

**Cuyahoga Falls City Council
Minutes of the Public Affairs Committee**

December 20, 2021

Members: Russ Balthis, Chair
Rachel Loza
Jeff Iula

Mr. Balthis called the meeting to order at 7:13 p.m. Ms. Loza was absent.

Legislation Discussed:

Temp. Ord. B-116 (Sub. Dated 12/6/2021)

Temp. Ord. B-133

Temp. Ord. B-134

Temp. Ord. B-135

Discussion:

Temp. Ord. B-116 (Sub. Dated 12/6/2021)

Police Chief Davis, Fire Chief Martin and Captain Todd Schafer, Special Operations Commander, presented Temporary Ordinance B-116 (Sub. Dated 12/6/2021) to Council. An ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into a Cooperative Agreement with the County Of Summit, the City of Akron, the City of Fairlawn and the City of Tallmadge whereby the county will acquire, design, construct, furnish, maintain and finance a Joint PSAP building and authorizing the Mayor to enter into those agreements defined in the Cooperative Agreement, including but not limited to, an Intergovernmental Agreement for the establishment of a Council of Governments with the County of Summit, the City of Fairlawn and the City of Tallmadge, for the purpose of operating a consolidated primary PSAP, and a guaranty agreement, lease agreement, and a joint use agreement for the use and operation of the joint PSAP building located in the City of Tallmadge, and further authorizing the Mayor to execute documents with the City of Stow also being a member of the council of governments, with any appropriate modifications and revisions to the agreements necessitated by the City of Stow's inclusion as a party to the same, and declaring an emergency.

Mayor Walters gave an overview explaining Council Of Governments (COG) and how it relates to moving dispatch to a new location. He stated that next generation 911 software is available that will not only use voice, but also text and videos. Changes in technology are affecting dispatch, requiring better supervision and training in order to provide the accuracy. The way things are done now will be different in the years to come requiring better training, better supervision and providing the precision needed in order to serve the public. The State of Ohio has a surcharge on monthly cellphone bills that gives a quarter back to the State to fund 911 centers. State Legislature want to direct the funds from that surcharge to only to the top 4 dispatch centers in each county. Small Communities would not receive funding, making it necessary to fund 911 PSAP on their own. Mayor Walters stated that this is not a money-saving measure, but will provide a higher level of public safety for Cuyahoga Falls and the surrounding communities.

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Mr. Brian Nelson, Chief of Staff for Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro, stated that he has been involved in this project for over five years. In 2016, the County invested \$18 million to upgrade that system and add more tower locations. There are currently 1,000 users on that system, including local public service and schools. MCM Consulting was brought on board to guide them through this process. All communities that are involved in this legislation are currently running Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD), which will make the transition run smoothly. Once all parties involved have given approval, the County will submit drawings and a bid that has already been prepared. Mr. Nelson stated the communities joining together will enhance their buying power making the cost of the GIS computers, dispatch software, next-generation 911, and all the power requirements and back-up systems affordable, benefiting all those served by the new dispatch center.

Mr. Jason Roblin, MCM Consulting Project Manager and Staff Supervisor, stated that the building will be able to support 20 communities with provisions that will be constructed for future expansion.

Mr. Balthis stated that it has been said that no stone has been unturned, and it has been well thought out. There has been a lot of engineering and thought put into the process. He stated that he would like to thank the Mayor and the safety services. He would also like to thank Councilmen Miller and Brillhart. He appreciates the time that the chiefs took with Mr. Hoffman and Mayor Walters to give them a chance to run costs.

Mr. Balthis stated that, as part of this process, there will have to be coordination between the safety forces to make sure policy and procedures are similar between the communities so that, when they are dispatching, it is easier dealing with all the departments. He asked if they have an idea how long that will take. Chief Davis stated that when they first had the conversations with Stow, they started making lists and comparing notes. Cuyahoga Falls currently dispatches for Silver Lake, Munroe Falls and Boston Heights. Their job is to make sure dispatching does not have to remember 15 different things from 15 different departments. The idea is to work on the same page. It is a benefit to the community that they are going to do this. They try to operate the same way now, so it would not be a big leap. It is something they do as they go forward and learn all the players. They are still working on this. This is a two-year project. During that time, they will be sitting down and going through things.

