

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 18, 2008

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO #110: EXPANSION OF THE EXISTING MILL ROAD POLICE COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

This memorandum is in response to Council Members Krupika and Wilson's question regarding what considerations have been given to retaining and expanding the existing Mill Road Police Communications Center as the new consolidated Public Safety Communications Center (PSCC) and the potential cost implications/savings of doing so.

As part of our planning process for the newly proposed consolidated police/fire communications center, the City, through our Police facility architects, HDR Incorporated (HDR), engaged the services of L. Robert Kimball and Associates (Kimball) to study the physical, technical and operational requirements associated with the proposed consolidated center. As part of their study they have looked at the existing emergency communications operations of both Police and Fire and the proposed space at the new facility.

The current plan provides for approximately 5,000 square feet of space in the new Alexandria Police facility for the consolidated police/fire emergency communications operations. Kimball is currently assisting HDR and the City in the design of this space based for the proposed program. The current police operation on the third floor of the Public Safety Center (PSC) has approximately 3,000 net square feet of space. Fire has approximately 1,500 square feet of space for its communications center at Fire Station 204. When the PSC space now occupied by Police is totally vacated and the new police facility is operational, there will be approximately 15,000 net square feet of space left on the second floor of the PSC. This space is programmed for our new Emergency Operations Center (EOC) operations. We need an up to date EOC that is able to meet all of the City needs that arise in an emergency.

One consideration in the proposal to locate the consolidated communications operation at the current PSC is that it will require a minimum of 5500 net square feet of space thereby negating the opportunity to house the proposed EOC at the PSC and triggering the requirement to search for an alternative secure location for the EOC.

The new EOC is initially programmed at approximately 11,000 square feet of usable space. The existing Public Safety Center is ideal for this operation in that it is a secure facility, has adequate on-site parking,

and internal services to support extended operations if necessary. We expect to have the back-up for our communications center at this site as well, since it provides the consultant-recommended degree of separation from the main communications center at the new Police Department building. (The PSC site would meet the need to have a decentralization backup in event of catastrophic emergency). To obtain the necessary 11,000 square feet of usable space for the EOC we have estimated that 15,000 gross square feet will be required (75/25 net-to-gross ratio).

We cannot determine what, if any, savings or cost avoidance would be realized through the proposed collocation of fire and police communications at the existing PSC. The majority of the cost budgeted for the combined ECC is for new equipment; this will be necessary in either scenario. Budget Memo #6 (Public Safety Emergency Communications Equipment in the FY 2009-20014 CIP) addresses the \$16.1 million required to replace public safety emergency communications equipment with the majority of the expenditures to occur in FY 2011. As noted in this budget memo: "Of the \$16.1 million, \$8.8 million is budgeted for the planned, life cycle replacement of the public safety communications equipment that will have reached or exceeded its useful life by 2011."

If the two communications centers were combined and located in the PSC, the communications equipment still would have to be replaced. The costs to renovate and fit-up existing space can often be greater than installing equipment in programmed new space. It is generally much easier and more efficient to run conduit and lines in open areas as opposed to previously used space. Installing new equipment can be done more readily in space specifically designed to accept the equipment of 2011, and tying into emergency backup systems can be done more readily.

Maintaining 24/7 emergency communications operations during the course of the new installations and establishing a redundancy or back-up capability is of primary importance in our planning. The proposed scenario with the new operations housed at the new facility and the backup or redundant facility housed as part of the EOC operations gives us the best opportunity to achieve both of the objectives of continuous reliable operations and a solid backup capacity which can provide additional benefits including a facility for training, special operations, as well as a short/long term alternative site. It is important to install the required infrastructure to support the new center at the time of the construction of the new facility, the timing of the other operational elements at the PSC are something that can be considered as we move forward, understanding that the existing equipment will become outdated and, it too eventually would not be supported by the manufacturers. As it would be a back-up site, this can be addressed in the future, once the primary site is operational.

It is the joint opinion of City staff and our consultants, Kimball, that locating the primary combined communications center at the PSC is likely to be problematic for installation because of certain conditions in the building, which have not been studied in depth for this type of expanded use. We expect we would identify significant expensive electrical upgrades that would be required before this move could be undertaken. It also would be necessary to identify and develop a redundant site elsewhere for a period of time during the renovation and installation of new equipment, which would be at an additional cost. Therefore we support the current plan to locate the new emergency communications center in the new Police Facility.