



CITY OF FAIRFIELD

Founded 1856 - Incorporated December 12, 1903

CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

August 15, 2023

Cheryl Clower
Administrative Assistant to the Grand Jury
cdclower@solano.courts.ca.gov

SENT VIA EMAIL

Re: 2022-2023 Civil Grand Jury Report Entitled: Solano County Emergency Dispatch Report

Dear Ms. Clower:

This letter is in response to the Grand Jury request dated June 20, 2023, regarding the Solano County Emergency Dispatch Report. The Grand Jury's Findings and Recommendations are listed below, along with the City's response:

Finding 3 – *“There is a general acceptance among emergency service providers in the County to the idea of a consolidated dispatch center.”*

Recommendation 3 – *“Solano County Board of Supervisors should approve and begin the implementation of a consolidated dispatch center.”*

City's Response: The city disagrees with this finding and opposes the recommendation. There are many factors and concerns with consolidating all county police and fire agencies' dispatch centers. Some partial consolidation could be a cost-saving for some agencies. For example, the City of Fairfield dispatched for the City of Suisun City and the City of Vacaville with the City of Dixon. However, a countywide consolidation would present challenges that would be hard to overcome.

Many challenges exist with the idea of a consolidated dispatch center. The number of calls shown in the Grand Jury Report only reflected 911 calls. Dispatch handles a multitude of other calls every day. For example, in 2022, Fairfield Dispatch received 231,431 total calls for service at our dispatch center. Those are inclusive of 911 calls (51,114), transfers to dispatch (5,750), transfers out from dispatch (3,607), 7-digit emergency line (2,417), text-to-911 (132), and non-emergency business line (150,411). Additionally, dispatch created 64,591 calls for police service, 24,929 officer-initiated calls, and 16,190 fire and medical calls for service. All other county agencies have varying numbers reflecting similar workflow other than just 911 calls.

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Due to the number of calls for service and emergencies, a consolidated dispatch center would still require a significant number of dispatchers and call takers, not significantly reducing the cost of dispatchers currently. The only difference is that they would all be in one location. A singular location provides for challenges as well. Based on the number of calls for service and staff in the field for each agency, multiple radio channels would be required to be operational simultaneously. The City of Fairfield Police Department can have two and sometimes three channels operating at a time depending on the calls and number of staff working. In contrast, the Fire Department still has its working channel and can also have an additional channel. This level of service demands multiple dispatchers to be efficient and effective. Again, this is similar for Vacaville, Vallejo, and Solano Sheriff's Office.

Another issue that could arise is the differences in service expectations from each department and community. For example, Fairfield dispatchers have familiarity with the community and the streets. They can operate over 350 cameras from our dispatch center, greatly assisting officers on the road with solving crimes and observing the area before officers arrive on the scene. Their ability to assist helps provide a better service to the officers and the community. Ideally, this would also be effective in a real-time crime center; however, with a lack of funding for a center, our dispatchers do a fantastic job in this area. Their assistance in working city cameras would likely be a service greatly missed by our department in a consolidated center. Our dispatchers take pride in serving the Fairfield community, often participating in community events when opportunities come up to build personal relationships. It is not just about being a dispatcher but also being part of the community they serve. Consolidated dispatch centers take the intimate knowledge of the officers and community out of the job for the dispatchers.

Another general challenge is the actual logistics of combining the dispatch centers. A few logistics to consider:

- A significantly sized location would be necessary to house all the dispatchers and workstations.
- Dispatchers would have to be under one general department in the county. How would the employees be absorbed?
- Who would be responsible for layoffs and recruitment?
- What would happen with seniority for long-term current employees, including the supervisors and managers of each existing dispatch center?
- The departments have different varying pay structures; how would income be determined?

Lastly, some of the fire community supports the idea of a consolidated dispatch center for fire only, separating from the police services side. This idea may seem reasonable for fire as they rely

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on mutual aid from other cities with larger fires or when stations are out of service. The challenge with separating from police services is the gap in coverage and response it would create for our communities. There is no way to determine a medical emergency from a police emergency when calling 911. It is the emergency number. The designation of these calls is determined by location as to what dispatch center gets the call. It would have to be decided all 911 calls would be answered by the fire dispatch and transferred to the respective departments for police response or calls would be answered as they currently are and sent to the fire dispatch center. Either way, this creates a gap in services when minutes and seconds matter when saving lives. The time it would take to transfer calls affects our community in a medical or police emergency. We would not support this type of system either, knowing our community will suffer.