Mr. Balthis stated that he received an e-mail from the dispatchers that included a letter from the Police Union and the Gold Union concerning some concerns about the COG. It was addressed to all of Council, so Mr. Hoffman forwarded that to everyone. Chief Davis stated that he was surprised by the letter. He did have a chance to talk to one of the Gold Union leaders about it, and was told that it was written on a solidarity level. They were asked by another union to write that letter, and that is what they did. He asked if they were going to be here to speak to it, and they are not. He has talked to individual members about the benefits, and a lot see the benefits. It is change. They are like his family. The officers are like his family. There is nothing he would do

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to make anything less safe in the city. He believes that this will create a safer environment for these officers and citizens.

Mr. Iula asked what the status is on the Stow Council vote. Mr. Nelson stated that Summit County Council passed this resolution December 6th. Mayor Roth just texted him a little bit ago that Fairlawn City Council unanimously approved this. Akron City Council has also passed this. There was some miscommunication with Stow between the Administration and Council members. In addition to that, the Council president was going to be out on medical leave in December, and then they had a council member who unexpectedly passed away. That has delayed Stow. They have been meeting individually with Stow Council members. Stow has scheduled a special January 6th committee meeting just for this topic, a public meeting and then they are going to take it through the three full readings and are expected to pass it January 27th. His discussion with them and his discussion with the Mayor and Administration in Cuyahoga Falls and the other communities has been that the County can still get out the bid in the beginning of the January. They obviously cannot award any big contracts or sign anything until they get all the communities there. They have a pathway that allows Stow to get this through Council and then sign all the agreements and move forward with all the bid documents and not lose any time.

Mr. Iula asked what will be done with the equipment that they have here. Mr. Nelson stated that the radio consoles that the community purchased will be transferred to the center.

Mr. Gorbach stated that he wanted to thank everybody for all the work that they have put in over the past five years on this. He appreciates those members of Council that were on the committee and devoted their time to this. He stated that he is 100 percent in favor of this and will be voting for it at the next meeting.

Mr. Brillhart stated that he appreciates being a part of this committee and talking with the two chiefs, who are very forthright on everything. It really sealed the deal for him that this was the thing to do.

Mr. Miller stated that he agreed with Mr. Brillhart and really appreciated Mr. Hoffman, who had flexibility in scheduling and getting them out the PSAPS and different things with the police and fire chief. He asked when the County purchased this location for this project.

Mr. Nelson stated that the DD Board, which is a County agency, has owned this property for 50 years dating back to 1970. The County Executive's office bought DD out of the property. The General Accounting Fund entered into a purchase agreement, which was a transfer of land, earlier this year or last year to acquire that property. There was an agreement between the City of Tallmadge, the County and the DD Board on subdividing parcels. The City of Tallmadge acquired the school. The County also acquired the maintenance facility.

Mr. Miller asked if the State is mandating that there are four PSAPS for the County. Mr. Nelson stated that the State is mandating that they can only use the State 911 money to fund four PSAPS.

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The amount of funding that they get from the State is not as significant as it should be. With this consolidation, it would be treated as one PSAP. Mr. Miller asked how many PSAPS are currently in Summit County. Mr. Nelson stated that there are approximately 12.

Mr. Miller stated that at one of the centers they visited, the director mentioned that response times have gotten better. He asked Mr. Roblin if he sees that with this project through all the work that they have done. Mr. Roblin stated that that is absolutely the case for a few reasons. The transfer of calls is one reason he states the most. The cell phone companies have not been required to use the GPS chip in the cell phone. By having a larger geographic footprint, now they have a larger area where the calls are going to come to one place. That is the biggest immediate factor. Another factor is the policy and procedures talked about. The PSAP operations working group made up of two to three dispatchers from the communities have a spreadsheet. Once they are all on the same page, it is anticipated that they will be training in Cuyahoga Falls. Before they ever go to the new center, they would be trained like everyone else.

Mr. Stams stated that what concerns him is the attitude or the state of mind of the dispatchers going into this, coupled with the amount of technology being presented in front of them. Thankfully, it is not going to be into effect immediately. Training is going to be most important because what is the default if the technology is beyond the capacity of the dispatcher.

Mr. Roblin stated that it is more in how they are going to use the technology than can they. They are already all using the Computer-Aided Dispatch that is in place, but they are using it differently. Mr. Nelson stated that they believe it is 18 months to go out to bid and build out this facility. During that time, they would immediately begin all of this cross-training and coordinating with the dispatchers and putting all the policy and procedures into place. There is a solid year and a half of them working together. It is highly likely there are going to be dispatchers from the Sheriff's Office that are going to be coming to Cuyahoga Falls and dispatching out of the dispatch center and vice-versa in all the communities. By the time they move to this center, they will all know each other. They would have been working together. They would be working out of the same playbook and cross-trained. They have been very methodical. If they get that center built and think they are not ready, then they will wait until they are ready to make that move.

