).

STRENGTH, WEAKNESS, OPPURTUNITIES and THREATS

A facilitated discussion was held with the Board of Directors and various stakeholder's in February of 2016. The notes below are the outcome of this discussion. The Board of Directors of the CVPSA uses this information in its planning for the future development of an affordable, integrated, and efficient system of providing public safety services.

One of the key points that came out of this discussion was not to move to fast. It is for this reason that Board of Directors are focused on dispatching services as a first step in providing an integrated solution. Once the management of dispatching services are turned over to the CVPSA then further plan will take place.

Hope

Improve public safety
Improve dispatching
Increase education
Prove our value
Convince people that change can be good, change the environment.
Set aside concerns and look at the big picture, take ego out of decision making
Accomplish goals
Capitalize on the good will
Advanced dispatching
People who are doing the work see that it is in their best effort for this succeed
Integrated public safety delivery system
Secure funding
More towns

Concern

Lack of knowledge of the board with the current public safety system
People do not like change
May not save money
Employee security
Hard to keep consensus
Get bogged down with implementation details
Could alienate stakeholders
Continue to be transparent
Turf battles will result in failure
People may think that the current system is not broken
Many moving pieces – big & small
Don't go to fast

Strengths

Momentum, strong vote of support from public and councils
Operationally the two communities work well together
Board had no preconceived opinions about fire, police, EMS – learning as they go
Charter, governance model and cost sharing formula – much work done to create CVPSA
Many stakeholders sitting together around the table
Staff ...staff ...Staff....Staff

Young dedicated professional staff

Two towns similar in structure & goals
Incremental steps, taking time to build it right
Public support
Vermont in general is going to a consolidated environment
The fact that we have our own charter and we are an independent municipality

Weaknesses

Demographic differences between the two communities - support could erode over time
Geographical differences - Berlin gap in between
Some people are not informed, and they are working against us
Failure to show a product
Talk is cheap, and action is hard to come by
We have been talking for 8 years and we have little to show for it
Under representation of police and fire at our meetings and No dispatchers
Difference in police culture between the two communities
Could cost more than expected
Police officers work environment may change
- If I wanted to be a Barre City police officer, I would have applied to Barre City
If we fail to deliver on the dispatch vision, it will cause a lack of support
Cut costs vs improve service - Do the politicians in the Cities see this as a way of cutting costs
Board members who leave and having to re-educate new board members
Apathy of the public in the work of the CVPSA

Opportunities

Grant opportunity
Capital purchases – consolidate big equipment & maximize use of specialized equipment
Bulk buying
New and consistent training
New technology
Board build public service support & increase focus on public services
Improving recruitment and retention
Others are watching the development of this endeavor
Increase the level of service provided in the communities
More opportunities for partnerships
Common language
Employees can advance
Talented employees that are shared
Being a separate entity builds public safety support
Break down the barriers between management and employees

Threats

Climate change creating emergencies
Politics and budget cycle
EMS transport loss of income due to changing hospital or regulatory environment
Community perceives a loss of service which erodes support
Income transfer – potential loss and privatization
Perception that lowest will get cut
Need to keep current employees in place is a threat
Failure of staff, community or people to change
Failure of CVPSA Board to remain constant as its Board members change.
A few vocal opponents

If seen as costly it may not happen
Failure to communicate & follow its own principles

What can we do?

A clear and well publicized plan – defensible to councils
Buy-In - Build employee confidence & mutual education
First contract re-negotiation - will they see the reality that things are better?
Show job security – pay, benefits, schedules. Etc.
How are residents better off with this concept than they were before? Communicating this.

How do we bring more of the rank and file into the discussion?

