



DATE: September 29, 2003

TO: The Honorable Scott Kays
Presiding Judge, Superior Court
% Superior Court Executive Office/Clerk of the Court

FROM: Veronica Ferguson, Director
General Services Department

SUBJ: **RESPONSE TO THE 2002-2003 GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT**

I wish to personally thank the Grand Jury for its constructive comments. I have reviewed the findings and recommendations stated in the Public Safety Radio Interoperability, the Standardized Emergency Management System, and the Zoning Code Enforcement sections of the 2002-2003 Solano County Grand Jury Report that affect General Services. The following information is provided in response to the information contained therein. If additional information or assistance relative to these responses is needed, please let me know.

Public Safety Radio Interoperability

Finding #1 – The radio communication system presently used throughout Solano County prevents effective emergency communication between local emergency providers (1,2,8).

Response to Finding #1 - General Services concurs that the radio communication system presently used could be more effective between local emergency providers.

Recommendation #1A – A coordinated radio communications system be implemented within Solano County to allow interoperability between public safety agencies.

Response to Recommendation #1A – General Services concurs with the recommendation. It corroborates the work that Solano Emergency Communications Activity (SECA) has undertaken, particularly in the past two years. There appears to be no reluctance from any of the affected public safety agencies, or from the City Managers and the County Administrator to move forward. Additionally, the the executive level of local government supports our efforts to date in the pursuit of the three primary objectives that we set for ourselves to attain:

1. Radio Interoperability amongst Public Safety Agencies within Solano County
2. The Sharing of Data amongst Public Safety Agencies within Solano County
3. The Consolidation of the Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs)

SECA continues to meet regularly, working towards measurable milestones such as the completion of a Memorandum of Understanding that should lead toward the inevitable Joint Powers Association, short and long term approaches to radio interoperability and data sharing, and recommendations to define the logical steps to consolidate the six PSAPs.

It is important to note the fiscal prerequisites necessary to fund a well coordinated radio communication system. The SECA steering committee recommends a phased approach to solve the radio and data sharing objectives, acknowledging the reality that the estimated cost of a long term and comprehensive solution would be approximately \$42 million to \$52 million. The short term solution for radio interoperability and data sharing would cost approximately \$3 million. This provides technology for interfacing existing disparate radio systems and foresees a common data "warehouse" for the Computer Aided Dispatch/Radio Management Systems, whereas the long term solution foresees a large countywide trunked radio system proportioned to each agency's specific requirements. The steering committee believes that it may be more realistic to secure funding in the form of Homeland Security grants and or grants earmarked specifically for radio interoperability. The amount of the grants is likely to be up to a few million dollars per year for the next 2 or 3 years, if we demonstrate the will to create a regional, multi-jurisdictional system.

The Grand Jury Report seems to emphasize the consolidation of PSAPs more than the other two objectives set by SECA. I concur with the steering committee in that we must resolve the radio interoperability and data sharing as prerequisites to the consolidation of PSAPs, lest we set the PSAPs up for failure in our haste to meet that specific objective. I do think that it is possible to continue to work towards consolidation and recognize that it could very well require 3 to 5 years to accomplish this goal.

The SECA steering committee accepted the Needs Assessment report performed by RCC Consultants Inc. and is currently using that report to form a recommendation to the City Managers and the County Administrator. It is also important to note that each PSAP does currently have the technology in place to set up audio patches from any radio channel that appears on the consoles to any other radio channel, albeit without clear guidelines on how and when to use this capability.

The Grand Jury's comments in Section V pertaining to the benefit for the County Emergency Operations Center to have access to an interoperable radio system is very true, although the EOC does already have a cache of deployable radios as well as mobile radios installed in the Mobile Command vehicle, thus affording them a means of communicating to any public safety agency within Solano County, including Travis AFB and each city.