The city appreciates the thought of the Grand Jury in trying to combine services in a small county. However, this would be an extremely challenging feat and would cost more money than anticipated, changing the level of service across the county for all organizations and communities.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



DAVID J. GASSAWAY
City Manager

Attachment 1: Solano County Grand Jury letter dated June 20, 2023

Attachment 2: Solano County Civil Grand Jury Report: 2022-2023 Solano County Emergency
Dispatch Report

cc: Dan Marshall, Police Chief



SOLANO COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

Hall of Justice
600 Union Avenue
Fairfield, California 94533
(707) 435-2575 (P) / (707) 435-2566 (F)
CDClower@Solano.Courts.Ca.Gov
www.Solano.Courts.Ca.Gov

June 20, 2023

Sent via email

Dan Marshall, Chief
City of Fairfield Police Department
1000 Webster Street
Fairfield, CA 94533

RE: 2022-2023 Civil Grand Jury Report Entitled: **Solano County Emergency Dispatch Report**

Enclosed please find a copy of the above named report by the 2022-2023 Solano County Civil Grand Jury. This report is provided to you **in advance of public release** as provided for in Penal Code §933.05(f). Please note that Penal Code §933.05(f) specifically prohibits any disclosure of the contents of this report by a public agency, its departments, officers or governing body prior to its release to the public, which will occur on **Friday, June 23, 2023**.

You are required to respond in writing to the Presiding Judge and to provide an electronic copy in pdf form to the Grand Jury regarding the Findings and Recommendations contained in the report pursuant to Penal Code §933.05. This section of the Penal Code is very specific as to the format of the responses. The Penal Code §933 (c) is also specific about the deadline for responses. You are required to submit your response to the Grand Jury by **Monday, August 21, 2023** on signed letterhead. Each final report, together with the required responses will be filed with the clerk of the court and forwarded to the State Archivist for retention in perpetuity §933 (b). If no response is received from the agencies or elected officials a notation will be included on the filed report.

The electronic copy should be sent to the Grand Jury office at cdclower@solano.courts.ca.gov.

Responses are public records. Should you have any questions, please contact Cheryl Clower, Administrative Assistant to the Grand Jury at (707) 435-2575.

Sincerely,

Carl DuBois, Foreperson
2022-2023 Solano County Grand Jury



**SOLANO COUNTY
CIVIL GRAND JURY**

2022-2023

SOLANO COUNTY EMERGENCY DISPATCH REPORT

June 23,2023

Solano County Emergency Dispatch Report

Solano County Civil Grand Jury 2022-2023

I. SUMMARY

Time is of the essence for emergency service personnel to respond to calls for help. Delays in responding to such calls can be the difference between life and death. As a result, the 2022-2023 Solano County Civil Grand Jury (Jury) investigated and found there is a lapse and sometimes inappropriate delays between receipt of incoming calls and fulfillment. This greatly affects a rapid response to emergency issues. Dispatch delays increase the danger for property and lives.

This jury toured and interviewed various public safety entities and their employees, to include sworn officers, fire fighters and other staff. The Jury determined that there is a major disparity within the departments relating to dispatch and emergency response times.

A consolidation of all dispatch centers to one facility would adequately serve the residents.

II. INTRODUCTION

Solano County was formed in 1850 and served seven jurisdictions. Benicia, Dixon, Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun City, Vacaville, and Vallejo as well as unincorporated areas. As jurisdictions voted to become cities the primary responsibility to provide safety for residents fell onto the lap of the cities, themselves. Some Cities took charge immediately on incorporation while some took a “wait and see” attitude. All seven became cities by 1903.

There are seven cities and one Sheriff’s department in Solano County, most with their own communications or dispatch systems.

III. METHODOLOGY

Interviewed/toured:

County Department of Information Technology

Dispatch Centers

Fire Departments

Police Departments

Sheriff’s Department including the Office of Emergency Services (OES)

Articles:

www.fire.ca.gov - The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

www.Gilroydispatch.com – CDF Changes Name to CAL FIRE, dated January 31, 2007

IV. STATEMENT OF FACTS

During interviews with staff, the Jury discovered a general acceptance to the idea of a consolidated dispatch center for Solano County.

Dispatch centers in Solano County operate on three different radio systems. The cities of Benicia and Vallejo are part of the East Bay Regional Communications System Authority (EBRCSA). Fairfield, Vacaville and Suisun City operate on the Solano County Regional Communications System (SCRCS) and the Sheriff Department, Rio Vista and Dixon operate on an analog UHF/VHF system. EBRCSA and SCRCS utilize the P25 platform which is the digital standard for radio communications with the ability to transmit and receive both voice and data. The Sheriff Department has the capability to communicate with either the EBRCSA or the SCRCS.