Schedule rotation is a problem to attending Board meetings -perhaps different location, date, time

Problems, solutions [weary of talking about it] . . . want to see a plan
Next step is to get an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) in place (agreement with both city councils)
Communications in all directions
More communications with dispatch about training -Chiefs job, not Board
Need road maps
Mutual Education
How do we avoid the turf battles?
Identify where and what they are?
Pride in their organizations and identities.
What are the uniforms going to look like, what is the patch going to look like?
Show how everyone is better off today than yesterday.
This effort needs to make sense.
Trust building.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Outreach and Education

Goal 1: Beginning on July 27, 2015 and continuing through this FY 16 the Executive Director will have met with stakeholders and interested person and establish a web presence promoting the vision and purpose of the Central Vermont Public Safety Authority (CVPSA) and the work being done by the Authority.

Objective 1.1: Meet with between 75-100 individuals during FY 16 promoting the efforts of the CVPSA.

STRATEGY

Meet with persons to educate them and inform of newly created Central Vermont Public Safety Authority. To date (November 2016) the executive director has met with approximately 115 people.

Objective 1.2: By January 31, 2016 a web site belonging to the Central Vermont Public Safety Authority will be created and published and email addresses belonging to the Authority will be established.

STRATEGY

This objective has been accomplished. A person has been put on contract to manage the CVPSA web services. The web site can be found at www.cvpsa.org.

2. Build CVPSA Organizational Structure

Goal 2: By June 30, 2016 CVPSA will be an established organization.

Objective 2.1: By November 2015 the Executive Director will apply for and receive a DUNS number so the CVPSA can apply for grants.

STRATEGY

This objective has been accomplished. The necessary documentation for applying for grants has been received and included in two grant applications.

Objective 2.2: By January 1, 2016 the Board of Directors and other interested stakeholders shall participate in SWOT analysis and strategic planning session to help define and guide the future of the organization.

STRATEGY

This has been accomplished.

Objective 2.3: By October 2015 the CVPSA shall have office space available and an address.

STRATEGY

The Central Vermont Chamber of Commerce is letting the CVPSA use office space for free. They also provide the meeting room for Board meetings.

Objective 2.4: By January 2016 the Executive Director shall produce an annual report, a FY 17 budget proposal and future budget projections and caused them to be distributed to the City Councils and arranged for the documents to be part of the annual city meetings for public vote. Thus, ensuring the organization is in place for another year.

STRATEGY

The annual report and budget was prepared on time and delivered to the City Council's.

3. Opportunities and Barriers for other Communities to join the Authority

Goal 3.1: By June 2016 the Executive Director and Board shall have a clear understanding as to why other communities in Central Vermont are not members of the Authority and what if any opportunities exist to attract other communities to either contract with or join the Authority.

STRATEGY

Meet with other communities to determine why they were reluctant to join the CVPSA. This was accomplished, and it was learned the roadblocks to joining the authority were based on the perceived loss of control over their public safety services, the unknown costs for operating the Authority and they would not be adequately represented on the Board. It is also difficult to begin talks with other municipalities about joining CVPSA because of the lack of operational responsibilities. CVPSA is not responsible for any public safety operations and therefore has nothing to offer other communities.

However, because of this goal and comments made by the City Councils and the Chiefs of Police the Board has begun talks with the Capital Fire Mutual Aid (CFMA) System (a union municipal corporation) to join the CVPSA. Thus, a new objective has been created.

Goal 3.2: By May 2018 the CVPSA will have added the CFMA as a member to the Board of Directors of CVPSA.

Objective 3.2.1: By January 2018 the Board shall meet with members of the Capital Fire Mutual Aid System/Capital West and begin working out a memorandum of understanding for Capital Fire Mutual Aid System to become a member of the CVPSA.

STRATEGY

The Executive Director has met (summer /fall of 2017) with the leadership of CFMA and Capital West. A draft memorandum of agreement (MOA) was prepared illustrating some of the conditions for joining CVPSA. The CVPSA has consulted with an attorney and determined that process to be used for CFMA joining. Legal issues are being pursued by the CVPSA to better understand the bonding issues associated with both entities in considering a new simulcast radio system. The Board has discussed tentative conditional agreements they would like to see in a MOA. The two entities need to begin formal negotiations of becoming a member of CVPSA.

