

City of Auburn  
**Public Safety and Community Services Council Committee Minutes**

Wednesday, March 24, 2016

4:00 PM

Community Room – Auburn Hall

**Present:** Councilor David Young; Councilor Leroy Walker; Councilor Andy Titus; Paul Fraser, Director of Info Technology; Phil Crowell, Chief of Police; Phyllis Gamache, 911 Director; Frank Roma, Auburn Fire Chief; Dennis D’Auteuil, Assistant City Manager; Paul LeClair, Lewiston Fire Chief; and Mamie Anthoine Ney, Library Director.

Councilor Walker called the meeting to order:

Meeting times: Eight people have complained to the Chair that 4:00pm for Public Safety and Community Services meetings are not conducive for people to attend. For now, we will continue on this schedule – but we will need to change it.

**DISPATCH SERVICES**

Councilor Walker and Councilor Titus met with Sheriff Samson regarding 911 calls and increasing costs if they took over our service. Councilor Walker was to receive costs from County Commissioner, but Councilor Walker has not received as of the start of this meeting.

Councilor Titus and 911 Director Gamache said that in the meeting with the Sheriff, Auburn wants to be fair in their payment to County. Everyone wants to review the information and be fair. Auburn does not want to favor one over the other, but we want to make the right decision.

Chief Crowell met with County Commissioners. The current fees have not been increased for 4 years - not since 2012. The commissioners made a motion to raise Dispatch fees that County is currently charging. PSAP fees will be increased by ten cents (\$ .10) and Fire/EMS fees will be increased by fifteen cents (\$ .15). Police fees will remain the same for now. New fees will go into effect on July 1, 2017 – FY 2018. Current rates = \$2.50 for Fire/EMS and \$6.10 for Police. The Sheriff informed Commissioners that he had met with L/A911 Director and Auburn Councilors. Sheriff shared with Commissioners that Auburn sent letter requesting documentation of the proposed rate increase and that Commissioners had not provided that yet. Commissioners did not take any formal action at the meeting and the only statement by a few commissioners was – not by formal vote – that they would not offer a different rate for anyone within the county. One of the Commissioners cautioned the other members on making that statement without completing an assessment of the overall costs.

Sheriff Samson cautioned that we would not be receiving the same services that we are currently receiving and they do not have the infrastructure to offer that for three or more years.

Councilor Walker asked Chief Crowell how we could get that information – do they tape their meetings. Chief Crowell stated that County meetings are recorded – perhaps by Great Falls TV. We would need to confirm exactly who was there doing the recording.

Chief Crowell cautioned that the Sheriff said there will be a three (or more) year window before County has the infrastructure to provide the same services we currently receive. Following the last meeting, Auburn did request a letter from the PUC. Director Gamache did reach out. Couple of things we need to be mindful of the costs if Lewiston/Auburn were to move their PSAPs to county – or if you were to break that out – Auburn would have to bear ALL of the costs for the upgrades that would be required for PSAP. There is no guarantee that PUC would approve this move. PUC letter stated that typically it's a smaller agency that folds into a larger infrastructure. Doing it this would way would mean a considerable cost. PSAP is just the 911 system and county are not able to receive Auburn's call volume as it currently exists.

Chief said that the School Superintendent spoke about this at the joint CIP meeting, that the more we talk about consolidation we need to be mindful of the impacts on staff. We currently have 24 employees at L/A 911 and the Director is doing a great job with retention. When we start talking about changes, staff may begin to look elsewhere for jobs. In addition, we need to be mindful of call volume and how current county employees would handle Lewiston/Auburn's call volume. Chief is encouraging Councilors to visit L/A 911 dispatch center and view how dispatchers handle call volume. We need to make informed decisions.

Council Titus asked to review the existing rates. Not significant rate increase over five years. Commissioners did vote and it passed. Councilor Titus would like to receive the offer from County to review. County will not begin to make changes unless there is a commitment from Auburn to consolidate. This is a catch 22. County should be providing us with the requested information.

Chief Crowell stated that Auburn has invested 50% of the capital that is situated in the basement on Minot Avenue totaling \$1.2 million dollars. Sixty-one percent is IT equipment. Eighteen percent of that is in the IT tower. We just can't flip a switch and make it work. County would have to find another facility to take in all this equipment. They Mayor mentioned percentages for Lewiston and Auburn's share and the Director has run some numbers this week. Currently, Auburn is at 45% of the call volume and Lewiston is at 54% percent. Poland also has a very small fraction of the call volume.

Councilor Young stated that perhaps the percentages come out that way based on the time of day. Chief Crowell agreed that Auburn's population swells during the day. Traffic is our biggest

call volume. Typically, each traffic crash involves approximately 8 calls coming to the 911 center. Retail stores bring in a large call for service. Councilor Young asked why we have our own PSAP and Chief Crowell explained that approximately 14 years ago, fire chiefs were getting calls in their own homes, police was dispatching their own, each town did their own thing and it was decided that it would make more sense to have all calls dispatched from one centralized location. Communities are always shopping for better services, better rates. Currently, no other PSAP has a center large enough to take Auburn on. County is looking at charging Auburn \$10.85 per capita for dispatch services (which is consistent with other communities) in addition to paying a county tax.

