

Proposal Development and Grant Administration

Cliff Sessoms

SPEA V550

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Executive Summary

Marion is the county seat of Grant County which is located in north central Indiana. Marion's population is currently 30,528 according to the 2006 census. Marion comprises nearly half of the population of Grant County which as of the 2000 census is 73,403. Within Grant County there are currently ten law enforcement agencies.

Furthermore, there are some twenty-three fire departments and two emergency medical service providers, including Marion General Hospital (MGH). Moreover, Grant County Emergency Management is responsible in helping to coordinate assistance during the time of emergencies.

There are currently five public safety dispatch centers located within the county. Each of these dispatch centers maintain their own equipment and personnel, often times duplicating the services provided to the citizens, and in some cases greatly increasing the response time for emergency personnel. There are currently forty dispatchers working between the five dispatch centers.

In 2009 the Grant County E-911 commission appointed a study committee to determine if a centralized dispatch and emergency management center for Grant County's public safety agencies was needed and feasible. The main reasons for consideration are as follows; to reduce dispatch time for public safety personnel, to reduce the duplication of equipment purchased by tax-payers, and to better coordinate and share information among all public safety agencies by centralizing the location for gathering, storing, and disseminating information.

As an example of increased dispatch time; all 911 calls made by way of a cell phone currently ring into the Grant County Sheriff's Department. The caller will indicate their need to the dispatcher. If it is determined they live within the city limits of Marion then the caller will be transferred to the Marion Police Department and must repeat their story -- thus wasting valuable response time. The same is true if a caller needs an ambulance. They will call one of the five dispatch centers telling the dispatcher the nature of their problem. The dispatcher will then transfer the call to MGH where they will repeat their story prior to an ambulance being dispatched. If all dispatchers were located within the same center there would be no need to transfer calls, thus potentially cutting in half the time needed to get help to the caller.

Furthermore, the committee visited three other Indiana public safety agencies who have already switched to a centralized dispatch center. If data is available from these other dispatch centers it will be used to compare dispatch times before and after consolidation. Likewise, current dispatch times for Grant County agencies will be used as a base on which the project will be evaluated. The desired outcome is that response time for citizens of Grant County to receive help will be cut in half.

Finally, as a source of input all current employees, software, and equipment will be moved to the new dispatch center. One existing dispatch center will be maintained only as an emergency back-up in the event the main center is damaged and can no longer function.

Literature Review

The City of Marion was founded in 1831 and serves as the county seat for Grant County, which is located in north central Indiana approximately 70 miles northeast of Indianapolis. According to the 2006 U.S. Census data, the population of Marion is 30,528 or nearly half the population of Grant County.

Currently there are ten law enforcement agencies, twenty-three fire departments and two emergency medical service providers. Marion General Hospital is the main provider for medical care in Grant County and is one of two providers for ambulance service in the county. Furthermore, the Grant County Emergency Management Agency serves as the central coordination point for requesting mutual aid from surrounding counties, as well as state and federal resources and is a division of the Indiana Homeland Security Office.

At this point the following five public safety dispatch centers are located in Grant County; Marion Police Department, Grant County Sheriff's Department, Gas City Police Department, Fairmount Police Department, and Marion General Hospital. Each of the dispatch centers receives administrative and emergency calls for their particular jurisdiction. However, only Marion and Grant County are considered Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) or what is commonly referred to as Emergency 911 Centers. This means that all 911 calls for Grant County are funneled into one of centers depending on where the call originates from. Furthermore, the Grant County Sheriff's Department handles all 911 calls made by a cell phone.

The five dispatch centers differ in the amount of telephone calls received the amount of emergency and non-emergency dispatches, and the types of personnel they dispatch. Both Gas City and Fairmount dispatch police and volunteer fire fighters for their communities. The Grant

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County Sheriff's Department dispatches law enforcement officers for the county and some of the smaller towns in the county, along with volunteer fire fighters from those communities. The Marion Police Department dispatches law enforcement officers for Marion along with Marion fire fighters. Finally, the Marion General Hospital dispatches ambulance personnel who work out of the hospital.

In 2009 the Marion Police Department dispatch center received 145,298 inbound calls on the administrative phone lines. Although emergency calls can come by way of the administrative phone lines they differ from the actual 911 phone lines which are designated as emergency only. In 2009 there were 12,567 calls to the 911 phone lines; this included transferred cell phone calls from the Grant County Sheriff's Department (Marion Police Department [MPD], 2010).

Another important aspect about incoming calls is how transfer calls are handled within the existing five public safety centers and in particular the two PSAP's. For example if a citizen has an emergency in Gas City and they dial 911 the call will be taken in the Grant County Sheriff's Department Dispatch Center. The caller will tell the dispatcher the nature of the problem and the dispatcher will transfer the call to the Gas City Center if a police officer is needed and to Marion General Hospital if an ambulance is needed. The caller will then need to tell that dispatcher the nature of the problem again. The same is true if the caller is using a cell phone, since all cell phone 911 calls go directly to the Sheriff's Department they must determine which agency to transfer the call to once the correct jurisdiction is determined. In both scenarios precious time can be wasted transferring calls and requiring the caller to repeat their story. On an average in the Marion Dispatch Center between 30 seconds and 1 minute is wasted when a citizen's call must be transferred to another agency.