4. Consolidated or Regionalized Dispatching Services

Goal 4.1: By July 1, 2017 a single dispatching system shall be established working out of two locations (Barre City and Montpelier) providing seamless dispatching services for all the public safety entities that the individual services provide today (December 2015).

Objective 4.1.1: By December 2015 the Executive Director shall produce a business case document detailing the issues, alternatives and costs for regionalizing dispatching services.

STRATEGY

This objective was accomplished.

Objective 4.1.2: By January 15, 2016 the Executive Director and the Board shall produce a budget detailing the expense of training the dispatchers to work within a single dispatching system.

STRATEGY

This was accomplished. \$25,000 was placed in the budget for training and the budget passed.

Objective 4.1.3: By March 1, 2016 CVPSA shall file a grant application with Department of Public Safety asking for funding for radio equipment necessary to equip both Montpelier and Barre City.

STRATEGY

This has been accomplished. Two grant applications totaling \$75,000 were submitted and awarded.

Objective 4.1.4: By May 4, 2016 an operational plan shall be developed detailing the roles and responsibilities of the new communication centers. This document becomes the basis to ask the City Councils to cede authority to manage and direct the dispatching services

STRATEGY

This work is ongoing and is expected to be finalized in November of 2016. The MOU has gone through different forms from a resolution with an intermunicipal agreement and operations to a ceding document and a strategic operations protocol. The Board has reviewed several drafts of the documents and will vote on the final form and send them to the City Councils. Obtaining authority to manage and direct dispatching services is a major objective.

This document was presented before the individual City Councils and before a joint meeting of the two City Councils. Numerous questions were raised causing the CVPSA to rethink the transition of the CVPSA Board assuming management and direction of dispatching. An interim plan which will not include assuming employees becoming CVPSA employees will be presented to the City Councils in 2017.

Objective 4.1.5: By July 1, 2016 the two existing centers shall begin working together under a common supervisory structure.

STRATEGY

This was an unrealistic expectation. The aspect of working together, especially under the CVPSA, cannot occur without the Montpelier and Barre City ceding the authority to do so.

A request was made before the City Councils in December of 2016 asking that the CVPSA assume management and direction of dispatching. This request was rejected and the CVPSA was asked to reconsider and modify the request and/or come back with answers to the numerous questions that have been raised.

Objective 4.1.6: By October 1, 2016 a grant award is made for radio improvement.

STRATEGY

This objective has been accomplished. The grant award occurred in July of 2016 and radio improvements were made by the end of August. However, another grant was also received to finish the project which must be accomplished by December 31, 2016.

Objective 4.1.7: By February 2017 all radio improvements shall be made.

STRATEGY

This objective is on track to be completed prior to January 1, 2017 in terms of all equipment being purchased. Installation will not be complete until a data circuit is installed between Montpelier and Barre City. As of December 2016, this circuit has been ordered.

Objective 4.1.8: Between April and July 2017 the CVPSA shall assume management responsibilities for the new Central Vermont Public Safety Communication Centers.

STRATEGY

Documents requesting the ceding of authority to manage and direct the dispatching services will be submitted in November of 2016. Budgets necessary to operate dispatching will be presented to the City Councils in December and it is expected that a vote will be held in March 2017 approving the dispatch operating budgets. This was accomplished.

A request was made before the City Councils in December of 2016 asking that the CVPSA assume management and direction of dispatching. This request was rejected and the CVPSA was asked to reconsider and modify the request and/or come back with answers to the numerous questions that have been raised. CVPSA has provided answers to numerous questions raised by employees (appendix B).

A revised "ceding" document was prepared refining the previous plan to assume responsibility for both dispatching centers. The CVPSA considered a request to combine the dispatch centers into one location but felt more time was needed to address this costly alternative. As a result, a third phase of combining the two centers was included in the strategic operations plan of the revised ceding request. The ceding request also included more detail regarding administrative, support and employee transition issues. There still was a lack of support for this plan from City management and employees and just before the CVPSA was to present the latest plan to the City Council's it was abandoned. Therefore, this objective is finished and objective 4.10 has been created.

