

# Ryan Strategies Group, LLC



## City of Taunton, Massachusetts



### Public Safety Emergency Communications Service Delivery (An Independent Administrative Incident Review)

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The following acronyms are used in this document:

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Definition</b>
GIS	Geographical Information System
IP	Internet Protocol
IP PSAP	Internet Protocol Public Safety Answering Point
NG 9-1-1	Next Generation 9-1-1
PSAP	Public Safety Answering Point
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
VOIP	Voice Over Internet Protocol
AMR	American Medical Response
SOG	Standard Operating Guideline
RMS	Records Management System
CAD	Computer Aided Dispatch
QED	Queues Enforth Development (CAD/RMS vendor)
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agreement
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
RMS	Records Management System
NIBRS	National Incident Based Reporting System
NFIRS	National Fire Incident Reporting System
NFPA	National Fire Protection Association
ALI	9-1-1 Automatic Location Indicator Screen
CALEA	Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies
APCO	Association of Public Safety Communications Officials
EOPSS	State Executive Office of Public Safety & Security

The following terms or phrases are used in this document:

<b>Term/Phrase</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Next Generation 9-1-1 NG911	NG911 is an Internet Protocol (IP)-based system that allows digital information (e.g., voice, photos, videos, text messages) to flow seamlessly from the public, through the 911 network, and on to emergency responders. <a href="http://www.911.gov/911-issues/standards.html">http://www.911.gov/911-issues/standards.html</a>
Incident	A real occurrence such as a car crash, medical emergency, crime in progress, etc.
System	A computer hardware, software, and database
Call Taker	Person answering 9-1-1 calls
Dispatcher	Person assigning public safety assets to a call for service
Single Source PSAP	Combined police/fire/EMS 9-1-1 call center

Section One:  
Project Background

The City of Taunton, Massachusetts is located in Bristol County about 40 miles south of Boston. The city operates on a Mayor/City Council municipal form of government.

On the evening of May 10, 2016 the City of Taunton's Primary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) received multiple 9-1-1 calls reporting several incidents all related to one homicidal man. This series of incidents required a response from all three public safety disciplines (police, fire, & EMS.) The resulting delayed public safety response to the home at 270 Myricks St., where two stabbing victims had called 9-1-1 for help, resulted in the City ordering this independent administrative review of the call handling and dispatching of the calls for service.

"This multiple source notification model of public safety call taking and dispatching is obsolete, dangerous, and does not comply with the standard of care provided by jurisdictions of similar size and complexity in the Commonwealth."

The city's primary Emergency Services Public Safety Answering Point (PASP) is located in the Central Fire Station at 50 School St. and functions under the management control of the Chief of Department, Fire Chief Timothy J. Bradshaw. Chief Bradshaw delegates the day to day operations and management functions of the 9-1-1 call center to a Fire Department Lieutenant. Sworn firefighters, as opposed to non-sworn telecommunication professionals (i.e. public safety dispatchers), staff the call center and perform the functions of a public safety dispatcher.

This PSAP is not a single source emergency services call center, and the current practice is that a Taunton Fire Department firefighter answers the 9-1-1 calls, attempts to determine if it is a police, fire, or emergency medical services incident, and then transfers the call to the relevant public safety agency. A second Taunton Fire Department firefighter is also on-duty in the call center and that person is responsible for dispatching fire assets only. Note, this Firefighter/Dispatcher (as opposed to the call taker) is assigned to a 24 hour schedule and is authorized to bunk/sleep in a "Murphy Bed" during overnight periods of low activity. The bed is affixed to the wall adjacent to the fire dispatch console. Meanwhile, the firefighter/9-1-1 Call Taker is assigned to rotating 10 or 14 hours shifts and this person is not authorized to bunk/sleep while on-duty.

In 2013 the Commonwealth of Massachusetts mandated that all public safety dispatch centers that provide Emergency Medical Services (EMS) dispatching must also provide Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) pre-arrival instructions to the caller by a certified public safety dispatcher. During the events of May 10, 2016 the City of Taunton contracted its mandated

EMD service to state authorized service provider, American Medical Response (AMR) ambulance service.

This multiple source notification model of emergency services call taking and dispatching is obsolete, dangerous, and does not comply with the standard of care provided by jurisdictions of similar size and complexity in the Commonwealth. The very system itself directly resulted in a series of communication failures on the night in question, and responding public safety personnel, while well intentioned, were operating on delayed, incomplete, and sometimes flawed information.

The best efforts of the Taunton Fire Department and its communications personnel could not and cannot counteract what is a flawed and obsolete system of taking emergency reports. Outdated rules and procedures also limit the efficacy of Taunton firefighters as 9-1-1 PSAP call takers.