Recommendation #1B – A permanent Joint Powers Authority be formed to oversee, coordinate and implement the emergency communication needs of Solano County. The Joint Powers Authority should consist of representatives from:

- Solano County
- Solano emergency Medical Services Cooperative
- The Cities of Benicia, Dixon, Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun City, Vacaville, and Vallejo
- All Fire Districts within Solano County
- Solano Community college Police Department
- Solano County Office of Emergency Services

Response to Recommendation #1B – General Services concurs that a Joint Powers Authority be formed to oversee, coordinate and implement the emergency communication needs of Solano County. Several agencies on the above recommended list currently contract with Solano County to use its radio infrastructure and may be represented by Solano County in the JPA. These include Solano Community College, the Fire Districts and the Office of Emergency Services. SECA's Steering Committee has thus far recognized the financial hardship that these smaller agencies would be faced with and recommends that the County continue to provide the infrastructure and dispatch capabilities without requiring them to participate in the JPA. These agencies would be required to become "fee-for-service" end-users when an interoperable radio and data system is realized.

Finding #2 – Consolidation of dispatch centers would be more efficient and provide a significant overall cost savings. (9,10,11)

Response to Finding #2 – Solano County General Services concurs with this finding.

Recommendation #2 – A plan be formulated to implement two regional dispatch services in Solano County. This would provide a back-up in case one center becomes temporarily inoperable.

Response to Recommendation #2 – We concur with the goal of consolidating the six city and county dispatch centers (PSAPs), but it is possible that three regional PSAPs would prove to be more desirable. If SECA wishes to segregate all PSAPs based upon type of service requested, (all police by one PSAP and all fire/medical by a second PSAP) then the two-PSAP configuration would be plausible technically.

Standardized Emergency Management System

Finding #1 – The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) requires dedicated space to ensure complete operational capability is immediately available upon activation. (3)

Response to Finding #1 – Solano County General Services concurs with this finding.

Recommendation #1 – The Solano County Board of Supervisors monitor the building assignments plan during the renovation period of County buildings to ensure that the space currently planned for the EOC is not assigned to a less critical function.

Response to Recommendation #1 – General Services partially agrees with this recommendation and acknowledges that the EOC is a critical County function that should have dedicated space. Several existing County buildings in the downtown Fairfield campus will be vacated in whole or in part as a result of consolidating departments in the Government Center project. In early August 2003, a Steering Committee was formed to identify adaptive reuse opportunities for vacated facilities in the downtown Fairfield County campus.

In late June 2003, General Services presented the preliminary findings of the Adult Detention Needs Assessment and Master Plan to the Board of Supervisors. This Master Plan indicates the need to expand the existing adult detention facility in downtown Fairfield as early as 2008 based on current projections. If the Board adopts and implements the final Master Plan, the space that is currently planned for the EOC would be demolished to accommodate the expansion. On this basis, other viable options to

provide dedicated space for the EOC (including adaptive reuse of vacated space not planned for demolition) should be identified and presented to the Board for consideration.

Finding #2 – Communications capabilities of the EOC do not satisfy requirements to control a complex emergency. (5)

Response to Finding # 2 – Solano County General Services concurs with this finding.

Recommendation #2 – Ensure the EOC needs are incorporated in the current County study that is developing interoperability of radio communication between dispatch centers and mobile units of County and city agencies.

Response to Recommendation #2 – We concur with the Grand Jury findings except to note that the Office of Emergency Services does currently have four FCC licensed radio channels at its disposal to use within Solano County to manage or coordinate any type of disaster, two of which are used as a high level repeater. These radio channels are programmed into the EOC radios.

The requirements of the EOC will be addressed by SECA as it attains the goals described in the Public Safety Radio Interoperability section.

Solano County Zoning Code Enforcement

Finding #6 – Solano County procedures do not ensure that businesses bidding on county contracts are in compliance with County laws. (2,10)

Response to Finding #6 – Solano County General Services disagrees with this finding because, pursuant to California law, County procedures require bidders on Public Works projects to submit confirmation of applicable licensure. All other parties contracting with the County must demonstrate compliance with applicable laws at the time of contract award.

Recommendation #6 – Ensure procedures in the Solano County Policy Manual revision clearly identify all lawful requirements of the bidder.

Response to Recommendation #6 – General Services agrees with this recommendation. Procedures are included and will be published in the revised Purchasing and Contracting Policy Manual clearly stating all lawful requirements of the bidder.

cc: Michael D. Johnson, County Administrator/Clerk of the Board of Supervisors