Objective 4.1.9: Develop a task list and timeline of all the necessary steps required to complete the implementation of a Central Vermont Public Safety Dispatching System (Centers).

STRATEGY

This has been accomplished and is made part of this document in Appendix A.

However, this timeline will need to be adjusted based on new information that a newly formed executive committee (proposed in 2017) will provide. The dispatch executive committee as formed and met several times. Staff have been engaged in discussions about operational issues regarding dispatching. As a result of the numerous discussion the Chiefs of Police have recommended that a one center located outside of the police departments be considered. This has been determined to be worth while consideration but a costly one. Until solutions are found to alter the current business requirements of the police departments this alternative cannot be advanced.

Objective 4.1.10: By the Fall of 2017 develop an easy to read flyer outlining the benefits of creating a communications system in Central Vermont that is under a common governance structure and routinely operates by a working together policy.

STRATEGY

This was accomplished. It is included as an attachment to this document.

Objective 4.1.11: By July 2018 the CVPSA shall assume management responsibilities for the Montpelier Dispatch Center.

STRATEGY

A new plan calling for a more collaborative approach to manage dispatching has been created. The term “ceding” has been removed from this document. It is currently in the discussion phases with the CVPSA Board of Directors.

This document was reviewed with the City Manager for Montpelier and the Chief of Police. They were not supportive of this type of shared management responsibility. They also believe a single site location for dispatching should be the preferred alternative for dispatching. Due to the lack of employee support the Board did not take this plan to the City Council and Goal 4 has been abandoned for the revised Goal 5.

Goal 4.2: By July 1, 2019 a single dispatching system shall be established working out of a single site location providing seamless dispatching services for all the public safety entities that the individual services provide today (January 2018).

Objective 4.2.1: By November 2018 the Executive Director shall produce a plan detailing the issues, alternatives and costs for regionalizing dispatching services into a single site facility. This plan shall include a review of combining dispatching into one of the current locations.

STRATEGY

This goal and funding from the FY 19 budget request going to voters at Town Meeting in March of 2018.

5. Simulcast Radio System

Goal 5.1: By July 1, 2021 a new simulcast radio system will be in place which will improve the radio coverage, reduce interference amongst the fire services operating in Central Vermont. This project will be a collaborative project between the CVPSA and the Capital Fire Mutual Aid System/Capital West.

Objective 5.1.1: By March 2018 working with Capital West a strategy for moving forward will be determined a document detailing this strategy will be developed.

STRATEGY

For this objective to be accomplished their needs to be agreement between the two organizations that this goal is a worthy goal for both organizations to pursue.

Objective 5.1.2: By June 2018 a funding mechanism for the simulcast radio project must be determine. This funding strategy should include the costs for design and engineering and reimbursement of up front costs if they are occurred.

Appendix A - Timelines

These timelines were used to illustrate a transition to dispatching. They are currently not relevant.

Milestone(s) Timeline: 11/30/2015 - 7/2/2018

CVPSA CV Dispatch Center Transition Timeline

Date	Description
03/09/2016	Funding for Authority is Approved along with Dispatch Training
03/15/2016	Develop a Training Plan
04/04/2016	Implement the Valcour RMS in Barre
06/01/2016	HSU Grant awarded for radio improvements
08/31/2016	Implement Improvements in Radio System
11/11/2016	Establish MOU/Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA)/Operations Plan – Ceding document
11/18/2016	Telephone Improvements are determined to allow for cross communication
12/31/2016	Radio Improvements Completed
03/07/2017	Budget for Operations, Dispatch and Capital Enhancements (Telephone) Approved
06/01/2017	Labor/Management Issues Resolved - New Contract if Necessary or Personnel Rules
07/02/2017	Establish Advisory Board or like committee
07/02/2017	Start Dispatch System using the existing operational structure
07/02/2017	CVPSA Assumes Responsibility of Management/Supervision of Dispatch System
09/29/2017	Telephone improvements are implemented

