

RESOLUTION NO. 4697

**A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE FAIRBANKS EMERGENCY
COMMUNICATIONS CENTER SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PLAN**

WHEREAS, the City of Fairbanks operates a state-of-the-art emergency communications center known as the Fairbanks Emergency Communications Center (FECC); and

WHEREAS, the FECC provides dispatching and call taking services to numerous police departments, fire departments, emergency medical service agencies, and municipal agencies; and

WHEREAS, the FECC handles around 75% of 911 dispatch traffic within the Fairbanks North Star Borough; and

WHEREAS, the FECC engaged Alaska Management Resources, Inc., to help develop a business plan for the FECC and sustainable public safety communications;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council supports the Fairbanks Emergency Communications Center sustainable business plan that is premised upon the following four core foundational principles:

1. The City of Fairbanks owns and controls FECC;
2. FECC will work to be a self-supporting function of City Government;
3. User agencies will have input in FECC governance; and
4. The City will strive to provide affordable 911 call-taking and dispatch services for end-user agencies.

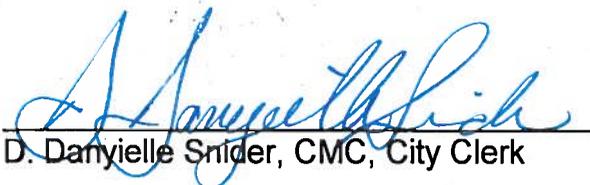
PASSED and **APPROVED** this 9th day of November 2015.



John Eberhart, Mayor

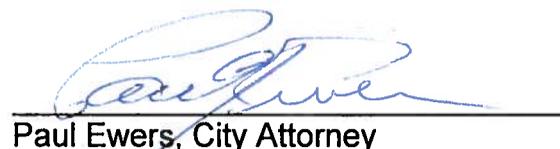
AYES: PASSED and APPROVED on the CONSENT AGENDA.
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Gatewood
APPROVED: November 9, 2015

ATTEST:



D. Danyielle Snider, CMC, City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



Paul Ewers, City Attorney

CITY OF FAIRBANKS

FISCAL NOTE

I. REQUEST:

Ordinance or Resolution No: 4697

Abbreviated Title: FECC BUSINESS PLAN PROJECTIONS

Department(s): DISPATCH

Does the adoption of this ordinance or resolution authorize:

1) additional costs beyond the current adopted budget? Yes x No _____

2) additional support or maintenance costs? Yes x No _____

If yes, what is the estimate? see below

3) additional positions beyond the current adopted budget? Yes x No _____

If yes, how many positions? 4

If yes, type of positions? F (F - Full Time, P - Part Time, T - Temporary)

II. FINANCIAL DETAIL:

EXPENDITURES:	2016	2017	2018	2019
Dispatch Operational Costs (Budget)	\$2,149,696	\$2,258,028	\$2,367,444	\$2,477,954
Dispatch Operational Joint Costs (Facility, Admin, Other)	\$449,944	\$458,943	\$468,122	\$475,313
TOTAL	\$2,599,640	\$2,716,971	\$2,835,566	\$2,953,267

REVENUES:	2016	2017	2018	2019
City General Fund (Police, Fire, Other)	\$1,770,380	\$1,850,282	\$1,931,047	\$2,011,203
North Pole Police & Fire Departments	\$180,000	\$195,000	\$210,000	\$221,822
Fairbanks North Star Borough (911 Services)	\$429,143	\$437,725	\$446,480	\$460,000
Local Fire Agencies	\$140,915	\$175,100	\$212,712	\$265,797
City General Fund Subsidy	\$79,202	\$58,864	\$35,327	(\$5,555)
TOTAL	\$2,599,640	\$2,716,971	\$2,835,566	\$2,953,267

Dispatch Operational Costs projections include an annual 1% increase in personnel costs and an increase of one full time equivalent position for each year. Dispatch Operational Joint Costs projections include an annual 2% increase. Revenue projections include an increase based on contractual agreements with full implementation of the new cost structure by 2019.

Prepared by Finance Department:

Initial mb

Date 10/30/2015



The Fairbanks Emergency Communications Center – the FECC

A Business Plan for Sustainable Public Safety Communications

The FECC
911 Cushman Street
Fairbanks, AK 99701

July 2015

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I. Executive Summary

When our neighbors need police, fire or EMS help, well over 75% of their E911 phone calls are answered by dispatchers at the Fairbanks Emergency Communications Center – the “FECC” – who in turn dispatch units from fire departments and police agencies throughout the region. The FECC is a state-of-the-art emergency communications center run by the City of Fairbanks, providing comprehensive, consolidated dispatch services to multiple agency users. A real entrepreneurial spirit – ‘build it and they will come’ – continues to drive the FECC today as it develops this second Business Plan, ensuring the long-term sustainability of its business model, and by extension the FECC’s ability to meet the expanding public safety communications needs of the region.

Across the country, communities are actively consolidating public safety communications capacity, owing to monetary motivations – to save and better leverage valuable public dollars – and also to improve services. As the need for its services expands, FECC continues to grow, leading to the development of a first Business Plan in 2011, and this updated version in 2015. Both Business Plans speak to the need to develop and maintain a sustainable business model based on quality service, fully integrating users in appropriate decision-making, increased efficiency of operations, and with a fair allocation of costs among all users.

At the outset the FECC used a lot of “educated guesswork” to determine how much to charge user for consolidated dispatch services, with the first User Agreements based on “good faith.” For the last several years, satisfaction with an informal approach to establishing user rates was criticized from all sides. The City Council and Mayor want to know: “Why are we paying so much for the FECC? Why aren’t users paying a bigger share? To what extent are we subsidizing the dispatch center?” Users have asked: “Am I getting what I pay for,” and “Am I paying too much?” The reality is that users are less concerned about how much they are paying, but that the amount they pay is equitable; in short, they don’t want to subsidize other users, a concern expressed by the City of Fairbanks, too. As public resources become tighter, users want a tangible, objective measure of the true costs of doing business, and a fair, equitable and objective cost allocation method.

This Business Plan document is premised upon four core foundational principles:

1. The City of Fairbanks owns and controls the FECC
2. The FECC must be 100% self-supporting, with no subsidy from the City
3. User agencies desire a more formal role in FECC operations
4. FECC services must be affordable for end users

Based on this Business Plan, every user agency customer, from the smallest to the largest, can be assured they are getting significant value for their emergency communications dollar, while at the same time receiving the highest quality services, and protecting those they serve.

