

Memo

To: Mayor Ferguson, Aurora City Council, City Manager J. Holmes
From: Richard Witthuhn, Chief of Police
Date: January 5, 2021
Re: Aurora 911 Dispatchers

This report is to inform you of the potential reassigning of our Police Dispatchers and their duties from Dispatchers to Service Officers.

However, before I continue with their duties, I feel it is important to explain my reasoning for maintaining their employment with the Police Department. One of the main objectives in retaining our former Dispatcher's is not just out of a sense of responsibility to loyal employees but to utilize them to enhance the performance of the Department and to better serve our Citizens.

I realize for someone on the outside looking in, it probably appeared that all a Dispatcher did was to answer phones and send emergency personnel to calls, that is far from the truth. As you read this memo you will see they perform many other tasks to assist the department. If we eliminated their positions, we would be pulling Officers of the road to handle their duties.

If you recall when the Lawrence County Commissioner's elected to send the Sheriff's Dispatching to Monett due to an ageing system and in the hopes of saving money, they also found that their dispatchers did more than dispatching requiring the County to maintain several of their employees. So, while they supposedly saved money in upgrades to the system, they still had the expense of employee's salaries. It also needs to be pointed out in the history of the Aurora Police Department the City has not provided adequate civilian personnel to assist in the Police mission. This would be an excellent opportunity to remedy that issue.

Presently we are allotted six dispatchers. At this time, we have four with two openings. At least in the beginning I will need to maintain five of those positions due to the Monett CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch) system not being compatible with the Aurora RMS (Records Management System). With our current system when a dispatcher takes a call the information from the caller is put in CAD and then dumped into our RMS saving time and accuracy for the Officers. As we explained the systems between Monett and Aurora are not compatible. Which means we will need to switch to Monett's system or come up with a program that would link the two systems, either way there will be a cost to the City.

Until the situation is resolved the way the information will get to us from Monett will be for Monett to E-mail the information to Aurora then our current Aurora Service Officers (dispatchers) will need to put the information into our CAD and then dumping the information into our RMS system. Basically, doubling the work for the call.

I recently assigned Captain Jenkins and Supervisor Lyon the task of evaluating the best option. Not only trying to pick the best option for the present but also for the future, as there is a good chance in the next three to five years, if a 911 center is built, we may be going through this again.

After meeting with Monett and observing their system, and contacting the Sheriff's Office to see what system they were using, we feel the best option for us will be to have a "patch" made which will make our current system work with Monett's.

On 01/25/2021 we received the estimates for creating a patch for the two systems. Total cost is \$23,100.00 dollars. They estimate the time frame is at least six (6) months once they start on the patch. They will not start the process until they get a written confirmation that the project is a go.

Estimates from both companies are attached.

A side note, both Monett and the Sheriff's Department bought new systems a year ago neither one compatible with each other's. The Sheriff's system cost approximately \$130,000.00.

While the Service Officers will still be performing the CAD and RMS task, they will be able to start taking on some of their new duties.

Another issue that has come up is the mapping. The current mapping program that we sent over to Monett, that was recently received from our mapping vender Clear Water, was "corrupt" according to Monett. It is unclear where Clear Water got their information, but the best we can tell is it came from old City of Aurora mapping, and Lawrence County mapping information. Fixing the issue is going to be very labor-intensive and time consuming as someone will need to check each address to make sure the coordinates are correct; something our current dispatchers can do.

Current duties

1. Administrative Calls: They are responsible for answering all calls into the Police Department which averages around 16,000 calls per year. for Officer, Detectives, Animal Control, Staff and questions which all need routed to the appropriate section or individuals in the City.

2. MULES: Filing of MULES/NCIC/NLETS entries/messages. This includes warrants for the Cities of Aurora and Marionville Courts. Stolen/Lost property, vehicles, and license plates. Missing person(s). Orders of Ex-Parte, Full Orders of Protection. Missing/Runaway/Kidnapped juveniles. Amber Alerts, Silver Alerts. Weather Alerts from the National Weather Service.