TASKS

Duration

(days)	Start Date	End Date	Description
54	11/30/2015	01/22/2016	Engineer Radio and Telephone Improvements
33	12/07/2015	01/08/2016	Seek Funding for Authority and Dispatching Training
33	01/25/2016	02/26/2016	Apply for HSU Funding
283	01/24/2016	11/01/2016	Establish MOU/Intermunicipal Agreement/Oper. Plan
22	02/15/2016	03/07/2016	Develop a plan for Valcour conversion
272	03/04/2016	11/30/2016	Train dispatch personnel
394	03/10/2016	04/07/2017	Develop Performance measures
103	01/01/2016	04/12/2016	Train staff for Valcour conversion
403	04/25/2016	06/01/2017	Hire a supervisor in Barre
458	04/01/2016	07/02/2017	Establish an Advisory Board of Dispatch Stakeholders or committee
404	04/16/2016	05/24/2017	Research, write and implement dispatch policies
366	07/02/2017	07/02/2018	Hold monthly Advisory Board Meetings
444	11/02/2016	01/19/2018	Radio Improvements made creating a single system
456	07/01/2016	09/29/2017	Budget analysis done, training ongoing, call volumes monitored
425	04/03/2016	06/01/2017	Labor Management Issues Identified and Resolved
245	11/01/2016	07/03/2017	Resolve All Issues for Transfer of Dispatch to CVPSA

This timeline was developed for the second plan to assume responsibility for the management and direction of dispatching. This strategic planning document (without this timeline) was to be presented in the Fall of 2017.

<u>Tasks</u>	<u>Time Line</u>
Phase 1 Begins	July 2018
· Resolve “Ceding of Authority” Question.	October 2017
· Prepare FY 19 Appropriation.	December 2017
· Revise task list and timeline	November 2017
· Hire or contract for Human Resource and Payroll needs.	October 2017 - February 2018
· Organize a transition team of employees and stakeholders.	December 2017
· Hire supervisory position.	March - June 2018
· Agreement with Cities for information tech. support.	October 2017 - May 2017
· Ongoing work on training plan.	October 2017 - July 2018
· Training of dispatchers.	October 2017 - July 2018
· Establish unified policies and procedures, to include a Quality Assurance Program.	October 2017 - July 2018
o Begin work to identify ways to share resources.	
· Seek funding for a CAD.	March 2018
· CAD RFP, purchase and implementation.	March 2018 - August 2018
· Negotiate Collective Bargaining Contract with Staff.	ASAP after Ceding
· Ensure phone systems work together.	May 2018
o Determine specifications for a new phone system.	November 2017
· Begin transfer of calls.	
Phase 2 Begins	July 2019
· Establish the two centers are connected and working together.	December 2019
Phase 3 Begins	July 2020
Determine budget for a combined facility, stand-alone facility or co-located facility.	
Telephone connection to all departments.	
Security at the new center.	
Staffing of the police departments. How many new personnel after staff removal?	
Transfer of equipment (positions) from the police departments to the new facility.	
Radio connectivity and improvements.	
Determine how the transfer of administrative functions and jail monitoring will occur.	

Appendix B – CVPSA Response to Dispatcher Concerns

CENTRAL VERMONT PUBLIC SAFETY AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY DISPATCHERS

The Authority will exist for only one purpose and will have but one management goal: to enable central Vermont Communities to be safer from crime, fire, and medical emergencies through thoughtful, technologically sophisticated, communications and response between providers and community.

Barre and Montpelier Dispatchers have attended CVPSA BOARD meetings. They have expressed strong, even hostile, disapproval of the two-city merger concept, especially if no single dispatching center is created to staff a function unified in place and management.

This document does two things. First, it restates *in italic type* the criticisms based on the reasons the dispatchers gave to the Board for their response. On occasion, several stated reasons are combined into one central theme. Alternatively, reasons are stated as directly as memory permits. Second, it contains the CVPA Board's response. The Board insists that wise and vigorous management of a merged facility – with or without a new stand-alone facility can overcome the voiced obstacles.

