



DATE: June 28, 2006

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Fire Department

SUBJECT: **ADOPTION OF A RESOLUTION REQUESTING TO ADD THE CITY OF OCEANSIDE AS A MEMBER AGENCY OF THE NORTH COUNTY DISPATCH JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY (JPA) AND APPROVAL OF A JOINT EXERCISE OF POWERS AGREEMENT WITH THE JPA FOR THE PROVISION OF FIRE DEPARTMENT DISPATCHING SERVICES**

SYNOPSIS

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt a resolution requesting to add the City of Oceanside as a member agency of the North County Dispatch Joint Powers Authority; approve a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement between the City of Oceanside and the North County Dispatch Joint Powers Authority (JPA) for the provision of Fire Department dispatching services; and authorize the Mayor to execute the agreement.

BACKGROUND

The North County Fire Dispatch JPA was formed in July 1984. Current members include the cities of Encinitas, San Marcos, Solana Beach, Vista, Carlsbad, Rancho Santa Fe, Del Mar and North County (Fallbrook) Fire. In addition, the JPA provides contracted dispatch services to the CSA-17 Ambulance District, Elfin Forest Volunteer Fire Department, Rancho Santa Fe Patrol, and the Olivenhain Water District. The JPA is financially stable (as are its member agencies) and is actively pursuing the addition of the remaining North County fire agencies as members.

Besides serving as the primary dispatcher for its member agencies, the JPA dispatch center also serves as the "Zone 1" dispatch center under the California Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid Plan. Under this plan, San Diego County is designated as an "Area" consisting of a number of geographical "Zones." Zone 1 is comprised of local fire agencies from the northern county boundary, to Del Mar along the coast, and Escondido in the inland area.

All mutual aid requests are routed from a local agency dispatch center to the Zone dispatch center and, if necessary, to area dispatch. The fact that the JPA is also the Zone 1 dispatch center simplifies and speeds the process for member agencies.

The JPA dispatch center is located next to the Rancho Santa Fe Fire District Headquarters. They employ eight full-time Dispatchers, four Lead Dispatchers, 4 part-time Dispatchers, one Communications Supervisor, one Network Systems Administrator, one GIS specialist, one Administrative Assistant, and one Administrative Manager.

The JPA board is comprised of one elected official from each member agency, with each member having an equal vote. The Fire Chiefs of the respective agencies serve in an advisory capacity to the Board. Typically, the Fire Chiefs meet as a group once a month to discuss operational issues and develop recommendations for future agenda items. The Chiefs individually brief their respective board members prior to the quarterly JPA Board meeting. Meetings are held on the last Thursday of January, April, July and October at 4pm at the Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection Headquarters and typically last between one and two hours.

Currently, the Oceanside Fire Department receives dispatch services from the Oceanside Police Department. Although the Oceanside Fire Department has contemplated becoming a member of the JPA for some time, recent events have made the transition much more attractive. These include the adoption of the 800 MHz Regional Communications System, and the cities of Carlsbad and Fallbrook joining the JPA.

ANALYSIS

In accordance with the current JPA Agreement, the City of Oceanside would cover the start-up costs, making the project cost-neutral for existing members. In addition, the agreement requires new members to contribute a "buy-in" cost, going directly into the reserves. These costs are:

BUY-IN:	\$222,133	(23.04% of JPA net assets as of June 30, 2005)
START-UP:	\$348,060	

These costs include the hiring and training costs of 6 additional dispatchers	\$147,556
I.T. Staff costs for Transition:	\$6,612
Adding 2 full-function consoles (furniture, radio, CAD, telephone)	\$348,060
Cost to join	\$570,193

Operational Advantages:

An immediate advantage will be the ability of the JPA to dispatch the closest unit(s) to an emergency scene regardless of jurisdictional boundaries. Under this scenario, the JPA's Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system will select for dispatch those available

units that are closest to the scene of an emergency. This could result in emergency personnel from another agency responding to an incident in our community or vice versa. This would most likely occur when the primary unit to respond in our City is already on a call. Although the amount of reduction in response time would vary on a case-by-case basis, response time savings could range from thirty seconds to more than three minutes. In addition, utilizing the regional dispatch center gives us the ability to consider the effect boundary drops would have on future response areas and service levels.