Simply stated, this was a systems failure, and this flawed system of receiving and dispatching 9-1-1 calls directly resulted in a delayed response to the Myrick St. address where the initial call originated. So as to ensure the safety of the citizens and first responders of the City of Taunton, the existing policy of employing multiple sources of emergency services call taking and dispatching should be abandoned as soon as practically possible.

“Simply stated, this was a systems failure, and this flawed system of receiving and dispatching 9-1-1 calls directly resulted in a delayed response to the Myrick St. address where the initial call originated.”

## Section Two: Methodology

### A. Project Organizational Conference

Several meetings were held in June of 2016 with City of Taunton officials. These meetings were held to identify communication protocols for the duration of the project and to set goals relative to the project timeline. Further, the scope of the project and expectations relative to deliverables was discussed and agree upon.

### B. Collection and Review of Background Information

In order to put the project into proper context the Ryan Strategies Team requested and/or reviewed the following documents and information:

- Fire Department SOG’s related to the call taking and dispatch functions;

- Police Department Policies & Procedures related to the police dispatching function;
- Fire Department dispatch schedules;
- Contract between the City of Taunton and AMR;
- Collective bargaining agreement between the City of Taunton and the Taunton Police Association, and;
- Collective bargaining agreement between the City of Taunton and the Professional Firefighters of Taunton.
- NFPA Standards
- APCO Standards
- EOPSS State 9-1-1 CMR regulations and standards

### C. Incident Analysis and Timeline

A complete review and transcript of the public safety communications related to the May 10, 2016 series of incidents was conducted. The project team met with and communicated extensively with Taunton Fire Department Communications Officer Lt. Kevin Farrar. The mission of the meetings included, but was not limited to, the following:

- To gain an understanding of and collect documents relative to the management structure and governance of Taunton's primary PSAP;
- To acquire all electronic dispatch logs related to incidents of May 10, 2016;
- To acquire all electronic audio recordings of incoming telephone calls (9-1-1, emergency and non-emergency) related to the incidents in question;
- To acquire all two-way radio transmissions of incident in question, and;
- To acquire copies of any internal administrative audits/reviews already completed by Taunton public safety officials.

Ms. Paula Snow of the project team collected, reviewed, and transcribed all of the two-way radio transmissions, 9-1-1 calls to the primary PSAP, transferred calls to the police department, and transferred calls to the City's Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) contractor American Medical Response (AMR). Note, AMR's recordings were incomplete and only included telephone calls. AMR did not provide audio recordings from their two-way radio system. Additionally, the audio segments provided did not include time stamps. As a result, there was no way to determine when certain key events occurred. For example, AMR did not provide audio of an ambulance being dispatched to 270 Myricks St. nor the time that a unit was requested from the Town of Dighton. We question AMR's performance under this contract and the City of Taunton has since elected to contract with a new vendor to provide EMS/EMD services.

#### D. Interviews with Key City Staff and Vendors

The project team met with and/or interviewed Fire Chief Timothy J. Bradshaw, Police Chief Edward James Walsh, Fire Lieutenant Kevin Farrar, City Information Technology staff, and others.

Jack Olson, Vice-President of Queues Enforth Development (QED) was interviewed relative to the City of Taunton's existing CAD systems and policy, as well as potential for integration of such systems.

#### E. Review of Draft Report and Recommendations

The draft report was released to City management staff to review facts contained within the report. The final recommendations are independent recommendations made by the project team were not subject to modification by City management staff.

#### F. Final Report and Recommendations

A series of recommendations and conclusions were formulated and published in the final report.

### Section Three: [Administrative Analysis/Incident Transcript](#)

A complete review of 9-1-1 audio recordings, fire dispatch two-way radio recordings, police dispatch two-way radio and telecommunication recordings, and AMR audio recordings found that a series of miscommunications contributed to the 20+ minute delay in response to the two stabbing victims at 270 Myricks Street. The following highlights some of the key communication failures:

1. There was little or no communication between dispatchers in either the police or fire dispatch centers during the series of incidents. Each agency operated in its own communications silo during the entire incident. Further, it is clear that one or more dispatchers/call-takers were unable to multi-task, and that contributed to a lack of situational awareness, even within the fire department dispatch center itself.
  - Although separate notifications were received from the fire dispatcher and AMR that there was a double stabbing at 270 Myricks St., the record reflects that police units were never dispatched to that specific location for the reported stabbing. The only mention of the exact address of the stabbing was after the responding police supervisor (1318) requested an additional

unit, the police dispatcher told unit 36 to "head out there to that 270 Myricks St. to assist those guys."