L/A 911 Director recently met with 2 communities who are considering merging with L/A 911. Many factors play into providing a cost for services. Councilor Walker asked if Director Gamache were to have her budget cut by \$500,000, would she have a plan in place. Would county want to take over our system. She said she would need to shut down dedicated dispatchers for police and fire (equivalent to 8.4 people) and combine into one. This would be nearly one half of her budget and would mean delayed dispatch and arrival times for public safety personnel - but it could be done. Councilor Walker asked if county would want to take over from our building or if they would want to take us over in their building. Director Gamache said that this was asked in the past and an offer was made and it was not accepted. Councilor Walker stated that county plans to renovate their building to accommodate five dispatch stations.

Director Gamache asked "who would pay for that?" She stated that the position alone is upwards of \$100,000. The physical capital changes that need to be made to the building are very expensive. State 911 will not allow anyone to upgrade at the state's cost unless they are in the process of transitioning to a new 911 system - which we do every 5 years. If a center chooses to combine during the in-between cycles, it is up to that center to absorb those costs. Fairpoint technicians, lines, equipment, data bases, etc. will also have to be purchased. Councilor Walker said that he believed that the Sheriff is doing a lot of partnering with Lewiston EMA utilizing grant money. Director Gamache was concerned that federal monies were not being offered to L/A 911. Chief Crowell suspects that the funds would be Homeland Security monies and county does receive some of those funds. As such, Lewiston and Auburn is a direct recipient of HS funds. Over the last years, HS fund allocations have been used to upgrade L/A 911 saving the taxpayers a lot of money.

Councilor Walker commented that the City Manager is reviewing all city budgets. He is afraid that 911's budget is too high. He would prefer not to go to county, but we need to wait for them to provide a plan and costs. Councilor Walker asked for 45% and 54% dollar figure - and what that means - so that a comparison can be made.

Councilor Walker asked Fire Department Chief Roma how county dispatch would impact those services – are you in favor of that or could it be done in Auburn? Chief Roma said he would not be in favor of or support any change in the current EMD dispatch services we have if it would be less than what we currently have. That being said, there are other locations that could do EMD but those would have to be evaluated. Councilor Walker asked if fire dispatched “in house” how many staff would they need to add? Chief Roma stated that they would have to have at least the same number of staff they have now – or more – that are currently at 911. Staff would have to be trained, etc. He cannot imagine what that would look like.

Councilor Titus asked Chief Roma re: Mutual Aid Agreements and resources that are available. Chief Roma explained that Mutual Aid responses work very well for our and surrounding communities. Mutual Aid agreement works under the umbrella of the state system. Councilor Titus would like a copy of that inventory list.

Councilor Walker asked Assistant City Manager D’Auteuil regarding whether or not we continue to have resource documents re: equipment available. Assistant Manager D’Auteuil said “yes - at the annual meeting, those lists of resources are updated and made available to all communities. Councilor Titus would like that list.

Chief Roma wanted to offer a comment on dispatch. He understands that we need to look at dispatch from a fiscal point of view. However, we are very fortunate Auburn and Lewiston are very fortunate to have such a tremendous dispatch service that provides the citizens of Auburn and Lewiston an exemplary service. He would hope that going forward the desire to find equity in terms of costs for services rendered and not rendered that the quality of service for the citizens of Auburn and Lewiston will either do well or be equal to or greater than the current level of service citizens are receiving. Try to find a service level during the discussions. Chief Crowell echo’s the Fire Chief’s comments.

Councilor Walker would like citizens to understand the implications and make the choice.

### **Parking Plan**

Chief Crowell took items from Auburn’s Comprehensive Plan and the goals that the city should be working towards and distributed to city councilors. Parking zones have been restructured. Of the 15 lots that are listed, the city owns and manages 1,036 spaces. 260 are privately owned but we also manage and enforce activity. In this area, the only street parking is zone 11 in front of the jail. There is more parking that we do manage. Many of these spaces are permit spaces and individuals pay \$45 / month to park there.

Chief Crowell distributed information re: parking access systems. Smart parking meters are available – pay for an extended time (day pass). City currently has 2 hour free parking but many visitors exceed that length of time. Some systems are web app based. Parking is a huge issue for police across the city.

Current parking enforcement brings in upwards of \$60,000 in violations and \$150,000 in permits annually. This can fluctuate with businesses moving in and out of the buildings. Our \$45 / month parking permits are lower than most other communities. We have also looked at a reduced rate for seniors. What do we want to do in the future?

Councilor Titus would like to move slowly and start with a few kiosks in selected areas and see how it works and what type of response we get from citizens and visitors. Let's look at implementing in zones 1 and 4 and set reasonable rate.

Chief Crowell will provide documents to City Clerk to be included with minutes.

Next meeting: Thursday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 4:00pm

Motion to adjourn: Councilor Young                      All in favor.

Respectfully submitted: Rita Beaudry, Executive Assistant.