1. COMMENT: Several dispatchers said No benefit was perceived to occur by merger without creation of single center.

RESPONSE: The measure of an organization is the energy and the creativity of the people who work for it not the space in which they function. Management must help everyone to meet those qualities necessary for success in any venture.

2. COMMENT: Dispatchers complained the Board did not “respect” them. Various comments imply a feeling that the CVPSA has cobbled together plans without adequate thought or consultation with them which will impact the dispatchers work environment, community culture, management, supervision and possibly pay and benefits. One dispatchers complained they were being asked to walk into an “unknown”. Another said dispatching can be a high stress job, and requirements for 24/7 staffing are a disincentive for many applicants. Therefore, it is important to retain existing staff.

RESPONSE: The Authority's management goal is to have and retain people

that are proud to work for an organization that is vital to the community and who in return are appreciated for the good work they do. Managers and dispatcher's alike must feel respect for each other. This goal is achievable by allowing dispatchers to use their experience, creativity and training to come forward with ideas and procedures to improve service. Management will respect them by so doing, and they will respect management that does so.

The CVPSA is confident that dispatchers will be able to engender that respect both in the workplace and the community because of the broad support they voiced for achieving such an organization. This confidence is because most of the dispatchers filled out a questionnaire in which they identified the strength and opportunities (reproduced below) a merger would bring about. These statements are virtually identical to the goals of the authority. With agreement in principle the execution is achievable.

Strengths and Opportunities

At a recent dispatcher meeting a majority of employee's present were asked to list the strengths of a formal coordination between the two dispatch centers.

- 24/7 coverage
- Better department safety - first responder
- Shared internal and external resources
- Combined special interests
- Consistent policies and procedures
- Existing working relationships
- More staff coverage
- Levels of experience

The CVPSA accepts that communications between the Board and dispatchers could have been better. Management goals have been clearly articulated in written planning documents. However, these documents are often complex and difficult to understand how they impact individuals. These documents were not widely or effectively distributed. Discussion and concerns of dispatchers that impede reaching our goals have been and will be considered. This dialogue is ongoing and will continue by working with the dispatchers to establish their preferred method of communications.

The CVPSA acknowledges that the lack of a collective bargaining process has limited the ability to communicate with potential employees regarding pay

and benefits. Regardless, the CVPSA has embraced the model for a collective bargaining process that is contained in T. 16 V.S.A. § 1802 (2016 Act 46. school merger).

2. *COMMENT: Dispatcher “culture’ among public safety workers who depend on each other is like family and it cannot be changed, by breaking up existing relationships.*

RESPONSE: All organization must adapt their culture to meet the needs of changing technology and demands for customer or community services. Otherwise they become obsolete and collapse. Dispatchers who enlarge their geographic and personnel contacts while serving public safety entities and the emergency needs of communities will always experience a bond with the fire, police and emergency medical services they are responsible for. This will not change.

The change that will occur will be that dispatchers working for the CVPSA will be part of a larger public safety community including fire/EMS and police departments from two Cities not just the one police department they are part of now. In Barre, now that fire fighters are in the same building there is a better relation and understanding of mutual needs as they have gotten to know each other. And so the “family” has expanded. This process can also occur through planned learning events educating personnel on the needs and requirements of each other and ways of getting to know one another.

Respect for the dispatcher function requires management to encourage this evolution, and respect for management requires employees to embrace it.

4. *COMMENT: Personal availability of dispatchers at each facility 24/7 is a comfort to the populations of each City. People with mental health issues frequently contact dispatchers for information and security concerns. Interaction via video would not be as effective as in person communication, even though now contact is separated by glass.*

Management’s preferred plan is a period of transition beginning with a merger of operations operating out of two facilities with a single management structure, followed by a discontinuation of one or both existing dispatching spaces and creation of a single facility. For the period of transition dispatchers will continue to function as they do now. During the transition, alternative plans can be vetted.