- At 1849 hours, the police dispatcher contacted the units dispatched to Clair Terrace & Myricks to confirm that they did not have stabbing victims there.
  - After the initial dispatch of Fire Engine 9, Fire Engine 1 was dispatched to assist Engine 9 in the "vicinity of Birch Ave & Myricks St." The fire dispatcher stated that they were, "unclear as to the nature of the call...we're unsure if it's a severe car accident, multiple stabbing, or combination of the two." However, the call-taker who answered the 9-1-1 call from the victim at 270 Myricks St. was abundantly clear as to the nature and location of the incident--he was speaking to one of the stabbing victims on a landline 9-1-1 call from that address when he transferred the call to AMR, and the 9-1-1 ALI location was displayed on the monitor. Unfortunately, due to the high volume of phone and radio traffic it appears that the fire call taker did not have the opportunity to correct the fire dispatcher.
  - At 1846 hours, 9 minutes after dispatch, Fire Engine 9 called on scene with police at **280** Myricks Street. Neither the fire dispatcher nor the fire call taker caught the error and directed responding to units to the correct location as indicated on the 9-1-1 Automatic Location Indicator (ALI) screen. In other words, the exact location of the stabbing victims was known and was displayed on a 9-1-1 ALI screen yet this information was never clearly communicated to responding and on-site public safety personnel.
  - At 1849 hours, when Fire Engine 9 reported that, "it looks like we have 1 injured here," and at 1853 hours when Engine 9 released the Dighton Fire Department ambulance because Lakeville Fire had transported one patient to the hospital, the fire dispatchers should have questioned Taunton Fire Engine 9 about the disposition of the second stab victim.
2. Communication between fire, police and EMD dispatch centers was made more difficult as the incident progressed.
- Fire dispatchers were overwhelmed trying to transfer 9-1-1 calls to the police dispatchers who were unable to answer due to call volume. Several calls to the police rang many times or were never answered at all. As a result, the fire dispatchers had information that they were unable to communicate to the police.
  - When they were unable to transfer 9-1-1 callers, the fire dispatchers were not prepared to assist callers in dealing with an active assailant type of



incident. In one call from Metro PCS, the fire dispatcher instructed the caller to go see the police that were on scene without knowing if the scene was secure.

- AMR contacted the Dighton Fire Department to respond to 270 Myricks St. However, the audio segments from AMR were not complete and not marked with the date and time of recording. Therefore, it is unknown exactly when the Dighton Fire Department was contacted. AMR did not notify Taunton Fire that Dighton Fire was responding until 1845 hours. This is unacceptable performance by AMR for such a high priority call.
  - The Dighton Fire Department was released by Taunton Fire Engine 9 at 1853 hours and responded to the mall. It appears that AMR was not notified of the diversion as they called the Town of Dighton dispatch looking for an ETA to Myricks Street.
  - At 1855 hours, AMR called the Taunton Fire Department dispatch to confirm that units had been dispatched to Myricks Street. Remember, AMR was on the line with the stab victims giving EMD pre-arrival instructions. The fire dispatcher replied that Taunton Engine 9, "should be out there." Following this prompt, the Taunton Fire dispatcher never contacted Engine 9 to confirm that they were at the correct location.
  - Taunton Fire Department Engine 9 was promptly dispatched specifically to 270 Myricks St. for a double stabbing. When they arrived (at the wrong location), they did not request that the dispatcher check the location.
3. Citizens calling 9-1-1 volunteered scene safety and suspect information that was never communicated to responding units. This seriously compromised the safety of the public and first responders. This was true whether the call taker was a fire fighter or a police officer.
- The caller from 270 Myricks St. told the fire dispatcher that the suspect fled in a black vehicle with a knife. There is no evidence that this fact was ever communicated to the police dispatcher or police responding units.
  - The caller from Birch St. reported to the police dispatcher that the suspect fled in a black car and headed west on Rt. 79. There is no evidence that this information was never communicated to responding police units.

4. Other general observations from reviewing the audio files:

- The 9-1-1 lines were not answered pursuant to EOPSS State 9-1-1 CMR standards. Most calls were answered as follows: "Taunton 911" and "911 do you need police fire or ambulance?" Note, during recorded phone calls Massachusetts General Law requires that call takers announce that the call is being recorded.
- Call back numbers were not verified for 9-1-1 calls pursuant to EOPSS State 9-1-1 regulations/standards.
- Numerous off-duty members of both the police and fire departments called their respective stations during the initial crisis phase of the incidents to find out what was going on. This added unnecessary call volume further challenging call takers, which ultimately further compromised the safety of the public and public safety personnel responding.
- State police transferred wireless callers on a one-way line which prevented such calls from being forwarded to AMR for pre-arrival EMD instructions.
- The tone of the police dispatcher was troublesome. His tone appeared to create a mindset amongst the responding police officers that the reported stabbing call lacked credibility because it came from the fire dispatcher. This likely adversely impacted the police response.
- At 1931 hours, a caller at 192 Bay St. reported to the police dispatcher that a group of teenagers on bicycles were causing a disturbance (kicking a citizen's bicycle.) The caller reported that a neighbor yelled at them and they moved on. The dispatcher lacked professionalism and told the caller that they didn't have any available units to respond. No mutual aid from neighboring jurisdictions was sought, even though several area towns had called to volunteer to help cover service calls.
- At 2000 hours, a caller from 420 Bay Road reported that he got into an argument with youths outside and the involved subjects stated that they had a gun. The police officer dispatcher advised the reporting party that

The tone of the police dispatcher was troublesome. His tone created a mindset among the responding police officers that the reported stabbing call lacked credibility because it came from the fire dispatcher.

all units were tied up and that a police officer would be dispatched as soon as possible. No record of a police dispatch (for reports of youths with a gun) to that location could be located.