SOLANO COUNTY RADIO COUNT BY ENTITY

	<u>Radios</u>		<u>Radio System(s)</u>
Solano County	1,458	33.8%	VHF/UHF
Fairfield	798	18.5%	P25 (SCRRCs)
Vacaville	680	15.8%	P25 (SCRRCs)
Vallejo	530	12.3%	P25 (EBRCS)
Benicia	201	4.7%	P25 (EBRCS)
Suisun City	180	4.2%	P25 (SCRRCs)
Dixon Police	58	1.3%	P25 (SCRRCs)
Rio Vista	36	0.8%	VHF
<u>Fire Protection Districts</u>			
Suisun FPD	93	2.2%	VHF
Montezuma FPD	84	1.9%	VHF
Vacaville FPD	72	1.7%	VHF
Cordelia FPD	62	1.4%	VHF
Dixon Fire	59	1.3%	VHF
Total	4,311		

Emergency communications in the County are transmitted and received by strategically placed antennae towers. Communications throughout the county are fractured due to the topography and radio systems separating Benicia and Vallejo from the rest of the county.

The County has developed a proposal with the Motorola Corporation to provide antennae towers to bridge the communication gap. As of the time of this investigation funding has yet to be identified and the land to erect the towers has not been acquired.

All dispatchers in Solano County are cross-trained to serve both the fire and law enforcement departments.

As of 2022: the following details the fire and police departments in each jurisdiction and their dispatch:

A. BENICIA

- Population 26,819 (5.9% of Solano County)
- Fire and Police Departments and dispatch center
- The Dispatch Center staff: 11
- 2017 through 2022 dispatch center calls:
 - 311,882 non-emergency
 - 36,513 emergency (911)
 - 317 texts (911)
 - Average processing time of the 911 call until fire/police dispatch: 86 seconds

B. DIXON

- Population 18,974 (4.2% of Solano County)
- Fire Department
- Law enforcement is performed by the County Sheriff / OES provides dispatch services

C. FAIRFIELD

- Population 119,705 (26.5% of Solano County)
- Fire and Police Departments and dispatch facility
- Dispatch Center staff: 13 full time dispatchers, including four dispatch supervisors and three part time dispatchers.
- 2017 through 2022 dispatch center calls:
 - 282,195 emergency (911)
 - Average processing time from receipt of the 911 call until fire/police dispatched: 61 seconds

D. RIO VISTA

- Population 10,533 (2.3% of Solano County)
- Fire Department
- Law enforcement is performed by the County Sheriff / OES provides dispatch services

E. SUISUN CITY

- Population 29,165 (6.5% of Solano County)
- Fire and Police Departments and dispatch center
- 2017 through 2022 dispatch center calls:
 - 63,312 emergency (911)
- Dispatch center staff: 10 full time positions
- The average processing from receipt of 911 call to dispatch of fire/police: 92 seconds

F. VALLEJO

- Population 124,886 (27.6% of Solano County)
- Fire and Police Departments and dispatch center
- Dispatch center staff: 11 dispatchers including four supervisors

- 2017 through 2022 dispatch center calls:
 - 584,613 emergency (911)
- Average processing time from 911 call until:
 1. Fire dispatch: 7.06 minutes
 2. Police Dispatch 84.26 minutes

G. VACAVILLE

- Population 103,078 (22.8% of Solano County)
- Fire and Police Departments and dispatch center
- Dispatch center staff: 19 dispatchers and four supervisors.
- 2017 through 2022 the dispatch center calls:
 - 153,299 emergency (911)
 - Average processing time from receipt of 911 call to dispatch of police/fire dispatched: 24.15 seconds

H. UNINCORPORATED AREAS (Including Elmira and Birds Landing)

- Population 18,556 (4.1% of Solano County)
- Responsibility for responding to unincorporated areas and those residences lies with three agencies, Solano County Sheriff's Department, Montezuma Fire District and the Vacaville Fire Protection District.
- Average processing time from the receipt of the 911 call to dispatch of fire/sheriff: 62 seconds

V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDING 1 – Emergency service communication is fractured throughout Solano County and puts the Solano County residents and residences at risk.

RECOMMENDATION 1 – The County should install a uniform and consistent communications system that connects all emergency services.

FINDING 2 – The Vallejo Dispatch Center reported 911 call processing times for Fire and Police far longer than every other agency in the County.

Recommendation 2 – Identify and correct issues to bring average call processing times in line with other County dispatch centers.

FINDING 3 – There is a general acceptance among emergency service providers in the County to the idea of a consolidated dispatch center.

Recommendation 3 – Solano County Board of Supervisors should approve and begin the implementation of a consolidated dispatch center

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Cities of

- Benicia Police and Fire Departments Finding 3
- Dixon Fire Department Finding 3
- Fairfield Police and Fire Departments Finding 3
- Rio Vista Fire Department Finding 3
- Suisun City Police and Fire Departments Finding 3
- Vacaville Police and Fire Departments Finding 3
- Vallejo City Manager Findings 2 and 3
- Vallejo Police and Fire Departments Finding 3

Solano County Board of Supervisors – Finding 1 and 3

Solano County Sheriff Finding 3

COURTESY COPIES

Benicia City Manager

Dixon City Manager

Fairfield City Manager

Rio Vista City Manager

Suisun City, City Manager

Vacaville City Manager

Vallejo City Manager