



**STAFF MEMORANDUM**  
**City Council Meeting – May 20, 2019**

Date: May 8, 2019

To: Matthew H. Greeson, City Manager

From: Robyn Stewart, Assistant City Manager

Subject: **Resolution No. 31-2019 - 911 Services - Contract with the Northwest Center**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This Resolution authorizes the City Manager to execute a contract with the City of Dublin for the Northwest Regional Emergency Communications Center to provide public safety dispatching communication services.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Introduce and Approve as Presented

**BACKGROUND/DESCRIPTION**

On April 8, 2019, City staff presented a recommendation to City Council that the City of Worthington join the Northwest Regional Emergency Communications Center for the provision of 911 call answering and public safety dispatching services. This recommendation was the result of extensive analysis that has been completed by a committee comprised of Police Chief Jerry Strait, Fire Chief John Bailot, Assistant Fire Chief Mark Zambito, Finance Director Scott Bartter, Personnel Director Lori Trego and Assistant City Manager Robyn Stewart.

The Northwest Center is operated by the City of Dublin and serves the communities of Dublin, Hilliard and Upper Arlington through agreements with the Cities of Dublin, Hilliard and Upper Arlington as well as Norwich and Washington Townships. The Center is highly professional and is nationally accredited and certified. It is governed by an executive committee and two operational committees which allow for each of the jurisdictions served by the Center to be involved in how the Center operates and interacts with the community, police, firefighters and paramedics.

Staff initiated the evaluation of our operation because it is challenging for a small community such as Worthington to keep up with the ever-increasing expectations and demands for technology and training of personnel. Nationally, there has been an ongoing

trend of smaller centers consolidating with other jurisdictions to provide this service. Joining the Northwest Center will allow us to join together with the other jurisdictions served by the Center to enhance the services that are provided.

Our analysis has identified a number of benefits to joining the Northwest Center. These benefits include:

1. Quicker response times for Worthington paramedics, firefighters and police when a person calls 911 from a cell phone due to elimination of the transfer that now occurs with 911 cell phone calls
2. More focused attention for the 911 caller via a dedicated call taker, while separate personnel are tasked with dispatching the first responders
3. More extensive and quicker use of technology
4. Greater capacity to handle large-scale emergency events
5. More robust training for personnel

It is important to note that this recommendation is not driven by the performance of the people who currently work in our 911 center. We have highly trained and dedicated individuals who provide a high level of service to our community and our first responders. The recommendation is being made because of the limitations that occur when operating a small, independent center. We cannot attain the same level of service as the Northwest Center simply due to the size of our operation.

Since we presented this recommendation in early April, we have held extensive and multiple conversations with the community about the recommendation. The following steps have been taken to communicate the recommendation:

1. Discussion at Police Citizens Academy Alumni Association – April 8 & May 13
2. Briefings with Riverlea, Perry Township & Sharon Township – April 15
3. Brief Announcement at Lions Club – April 23
4. Brief Announcement at Old Worthington Partnership Annual Meeting – April 23
5. Brief Announcement at Chamber's Eggs & Issue Breakfast – April 25
6. Coffees with the Chiefs – April 29 & May 8
7. Discussion at Downtown Merchants' Meeting – April 30
8. Public Forums – May 1 & May 6
9. Discussion at Chamber's Economic Development Committee – May 2
10. Telephone Town Hall – May 14
11. Presentation at Dublin-Worthington Rotary – May 15
12. Emailed information to Citizens Academy Alumni & Members of City Boards & Commissions
13. Hand-delivered information to apartment residents at The Heights and Stafford Village; emailed apartment management at other locations
14. Posted information on the City's Website and sent out notice via Notify Me
15. Information in Neighborhood News e-newsletter
16. Information in Village Talks mailed newsletter delivered to every household
17. Information on Facebook and Twitter
18. Two short videos explaining benefits
19. Newspaper articles included in the *Columbus Dispatch* and *This Week News*.
20. Boosted the public forums, coffees and videos on Facebook

## 21. Recording of Telephone Town Hall made available on the City's website

The Resolution for this agenda item authorizes the City Manager to execute a contract with the City of Dublin for the Northwest Center to provide public safety dispatching communication services. Dublin, through the Northwest Center, will provide police and fire emergency communications including answering 911 calls, other emergency calls, and some after-hours nonemergency calls. Dublin will also provide emergency dispatch of police, firefighters and medics, and radio communications for the Worthington Division of Police and the Worthington Division of Fire & EMS. Worthington Police and Fire/EMS will still be the ones that respond to the emergency. A draft agreement is attached, which will be finalized as we confirm additional details of the implementation.

Upon adoption of the Resolution, staff will continue to meet with representatives of the Northwest Center to finalize the details of implementation. The transition will take more than a year. It is anticipated that Fire & EMS support will transition by July 2020 and Police support will transition by September 2020.