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II. The Organization and its Environment

The Fairbanks Emergency Communications Center (FECC) is a consolidated public safety dispatch center providing services to two police departments and numerous fire and emergency medical services agencies. The FECC has operated as a separate department with the City of Fairbanks government since 2006, beginning in 2002 as part of the Fairbanks Police Department; today the FECC is physically located in the Fairbanks Police Station at 911 Cushman Street.

The FECC is one of five, year-round (and one seasonal) public safety dispatch centers operating in the Fairbanks North Star Borough. The others are: 1) the Alaska State Trooper Dispatch Center, a state agency, 2) the University of Alaska Fairbanks Police Dispatch Center on the UAF campus, 3) Fairbanks International Airport Police/Fire Dispatch, and 4) Alaska State Forestry Dispatch, which operates only during the summer months. Two full time dispatch centers also operate on Fort Wainwright and Eielson Air Force Base.

Some Historical Perspective

For decades prior to the 2002 opening of the FECC there had been intermittent local discussions about consolidating some or all public safety dispatching services within the borough. One of the often-mentioned proposals was for a regional, consolidated dispatch center. Although there were no concrete plans in that direction at the time, when the City began designing the new police building planners included capacity to handle a much larger dispatch center than was needed by the City at that time, or in the foreseeable future. The intention was to build capacity for the future, even though actual non-city users had not been identified. The FECC was “sized for a consolidated and sustainable future.”

Present staff and City Officials recall discussions back to the 1980s which recommended development of a consolidated, regional dispatch capacity in the community. A 2003 Borough-sponsored study declared that a consolidated dispatch center could be established within the newly-built FECC. On top of that, federal mandates for interoperability loomed large in the minds of planners, such that in 2004 what would eventually become the FECC began providing dispatch and related services to the City of North Pole Police and Fire Departments, but not in accordance with any borough-wide coordinated plan. Since then, with the addition of other Fire and EMS agency providers, the FECC is today handling the vast majority – calculated at over 75% of dispatch traffic – from E-911 call taking, to dispatch, to call resolution, within the Fairbanks North Star Borough. Current user agencies are:

Law Enforcement

- Fairbanks Police Department
- North Pole Police Department

Fire/EMS Services

- Fairbanks Fire Department
- North Pole Fire Department
- North Star Fire Department

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- Steese Area Volunteer Fire Department
- University Fire Department
- Chena-Goldstream Volunteer Fire and Rescue
- Ester Volunteer Fire Department
- Delta Fire, Rural Deltana and Delta Rescue
- Salcha Fire and Rescue
- Fairbanks North Star Borough – Emergency Operations & Hazardous Materials Response Team

E911

- Fairbanks North Star borough E911
- City of Delta E911

In the spring of 2010, the City of Fairbanks and the Fairbanks North Star Borough's Emergency Operations Department began discussions aimed at answering questions surrounding fairness of costs, and value associated with the FECC. The cities of Fairbanks and North Pole and the Fairbanks North Star Borough jointly retained and provided solid direction to the consulting firm Information Insights to conduct a comprehensive Workload Analysis fully describing the actual workload of the center – the main question was how much of which tasks were being undertaken on behalf of each user. Information Insights found that 18% of FECC tasks were for E-911 Call Taking, 46% for Dispatching, 27% for Records tasks, with Other Tasks taking up nine percent. With the Workload Analysis completed, the City of Fairbanks engaged Alaska Management Resources, Inc., a local planning and consulting company, to develop a business plan for a sustainable FECC – that Business Plan was completed in 2011, and is being significantly updated in 2015.

III. FECC Services and an Improved Cost Allocation Model

The Fairbanks Emergency Communications Center provides regional dispatch services for police/fire/EMS users that include computer-aided dispatch (CAD), records management and reporting, automatic paging and conventional paging, radio dispatching, E-911 call taking, fire and police alarm monitoring, digital call logging and other administrative tasks for users. To ensure that allocation of costs to users is appropriate and fair, the FECC, in partnership with the Mayor's Office, Finance Department and user agencies, has developed a new model that enables the FECC to fully cover its costs and allocate charges to all user agencies. The projected total cost to operate the FECC is \$2,956,888, which supports 22.5 full-time equivalents (FTEs).

Identifying the true costs of operating the FECC continues to be central to implementing a solid, forward-thinking, long-range business plan for the FECC. In 2011, the FECC began a process to more fairly and equitably allocate among all users the true costs of providing public safety communications in the area. True cost is a function of direct and indirect costs, as well as joint facility costs. At the writing of this 2015 Business Plan the FECC, assisted by current users, the Mayor's Chief of Staff and the Finance Department, developed a new cost allocation model based on a modified "ala-carte approach," under

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which user agencies pay on for the services they receive. All existing and any new police and fire agencies pay for a “General Services” package, and can choose to pay for a number of “Specialized Services.”

The new cost allocation model provides clear information to existing agencies about how much they need to pay for services from FECC; the model also establishes a framework that allows new agencies to contract with FECC for services – to know what they will have to pay to “buy-in” – based on three service categories: 1) E911 Call Taking; 2) General Services; and 3) Specialized Services.

1. **E911 Call Taking:** Currently, E911 call-taking fees fund the portion of time allocated to call taking activities before dispatching to appropriate emergency responder agencies, with the charge based on the number and costs of call takers needed to provide 24-hour coverage. At the FECC services minimum of 5 call takers is necessary, translating to 8,760 staff hours each year, or 1,840 hours per call taker. The total amount of call taking is deducted from the FECC budget before individual agency cost allocations are determined for user agencies. For future contracts an annual Consumer Price Index (CPI) is applied, as well as a 10% indirect rate.

