



CITY OF SAINT PAUL

ALASKA

MEMORANDUM TO COUNCIL

TO: Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Phillip A. Zavadil, City Manager

CC: Aubrey Wegeleben, City Clerk; Stephanie Mandregan, Finance Director

DATE: September 14, 2023

RE: Resolution 23-18 - A Resolution of the Council of the City of Saint Paul Approving Dispatch Services Agreement Between City of Cordova, Alaska and City of Saint Paul, Alaska

SUMMARY: The City of Saint Paul (City) is charged with providing public safety services (e.g. law enforcement, emergency medical, dispatch, fire, and search and rescue) per City Code of Ordinance Title 8, Chapter 8.05 for the community of Saint Paul Island. Over the past years it has been difficult to recruit and retain qualified individuals to work emergency dispatch. Stable and quality emergency dispatch services are critical to ensure the safety of our community.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION: City Council has not acted on this topic before.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION: Over the past years it has been difficult to recruit and retain qualified individuals to work emergency dispatch resulting in instability and poor-quality emergency dispatch services for our community. Emergency dispatch has had a high number of various personnel issues with dispatchers over the past few years resulting in further instability and poor-quality emergency dispatch services. In addition to personnel issues, there are numerous performance-related issues resulting in poor communication with first responders, safety issues for officers, and potential liability issues for the City.

Maintaining 24/7 dispatch coverage is expensive. Over the past three years from 2020 to 2022 labor for 24/7 dispatch coverage has cost on average \$250,941 per year. In 2020 labor for dispatch was \$244,124, 2021 \$263,341, 2022 \$254,358. Dispatcher training ranges averages \$1,000 per dispatcher per year. It is predicted that these costs will continue to increase over time.

There are several training requirements for emergency dispatchers, which include but are not limited to:

- PowerPhone which is an online certification and continuing education for public safety telecommunicators
- ICS 100, 200, 700, and 800

- First aid and CPR
- OJT eForce CAD system training
- OJT with emergency radio and VHF communication
- Basic computer and software applications

To perform emergency dispatch properly to allow for access and handling of criminal and court records, including the Alaska Public Safety Information Network, dispatchers need to free over any disqualifying criminal history. Criminal background checks of all dispatchers would be needed to meet Criminal Justice Information Systems requirements. Current dispatchers and future local hire dispatchers may have disqualifying background preventing them to have access to critical criminal and courts records for the proper and efficient operation of emergency dispatch services.

If the City Council elects to contract emergency dispatch services that 3-4 dispatchers that the City currently employs would be laid off. It may be possible to transfer some of the employees to other departments and positions within the City, but this would depend on funding, qualifications, and performance of each individual employee.

The switch from City providing direct dispatch services to contract services with Cordova would begin January 1, 2024.

ALTERNATIVES: City Council could choose not to contract out emergency dispatch services at all or to Cordova Police Department.

Alternatively, if City Council wants to maintain emergency dispatch services in house, City Administration recommends:

- Increasing the dispatcher pay, expectations, and requirements for dispatchers hired by the City. However, this could lead to current dispatchers not meeting new expectations and requirements.
- Hiring of a Director of Public Safety that has familiarity with operating emergency dispatch services. A Director of Public Safety with these qualifications could cost the City approximately \$200,000 a year in salary and benefits in addition to relocation, housing, and vehicle costs. Alternatively, the City could hire a qualified emergency dispatch supervisor to manage and operate emergency dispatch services. Hiring an emergency dispatch supervisor could cost the City approximately \$120,000 a year in salary and benefits in addition to relocation, housing, and vehicle costs.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS: The City could see an annual savings of approximately \$100,000 to \$150,000 annually by contracting dispatch services. To allow for emergency radio communications between Saint Paul Island and Cordova the City will need to invest approximately \$12,000 in equipment and contracted labor to install the equipment necessary for the connection.

LEGAL: When City Council approved amendments to City Code of Ordinance Title 8, Chapter 8.05 this allowed the City to contract out various public safety services.

ADMINISTRATION COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATION: City administration recommends approval of this resolution.

PROPOSED MOTION: I move to approve Resolution 23-18.

ATTACHMENTS: Resolution 23-18, Dispatch Services Agreement between City of Cordova and City of Saint Paul, Revl Communications Quote for Radio Equipment, Telex Dispatch Tunnel Box Specs Sheet.