Extensive information on this topic is available on the City's website at [www.worthington.org/911](http://www.worthington.org/911). Among the materials available on the website is an in-depth analysis report that details the evaluation that was conducted by the staff team.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/FUNDING SOURCES** (if applicable)

The total cost for the Northwest Center is determined each year through the development of the Joint Dispatching Budget. Each fall, the Northwest Center staff work with the Executive Committee comprised of the Chiefs of each of the jurisdictions to develop a budget by consensus. This Joint Dispatching Budget then goes to the Dublin City Council for adoption as part of the City's operating budget. Once the Joint Dispatching Budget is finalized, the costs are allocated across each of the jurisdictions served by the Center based on a formula for usage of the center. The amount that will be charged to Worthington can vary from one year to the next, depending on the number and type of calls we experience and the adopted Joint Dispatching Budget. The run amounts and call types are updated each summer with data related to the preceding 12 months. This accounts for changes in run amounts and types over time.

We will have influence over the Joint Dispatching Budget through the Executive Committee. Any additions to the budget from one year to the next are done by consensus from the group. Sometimes items are added that may have previously been funded elsewhere to take advantage of cost sharing. One example is the ongoing maintenance and support cost for the fire station alerting systems (this is the system that announces inside the fire station the details of the run being dispatched). Each jurisdiction previously funded this separately but the entities currently a part of the Northwest Center added it to the Northwest Center budget so they could cost share on the maintenance rather than having separate contracts.

As part of our analysis, we projected costs for the continued operation of our own Worthington Center and joining the Northwest Center. According to the analysis, the first year would have transition costs which would make joining the Northwest Center more expensive. These transition costs include modifications to our Police Building, small modifications to the Fire Station, expenses associated with new workstations that would

need to be added to the Northwest Center and investment in equipment and technology to allow our police & fire personnel to communicate with the Northwest Center. After the first year, we would see annual operational savings which would offset the initial transition costs. By the fourth year, we would have paid off the transition costs and would experience ongoing costs savings.

We will receive the contract cost for services from the Northwest Center for the upcoming year in the fall of each year based on the Joint Dispatching Budget and Worthington's proportional use of the Center. This will enable us to incorporate the amount into the annual operating budget.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Resolution No. 31-2019

Draft Agreement with the City of Dublin

RESOLUTION NO. 31-2019

Authorizing the City Manager to Enter into an Agreement with the City of Dublin for the Northwest Regional Emergency Communication Center to Provide Public Safety Dispatching Communication Services.

WHEREAS, on April 8, 2019 City staff presented a recommendation to City Council that the City of Worthington join the Northwest Regional Emergency Communications Center (NRECC) for the provision of 911 call answering and public safety dispatching services; and,

WHEREAS, the Northwest Regional Emergency Communications Center (NRECC), operated by the City of Dublin, currently serves the communities of Dublin, Hillard and Upper Arlington, and is governed by an executive committee and two operational committees which allow for each of the jurisdictions served by the Center to have input on how the Center operates and interacts with the community, police, firefighters and paramedics; and,

WHEREAS, some of the benefits of joining NRECC include quicker response times for Worthington paramedics, firefighters and police when a person calls 911 from a cell phone due to elimination of the transfer that now occurs with 911 cell phone calls, more focused attention for the 911 caller via a dedicated call taker, while separate personnel are tasked with dispatching the first responders, and greater capacity to handle large-scale emergency events; and,

WHEREAS, City staff is recommending that the City enter into a three year agreement with Dublin commencing January 1, 2020 in which Dublin would furnish the facilities, personnel and equipment for the purpose of providing dispatching communication services and the City would pay Dublin its proportionate share of the annual joint dispatch budget calculated based upon the number and types of calls for service from the prior year;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Municipality of Worthington, County of Franklin, State of Ohio:

SECTION 1. That City Council has determined that contracting with the City of Dublin for the Northwest Regional Emergency Communication Center to provide public safety dispatching communication services is in the best interest of the City and its residents.

SECTION 2. That the City Manager is hereby authorized and directed to negotiate and execute an agreement with the City of Dublin for the Northwest Regional Emergency Communication Center to provide public safety dispatching communication services, subject to approval to form by the Law Director.

RESOLUTION NO. 31-2019

SECTION 3. That the City Manager, Police Chief, Fire Chief, Finance Director, and the Law Director are hereby authorized to take all actions, including the execution of all documents or amendments, necessary to implement the transfer of the City's 911 call answering and public safety dispatching services to the Northwest Regional Emergency Communications Center, and that are not substantially inconsistent with this Resolution.

SECTION 4. That the Clerk be and hereby is instructed to record this Resolution in the appropriate record book.

Adopted \_\_\_\_\_

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President of Council

Attest

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Clerk of Council