2. **General Services:** The General Services portion of FECC services is much like a basic cable television package, in that it includes the foundational channels every subscriber gets – for the FECC the basic General Services packages includes the many various activities that are generally associated with a police/fire/EMS call. Charging for General Services is determined by event-based call volume, meaning the number of police/fire/EMS calls dispatched by FECC for each user agency. Event-based call volume has been determined to be the most appropriate, consistent and equitable method to calculate agency cost allocation because it is objective and easily verified. Because actual call volume fluctuates year-to-year and from season-to-season, the FECC has developed call volume ranges, and further classifies calls as being either police or fire/EMS. Billable call volume will be based on the prior year’s audited call volumes.
 - Fire calls tend to have a longer duration and are therefore charged out at \$60 per call, based on call-volume increments. Fire/EMS agencies will be charged a minimum rate of \$12,000 for a call volume of 0-200 calls, with increased charge based on 200-call increments. For instance, a Fire and or Fire/EMS agency with a call volume between 201-400 will be charged \$24,000, for a call volume of 401-600 the charge would be \$36,000, and so on.
 - Police calls, which are of higher volume but shorter duration, are charged out at a lower rate than Fire/EMS, but the call increments are in multiples of 1,000 – at \$30 per call. For the Fairbanks Police Department the per-call rate is slightly higher (\$40), owing to the increased utilization of dispatch staff and other in-house administrative duties, but is still based on the 1,000 call volume increment.

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The new fee schedule for General Services is simply structured, allowing new and existing user agencies to accurately project what they will be charged during the fiscal year, again based on audited call volumes for the prior year. For future contracts, a CPI will be applied annually, or per contractual agreements with specific user agencies. The two tables below demonstrate the new model for allocating costs associated with General services, broken out by Police and Fire agency calls.

GENERAL SERVICES - POLICE AGENCY		GENERAL SERVICES - FIRE AGENCY	
Event Call Volume	Cost to User	Event Call Volume	Cost to User
0-1000	\$30,000	0-200	\$12,000
1001-2000	\$60,000	201-400	\$24,000
2001-3000	\$90,000	401-600	\$36,000
3001-4000	\$120,000	601-800	\$48,000
4001-5000	\$150,000	801-1000	\$60,000
5001-6000	\$180,000	1001-1200	\$72,000
6001-7000	\$210,000	1201-1400	\$84,000
7001-8000	\$240,000	1401-1600	\$96,000
8001-9000	\$270,000	1601-1800	\$108,000
9001-10000	\$300,000	1801-2000	\$120,000
10001-11000	\$330,000	2001-3000	\$180,000
11001-12000	\$360,000	3001-4000	\$240,000
12001-13000	\$390,000	4001-5000	\$300,000
13001-14000	\$420,000	5001-6000	\$360,000
and up		and up	

- Specialized Services:** The FECC currently offers a variety of specialized services to user agencies, including Police Records Management System, Police Mobile Field Reporting, Police Administration Call Taking and Mobile Computing Application. Like the enhanced cable television package – paying extra for HBO, Showtime, etc. – user agencies can choose the “premium services” that they are willing to pay extra for. Fees charged to agency users are based on the actual costs to the City of Fairbanks for each service, license or user. FECC can offer other specialized services, with all associated costs borne by the requesting agency. The chart below shows the current costs for specialized services.

SPECIALIZED SERVICES RATE STRUCTURE		
Specialized Services	Rate	Method
Police Records Management System (RMS)	\$488.80	Per User
Police Mobile Field Reporting (MFR)	\$397.85	Per User
Police Administration Call Taking	\$2.50	Per Call
Mobile Computing Application	\$239.50	Per License
Other Customer Service	Actual	Actual

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IV. Market Analysis – FECC Users and the Market

The Market Analysis in a public-sector business plan is generally a mix of discussion about customers or stakeholders, what the future of a particular market may hold, and any competitive advantage. In terms of customers/stakeholders of the FECC, police and fire/EMS providers are primary:

Police. Across the country, Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) provide combined services for police and fire/EMS, the majority of that work being generated by police calls – most of the work comes from calls initiated by dispatch through a 911 phone system, with other calls initiated by officers on patrol. Therefore, many PSAPs are operated by law enforcement agencies. The FECC provides services to two police agencies, which make up a majority of the workload. The Alaska State Troopers dispatch out of its own center, utilizing state employees, as does Airport Police/Fire.

Fire/EMS. The FECC dispatches for fire departments with a mix of fully paid, partially paid/part volunteer, and all-volunteer departments. The majority of fire department calls are EMS-related, with frequent interaction between law enforcement and fire/EMS providers. The FECC dispatchers are fully trained to handle fire and EMS calls, as well as police calls; FECC dispatchers are trained in EMD (Emergency Medical Dispatching), EFD (Emergency Fire Dispatching) and EPD (Emergency Police Dispatching), all of which adds to their overall training requirement. All FECC dispatchers are also certified by the National Academies of Emergency Dispatch.

Other Clients. The FECC also dispatches for community service officers in the nonprofit Volunteers in Policing (VIP) Program, the Fairbanks North Star Borough Emergency and Haz-Mat Operations; and there have been discussions about acquiring after-hours Animal Control service for the FNSB.

While there are many customer or user agencies, the ultimate FECC stakeholders are the citizens who may or may not know the center exists, or where it exists. But the user agencies are the “customers” of the FECC, paying for the services of the Fairbanks Emergency Communications Center.

The Competition

In the truest sense of the word, although there are other PSAPs in the area, and each provides some level of “consolidated” services, none provide consolidated E911 call taking and dispatching to the significant extent FECC does.

- **The University of Alaska Fairbanks Police Department Dispatch Center** provides call taking and dispatching services primarily for the UAF Police Department. According to UAF Dispatch Center management, the likelihood this PSAP will avail itself of the full services of the FECC is small in the short term, but not completely out of the question, although the University Fire Department has

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recently contracted with the FECC for services. The nature of dispatch services to UAF is unique, and somewhat difficult to duplicate in the FECC environment. Over the longer term, the likelihood of a more formalized relationship is greater, as the university contemplates required capital expansion and continued demands for budget discipline. There appears to be little likelihood of the UAF Police Department coming over to the FECC as a user in the near term.

- **Fairbanks International Airport Dispatch** is operated by the State Department of Transportation and dispatches police and fire/EMS units for the Airport Public Safety Department. Dispatchers also provide services related to access management on the Fairbanks International Airport proper. According to dispatch managers, because of its responsibilities for tarmac access control as part of Homeland Security, and the uniqueness of Airport fire operations, the likelihood of the Airport taking advantage of the services of the FECC is small.
- **Alaska State Trooper Dispatch** provides services limited to the Alaska State Troopers, Fish and Wildlife Protection, and the State Fire Marshall. The nature of services and coverage areas, as well as the political will of the Alaska State Troopers, makes a transition to the FECC perhaps complicated – at this time the potential for becoming an FECC user agency is not clear.
- Both **Fort Wainwright** and **Eielson Air Force Base** have their own PSAPs for police and fire/EMS services, providing services similar to the FECC. However, because they both operate on active military bases, becoming an FECC customer is unlikely, though not completely out of the question.

