

PS COMMITTEE #4  
April 18, 2016

Worksession

**MEMORANDUM**

April 14, 2016

TO: Public Safety Committee

FROM: Susan J. Farag, Legislative Analyst *SJF*

SUBJECT: Emergency Communications Center (ECC) Consolidation

*Those expected for this worksession:*

Chief Tom Manger, Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD)  
Assistant Chief Luther Reynolds, MCPD  
Assistant Chief John Kinsley, Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS)  
Bill Ferretti, Director, ECC, MCPD

**Background**

The ECC answers all 911 calls dialed in the County, as well as non-emergency police service calls. The current operation is a bifurcated model with separate Police Department and Fire and Rescue Service call takers and dispatchers. Police staff are civilian. MCFRS call takers are civilian, but their dispatchers are uniformed firefighters. Police call takers answer all incoming calls to determine if the caller needs police, fire, or medical assistance. If the caller needs police assistance, the call “stays” on the police side of the ECC operations. If the caller needs fire or medical, the initial police call taker routes the caller to MCFRS call taker (opposite side of the same room), who then further assesses the situation.

The Public Safety Committee began discussing changes to ECC operations with Executive staff as part of the FY13 budget. At that time, the intent was to move to a Unified Call Taker (UCT) model, which would combine and cross-train all call takers so that all calls could be processed without the need for a second transfer step. The transition was delayed in 2013 due to difficulties with the implementation of the call taking protocol software, and ultimately the procurement was cancelled. At the same time, Executive staff began to reevaluate how to move forward. In September 2013, Executive staff discussed with the Committee the need to pause and reassess how to best address several inter-related components that affect ECC operations. Briefly, these included:

- **Call Taking Protocol System:** The ECC had to secure an appropriate call taking protocol software before implementing the UCT;
- **Public Safety System Modernization:** PSSM implementation involves several public safety system upgrades, including a new Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD). The project was scheduled to be completed in 2016. A new CAD would likely mean the need for a new call taking protocol system. The PSSM project was also using significant ECC resources as staff were regularly detailed out to assist with the PSSM;
- **Current Staffing Shortages:** Shortages were driving a high demand for overtime and the increased need for training resources; and
- **Civilianization in MCFRS:** The Executive's FY14 Operating Budget submission stated an intent to civilianize the fire and rescue dispatch function of the ECC. The FY15 budget included nine new civilian FTEs and \$225,329 to begin this effort.

Executive staff also retained a consultant (Gartner, Inc.) to evaluate how best to proceed with the UCT in particular, and with more long-term operational planning for the ECC in general. Executive staff indicated the report was less a roadmap for operations and more a starting point.

*The County Executive made the decision to house the entire ECC in the Police Department, transition all staff to professional civilian call takers and dispatchers, hire a Police Captain to function as a transition leader with MCFRS input, and begin the transition process to a UCT model using a new CAD. The Police Department stressed that because there were several complex competing issues regarding technology changes, call taking protocols, and staffing, the transition plan may change as they moved forward.*

**FY15 Operating Budget:** The Police Department and Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) developed a transition plan and had hired a Police Captain as the transition leader. Nine positions and \$225,329 were included in the MCFRS operating budget to begin a four-year plan to civilianize Fire dispatch positions, beginning in FY16.

**FY16 Operating Budget:** The FY16 operating budget included funding and the following assumptions:

- \$770,419 and 23 new full-time positions in the Police operating budget to upstaff the ECC (four to start in FY16 and 19 to start in FY17);
- Civilianization of Fire dispatch positions was to begin;
- New staff cost \$237,162 and the remaining \$533,254 would fund backfill overtime to facilitate training;
- Emergency Police Dispatch (EPD) certification would be completed (requires 32 hours per employee);
- Training on the new CAD was to begin in October 2015 with a targeted completion date of December 2015. This training is 80 hours per employee. The CAD was scheduled to go live in January 2016; and

- ECC personnel would begin Unified Call Taker training in the spring of 2016, which requires training all MCFRS and Police call takers to cross-train, and will continue into FY17. This training requires 240-320 hours of classroom training, Emergency Medical and Fire Protocol certification, and practical training.