Another advantage the JPA offers is the ability to monitor the command channel on significant incidents. Ideally, on a major incident the Incident Commander (IC) establishes communication on a command and tactical channel separate from the dispatch channel, to avoid overwhelming the dispatch channel. The command channel is used by the IC to organize resources on scene, contact the dispatcher to request additional resources, and by field personnel to the IC. By segregating communications by operational purpose on the scene of an incident, safety and efficiency are improved. Due to call volume workloads associated with handling both fire and police calls at the Oceanside Dispatch Center, the fire dispatcher serves as backup to the call taker and police dispatcher. This does not allow time for the fire dispatcher to exclusively monitor the command channel on significant incidents, thereby requiring the Incident Commander to communicate with dispatch via the dispatch channel. This provides for better communications between the dispatcher and IC, as the dispatcher can listen to how the incident is progressing and anticipate the types of request that will be made by the IC.

Reduced response times to incidents involving mutual aid and automatic aid will also be realized as a result of joining the JPA (although proportionately they are a small percentage of our total call volume). Automatic aid is an agreement by adjoining agencies to provide an emergency response into a neighboring jurisdiction for an incident that requires significant emergency response resources. The criteria for these automatic aid response agreements are then programmed into the dispatching jurisdiction's CAD to automatically select the necessary complement of emergency resources (from local and surrounding jurisdictions) to respond to a particular incident.

Currently, when Oceanside requires assistance in the form of mutual or automatic aid, our dispatch center first dispatches Oceanside emergency personnel to the scene, then calls the JPA Dispatch Center to request that additional resources be dispatched from surrounding communities. If we become a member of the JPA, all required responders to an incident (that are part of the JPA) could be programmed in the JPA CAD, so all needed emergency resources from multiple jurisdictions could be dispatched at the same time by the JPA dispatch center. This would shave approximately two minutes off the dispatching time for units responding into our community and an equivalent amount of time when Oceanside is requested to respond to an incident in a neighboring community.

Another advantage is the concentration of most Zone 1 fire agencies into a single dispatch center. By routing fire, rescue and medical emergencies to a single dispatch center, the JPA dispatchers are able to concentrate their efforts in maintaining their skills in the specialized field of fire dispatching. By contrast, due to the sheer volume of Police radio traffic (90%), as compared to fire calls (10%), Oceanside dispatchers spend the vast majority of their time responding to Police-related calls. This provides them with few opportunities to put into practice their skills as fire and emergency medical dispatchers. The JPA dispatchers have a much greater opportunity to maintain their skills providing pre-arrival medical instructions and in dispatching mutual and automatic aid requests. Conversely, by eliminating the need to train dispatchers in both Police and Fire dispatching protocols, our center's personnel will be able to concentrate their efforts on their primary function as Police dispatchers. This will eliminate the need for certain fire-related training, continuing education and medical dispatching quality improvement programs.

A less obvious advantage will be the natural tendency for greater regional coordination and cooperation as the JPA agencies begin to work together more frequently on emergency scenes and share a mutual dispatching resource. Undoubtedly, personnel from JPA member agencies will find themselves working in closer coordination with each other. In addition, the success of a regional dispatch center could serve as the driving force for agencies to consider consolidating other fire service functions in the region including training, public education, fire investigation, and special operations, to name a few. These functional consolidations would improve our region's effectiveness by reducing redundant efforts and enabling improved specialization.

Operational Issues:

In order to utilize the services of a separate fire dispatch center, Oceanside dispatchers will "live transfer" 911 calls for fire and medical-related calls to the JPA. This live transfer will take place over a direct connection telephone line with the JPA. As a result, the call processing time may increase by approximately fifteen seconds, due to the call taker having to identify whether the call is for fire, police or both services before handling the call accordingly. In the case of a call requiring a police and fire response, the most urgent need would be dispatched first. Typically, in a joint police/fire emergency, the call would be handed over to the JPA for fire dispatching first with the Oceanside dispatcher remaining on the line to listen in on the conversation to gather information necessary to dispatch the police response. Once the fire dispatching is complete, the call could be handed back to the Oceanside dispatcher to gather any additional information needed by the police. At no time would the caller be put on hold or be without someone to speak with.