5. As a result of policy decisions made by prior city administrations the police department and the fire department do not operate an integrated CAD system. Incredibly, each agency uses the very same CAD software vendor and the exact same CAD software/ version, yet the systems operate completely independent of one another, and there are no plans in place or funding mechanism to integrate the systems.

“As a result of policy decisions made by prior city administrations the police department and the fire department do not operate an integrated CAD system.”

Further, CAD systems are designed to chronologically track multiple incidents and multiple units among multiple agencies so as to avoid precisely what occurred in Taunton on May 10<sup>th</sup>. The CAD systems in Taunton are not only flawed due to the lack of integration and the policy decisions relative to their implementation, the systems are not used to their maximum potential by police or fire dispatchers. This appears to be both a training and supervisory issue in both agencies.

When we met with the City’s Primary PSAP Communications Director/ Fire Lt. Farrar, we were surprised to learn that the fire dispatchers do not use the CAD system to enter incidents in real time, keep track of unit status or location in real time, or enter CAD notes to record events as they occur. In fact, when we reviewed the CAD incident report for the original 270 Myricks St. call, we found that it was entered into the CAD system a full eight (8) minutes following the initial 9-1-1 call, it had the wrong fire department engine company assigned, and the disposition was logged as a pedestrian struck. This CAD entry is useless and inaccurate in terms of creating a permanent dispatch record of the incident.

When designed, implemented, and used correctly, CAD enhances the communication between dispatchers from multiple disciplines/agencies so that each discipline knows precisely what the other has done, whether it was five seconds ago, five hours ago or five years ago.

- When a call taker enters an incident, it is routed to the appropriate dispatcher consoles simultaneously so that police, fire and EMS can be dispatched at the same time. Contract ambulance companies can be authorized to interface with the CAD so they receive the notification at the same time as the call takers/dispatchers. Police and fire units with mobile data terminals can receive wireless call slips when they are dispatched to incidents. Fire stations can receive a "tear and run slip" that can be taken with them and reviewed while responding to an incident.
- Employing the use of a single source emergency services notification center with all telecommunication professionals in the same room increases situational awareness. Even when call volume is very high, telecommunications personnel are exposed to all ongoing communications, not only fire or police, and this results in macro-level situational awareness, unlike when emergency services communications are ongoing at multiple locations, by multiple dispatchers, and by multiple public safety disciplines.

#### Section Four: Staffing

The current staffing model for the City of Taunton's primary single source PSAP includes two firefighters 24 hours a day 7 days a week and one (1) full-time fire lieutenant tasked with managing the PSAP. In order to staff this schedule it requires the equivalent of FTE of eight (8) firefighters and one (1) fire lieutenant.

Meanwhile, the Taunton Police Department staffs one (1) police officer/dispatcher 24 hours a day 7 days a week. This requires four (4) FTE's to staff this function. Note, the police officer/dispatcher also serves as the front desk officer tasked with greeting the public and managing administrative telecommunications for the police department.

In total, the City of Taunton employs the equivalent of thirteen (13) FTE's (police & fire) assigned to emergency call taking and dispatching. As discussed in the Conclusions and Recommendations section, these thirteen (13) FTE's should be reallocated to staff a combined police, fire, EMS public safety communications center.

Section Five:  
Information Technology & Systems

As previously discussed, the police department and fire department do not operate integrated CAD systems or servers. The fundamental purpose of any public safety CAD system includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Manage multiple public safety resources
- Manage multiple calls/incidents
- Enable location verification
- Dispatching of public safety assets
- Enable unit status management
- Call disposition

It is beyond comprehension as to why the policy of the City of Taunton is to operate two independent and non-integrated police and fire CAD systems. While the police department employs the use of QED for CAD and RMS, the fire department uses QED for CAD purposes only, and the software program Firehouse® is integrated with QED® to enable NFIRS compliance.

“Given that the fundamental purpose of any public safety CAD system is to manage multiple resources, multiple calls, verify locations, dispatching, unit status management, and call disposition, it is beyond comprehension as to why the policy of the City of Taunton is to operate two independent and non-integrated police and fire CAD systems.”

Procurement and implementation of a comprehensive and fully integrated CAD/RMS computer system serving police, fire, and EMS is essential to the efficient operations of the City of Taunton’s public safety communication system. Such systems must be in compliance with Federal law enforcement standards (Global Justice XML Data Model) for criminal-justice data. This is discussed in further detail in the “Conclusions and Recommendations” section.