While there are limited opportunities for acquiring other PSAPs as customers of the FECC in the very short-term, there is a healthy culture of collaboration among the existing PSAPs. But that spirit of collaboration is coupled with challenges related to the interoperability of radio systems. Realistically, without adding to current staffing levels at FECC, it is somewhat impractical to bring other big customers/users into the FECC. In addition, it is important to think about the physical space capacity if many or all of the potential user agencies come on board. While challenge, these do not preclude other as yet unidentified customers/users from joining the FECC.

Competitive Advantage and Strategic Position

While there may be few new customers on the immediate horizon, there are several factors that give the FECC a real competitive advantage as a PSAP and dispatch center in providing regional, comprehensive, community-driven dispatch services:

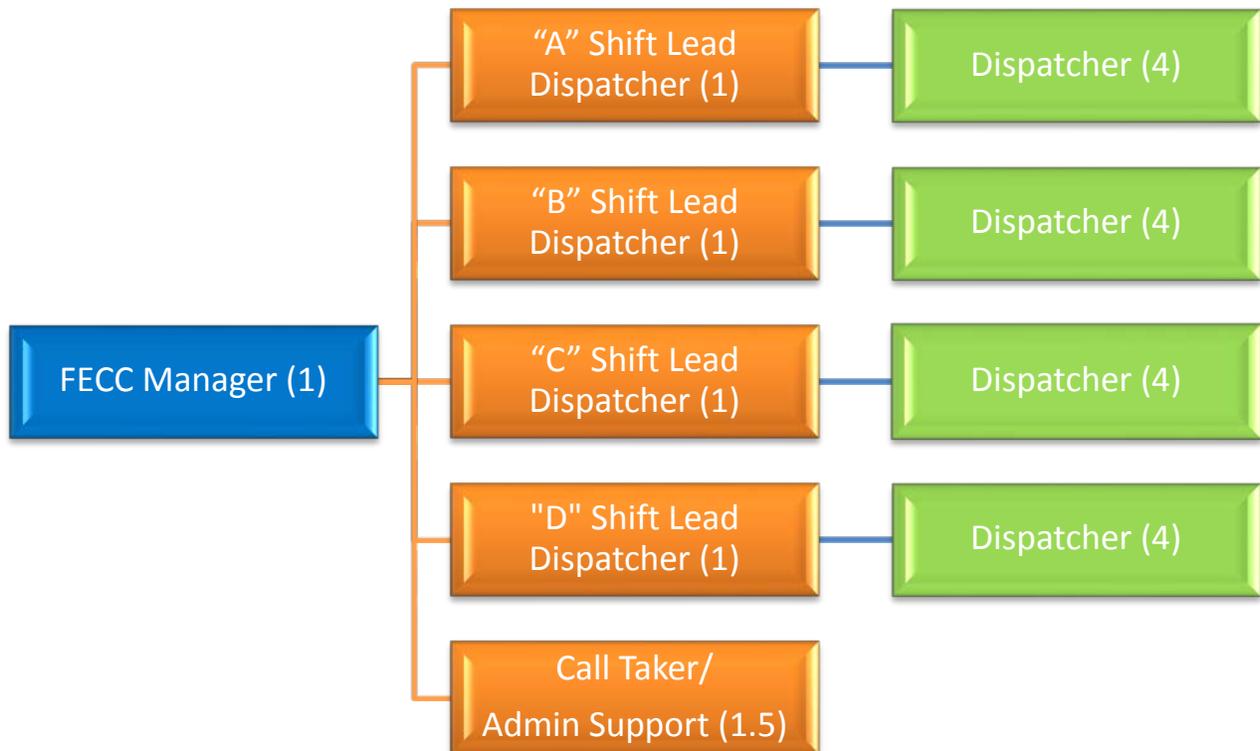
1. The building is state-of-the-art in design and technology, and has a long usable life.
2. The recently-renovated FECC can handle more dispatchers providing more services to more users.
3. Employees are extremely well trained, and ongoing training is robust.
4. The FECC has received very impressive ratings from ISO.

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VI. Sustainable Human Resources Plan - Current Personnel and Projected Needs

Maintaining a sustainable FECC human resources infrastructure has been a challenge because of the growing complexity of the work and the lack of a pre-trained workforce. As the work becomes more complex, so too does the training. This section includes a discussion of the current staffing and long-term suggestions for a training program.

Projected staffing for the FECC is 22.5 full time equivalent positions (FTEs), in the following configuration, and with the job responsibilities described below:



- **The FECC Manager (1 FTE)** provides overall administrative direction to the center, supervises center staff, and is the primary external liaison between the center and its users.
- **Shift Lead Dispatchers (4 FTEs)** provide shift supervision of dispatch operations during the four shifts necessary to run a 24-hour dispatch operation.
- **Dispatchers (16 FTEs)** are the front-line E-911 call takers and dispatchers of user emergency resources, including initial data entry into the CAD system.
- **Call Taker/Admin Support (1.5 FTEs)**, occupies the receptionist desk in the Police Dept. Building, providing call taking and other administrative support.

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Minimal Staffing and Shifts

The FECC configuration is based on a minimum staffing level of four dispatchers per shift. As in the 2011 Business Plan, it is not the purpose of this section to review prior discussions of staffing at the FECC, but instead to identify a sustainable staffing structure for the FECC moving forward. Such a structure will meet the needs of the most common questions asked by city council members and administrators surrounding excessive overtime.

1. Recognizing the work that goes on in the FECC, what is the minimum required staffing level? Is it three dispatchers per shift, four dispatchers per shift, or five dispatchers per shift? There are robust staffing models available to managers in answering this question.
2. When and how should the dispatch center shift to a staffing model that separates out the E-911 call taking function from the dispatching function?
3. What is the continuing impact of clerical duties performed for the Fairbanks Police Department on minimum dispatch staffing levels?
4. How should the dispatch center handle training needs to better utilize staff resources and limit the use of overtime?

For a Dispatch Center with FECC's current workload, ISO makes a recommendation of four dispatchers per shift, including a dedicated call taker. Others say five per shift, not including a separate call taker. There is much debate nationally about that number, and there are two sides to the discussion – establish staffing levels for the worst-case scenario or the mid-case scenario. Most agencies try to strike a balance between the two. With the current staff configuration, when the staffing level goes below three, overtime is required to pay for any additional staffing.

