

Town of New Hartford

24-Hour Dispatch Committee
32 Kellogg Road, New Hartford, New York 13413
Telephone: 315/733-6666

April 7, 2009
7:00PM

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PRESENT: Lawrence Gilroy; Chairman
Jeffrey Madden; Dispatch Supervisor
Raymond L. Philo; Chief – NHPD
Gary Edwards – Edwards Ambulance
David Reynolds - Councilman
Janet Hughes – NH Police Commission
William Hughes; Chief – WFC
Rodger Reynolds – Village of New Hartford Representative
Thomas Bolanowski; Chief – NHFD
Robert Glenn; Chief – NYMFD
Joseph Palmer; Chief – NYMPD
Barb Aiello – Personnel Director

ABSENT: Richard Sherman – Highway Superintendent
George Nasser; COCVAC
Robert Maciol; Mayor – V/NYM
Terry Martin – Citizen at Large

Chairman Lawrence Gilroy called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

At this time Police Commission Member Janet Reynolds made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 25, 2007 meeting, second by Rodger Reynolds. All in favor.

Supervisor Madden distributed year-end reports for 2008 and reviewed them with the committee. He explained the various reports and noted the figures included comparisons to 2007 and 2006. Activity in dispatch and calls for service were up nearly 5% compared with the figures for 2007. That was in addition to the 10% increase seen between 2006 and 2007. In all, the last 3-year period has shown a 15% growth in service. Chief Philo reaffirmed the fact the majority of the calls do not come in via 911. Councilman Reynolds also inquired on how many were generated on 7-digit *fire* lines? That total was just below 300.

The next subject on the agenda was to discuss meeting dates and schedule. Supervisor Madden noted our committee meetings had dwindled over the past several years and that

was something everyone on the committee agreed should be corrected. In an effort to better insure regular meetings and give us more room for meetings (the conference room at Kellogg Road is cramped for our committee) it was agreed that we would meet 3 times yearly. Spring, Fall and Winter dates would be scheduled and held and the 3 fire stations. Chief Glenn volunteered his station for the September meeting. Date to be determined later.

Another committee topic was that of membership. Supervisor Madden indicated that C.O.C. Ambulance had 2 representatives. It was mentioned that C.O.C. would determine the 1 representative and advise the Dispatch Supervisor. Also, the Citizen-at-Large position, currently held by Terry Martin, was questioned. The size of the committee very large due to the number of Department and Agency leaders. Is the "At-Large" position needed? Councilman Reynolds noted the need for strong support of our Dispatch Center. He said the more representation on the Committee the better. Larry Gilroy echoed those sentiments and indicated the issue can be revisited in the future if need be. All were in agreement.

PSAP consolidation was the next item on the agenda. Chief Philo led the discussion beginning with the latest developments. He pointed to County Executive Picente's State of the County address in January 2008 that very publicly pointed to the consolidation of 911 dispatching in the county as a way to cut costs. Since then, the County, Utica and New Hartford representatives met in early and mid 2007 to re-visit the possibility of consolidating dispatch operations. After several meetings, the same issues and problems were realized. The group consensus was that technology inoperability and extreme cost to the county presented "insurmountable" issues to realize a consolidation. Chief Philo noted that no mention of consolidation was made in Mr. Picente's 2009 county address.

Councilman Reynolds went on to say that there was an informal communication between the County and Town Board. That discussion echoed the findings of the earlier meetings and confirmed "no interest" in proceeding. Chief Philo stated the position of Utica was also clearly "not interested". Chief Philo went on to say we went into the discussions "open minded" and truly looked with earnest. After the review, consolidation was determined to be unfeasible. Chairman Gilroy thanked the Chief and indicated it was politically correct to work with the county. Although, we are no longer on the *defensive*, we must remain on the *offensive* and diligent.

