Office of the City Manager
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Dispatch Staffing Proposal
November 3, 2025

An internal working group comprised of Chief Ezell, Deputy Chief Nimmo, Chief Pearson, Assistant Chief Lewis, Captain Duncan, Finance Director Leslie Haase, Human Resources Director Michelle Ducre, and Public Safety Communications Manager Cheryl Konarski met to discuss plans to address a critical staffing shortage in Dispatch. Following discussion, the work group agreed, these measures are necessary to ensure the continued operation of the City's dispatch (911) service.

It is important to note that the organization has a critical need for additional resources and funding to allow for a more permanent and long-term solution for dispatch. Absent an additional revenue source, the proposed measures are only short-term corrections.

1. Reassignment of Personnel

   Dispatch is currently allocated 20 positions of which 10 of those positions are vacant. Meanwhile numerous employees in other departments are often on "light duty", have secondary employment, or desire overtime which presents an opportunity to fill some of the vacant positions temporarily with existing staff. The reassignment of existing staff will assist dispatch with administrative call-taking and free up capacity for dispatch personnel to handle dispatching the calls. Easing the burden of the call-taking function can reduce the stress and workload of dispatch personnel.

2. Lateral Incentive

   Similar to the lateral incentive granted to Police Officers, Dispatchers from other entities would be eligible for a one-time lateral incentive pay of $5,000. The incentive seeks to attract trained and experienced dispatchers to help fill unfilled positions. This will require a budget amendment of $20,000.00 to the Emergency Communications Fund.

3. Recognition Program

   The City has been able to attract candidates for dispatch positions, however, it has been difficult to retain personnel due to the challenging work and difficult scheduling. A recognition program aims to improve morale and the non-wage aspect of retention. While dispatch is operating at less than 75% of capacity, the City will provide one meal per shift two times a month to help improve morale. This will require a budget amendment of $5,000.00 to the Emergency Communications Fund.

4. Recruitment

   The creation of a Marketing and Communication Department for the City has allowed for a more proactive approach to marketing that can attract potential employees. The MarComm

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Department has created a marketing campaign designed to attract public safety candidates to the City. The City has currently budgeted approximately $30,000 towards this effort and will make use of TV, Radio, Billboards, and possibly even the new movie theater for ad placements.

5. Technology

The City has learned of new technologies utilizing AI that are designed to improve work flows for dispatch. One such tool allows for a voice transcription from a call to the dispatch console that allows for faster work. The tool should save time for dispatchers and public safety personnel while reducing work demands on dispatchers. This tool costs $11,650.00 for the first year and $10,000.00 annually, thereafter. This tool is still in development and is anticipated to be available publicly during the first quarter of 2026. This will require a budget amendment when it becomes available, but can be absorbed into the Emergency Communications Fund due to recent technology upgrades that resulted in savings in other areas.

6. Work Schedules

Dispatchers are currently working five, twelve (12) hour shifts to meet minimum staffing levels. In most instances employees are working 60 hours a week which presents an unstainable workload. As staffing improves, dispatch desires to work towards the "Pittman" schedule which will give employees every other weekend off, even though each shift is twelve (12) hours. This will improve opportunities for work/life balance and will help towards retention.

7. Pay and Compression Adjustments

Following the "no" vote on Proposition Public Safety, the City adjusted pay using the limited funding available from existing revenue sources. The City entered into collective bargaining agreements with the FOP and IAFF and for general employees, implemented the Internal Equity pay adjustments. These adjustments while improving pay, did not fully address the pay issues existing within the organization. The internal equity adjustments in particular created 'compression' where pay ranges were adjusted but employee pay rates did not maintain their appropriate step or penetration through the range. The compression issue has limited the City's ability to offer new employees, or candidates with experience, a competitive rate.

A proposed measure is to create an Operator 3 position at Grade N11, similar to the creation of the Transit 3 position, where qualified employees would have the opportunity to be promoted to a higher pay grade, and allowing flexibility in wage offers to perspective lateral candidates. Creating the Operator 3 position will also create an incentive to promote and advancement opportunities that aid in retention efforts. Currently, certain operators train the new hires, but this has not been recognized or compensated for in the current Operator 2 position. The Operator 3 position will add a required trainer component and will be a

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promotion for the three operators with the most seniority. Through the promotion of these three people, along with the creation of the three tiers of positions, this will allow the City to bring in experienced lateral candidates up to Step 7 without creating compression for those employees that have more years of service than the new hire. This also gives the Operator 3 future step increases, while creating a better path to the Communications Supervisor position. The current cost of the proposed changes is approximately $30,000.00. This will require a budget amendment to the Emergency Communications Fund.

If implemented, all proposed budget amendments totaling $66,650.00 to the Emergency Communications Fund will require an increase in the Transfer from the General Fund and the Public Safety Sales Tax Fund, which will be funded by a decrease in the police and fire budgets. This will result in no bottom line change to the General Fund and Public Safety Sales Tax budgets.

Summary

The work group agrees that the measures described above will effectively address the needs for dispatch for the short-term. However, the organization is in critical need of additional funding/revenue just to keep pace and not fall further behind other entities. Even with new funding/revenue, the need to sustain competitive pay, improve technology and facilities, while scaling for growth will present perpetual long-term challenges. The work group recommends improving partnerships with JASCO, setting a goal for inter-operability, and studying the shared service arrangements that exist in Boone Co/Columbia and Greene Co/Springfield as a long-term contingency plan.

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