Separate E-911 Call-Taking. With the size of the local emergency communications market, the question is not whether to separate out the E-911 call taking from the dispatching function, but when. A decade ago a consultant working on planning and construction of the new police building said the center was “at the cusp of needing separate call takers.” There is little disagreement that a business model incorporating separate call taking is preferred, especially during peak 911 call times, which include the noon to 8:00 pm hours. Center management cannot ignore the fact that there is an underlying need for FECC staff to be “ready” to answer an ever-increasing amount of 911 calls. There is not an obvious “tipping point” when expanding call taking activity dictates staffing separate call taking positions, but it is clear that today the FECC struggles to handle 911 phone calls during its documented peak call times. Dedicated call-taking positions would be funded by 911 surcharge revenue from the borough, although during a transition to separated dispatching/call-taking function, wages may have to be allocated among users.

Better Leveraging People Resources. Overtime has been an ongoing problem in the eyes of the City Council and Mayor since before the FECC started operations. It takes six months on average to fully train a new dispatcher, and only at the completion of the training is the new dispatcher considered part of the minimum staffing level. Until then other dispatchers must fill holes in the schedule, which means overtime. In addition, during or

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often at the end of the period, trainees often decide that a dispatching job is not for them, and they leave city employment. Realistically, the entire burden for training a new dispatcher now rests with the City, when it does not need to. On top of that, because there is not always a guarantee of a position at the end of the process, this often translates to dispatch training costing a great deal in overtime.

The significant training requirement is based on the fact that the City has to start from ground zero because there is not a prepared cadre of qualified dispatchers who are ready and able to go to work. With very few exceptions every person hired has to be fully trained by the City, on the City's dime. Yes, some of that training cost is built into the cost of doing business, but not so much the overtime component. The question then becomes: What would be the impact on training time and overtime if the FECC could hire pre-trained or mostly-trained emergency call taker/dispatchers? The training costs to the city would be reduced significantly, as would the overtime necessary to provide minimum staffing while new trainees learned the job. A proposal for improving the ability of FECC to recruit and retain employees appears below, through an Emergency Communications Academy. It should be noted that an academy would not be directed by FECC or the city, but instead would be a partnership between the university and area PSAPs.

The Emergency Communications Academy. Repeating a call made in the 2011 Business Plan, this 2015 document recommends further exploring the concept of an *Emergency Communications Academy* housed at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Community and Technical College (CTC) as having real merit, and a solid historical foundation. A similar program currently provides ready-trained police officers for agencies throughout the region, and even into Anchorage, as does the CTC Paramedic Academy. According to CTC,

The CTC Law Enforcement Academy conducts basic police training for Interior and rural municipalities. The training consists both of students who are current recruit employees of a law enforcement academy as well as students who are considering a career in law enforcement. All students in the program are seeking Alaska Police Standards Certification.

Similarly, CTC describes its Paramedic Academy this way:

The emergency medical services program at CTC is designed to prepare students for entry-level positions as paramedics within the EMS community. The most common entry-level position for paramedics is as an attendant on an ambulance within a 911 emergency response system or for a non-emergency transport service.

In 2015 the City of Fairbanks already reaps benefits from being able to hire students directly from the CTC Law Enforcement Academy and the Paramedic Academy. Law enforcement recruits do not have to be sent to Sitka to the Trooper Academy, and Paramedics do not have to travel out of state any longer.

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The idea of an Emergency Communications Academy is good not only for the FECC, but all of the other PSAPs in the area. There are not enough trained dispatchers in the area – this is widely recognized – as other PSAPs are experiencing the same trouble with hiring and retention of dispatchers. Initial discussions between the Dispatch Manager and UAF’s CTC leadership have already taken place, and there remains interest in pursuing the conversation further. Longer-term discussions should include a wider range of potential stakeholders and benefiting organizations and agencies.

VII. Governance and Leadership

The initial structure of the Fairbanks Emergency Communications Center was as a division within the Fairbanks Police Department, with day-to-day operations being the responsibility of the Deputy Police Chief. While the structure was effective for a start-up operation it became clear there should be greater “insulation” between the Police Department and dispatching responsibilities. It was felt that no user agency should have direct control over dispatch operations.

Today, the FECC is a separate City department, reporting to the City Mayor, who is responsible for all executive-level operations and leadership staff. The Center Manager exists at the same level as the Police and Fire Chiefs, Public Works Director and IT Director. The figure below illustrates the span of control graphically.

Current FECC Organizational Span of Control



Under the current structure, decision-making rests with the FECC Manager, who solicits advice on day-to-day operations from user agencies through a User Council, which plays an informal advisory role. In this structure there is significant overlap between the dispatch center and other parts of the City infrastructure, including the Mayor’s Office, the Mayor’s Chief of Staff, the Police and Fire Departments, the IT Department, and the City Attorney and City Clerk’s Office.

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Current Key Management Decision Makers

Ms. Stephanie Johnson, FECC Center Manager, began her emergency communications career working for the State of Alaska, Division of Forestry, Fire Suppression Unit, as an Initial Attack Fire Dispatcher. She has over 23 years of public safety dispatching experience, and has worked for the City of Fairbanks Police Department since 1995. In 2006 Johnson was appointed Dispatch Center Manager, with overall responsibility for managing the FECC. Ms. Johnson holds a bachelor’s degree in Speech Communication from UAF, certification of Emergency Number Professional (ENP) from the National Emergency Number Association (NENA), is a 2009 graduate of the Fitch and Associates Communications Center Manager course, and maintains certifications as and EMD, EFD and EPD.

Proposed Organizational Structure – The FECC Working Group

The proposed organizational and governance structure of the FECC moving forward is nearly identical to the current structure, with the exception of the replacement of ad-hoc FECC User Council with a much more formalized FECC Working Group. Operating under an agreed-upon set of Operating Principles, the Working Group (“Working Group”) is composed of one member appointed by each user agency; members must be in a leadership capacity within their agencies. Unlike the User Council the structure and function of the Working Group is formal, with a leadership structure based on having a Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary, and specifically articulated roles and responsibilities, as well as a decision-making process. A draft of potential Operating Principles appears in Appendix A; it is important to note that the newly installed Working Group will be responsible for approving its own Operating Principles. An organizational chart featuring the new FECC Working Group appears below:



Like the original User Council from the 2011 Business Plan, the Working Group will remain advisory under the FECC, but with a more robust decision-making process and mechanism for interacting with FECC leadership.