Councilman Reynolds added that the Town needs to stay "ahead of the curve" by maintaining our "extra services" and to keep pace with technology. Janet Hughes agreed and reiterated the service from the county, regarding the fire service, were lacking. Chief Philo mentioned the fact we are offering access to the Town of Whitestown to utilize our *Loss Prevention* (LP Net) frequency for their codes officers. Dispatch Supervisor Madden also pointed to the fact Central is the only Dispatch Center in the county to have radio communications with emergency services and DPWs.

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It was also agreed that we would re-visit the "bullet points" that list all the assets of Central Dispatch and update with all of today's current features. Larry Gilroy noted that we certainly have the statistics to back up our argument that Central Dispatch is vitally needed.

Chairman Gilroy then opened to floor to anyone with issues or concerns to bring before the committee or to the Dispatch Supervisor.

Chief Glenn questioned the status of delays in answering radio transmissions from time to time. Asked if it were radio equipment deficiencies and/or staffing shortages? Dispatch Supervisor Madden stated that, although those two items could not be ruled out, the most likely cause is increase activity and radio traffic. The fire dispatcher monitors and transmits over 4 separate frequencies and there will inevitably be times when delays occur. With upcoming frequency re-banding, the possibility in getting a single "Dispatch" frequency for fire is very real. Chief Glenn went on to say although there are issues from time to time; his over-all satisfaction level with Central remains high!

Gary Edwards inquired about Emergency Medical Dispatching (EMD). The system is in place and we are utilizing EMD when the call requires it and when the dispatcher(s) has the ability to do so. Better than 90% of the dispatchers are now EMD certified.

Chief Bolanowski brought up the status of interfacing our "texting" ability with the CAD system. Dispatch Supervisor Madden indicates we are in early talks with our CAD vendor and the possibility to interface is there and we are hopeful it can be accomplished before year's end. Councilman Reynolds's asked if there would be any costs associated with an interface. Yes, in all likelihood there would be some but could very well be absorbed in the current budget.

With regards to the frequency re-banding or "narrow banding", the project is moving forward. There is an issue with the New Hartford Fire frequency because of a possible interference issue raised by Canada authorities. Our radio vendor feels confident the issues can be remedied.

Phone service at Kellogg Road and Dispatch has again become an issue with *One Communications*, the town's 3rd party vendor of phone service. The town is exploring the possibility of either returning to Verizon or a closer re-seller who will be more responsive to our service issues. Rodger Reynolds noted we should not hesitate to report our phone vendor to the Public Service Commission (PSC) especially with outages lasting more than 24 hours.

The last topic discussed was the staffing issues in Dispatch. Although we have been able to maintain coverage, issues with long-term illnesses or injuries can wreak havoc on our schedule. Also, changes in the activity level of dispatch and the declining availability of the majority of our part-timers often create shortages that results in over-time. Last year's over-time exceeded 1,300 hours. Both Dispatch Supervisor Madden and Barb Aiello from Personnel wanted the committee to be aware we were exploring the advantages of a

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7th full-time position. A 7th full-time dispatcher could relieve much of the shortages and reduce a lion's share of the overtime. And since there are health insurance costs the town must incur now with it's part-timers, a reduction of part-time hours would result in a decrease in premiums. This could minimize the impact of health insurance cost increases with another full-time position. The Committee was advised we would be looking more in depth into this matter and possibly including the position in the 2010 budget.

Chairman Gilroy inquired as to the pool of available candidates (part-time) and the answer was it is diminishing. Many are seeking full-time and are hired by the county. And what few are left for part-time often live far outside a 45-minute radius of the town making emergency call-ins a hardship. All agreed we could look at this issue at or fall meeting.

With no further business to discuss the next meeting was scheduled September 2009 with Chief Glenn and Mr. Madden coordinating the date to be announced.

Chairman Gilroy moved to close the meeting. Hearing no objections the meeting was adjourned at 8:04PM.

Respectfully submitted.

Jeffrey P. Madden

Secretary Pro-tem

24-Hour Dispatch Committee



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