The fire department backs up its QED® database on-site and there is no continuity of operations plan should the Primary PSAP become disabled by natural disaster or intentional act. The police department employs the use of a hybrid model system where the database is backed up both on and off site.

## Section Six: PSAP Location/Infrastructure

The City of Taunton's primary PSAP is located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Central Fire Station at 50 School Street. The building, while historic and architecturally significant, is not ideal for a 24 hour 9-1-1 primary PSAP emergency services call center. The building's primary function is as a Fire Station/Headquarters and was never designed to serve as a 21<sup>st</sup> century 9-1-1 PSAP pursuant to NFPA standard 1221.

The PSAP has three (3) answering points, two within the so called fire dispatch area and a third in a separate room for 9-1-1 call taking. The rooms are separated by a cased door opening that lacks a door. HVAC systems are wall mounted and rudimentary.

A project team inspection of the PSAP revealed compromised access control and site security systems. In fact, two double hung windows were wide open during the site visit and the call center could easily be compromised and rendered uninhabitable by external threats or natural disasters.

NFPA 1221 requires construction techniques that conform to higher standards for fire resistance, flame spread of materials, blast resistance and security/bullet-proof glazing. Further, the HVAC system shall be fully redundant and the power supply must have a fully functioning emergency backup system.

While the primary PSAP at Central Fire is supported by a power generator, there was no evidence presented indicating that any audits or evaluations had ever been done to determine the resiliency, redundancy, and interoperability of the various systems in place at the PSAP.

Also during the site visit we witnessed the on-duty fire department dispatcher absent himself from the dispatch area, and he was seen running back to the call center to manage an incident. We witnessed blankets and pillows in a closet, a murphy bed on the wall, a blanket used to cover the door between the two answering points, and other evidence leading the team to believe that one or both of the firefighter call taker/dispatchers routinely bunk/sleep while on-duty.

*\*NFPA 1221: Standard for the Installation, Maintenance, and Use of Emergency Services Communications Systems addresses service delivery -- from receiving calls to dispatching emergency units to the correct location in the appropriate time period. Further, provides procedural and physical criteria for the installation, performance, operation, and maintenance of public emergency services communications systems and facilities. The 2016 edition reflects changes to call processing times and the addition of language on two way radio communications enhancement systems and pathway survivability (<http://www.nfpa.org/codes-and-standards/all-codes-and-standards/list-of-codes-and-standards?mode=code&code=1221>).*

Section Seven:  
Conclusions and Recommendations

Reliable emergency services communications are critical to effective emergency response to critical incidents by the fire service, police, and EMS. Although inherited from prior City administrations, the standard of care provided by the City of Taunton’s emergency services communication system is sub-standard, does not meet best practices, and presents a clear danger to the citizens of Taunton and its public safety personnel. Further, this flawed and fragmented call taking system results in serious customer service delivery failures, which compromises the trust that the community has in its public safety agencies. The situation is exigent, and labor counsel should be consulted before acting on any of the following recommendations.

Recognizing that the capital planning and construction process is time consuming and complex, our conclusions and recommendations are broken down into *Immediate Actions Steps* and *Final* recommendations. Immediate action step recommendations are designed to facilitate speedy and no/low cost actions to manage existing risk, and maximize the effectiveness of the existing infrastructure.

*Final* recommendations are intended to facilitate the process of **planning, designing, building, and staffing a City of Taunton combined police, fire, and EMS emergency communications center** built to relevant NFPA, APCO, CALEA and other relevant standards.

Nothing in the immediate action recommendations should be interpreted to be permanent solutions, and it should be recognized that while improvements can be made to the existing systems, the underlying system as a whole needs to be abandoned, and the City should design, fund, build, and staff a state of the art single source Public Safety Emergency Communications Center.

“Although inherited from prior City administrations, the standard of care provided by the City of Taunton’s emergency services communication systems is sub-standard, does not meet best practices, and presents a clear danger to the citizens of Taunton and its public safety personnel.”

## Conclusions and Recommendations Immediate Action Steps

### **1. The City of Taunton should immediately recruit and hire a civilian Emergency Services Communications Director.**

All of the recommendations in this report, including the design and construction of a single source Public Safety Emergency Services Communications Center, will require subject matter expertise in the field of emergency communications. The city should no longer demand that Fire Department Lieutenants, trained and skilled as professional firefighters, manage a technically complex and highly regulated 21<sup>st</sup> Century PSAP 9-1-1 emergency call center. This is the work of a professional communications director, who has the training and experience to manage the current systems and regulatory controls, as well as emerging systems such as Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG 911), and other emerging technologies. Put simply, NG 911 is an Internet Protocol (IP)-based system that allows digital information (e.g., voice, images, video, text messages, etc.) to flow seamlessly from the public, through the 9-1-1 network, and on to emergency first responders.