RESPONSE: Management's goal is to optimize the outcome of the communication for the person needing safety services or information. This goal, is more important than the medium by which that communication occurs. The goals of a management response for a 911 call, and an "in person" in facility request for a perceived emergency, usually for a less urgent situation, are similar; prompt assessment and allocation of appropriate resources to meet the event, rather than the method of communication. Personal communication would be preferred but it is not essential.

In case of discontinuation, there may be times when a City facility is not staffed. An in-person visitor to that facility will have instant video communication with a dispatcher in a staffed facility. Operational protocols will be established to ensure prompt in person response by a police officer. Various mediums of communications will be available. Visual and voice communications and personal contacts will occur. It would be possible for an in-person visitor in appropriate circumstances to hear the dispatcher communicate with the police or fire/EMS personnel regarding the response to their concern.

5. COMMENT: Even a perfect video hook- up to enable a person at a facility not staffed by a dispatcher to communicate with one that is, would not get administrative work such as working on parking tickets or jail monitoring accomplished.

RESPONSE: This problem only occurs when one dispatch center is collapsed into the other or a stand-alone facility is created. Initially we expect no change. However, as change occurs there are three administrative support needs that must be considered:

- i. The administrative support functions for the police will continue to be performed by dispatchers. For example, warrant control, relief from abuse orders and trespassing notices will be performed by dispatchers.
- ii. Jail monitoring can still be performed with a video feed but a quick in-person response to any jail issues cannot be performed by dispatchers who may be remotely located. Indeed, it may not be possible now if the dispatcher is engaged in crises of communications with victims and providers.

- iii. A management goal is to eliminate dispatchers performing non-dispatch functions. The ability to maintain a local lock up is a larger Barre City management issue with implications for the surrounding communities that would permit short periods of confinement rather than transport to St. Johnsbury. This issue should involve a coordinated approach involving the States Attorney, the Vermont Department of Corrections, the Vermont Department of Mental Health and other partners.
- iv. The parking functions are a City issue that needs to be performed by non-dispatchers.

6. *COMMENT: The Authority structure is unstable, tentative, and could change so any municipality joining the system now could become dissatisfied and leave. Unnecessary disruption of operations, and employees is the likely result of the plan.*

RESPONSE: This risk is inherent in all present operations. Both Barre and Montpelier have contracts with other towns for fire/ems dispatching which support operations. The existence of this possibility is not limited to the Authority plan. It is precisely why the Authority must knit its municipal members into a well-functioning, economically bound, well supplied, and well-trained operation so it can plan for the future and provide secure employment.

Appendix C - Why have a Regional Dispatch System?



Central Vermont Public Safety Authority

"Together is Better"



WHY HAVE A REGIONAL DISPATCH SYSTEM?



WHAT WE HAVE TODAY

- Two dispatching centers find difficulty routinely working together as they are separate with different management.
- No agreement yet on common policy and procedures.
- One City can't seamlessly help the other.
- No coordinated computer displays of maps, location of need, or availability of equipment (CAD*).
- No effective intercity communications.
- Radio interference and dead spots exist.
- No effective intercity dispatch phones
- City dispatchers not trained to work with the other city.
- Inefficient communications between cities, towns and State Police in Central Vermont.

A BETTER TOMORROW

- Two dispatch centers working together and sharing calls for service.
- All dispatchers responding and delivering service the same way.
- Improved technologies with visual displays, identifying resources and logging of incidents.
- Development of simulcast radio system that would remove dead spots and prevent jamming of messages.
- Connecting telephone system between the two dispatch centers.
- Equally trained dispatchers where everyone knows what to do and where to send resources.
- Working together guarantees 2 positions staffed for both Cities 24/7.
- Career opportunities for dispatchers.
- Other towns will be anxious to join a high functioning dispatch system.
- A management system and plan dedicated to dispatching.
- Shared capital costs and increased likelihood of federal funding in support of interoperable communications.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

FRANCIS (PACO) AUMAND, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CVPSA

EMAIL: PAUMAND@CVPSA.ORG

CELL PHONE: 802 747-8611

* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oNKUbog_o