Other FECC Leadership Structure Options

The Mayor and FECC management acknowledge the overall positive benefits of a structure that incorporates a more formal FECC Working Group in the management of the center. The city feels it is important to acknowledge the existence of other potential governance and operations structures for the FECC, but reiterates that it remains committed to the

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current city-dependent structure. Therefore, while there is no immediate call for changing the current structure, one purpose of this business plan is to identify possible leadership scenarios. The primary options include putting the dispatch center back under the Fairbanks Police Department, establishing an quasi-government organization such as a Service Area or other “enterprise operation,” and establishing an independent nonprofit organization apart from any of the participating government agencies. More detailed discussion of some of the options is presented below.

FECC within the Fairbanks Police Department. By placing the dispatch center back under the Fairbanks Police Department, decision-making would involve the Fairbanks Police Chief. One of the primary motivations for placing the center back under the Police Department is a perception that it might save the City money, because staff will have the ability to complete administrative tasks when they are not otherwise busy with dispatching duties. The reality is there will not be much in the way of savings, as the workload will not change with the change in structure. In fact, based on the 2010 Workload Analysis the majority of administrative tasks is already allocated to the Police Department, and will remain that way.

The most noteworthy downside associated with bringing the FECC back within the Police Department is that it is contrary to the advice to mirror a more independent governance structure, not less. On the surface a move back into the Police Department creates at the very least a perception of conflict and special interest, even if there is no actual conflict. In addition, there was concern expressed among some of the Fire/EMS users in interviews that a police-driven FECC would make the problem of perceived “second-class citizenship” worse.

FECC as Independent Nonprofit Chartered under a Joint Powers Agreement. Under this governance option, the FECC would be a separate legal entity formed as a nonprofit corporation under Alaska State law – the “members” of nonprofit would be public entities/agencies, and it would be governed by a board, on which all “principals/owners” are represented. The 2003 report by Public Safety Consultants recommended establishing an emergency communications center under a similar model. That 2003 study called for an independent entity chartered under state law, one that was not controlled by any single user agency, but residing in the city’s current physical facilities. While the nonprofit FECC would be independent and governed by a board with representation from all users, the nonprofit entity could contract for services through the city, with all personnel being employed by the city. Or, the nonprofit could be the employer, with the primary relationship between the center and the users being a customer relationship.

Alaska law permits municipalities and political subdivisions to enter into inter-local cooperation agreements to make the most efficient use of their powers, and to cooperate with other municipalities or political subdivisions on a basis of mutual advantage. The overall covering state statute is **AS Title 29** regarding municipal government powers, and specifically **AS 29.35.130. Emergency services communications centers**, which states:

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(a) A municipality may establish an emergency services communications center with one or more other municipalities and one or more state, federal, or private agencies that provide emergency service communications to the same geographic area. An emergency services communications center established under this section may be organized and operated as a public nonprofit corporation under AS 10.20.

Once established under Alaska Statutes, Title 10 – the Alaska Nonprofit Corporations Act – a consolidated FECC would be best served with two boards, one a Governance Board with a legal responsibility to provide overall policy direction and fiscal stewardship, and a second Operations Board to provide advice to the CEO of the center. The Governance Board would be comprised of representatives of each of the user agencies, generally the chief executive of each user agency, with each representative having an equal voice, and an equal vote, on governance issues and actions. The Governance Board recruits, hires, mentors and evaluates the Chief Executive Officer of the center, who would be employed by the nonprofit. The Governance Board would also be responsible for setting policy and establishing long-term direction through a Strategic Plan, and an Operations Board is constituted from among users and stakeholders to provide advice on day-to-day operational matters and protocols. Employees could be City employees contracted to work with the nonprofit.

In the alternative, rather than being City employees under contract with the nonprofit, all employees can be employed directly by the nonprofit. This structure is cleaner, but will likely not meet the needs of the current unionized city staff.

Under this nonprofit structure no one agency has more “power” than another over operations, which is a potential sticking point for the city that is now utilizing over 2/3 of dispatch services, according to the 2010 Workload Analysis.

Other Structural Options

In the spirit of full disclosure there are two other options that were presented as part of this business planning process: 1) Becoming a Service Area under the Fairbanks North Star Borough, 2) the FECC becoming solely a Dispatch Center with all call taking handled off-site, and 3) FECC as a Government-Owned Enterprise. Each option is discussed briefly below.

Service Area. State law allows the Fairbanks North Star Borough to establish Services Areas within the borough. The concept is widely used for road maintenance within the borough today. The basic idea is that a Service Area is constituted to perform a specific service – in this case emergency communications – for a specific coverage area, in this case the Fairbanks North Star Borough. A mill rate is established to support the service financially. There are positive attributes associated with this option, including the mill levy as a consistent revenue stream, and that it is independent of any user agency, although the borough does provide oversight of service areas. Negatives associated with the option include the limit of

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coverage to the borough proper, when there are actual needs outside the borough, and garnering the political support to increase the mill levy for all residents would be tricky.

Off-Site Call Taking. E911 call taking does not have to happen in the FECC, and in fact it can happen anywhere, even in the lower 48. There are many large jurisdictions that have successfully implemented a system whereby the dispatch function is separated physically and structurally from the call taking function. Call taking can be provided by another department within an agency, by another governmental entity, or private contractor. For the FECC that could translate to having the FNSB answer all E911 calls from its own facility, and channeling the dispatch information to the FECC, which would provide dispatching and call resolution services. The FECC staffing would be significantly reduced, and would include dispatchers and some support staff. While there are positives and negatives associated with this option, the capital investment alone would be substantial, and the perceptions of a literal disconnect between the E911 call and the dispatch would be challenging, from a customer service perspective at the very least. And this would require a significant change in the emergency services culture in the community.

Government-Owned Enterprise. Government entities sometimes establish what are known as enterprise entities to pursue commercial operations they cannot pursue – other names include state-owned company, state enterprise, publicly owned corporation, government business enterprise, government-owned corporation or commercial government agency. Regardless of the name, it is a legal entity engaging in commercial activities for an owner or stakeholder government; in the case of the FECC, the potential government stakeholders are the Fairbanks North Star Borough, the City of Fairbanks or the City of North Pole. The main characteristic of the enterprise operation is that it generally engages in what would be considered commercial activity, versus providing a public service such as public safety, fire or emergency dispatching. In the case of the FECC the provision of emergency communication services is a public sector service, not a commercial activity, so the government-owned enterprise model may have little applicability.