“This lack of consistency and use of fire officers, who are trained in and skilled at firefighting and rescue operations, as Communications Directors was inherited by the current administration, and the process to remove this function from the bargaining unit should commence immediately.”

The current practice of employing the most junior fire department lieutenant as the city’s emergency communications director, and the most junior firefighters as 9-1-1 call takers/dispatchers, is poor policy, poor use of fire department resources, and it fails to recognize and place value in the very real and complex profession of public safety emergency communications.

Although the current fire department Communications Director is extraordinarily professional and possesses key management skills, he admits that he will bid out of the job as soon as possible. Historically this position has been assigned to the most junior Fire Department Lieutenant who bids out of the job as soon as possible. This lack of consistency and use of fire officers, who are trained in and skilled at firefighting and rescue operations, as Communications Directors was inherited by the current administration, and the process to remove this function from the bargaining unit should commence immediately.



Once in place, the Public Safety Emergency Services Communications Director should temporarily report to the Fire Chief and should retain delegated authority over the emergency call center and its personnel. The Communications Director's responsibilities would include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Overall management of the city's public safety communications and its designated functions and maintain compliance with all relevant regulatory and best practice standards as outlined in this report;
- Development of a long-range strategic plan to achieve the city's authorized goals and objectives related to public safety communications;
- Responsible for developing various operating policies and procedures in conjunction with the overall mission, goals and objectives for the Police and Fire Departments;
- Performing statistical and quality analysis; assist with the development of programs to analyze and evaluate operations, and to create strategies for optimum efficiency and effectiveness in customer service and delivery of timely and quality emergency communications services;
- Implementation of staff development and training, performance management, employee relations, and prioritizing and assigning work;
- Assisting with the management of technology systems and resources for the public safety emergency communications center;
- Overseeing upgrades/add-ons, and maintenance issues involving the CAD system;
- Preparing detailed reports, briefings, presentations and publications in support of the division's functions, and;
- Remaining up-to-date on current developments in the field of emergency communications, particularly new regulations and 911 technological advances and may serve as the city representative for relevant advisory committees.

Pursuant to the long-term recommendations outlined below, this manager would eventually report through the police department chain of command.

Labor counsel and relevant collective bargaining units should be consulted at the beginning of this process.

**2. The police & fire QED Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) software systems should be immediately integrated.**

According to APCO, “the CAD system is one of the most important tools utilized by a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). All reported incidents are entered, dispatched, managed, and tracked via the CAD system, making it a mission critical system. The lives of citizens and public safety personnel heavily depend on the CAD system consistently performing at its maximum operational effectiveness and reliability. Although a CAD system is just one of many systems that public safety departments utilize, it is often considered the heart of public safety operations.” The systems should be promptly integrated and backup/redundancy protocols and continuity of operations plans should be key elements of this project.

“The lives of citizens and public safety personnel heavily depend on the CAD system consistently performing at its maximum operational effectiveness and reliability.”

As discussed in great detail in this report, police and fire use the identical CAD vendor and software, yet the systems are not integrated to ensure seamless dispatching and tracking of the City of Taunton’s emergency services assets. Immediate measures should be taken to integrate and upgrade the systems so that the police and fire dispatchers can see what calls are being managed in real time. EOPSS State 9-1-1 support and incentive grants are available to support such upgrades.

Further, the culture of the two departments lends to an environment where calls for service are handled strictly as a “police call” or a “fire call.” This culture is reportedly perpetuated by the police chain of command, and fire dispatchers are instructed not to listen in on so called “police” calls, and to immediately abandon the call once it is transferred to the police dispatcher.

This practice should stop immediately. All incoming calls to the city’s 9-1-1 call center are public safety calls, the overwhelming majority of which are a matter of public record. Except in rare circumstances, the fire dispatcher should stay on the line and monitor calls that are transferred to the police department so as to ensure a seamless multi-disciplinary response to calls for service.

The new integrated CAD system should be acquired and implemented in accordance with APCO's published standards on multi-functional multi-discipline CAD systems and relevant unified CAD functional requirements:

<https://www.apcointl.org/doc/911-resources/apco-standards/584-11011-2015-multi-functional-multi-discipline-cad/file.html>.

**3. Police & Fire call takers and dispatchers should be immediately retrained in the proper use of the City's CAD system.**

As was observed in the documentation to the 270 Myricks St. calls, the CAD system was not used to its maximum operational effectiveness or pursuant to call taker/dispatcher training. This was true with both the police and fire dispatchers. For example, the system is designed to stack calls for service and recommend response units, including mutual aid. Had the police dispatcher entered a QED CAD entry for the Bay St. call with reports of youths with a firearm, it would have been impossible to have been forgotten about, and it would have had to have been closed out with CAD notes and a disposition.

