



DANE COUNTY

Joe Parisi
County Executive

October 8, 2014

To: Dane County Board Chair Sharon Corrigan
Public Protection and Judiciary Chair Paul Rusk

From: Dane County Executive Joe Parisi
Dane County Sheriff Dave Mahoney

Re: 911 Governance

Much good work has been done in the past year to enhance the effectiveness of our Public Safety Communications Center. From changes in protocols to modifications in training and staffing, there's good reason to believe that improvements in performance noted in the past several months will continue as initiatives included in the 2015 County Budget are realized in the year ahead.

More dispatchers during periods of busier call times, disbanding inefficient protocols, and spending millions to enhance highly technical systems utilized by both the 911 Center and responders are certainly important reforms.

We also need to be mindful of the processes in place to be sure 911 staff and county policymakers can effectively receive input from public safety stakeholders while maintaining the ability to manage efficiently.

When challenges are identified, time sensitive solutions need to be expedited. Clear lines of accountability are critical.

This summer, staff from the Dane County Department of Administration conducted an assessment of how 911 Centers across the state and region are governed.

Just as a similar comparison of other counties informed recent recommendations for enhancing the "DaneCom" radio system, these findings were equally clear - - no other countywide, solely county funded 911 System delegates the critical mission of establishing operating practices and day to day management to an independent body.

Rock County meets national call answering and dispatch standards. Its 911 Center is managed directly by County Administration and the County Board. A group of public safety officials meet six times a year to advise 911 operations.

Brown County 911 is fully funded by county tax dollars. It has an advisory board that meets quarterly to discuss issues of importance to users. Budgetary oversight, administration, and policy making are provided by the County Executive and County Board.

Waukesha County also has a similar advisory body to guide its public safety operations. Budgetary oversight, administration, and policy making responsibilities lie with the County Executive and County Board. Waukesha County shares 911 expenses with participating local units of government.

Milwaukee County 911 doesn't have an advisory or governing board - - policy direction is provided by the Milwaukee County Board with day to day management the responsibility of the Sheriff.

The list goes on.

To be effectively managed and operated, our 911 Center needs the input and technical expertise of its partners. This is largely accomplished through the committees that currently report to the 911 Center Board - - Operating Practices and the Technical Committee. These committees are effective and offer the highly technical advice needed to inform operational decisions of the 911 Director and his management.

It's critical the 86 police, fire, and EMS agencies across the County have the opportunity to share ideas with the 911 Center. The question is how that expertise can most effectively be shared while ensuring County policymakers can manage an operation they are understandably held accountable for (and fund).

The events of the many years that "DaneCom" was under development offer just the latest evidence of a governance model that 25 years after it was created may no longer be able to accomplish the objectives originally intended.

For our 911 system to excel there needs to be clarity of accountability.

Redundant bureaucracies that don't exist in other counties can be responsibly addressed while being mindful of the need to be inclusive of good guidance from partners.

In the interest of ensuring continuous improvement along with improved transparency and accountability, we respectfully ask you and your colleagues carefully consider modifying the current 911 governance structure while ensuring the continuation of critical user level input.