While none of the three above options are considered viable as part of this business plan, they could be part of an active discussion around a truly comprehensive, community-driven emergency communications infrastructure.

Biennial FECC Review

In the long term there is strong user support for implementing a structure that provides greater independence for the FECC, but such a structure does not garner significant interest on the part of the Fairbanks City Council and City Mayor. In lieu of any such long-term change, the suggestion for continued improvement in the services of the FECC is that the City will fully incorporate at least biennial review of FECC operations by a third party, in addition to constituting a more formal FECC Working Group. This recommendation maintains the current structure of the FECC, adding an FECC Operations Working Group

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as formal advisory body, but adds another “check and balance” in biennial review to ensure users feel they have a meaningful advisory role in FECC management and leadership.

The Future of a Regional, Comprehensive, Community-Driven FECC

This Business Plan recommends a continued structure for the FECC housed within the City of Fairbanks, and describes the long-term sustainability of that structure. However, it is clear from the business plan process that there is significant energy within FECC stakeholders and the emergency services community to continue discussions aimed at developing a regional, comprehensive, community-driven emergency communications capacity. Deconstructing each of those words provides important context for describing a path forward:

- **Regional** refers to both breadth of the capacity, meaning that services cover the Fairbanks North Star Borough proper, and to the extent practicable the Interior region. The most significant change from the current situation is that the services will likely extend far beyond the boundaries of the borough, particularly with respect to Alaska State Troopers and its Fish and Wildlife Division.
- **Comprehensive** refers to the depth of the capacity, and that with the possible exception of the military installations, all emergency services agencies within the borough are dispatched by a single entity – a “one-stop” operation providing a wide range of services to users. The word “comprehensive” can also refer to being located within a single physical location, but it is not essential. The key component is the presence of a single entity responsible for emergency communications.
- **Community-Driven** is the descriptor that differs most from the current situation, which describes a city-controlled infrastructure with significant formal and informal opportunities for user input. The “community-driven” reference speaks solidly to the concept of a center that is not under the control of any single user. A community-driven structure is impractical now, given the capital requirements of such a center, and recognizing the already-significant investment made by the city. But there is definite interest among stakeholders for a community-driven center that is operated as an independent, nonprofit entity with a formal Governance Board.

This Business Plan is a valuable first step in expanding the ability of stakeholders to speak much more influentially about the viability and sustainability of a regional, comprehensive, community-driven emergency communications infrastructure.

VII. The FECC Budget and Sustainable Revenue

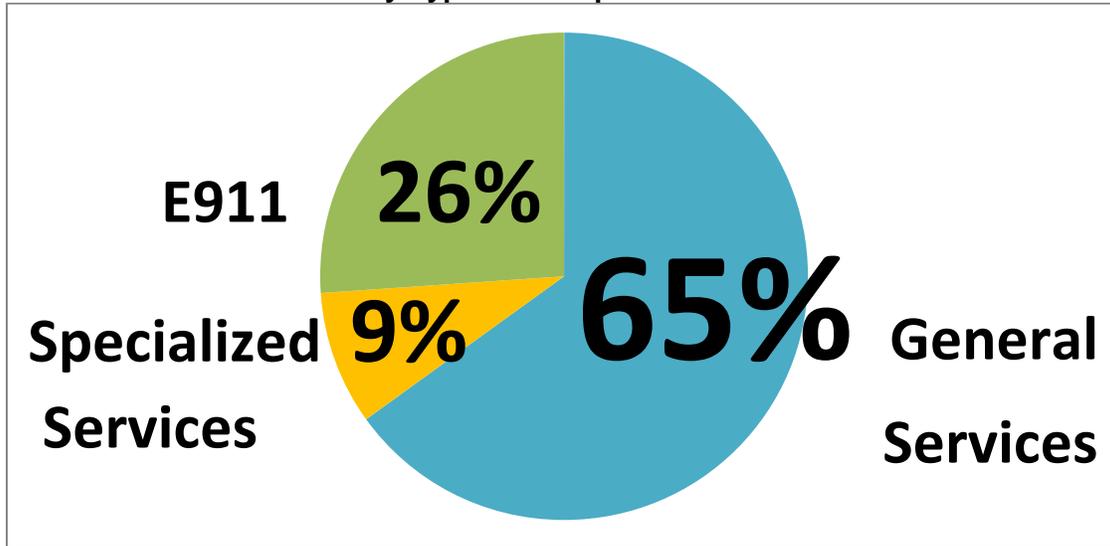
The FECC management is committed to developing a continuing revenue stream that covers the unit’s expenses, paying for the 22.5 FTEs required for full staffing, while at the same time growing a sustainable revenue base that does not require the City of Fairbanks to subsidize FECC operations. The current projected budget for FECC operations is \$2,956,888, with revenue coming from three sources, presented in the figure below:

1. **E911 Call Taking Fees** from the Fairbanks North Star Borough, at \$771,206 (26%)

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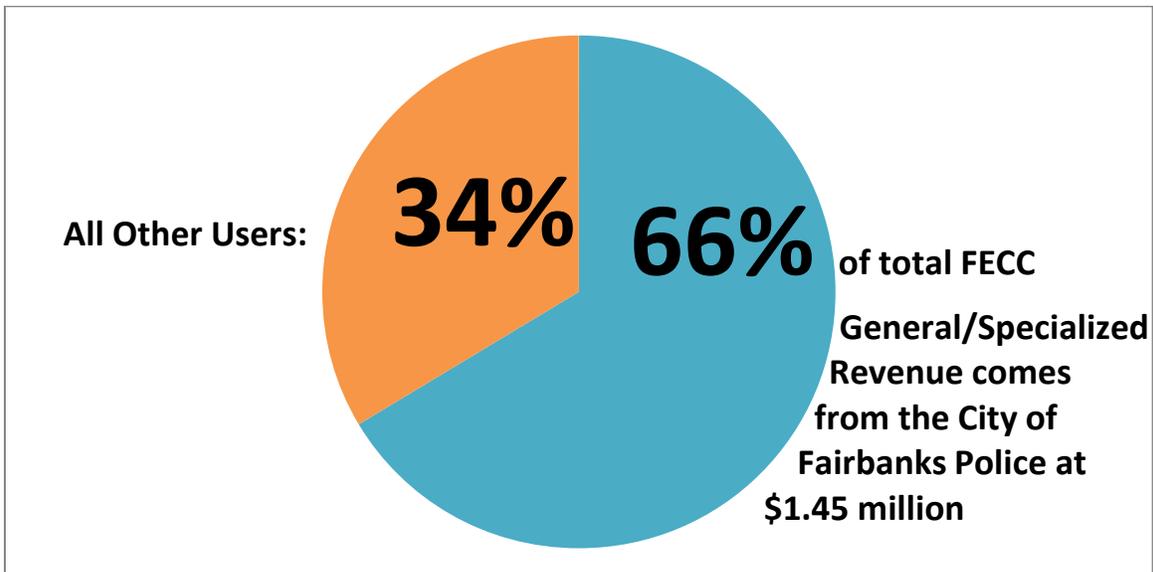
- 2. **General Services** provided to users agencies, at \$1,923,320 (65%)
- 3. **Specialized Services** provides to user agencies, at \$262,262 (9%)