The coordination and cooperation that currently exists between our Police and Fire Departments should not be affected. The high level of field coordination of police and fire units is due in part to our compatible radio system that gives each of our agencies the ability to monitor the other. The radio system will remain unchanged and our ability

to communicate with the Police Department on emergency scenes should not be impacted.

With regard to customer service levels, all 911 calls will still be received at Oceanside's dispatch center. The call will be answered by an Oceanside dispatcher and, upon being determined to be a Fire Department call, will immediately be transferred to the JPA dispatch center. It will not be readily apparent to the callers that they have been transferred to another location to complete the dispatching of their calls. For example, once a call has been determined to be Fire Department-related, a typical scenario would be for the caller to be told to "please stay on the line for the fire dispatcher" while the call is being transferred to the JPA call taker. The JPA call taker will then answer the line, "fire emergency" and proceed with gathering the information necessary to dispatch the call, which could include the Oceanside dispatcher first informing the JPA dispatcher of the information already ascertained from the caller.

FISCAL IMPACT

The funds for the JPA have been added to both the FY06/07 and FY07/08 budgets.

Description	FY 06/07	FY 07/08
Start-up/buy-in costs	\$570,193	
Station-alerting system for eight stations	\$150,000	
Ongoing costs (prorated for first year)	\$363,333	\$545,000
Total	\$1,083,526	\$545,000

Ongoing costs beyond FY07/08 will be included in future Fire Department budgets.

COMMISSION OR COMMITTEE REPORT

This item will be presented to the June 15, 2006, Police and Fire Commission meeting as an information only item.

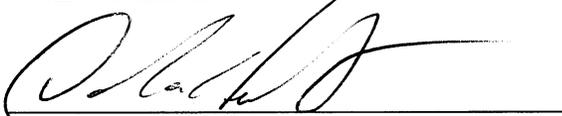
CITY ATTORNEY'S ANALYSIS

The referenced documents have been reviewed by the City Attorney and approved as to form.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt a resolution requesting to add the City of Oceanside as a member agency of the North County Dispatch Joint Powers Authority; approve a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement between the City of Oceanside and the North County Dispatch Joint Powers Authority (JPA) for the provision of Fire Department dispatching services; and authorize the Mayor to execute the agreement.

PREPARED BY:



Darryl A. Hebert
Administrative Officer

SUBMITTED BY:



Barry E. Martin
Interim City Manager

REVIEWED BY:

Michelle Skaggs Lawrence, Assistant to the City Manager
Robert J. Dunham, Interim Fire Chief
Nita McKay, Financial Services Director



Attachments: Resolution
Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement

1 RESOLUTION NO.

2 A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF
3 OCEANSIDE, CALIFORNIA, REQUESTING TO ADD THE
4 CITY OF OCEANSIDE AS A MEMBER AGENCY OF THE
5 NORTH COUNTY DISPATCH JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY

6 WHEREAS, the City of Oceanside ("City") and the North County Dispatch Joint
7 Powers Authority ("Authority") are public agencies organized and existing under the laws of
8 the State of California;

9 WHEREAS, the Authority was created in July 1984 and currently has seven members
10 who exercise certain powers jointly by providing fire communications, by equipping,
11 maintaining, operating and staffing a regional public safety services communications facility,
12 and by providing emergency call receiving and dispatching services to member agencies; and

13 WHEREAS, the City desires to join the Authority as a member agency.

14 NOW, THEREFORE, the City Council of the City of Oceanside does resolve as follows:

15 SECTION 1. The City of Oceanside hereby requests to become a member agency of the
16 North County Dispatch Joint Powers Authority, pursuant to the terms of that certain Joint
17 Exercise of Powers Agreement between the North County Dispatch Joint Powers Authority and
18 the City of Oceanside.

19 PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City Council of the City of Oceanside, California,
20 this 28th day of June 2006, by the following vote:

21 AYES:

22 NAYS:

23 ABSENT:

24 ABSTAIN:

25 MAYOR OF THE CITY OF OCEANSIDE

26
27 ATTEST:

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

28 _____
City Clerk

Barbara Hamilton, Ass't.

City Attorney

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 28, 2006
TO: Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers
FROM: Patricia Allison, City Manager's Office
SUBJECT: ATTACHMENT FOR THIS ITEM

Further attachments for this item will be distributed separately.