Further, as referenced below, had the police call taker been certified in law enforcement dispatching, he would likely have immediately assigned this call to a mutual aid resource.

The newly appointed Public Safety Emergency Communications Director should randomly audit CAD entries to ensure compliance, and those responsible for sub-standard performance should be promptly re-trained and/or disciplined.

**4. Police call takers should be immediately trained and certified by the State 9-1-1 Department as Enhanced 9-1-1 call takers.**

While the primary answering point for the City of Taunton Primary PSAP is at Central Fire and the initial 9-1-1 call takers are mandated by State 9-1-1 to be certified as Enhanced 9-1-1 call takers, there is nothing that prohibits the police department from training and certifying police department call takers as well. In fact, if the city adopts recommendation #6 below, this will become mandatory. Also note, training and support grants are widely available from EOPSS State 9-1-1 Department to fund this type of training.

**5. Police call takers should immediately be trained and certified by Powerphone® (<http://www.powerphone.com/dispatchu/law-enforcement-dispatch/>) as Law Enforcement Dispatchers.**

The Taunton Police department currently has no minimum training standards for police dispatchers, and there are no policies and procedures governing this police function. The department should immediately train and certify all of their call takers in the law enforcement curriculum offered by Powerphone®. This Powerphone® training and certification is an authorized program by EOPSS State 9-1-1 for purposes of grant reimbursement.

“If there is cohabitation, there will be collaboration.”

\*See long-term recommendation # 2 below relative to policies and procedures governing police call taking and dispatching.

**6. The City should temporarily relocate the police dispatcher from the police station to the city’s PSAP at the Central Fire Station.**

If there is cohabitation, there will be collaboration. The policy of the city to continue to allow police and fire to operate in separate public safety communications silos compromises public safety and the safety of first responders alike. The city should immediately begin the collective bargaining process to enable the relocation of police call takers/dispatchers to the city’s 9-1-1 call center at Central Fire Station. While this should be a temporary measure during the planning, design, and construction of the proposed city’s new emergency services communications center, this measure would greatly enhance the quality of the current delivery of public safety communications.

Meanwhile, the new Public Safety Emergency Services Communications Director should be resourced to move any and all police communications systems (two-way radio, CAD/RMS, telecommunications, call recorders, etc.) to the third answering point at Central Fire. Alternatively, a secure VPN should be established to access these systems remotely.

Relocating the police dispatcher to the city’s primary PSAP at Central Fire will place a temporary staffing burden on the police department. Currently, the police dispatcher also serves as the front desk officer tasked with assisting citizens in the lobby and handling non-emergency telecommunications. This system was flawed from its inception, and has resulted in poor customer service,

police officers overwhelmed with multiple tasks, and phone calls from citizens that go unanswered due to work volume.

Given that the reassignment of police dispatchers from the police department front desk to Central Fire will be temporary, the police department budget should be adjusted accordingly so as to allow the deployment of a front desk officer 24/7 (i.e. 4 FTE's.) This should greatly enhance customer service in the lobby and telecommunication services via the police non-emergency phone lines.

**7. The City of Taunton's Chief of Police and Fire Chief should immediately audit police/fire commanding officer training certifications in NIMS/ICS.**

During a review of all of the communications surrounding the incidents of May 10<sup>th</sup> there is no evidence that any state or municipal agency employed NIM/ICS protocols, there is no evidence on the City of Taunton's public safety recorded channels that a unified command was established by any state or municipal agency, and there was no evidence of any NIMS/ICS after action reporting.

Had the City's public safety agencies employed the use of NIMS/ICS protocols and quickly established a unified command center, communications would likely have been substantially improved during the series of events.

**8. The City of Taunton should immediately begin to plan and deliver multi-disciplinary NIMS/ICS compliant training exercises, with the goal of bringing NIMS/ICS concepts from theory to day to day practice, in all agencies of the City. This should be an ongoing and annual initiative.**

There is evidence that the Taunton Fire Department effectively employs the use of NIM/ICS protocols in their day to day fire department operations. However, when multiple city agencies are involved in the same incident(s), there is no evidence that NIMS/ICS protocols are used by city agencies to manage resources in a unified way.

In order to shift NIMS/ICS from theory to practice, there must be a commitment on the part of city leadership to practice these skills in simulated environments. Companies such as BOWMAC® (<http://www.bowmac.com/>) offer cost effective simulation training that the city should strongly consider.

## **9. Enhance Access Control and Security at Existing Primary PSAP**

The city should promptly review NFPA standard 1221 and make temporary modifications to the existing PSAP so as to ensure the security and integrity of this critical infrastructure. Security access control should be implemented and best practices policy around access authorization should be implemented. Again, this is an allowable expense under the State 9-1-1 Department's Support and Incentive grant.