Mr. Jerry Crawford stated that he has been in the sanitation industry for 40 years; 30 years of that in a management capacity. During that 30 years, he has seen numerous opportunities of change. Every time there has been a major change, he has seen people rising up against that change just because they are afraid of it. Rather than listening to who is afraid, they need to listen to why they are afraid. If there is confidence in the people that are putting the program together, which he assumes they do, because of the accolades that are attributed to Chief Davis and Chief Martin, then there is confidence in what they are doing. When there is this type of change, there are people that are putting the programs together. As they do that, they ask about the what-ifs. They then formulate the answers to those what-ifs. They start to solve the problem putting the project together. The people who resist the change and are afraid of it, they ask what if, but when they ask about what if, they are in search of justification of what goes wrong. When looking at this

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project, they have to ask themselves do they trust who is putting it together and do they like the beliefs of what the program is going to do, and base their decision on that. They have to trust where the information comes from and put in the value of the program and make a reliable decision.

Mr. Iula moved to bring out Temp. Ord. B-116 (Sub. Dated 12/6/2021) with a favorable recommendation, second by Mr. Balthis. Motion passed (2-0).

Temp. Ord. B-133

An ordinance establishing the authorized staffing of the Fire Department, creating the position of Deputy Fire Chief, and declaring an emergency.

Fire Chief Martin presented Temporary Ordinance B-133 to Council. Article III, Section 8 of the City Charter authorizes Council to provide for the authorized staffing of officers and employees in the Fire Department. Subject to the sufficiency of annual or supplemental appropriations for personal services in the Fire Department, the Fire Department shall be composed of the following officers and other personnel:

Officers:

- 1 Chief
- 1 Assistant Chief
- 1 Deputy Chief
- 3 Captains/Battalion Chiefs
- 20 Lieutenants
- 48 Firefighters

Other Personnel:

- 1 Office Manager
- 1 Secretary I
- 1 Regular Part-Time Laborer
- 1 Temporary Part-Time Laborer

This section shall not limit the Fire Chief from hiring additional personnel in the Fire Department to replace anticipated vacancies where such vacancy is known, and such overlap does not exceed thirty (30) days.

Mr. Iula moved to bring out Temp. Ord. B-133 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mr. Balthis. Motion passed (2-0).

Temp. Ord. B-134

An ordinance amending Codified Ordinance Title 5, Chapter 129, Police Department, Sections 129.01 and 129.05, and establishing the authorized staffing of the Police Department, and declaring an emergency.

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Police Chief Davis presented Temporary Ordinance B-134 to Council. The Codified Ordinances of the City of Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio Title 5, Chapter 129, Police Department, Sections 129.01 and 129.05, defines the composition of the Police Department. The Mayor, as Director of Public Safety, and the Police Chief desire to add an additional Patrol Officer to the Department.

Subject to the sufficiency of annual or supplemental appropriations for personal services in the Police Department, the Police Department shall be composed of the following officers and other personnel:

Officers:

- 1 Chief
- 2 Captains
- 4 Lieutenants
- 10 Sergeants
- 57 Patrol Officers

Other Personnel:

- 1 Secretary II
- 2 Secretary I
- 1 Juvenile Diversion Caseworker

This section shall not limit the Police Chief from hiring additional personnel in the Police Department to replace anticipated vacancies where such vacancy is known and such overlap does not exceed thirty (30) days.

Mr. Iula moved to bring out Temp. Ord. 134 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mr. Balthis. Motion passed (2-0).

Temp. Ord. B-135

An ordinance establishing positions and pay grade classifications for non-bargaining employees of the City of Cuyahoga Falls, and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Anthony Zumbo, Service Director, presented Temporary Ordinance B-135 to Council. Positions and pay grade classifications for non-bargaining employees employed with the City of Cuyahoga Falls are hereby established as set forth in Exhibit A, Full-Time Non-Bargaining Position & Pay Grade Classifications attached to the original ordinance.

Mr. Iula moved to bring out Temp. Ord. B-135 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mr. Balthis. Motion passed (2-0).

The meeting adjourned at 8:46 p.m.