3. Confirming warrants, this is a time sensitive task which will require an individual to be present at all times.

4. Booking/Prisoner paperwork, to include prisoner special/suicidal watch, contact with other law enforcement agencies as to holds placed for or requesting holds on person(s) in our custody. Cash, own recognizance, and surety bond paperwork. Ensuring that all MULES/NCIC checks are completed at the time the prisoner is booked into the Aurora City Jail. Ensuring that the "Jakes Law" check be completed on ALL persons released from the Aurora City Jail.

5. Logging and reviewing pawn tickets

6. Processing requests for records, and dissemination of those records.

7. Collection of monies for cash bond(s), requests for records, dog licenses, and the proper disbursement of those funds. Maintain receive and distribute pool money for the Aurora City Parks Department.

8. Faxing, receiving Faxes. Copy records as needed, daily maintenance of the copy/fax/printer machine.

9. Distribution of paperwork to officers, and other personnel and departments within the City of Aurora Government.

10. Answering general questions about services that the City of Aurora/Marionville Police Department offers/supports.

11. Ensuring the flow of information from the CAD to the RMS (IN Synch) system is correct. Ensuring the case numbers and final audit of each call is correct.

12. Maintaining a "Special Watch" list for both business and residential addresses in the Cities of Aurora and Marionville.

13. Maintaining a "COVID-19" list for the areas we are responsible for assigning resources to.

14. Maintain a "Business after Hours" Contact list for both the Cities of Aurora and Marionville. The information is subject to us being notified by the completion of a form, and or list provided by the City Governments of Aurora and or Marionville.

15. Watching Prisoners and Officers, while individuals are being booked, for Officer Safety, making sure prisoners are fed, watch for medical issues that may arise, and suicide watch should it be required.

16. Building Security.

17. Required racial profiling information.

In the future Service Officers will continue to perform their current task while taking on additional task that officers perform now. However, before these tasks can be implemented there will need to be special training for the Service Officers. We have identified the staff who will instruct the Service Officers. We are currently working on the training objectives to ensure the Service Officers safety and proficiency with their new task

Additional Duties:

1. Property and Evidence: Assisting with the property and evidence room. We take in a large amount of evidence and other property that needs to be logged and maintained for court purposes. At least once every two weeks we transport property to the crime lab in Carthage for analysis. Currently this job is being done by a Detective. At first the duties would be done by both the detective and the Service Officer. Once properly trained we would turn the operation over to the Service Officer with a detective overseeing the work.

2. Walk in Reports: Currently when a citizen comes into the station to make a report an Officer is called in to the station to take that report. We could have one of the civilian employees take the report leaving the officer on the street. Understandably there would be some exceptions to this depending on the type of report, an Officer may be required.

3. Booking of prisoners: This could be done by a civilian employee. The Officer could fill out a form with basic information and the charges needed and the Service Officer could finish the process. Again, there may be circumstances where the Officer would need to assist. However, the majority of time this could save the officer, 30 to 60 minutes of booking time, therefore allowing the Officer to return to the street in a shorter amount of time.

4. Reviewing Reports: Once the Service Officers are trained, they could review our reports along with sending required information to the State. Currently this task is done by a Commander. Once this task is turned over to the Service Officers this would free up another supervisor for the road. Again, a Commissioned Supervisor would need to oversee the process. There would need to be a great deal of training before this could be turned over.

5. We are required to maintain watch of the jail 24/7, when we have prisoners. The Service Officers would continue to do this along with feeding prisoners' allowing Officers to stay on the street.

This is not an all-inclusive list. I am sure as time goes by, we will need to revise their duties as some of the suggested duties may or may not work and we may find other duties they can do. There is also the possibility they could assist the Fire Department with some of their administrative jobs. If in the future, we feel five Service Officers are not needed we can eliminate them as needed by transfers within the City of natural attrition.

In short, should we eliminate dispatch many of these duties will still need to be performed. The only way we could accomplish these tasks, without keeping some of the dispatchers, would be to take more Officers of the road where we are already short staffed.

Respectfully

Chief Richard Witthuhn
Aurora Police Department