



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Dispatcher Concerns Regarding Regional Dispatching

Burlington, VT January 31, 2018

There have been many statements in the media lately concerning a regional dispatch center for Chittenden County. The employees of the Burlington Emergency Communications Center would like to address a few of those statements.

The main issue to be addressed is the approximately 60-71 seconds that will be theoretically be saved on each emergency call. That tracks the amount of time that passes from when a person calls 911 to the time 911 transfers the call to a municipal dispatch center, for this purpose when they transfer to Burlington dispatch. The problem is that once a regional center is formed it will become a PSAP, which then assumes those responsibilities. The amount of time that will be saved is the time the call is transferred to Burlington to the time Burlington takes ownership of the call. This second section of the call is when 911 is repeating the information that has already been gathered to the Burlington dispatcher. Based on personal experience in the dispatch center this takes on average 10-20 seconds. While the 60-70 seconds does accurately represent part of the phone call, it is not the part that will be removed from the process.

It has also been said that the only or primary concern for dispatchers is whether or not dispatchers will have to reapply for their own jobs. While it is true that we are worried about the possibility of losing our employment, the main reason we are unsettled by this plan is that there is no plan. The most articulate analogy would be that the city is asking its citizens to approve a business loan without the city presenting a business plan. Operationally there is nothing in place to show how the center would function on a day to day basis or whether it would be staffed appropriately to handle the call volume. Understandably it would be impossible to create a definitive layout but even hypothetical outline would be appreciated as a good faith effort.

This regional center could present increased concerns for employees as well as the general public. If the center is understaffed or staffed by employees not familiar with Burlington's call volume that will lead to officers remaining on scene for a longer amount of time. This would, if compounded enough, result in delayed response times to calls for service. It also increases the risk of a dispatcher missing radio traffic. In this profession one missed transmission could be monumentally dangerous, an officer or firefighter calling for help often cannot be repeated meaning there is one chance to receive it.

At this time our concerns are too great to be able to support the current proposal. We look forward to continuing the conversation to ensure that any plan moving forward will prioritize the safety of the citizens and first responders of Burlington.