

# Communication Study Q & A

(January 2020)

1. **The report notes significant pay disparities between police and fire dispatch. How will these be addressed?**

The City is committed to addressing these disparities. The City currently evaluates positions for internal and external equity on an ongoing basis. A factor involved in this process is that the Communications Workers of America may be representing Communications Specialists in collective bargaining soon.

“Regardless of whether or not the path forward includes consolidation—and even more importantly if it does—the issue of pay disparity must be addressed or the entire effort will fail.” (pg 37)

2. **The report discusses the need for additional staffing in both dispatch centers. How will this be addressed?**

A significant purpose of the audit of City public safety communications was to determine staffing needs. The results will help in decision making as we address staffing resources for both the Police and Fire Departments, as well as other operational needs throughout the City. The initial focus will be upon adding a new classification of call taker positions within the Police Department along with Communications Specialists for the Fire Department. The recommendations and results of staffing resource adjustments will subsequently be reevaluated annually.

“An increase in population will necessitate regular increases in public safety capacity to provide law enforcement and fire rescue services to an expected level. Consequently, appropriate increases in public safety communications will also be necessary to support law enforcement and fire rescue operations.” (pg 7)

“Staffing has remained at 13 since 2000, while service demand and workload have increased over 50 percent since 2000.” (pg 21)

“LSPD is understaffed by 12 telecommunicators (not including the current vacancies).” (pg 26)

“LSFD communications is understaffed by 15 telecommunicators.” (pg 27)

“Address staffing shortages at the individual agency level prior to consideration of any joint operations effort.” (pg 31)

“Additionally, resolving the staffing deficiencies as recommended herein will also require a modicum of financial planning.” (pg 37)

3. **The report references the lack of interdepartmental activities or work groups, as well as organizational oversight. What will be done to improve those relations as well as the oversight of each communication center?**

In order to improve upon the “relationship between the two PSAPS’s” we will establish a committee comprised of labor and management personnel of both communication centers. The committee will be charged with identifying commonalities between the centers, as well as identify areas to improve within our current operations by having open dialogue on a regular basis (every other month or quarterly). In regards to departmental oversight, no plans have been solidified about how to address this perceived issue in both centers. The City is committed to identifying options to improve the current organizational structures to enhance oversight.

“The relationship between the two PSAPs does require improvement...,” (pg 4)

“MCP found there is a severe lack of trust, support, and engagement between communications staff and a very high degree of skepticism, speculation, and rumors regarding who would comprise the leadership in a consolidated scenario.” (pg 14)

“there are no operational or administrative policy-driven interdepartmental activities or work groups that could improve communication for tasks related to shared responses...” (pg 14)

“Provide a position on every shift that has supervisor authority.” (pg 32)

**4. Facilities are mentioned. How will these change?**

The current focus is to improve or enhance the existing, separate communications centers. We are currently in early stages of a space needs assessment for Fire Headquarters (Station One), which will include a review of the communications center. The Police Department is in the early review stage of modifications to the Police and Courts building pursuant to a bond issue passed in 2019. This will include a review of space needs for the communications unit. There are no immediate plans to co-locate the two communications centers. However, there may be future, long-term consideration of a distinct public safety communications facility that will allow co-location.

“If co-location or consolidation were to occur and occupy the current LSPD Communications space, significant renovations and expansion would be needed to accommodate all operation personnel scheduled per shift.” (pg 51)

LSFD, “Significant renovations to the building would need to occur to reconfigure the existing center and provide for additional space for new staff.” (pg 51)

“From a facility standpoint, if the path of co-location and/or full consolidation is considered, so too should relocation of the EOC be considered.” (pg 52)

**5. One of the known goals was to establish a formula that would be utilized to charge contract agencies provided by the LSFD, as well as other areas of concern. How will this be addressed moving forward?**

Appendix H within the audit provides several options to address the current pricing formulas. While it does not specifically point us in a direction, it will allow us to have further conversations with our contract agencies on what a future pricing formula may look like. In addition to identifying future pricing options, the audit very clearly states that an Advisory Committee should be created consisting of at least a representative from each entity, the first meeting will be scheduled prior to the end of April 2020.

“Section 3 of the agency contracts articulates that an Advisory Committee, consisting of at least representatives from each entity that contracts with the City is to exist.” (pg 15)

“The current contract with outside fire agencies requires a dedicated dispatcher for the contract agencies...” (pg 26)

“Most of the seven contract agencies believe that dispatch services provided by LSF Communications are the best in the region, but there are still concerns with the financial model currently in place.” (pg 38)

“The concern was voiced virtually universally by the contract agencies that they think the money they are paying to receive this service is not being used to provide the service, but rather to supplement LSF Communication operations.” (pg 38)

“A successful cost-sharing model requires the equitable division of onboarding and ongoing fees for services that are representative of LSF’s liability and is predictive of the expected workload of the served agencies.” (pg 38)

6. **The report speaks to three (3) different types of consolidation; shared services, co-located consolidation, and full consolidation, what is the city’s plan with these provided options?**

While the report does say the optimal system would be a full consolidation, it also acknowledges that improvements need to be made to leadership/oversight, technology, staffing, pay, and training prior to moving forward. The city will be looking to identify opportunities to improve in these areas, while also establishing a long-term plan that will best suit the overall operations of the city’s public safety communication system.

“there is no perfect model,” (pg 4)

“MCP identified strengths and challenges along with numerous opportunities for improvement regardless of decision to move toward a form of joint operations or to maintain the status quo,” (pg 4)

“The use of a shared CAD system is one example of the potential for shared expenses.” (pg 36)

“This poses a prime opportunity for LSF Communications to either consolidate into a single, city-wide CAD/RMS or solicit for a new CAD/RMS all together (including CAD-to-CAD interface for ease of call transfers). (pg 48)

“A phased approach will allow the process to follow a natural transition in small, incremental steps that may allow trust to be built,” (pg 59)