In 2009 members of the 911 centralized dispatch study committee visited several newly established centralized dispatch centers located within the state of Indiana. The centers visited included; Wayne County, Bartholomew County, and Miami County. In each of these centers the reoccurring reasons as to why they chose to consolidate was to centralize the point to where calls came into and were dispatch out of, and to reduce the cost to the tax payers of duplicating equipment purchases and services.

In each of these dispatch centers they have been able to eliminate the need to transfer the caller to a different jurisdiction since all police, fire and ambulance dispatching is done from one location. They have eliminated that 30 second to 1 minute loss time that was present prior to centralizing their incoming calls and dispatching methods.

The centralize dispatch concept is not new and has been used throughout the United States for many years. The Indiana dispatch centers listed above are but a few currently in existence in Indiana with more being planned in the future. New Federal and State laws are requiring agencies to partner when it comes to communication if they are hoping to receive any future funding. New Indiana laws are calling for the reduction of PSAP's in each county by 2012 and are certainly moving towards a centralized dispatch concept as a way to provide a better service to the public and reduce the cost to tax payers. The concept being considered by Grant County will certainly be a model for other agencies to follow.

Program Model

The basic logic behind this program is to reduce the amount of time required to receive and process a call for service and ultimately reduce the amount of time required to get help to a citizen who has a need for assistance. Furthermore, as an added benefit there will be a reduced burden on the tax payer by eliminating the duplication of purchases for equipment that occurs now with the multiple dispatch centers.

Bartholomew County most closely resembles the concept being considered in Grant County. In Bartholomew County they chose to merge their emergency dispatch center and their emergency management center into one location. With this concept they now have all of their communications in one location along with all personnel who will be called upon to put into place the county's emergency action plan in the event of a disaster.

The Grant County plan would call for a new Centralize Dispatch/Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to be built on land that will be donated by Marion Community Schools. The new center will be built to the requirements established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) which requires all new construction of EOC's to be able to withstand an EF-5 tornado. The new center will be the central location for incoming administrative and emergency calls for all police, fire, and ambulance services located in Grant County. All emergency personnel for the entire county will be dispatched from this central location, thus removing the need to transfer calls from one center to another.

Furthermore, all emergency management personnel will be located in the center and the center will contain a training room which will allow for future training classes and a meeting

space when an incident command center must be established for future response to local emergencies. The architecture drawing of the center is shown page 9 of this proposal.

All equipment currently used in the existing dispatch centers will be evaluated to see if it can be used in the new center. Equipment that is up-to-date and relevant to the new center will be moved from the existing dispatch centers to the new center.

Finally, it should be noted that none of the existing dispatch centers visited by the study committee could provide statistical information on the amount of time it took to receive and dispatch a call prior to their centers being consolidated. However, as a method of evaluation for the Grant County Centralized Dispatch center a record of the time it takes to dispatch emergency service personnel now will be evaluated against the time to dispatch the same personnel after the consolidation is complete. The goal is that the time needed to dispatch help to the citizen in need will be reduced by half.

Inputs:

- Forty dispatchers from all Grant County Public Safety Agencies, salaries and benefits equal \$1,600,000
- Donated land from Marion Community Schools
- Dispatch equipment from current dispatch centers
- Ten employees from the Emergency Management Agency
- Annual unobligated revenue from the Emergency 911 fund of \$425,000
- Funding from Federal Government of \$2,048,000 for construction of new Centralize Dispatch Center/EOC

Outputs:

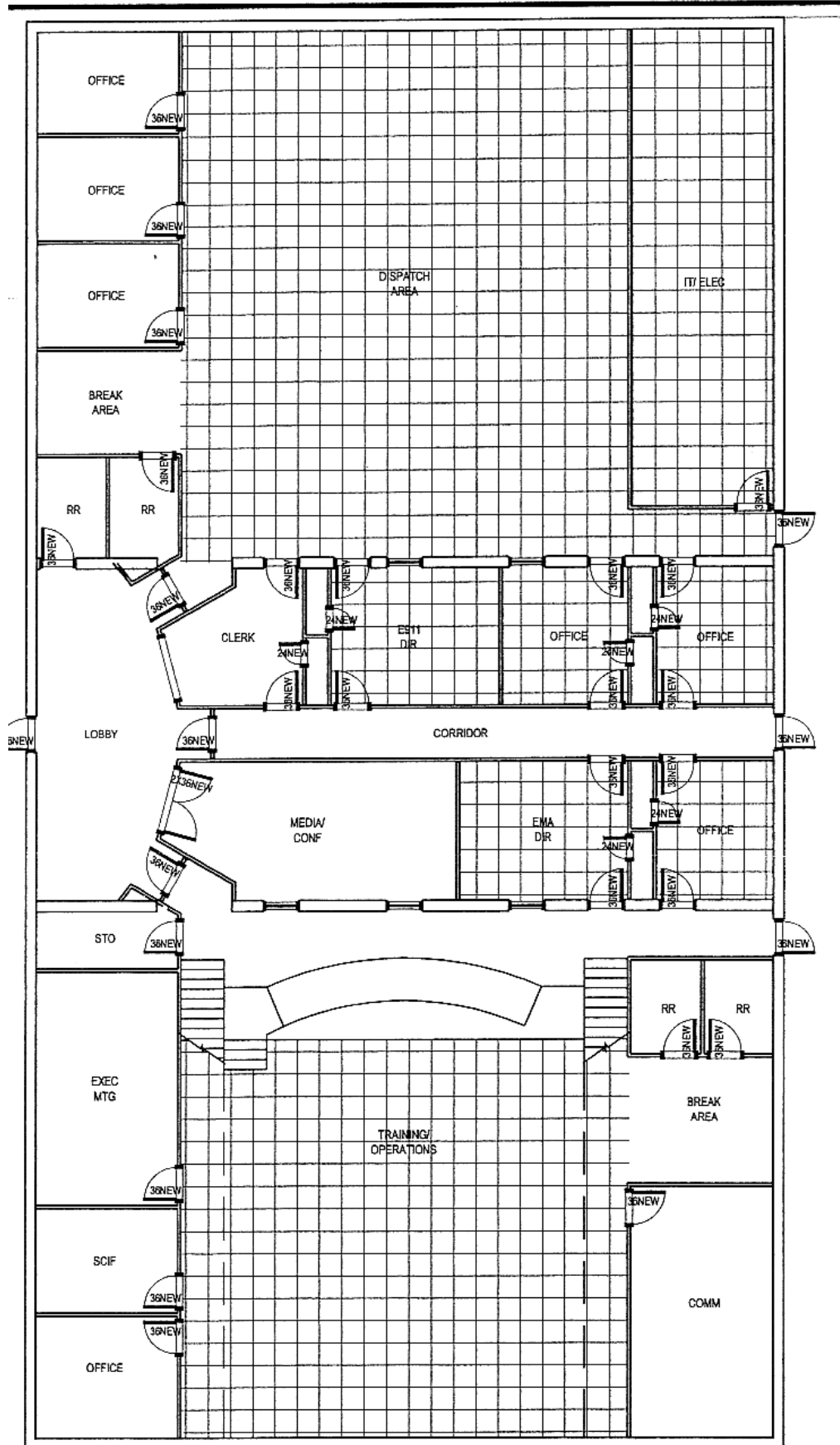
Immediately after the new dispatch center is opened there will be a 30 second to 1 minute decrease in the delay currently existing with the transferring of calls from one agency to another.

By moving all dispatch functions into a centralized location there will be no need to duplicate the purchasing of equipment. Within two years of opening new dispatch center the funds required for purchasing and maintaining equipment will be reduced by 50%.

The current arrangement requires forty dispatchers funded by five agencies who spend a total \$1,600,000 yearly on salaries and benefits. The county currently charges a 911 fee of \$.53 each month for each landline located within Grant County. This fee amounts to a yearly revenue of just over \$600,000 dollars with \$425,000 being unobligated monies. With pending legislation there is the potential for county government to increase the 911 fee to \$2.00 for each landline and to include the same fee for cell phones. Within five years of opening the new dispatch center the employees will be paid and the center will be operated on funds received from the 911 fee, thus reducing the tax payer burden by \$1,600,000 yearly.

Outcome

There are at least three benefits associated with centralizing all public safety and emergency management operations into one facility. The desired outcome for this project is to reduce the amount of time wasted on transferring emergency calls from one location to another thus providing potential lifesaving help to the citizens of Grant County in a greatly reduced amount of time. By reducing the response time the citizens of Grant County will benefit by receiving the help they need in a timelier manner.



Budget

Category	Request from COP Research Fund	In-Kind Secured/Applied For funds	Total Budget
Dispatchers salaries and benefits		\$1,600,000	\$1,600,000
Emergency Management Personnel salaries and benefits		\$400,000	\$400,000
Donated land from Marion Community Schools		\$35,000	\$35,000
Requested funding for construction and furnishing new dispatch/EOC	\$2,048,000		\$2,048,000
Yearly unobligated funds from Grant County E-911 account		\$425,000	\$425,000
Equipment from current dispatch centers		\$75,000	\$75,000
Subtotals	\$2,048,000	\$2,535,000	
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET			\$4,583,000

References

Marion Police Department. (2010). *Marion Police Department 2009 Progress Report: 2009 Progress Report for Marion Police Department Communication Center*

U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *State and County Quickfacts*. Retrieved February 22, 2010 from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/18/1846908.html>