## **10. Modify Current Fire Dispatcher Scheduling**

As previously discussed, the primary PSAP is staffed by two (2) firefighters (1 call taker and 1 dispatcher) who work entirely different schedules. The dispatchers are assigned to a 24 hour schedule and are assigned to a so called "group", and the 9-1-1 call taking firefighters are assigned to rotating 10 and 14 hour shifts. The dispatcher is authorized to bunk/sleep during overnight hours, and the call taker is not. This policy should cease immediately.

The city should immediately consult labor counsel and labor unions to begin the collective bargaining process to standardize the scheduling of the PSAP staff. Ideally, 9-1-1 call takers and dispatchers would not be regularly assigned to shifts of more than eight (8) hours.

All staff assigned to the city's 9-1-1 call center should be immediately prohibited from sleeping while so assigned, and all bedding supplies should be removed from the PSAP.

## Final Conclusions and Recommendations

- 1. The City of Taunton should immediately begin the capital planning process to fund, design, build, and staff a single source Emergency Services Communications Center (PSAP) in conformance with all relevant management, building, and, operational standards including, but not limited to, NFPA, CALEA, FCC, APCO, and EOPSS State 9-1-1 standards.**

Single source public safety emergency communication centers employing the services of certified and full-time public safety telecommunicators, as opposed to firefighters on a part-time basis, is the lifeblood of any effective response to critical incidents, natural disasters, and crimes in progress. As demonstrated during the events of May 10, 2016, failure to employ the use of such an emergency services communication system can have devastating consequences.

“Had a 21st century single source emergency services PSAP been in place on May 10, 2016 there is a very high degree of likelihood that the delayed response to 270 Myricks St. would have been avoided.”

Had a 21<sup>st</sup> century single source emergency services PSAP been in place on May 10, 2016 there is a very high degree of likelihood that the delayed response to 270 Myricks St. would have been avoided.

The new single source PSAP should be placed under the command, control, and supervision of the Taunton Police Department. This recommendation should not be perceived to be a criticism of the Taunton Fire Department and its personnel. Taunton firefighters assigned to 9-1-1 call taking and dispatching as a part of their duties have demonstrated admirable devotion to their duties, however emergency services telecommunications is not the profession that they chose, or were trained in.

The fact that the Taunton Fire Department operates in so called “groups” who work 24 hour schedules creates serious operational and supervisory challenges for an emergency communications public safety PSAP. The fire service operates under extremely physically challenging conditions, and professional firefighters, operating on 24 hour schedules, necessarily require rest and bunk time in between calls for service.

9-1-1 call taking and/or dispatching, also an incredibly demanding profession, should never be delegated to personnel assigned to physically challenging 24 hour schedules.

Alternatively, the police department generally schedules staff, including supervisory personnel, on eight (8) hour schedules and rest/sleep while on duty is not necessary. Therefore, Emergency Services PSAP dispatchers/call takers working under the

management control of the police department can be provided around the clock leadership and supervision.

Further, CALEA standards for accredited law enforcement agencies govern the policies and procedures of Public Safety Emergency Communication Centers and require compliance with national standards. This illustrates the importance of the Taunton Police Department seeking and achieving accreditation through the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission as recommended below.

The city currently employs 13 FTE's in its multiple sources of public safety dispatch centers. Following consultation with labor counsel and required impact bargaining with relevant collective bargaining units, those resources for such FTE's should be redeployed to fund the staffing of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Emergency Services Communications Center. Based on call volume and city demographics we recommend a Director (civilian mid-level manager reporting through the police department chain of command) and twelve (12) Public Safety Communication Dispatchers.

Note, given the current state of the emergency communications function in the City of Taunton it is not recommended that city officials seek out area municipalities for a regional PSAP. However, once a new communications center is operational and in full compliance with relevant standards and regulations the City of Taunton would be well suited to market itself to provide regional PSAP services. Potential for such expansion should be considered during the design phase of this project.

**2. The City of Taunton Police Department should immediately begin the process of seeking accreditation through the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission.**

According to the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission, "Accreditation/certification is a self-initiated evaluation process by which police departments strive to meet and maintain standards that have been established for the profession, by the profession. These carefully selected standards reflect critical areas of police management, operations and technical support activities. They cover areas such as policy development, emergency response planning, training, communications, property and evidence handling, use of force, vehicular pursuit, prisoner transportation, and holding facilities."



If the police department is to assume control of the city's primary single source Emergency Services Communications Center/PSAP as recommended, it must do so pursuant to nationally recognized CALEA standards and best practices.

While compliance with national accreditation standards relevant to public safety communications has obvious benefits in terms of community and first responder safety and risk management, the value added benefits to the city and the police department are countless in terms of improved performance, enhanced customer service, and reduced liability. The police department should be resourced to enable successful completion of the accreditation process.

"If the police department is to assume control of the city's primary single source Emergency Services Communications Center/PSAP as recommended, it must do so pursuant to national CALEA standards."