FIGURE: FECC Revenue by Type and Proportion of Total



General and Specialized Service Revenue

Nearly three-quarters of revenue for the FECC is generated by services offered to user agencies, at \$2,185,262. Of the revenue coming from General and Specialized Service Fees, roughly two thirds, or 66%, is paid for by the Fairbanks Police Department, which makes it by far the FECC's primary user. Combined, including the Fairbanks City Fire Department, all other users make up the remaining 34% of General and Specialized Service Revenue. The City of Fairbanks Fore Department generates close to 12%



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The following chart presents a detailed breakdown of General and Specialized Service revenue by user agency.

TOTAL REVENUE GENERATED - GENERAL AND SPECIALIZED SERVICES			
Agency	General	Specialized	Total
Fairbanks Police Department	\$1,232,480	\$218,055	\$1,450,535
North Pole Police Department	\$144,120	\$16,892	\$161,012
Fairbanks Fire Department	\$249,900	\$8,973	\$258,873
North Pole Fire Department	\$56,400	\$2,156	\$58,556
North Star Fire Department	\$62,760	\$4,311	\$67,071
Steese Fire Department	\$32,220	\$3,832	\$36,052
Chena Goldstream Fire Department	\$26,040	\$4,311	\$30,351
Ester Fire Department	\$9,960	\$479	\$10,439
Delta Fire, Rural Deltana & Delta Rescue	\$21,360	\$0	\$21,360
Salcha Rescue	\$5,100	\$0	\$5,100
University Fire Department	\$82,980	\$3,353	\$86,333
Total Revenue Generated by Type	\$1,923,320	\$262,362	\$2,185,682

E911 Call Taking Revenue

[if City is willing, discussion of working to change the way E911 revenue is calculated.]

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VII. Conclusion

Sustainable, consolidated public safety communications is not a luxury. There is little question nationally, or locally, that the need for comprehensive 911 call-taking and dispatching is increasing. In our communities, as the population in the Fairbanks area continues to age and grow, along with an expected military build-up over the next five years, so too does the demand for police, fire and EMS services. There is no “one size fits all” approach to dispatching, just as there is no “silver bullet” for deciding what the perfect public safety communications infrastructure looks like. But it is clear that building a more sustainable emergency communications infrastructure is essential to meeting the public safety needs of our growing communities. With the recommendations of this document in hand the City of Fairbanks has a solid plan and reasonable recommendations for developing and maintaining a sustainable human resources structure at FECC, suggestions and recommendations about potential organizational structures and expanded leadership options for the future, as well as a solid process for applying a fair and equitable pricing structure for all users, utilizing a reasonable and defensible cost allocation methodology.

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Appendix A: FECC Working Group Operating Principles

Article I. Name

The name of this entity shall be the Fairbanks Emergency Communications Center Working Group (the “Working Group”).

Article II. Purpose and Duties

1. Core Purpose. The purpose of the Working Group is to reflect and communicate the needs and interests of the FECC’s many user agencies to FECC Management and City Leadership.

2. Duties. In order to meet the Working Group’s Core Purpose, the duties of the Working Group are to:

- a) Inform themselves with regard to public safety communication issues and policies, especially as they relate to FECC operations;
- b) Bring the concerns and issues of FECC user agencies to FECC management;
- c) Become aware of FECC operations and the interest of its many user agencies.
- d) Advise FECC management with regard to operational goals and service delivery;
- e) Participate in FECC Strategic Plan and Business Plan development.

3. Manner of Acting. Providing advice to FECC Management can take the form of simple resolutions or other informal guidance, based on a Consensus Model of Decision-Making.

4. Responsibility of FECC Management. While FECC Management is not bound by recommendations and guidance coming from the Working Group, in situations where FECC Management does not fully follow the Working Group’s other direction, FECC Management must fully inform the Working Group about the reasons behind such action.

Article III. Membership

1. Number. The Working Group shall be composed of one member for each of the FECC’s user agencies. Working Group members are to be in positions of leadership within each user agency.

2. Designated Seat. The FECC Manager will serve as a non-voting, ex-officio member of the Working Group and will not be part of the Working Group voting membership.

5. Appointment of Working Group Members: Each user agency will have sole responsibility for appointing new and any replacement Working Group members.

Article IV. Officers

There shall be a Chairperson, Vice-Chair and Secretary of the Working Group, elected annually by a majority vote of the full Working Group. If necessary and appropriate, a Nominating Committee shall submit a Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary slate for nomination and election at the final meeting of the year.

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The duties of the officers will be as follows:

- The Chair will be responsible (when present) for presiding over Working Group meetings, appointing committees, determining “Chair Rules,” and other duties as determined by the Working Group.
- The Vice-Chair shall serve as Chair in the Chair’s absence.
- The Secretary shall be responsible for submitting meeting minutes to the Working Group.

Article V. Meetings

1. Number. There shall be at least four meetings of the Working Group held each year.

2. Quorum. More than **50%** of the members of the Working Group shall constitute a quorum.

3. Attendance. Each Working Group member is expected to attend all regular meetings.

Article VI. Conducting Meetings

The initial meeting of the council will be conducted according to an informal interpretation of Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised. Upon appointment of a Chair, the Chair will establish ground rules about appropriate decorum for meetings and have them stand as “Chair Rules.” A simple majority of council members may override any standard or procedure established by the Chair for the conduct of the meeting.

Article VII. Open Process

The Council will operate in a manner that is open and informative, in accordance with City of Fairbanks ordinances, regulations and policies.