## **Progress Report and Updated Assumptions**

The consolidation timeline has changed since the last time the Committee was briefed on its status. The biggest driver of the changes has been the need to coordinate training. The ECC consolidation is heavily-dependent on several different types of training, including protocol training, Fire Administrative call taking, cross-training police staff on fire call taking and dispatching, cross-training fire civilian staff on police call taking and dispatching, and new CAD training. Scheduling and implementing this training has been challenging due to low staffing levels, high attrition rates, on-the-job training resources, and the need to transition supervisory staff in conjunction with the call takers and dispatchers. Staff must be rotated in and out of training while still maintaining adequate staffing levels for daily operations. Classroom training alone can be time-consuming, ranging from 80 hours per employee for CAD training to 240 hours for each cycle of cross-training.

ECC staff have addressed this by overhiring staff beginning in December 2014 to account for historically-high attrition and the need to upstaff during training. The Department also has a new professional classification series (scheduled to be implemented this summer) that provides clear advancement based on training. These steps have laid the foundation for implementing regular training cycles.

A new timeline is included on ©16 showing what tasks have been completed and a revised timeline for the completion of remaining tasks.

**Staffing changes:** The FY15 and FY16 budgets added several positions to both MCFRS and the Police budgets to assist with the civilianization of Fire dispatchers as well as to prepare for the consolidation. Nine Public Safety Communications Specialist (PSCS) positions were added to the MCFRS budget in FY15. They were not filled, and the FY17 Recommended Operating Budget abolishes those same positions. Instead, ECC made the decision to end hiring of civilians for fire ECC and instead cross-train Police call takers and dispatchers to perform fire call taking and dispatch duties. MCPD has now assumed all responsibility for hiring new PSCS positions. Further, 12 vacant PSCS positions were transferred from MCFRS to MCPD within the OHR system during FY16.

In FY16, the Police operating budget included 23 new positions, four of which were funded and to be filled during FY16. One PSC Operations Manager and two PSC Supervisor positions were filled to facilitate the Police-to-Fire cross-training sessions. The remaining positions will be filled as needed once the new training cycles begin.

The FY17 Recommended Police Operating Budget includes three new positions: (1) Deputy Director; (2) Quality Assurance Specialist; and (3) IT Specialist (total cost \$348,703).

**Call Floor Modifications:** The changes in call taking procedures, as well as bringing the new CAD online, have necessitated call floor renovations at both the ECC and the Alternate ECC (AECC). AECC call floor renovations should be done by May 2016, and ECC renovations should be completed by the end of calendar 2016.

### **Discussion Issues**

- 1) It is Council staff's understanding that the Police Captain originally appointed as transition leader will be leaving the Department. What steps are in place to ensure continued transition oversight?
- 2) What impact will Text-2-911 and Next Generation 911 have on the training process?

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ECC PowerPoint on the ECC Transition	6-16

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## **ECC Questions for FY17 update – April 18**

The Committee will receive an update on the ECC consolidation process on April 18. I will be meeting in person with Police staff on April 6. If these ECC questions can be answered at that time, that's great. If not, could you please provide written answers to these questions by April 12?

### **Background:**

#### **The last time the committee was briefed, the following had occurred:**

- Captain John Damskey had been appointed as the transition leader;
- MCFRS had hired additional civilian staff;
- No uniform positions had been moved out of dispatch yet. That was slated to occur in FY16.

#### **In FY16, ECC was to:**

- Create nine more civilian public safety communications specialist positions in MCFRS (and eliminate nine uniform positions);
- Add 23 new full time positions to upstaff the ECC as part of the consolidation process. Four of these were to begin work in FY16 (and assume the others start in FY17);
- Change Core Shifts from eight hours to 12 hours;
- Use about \$533,000 for backfilling overtime to facilitate training.
- Complete Emergency Police Dispatch (EPD) certification;
- Begin training on the new CAD;
- Begin Unified Call Taker training in the spring of 2016.

### **Questions:**

- 1) Please provide a status update on what has occurred, to date, for the ECC consolidation, including updates on what was to have taken place during FY16 (see above). Were all these steps completed or started? Please describe any variances.

A number of challenges were identified early on by the Consolidation Team (Hiring and retention, Training, Computer Aided Dispatch System implementation, Radio System implementation, Text-to-911) and their impact on timelines and resources for consolidation. Based on interdependencies, and in order to take advantage of scheduling opportunities, a modified plan and timeline for MCFRS/MCP Consolidation was adopted in July 2015. This plan started with sending two (2) groups of police communication specialists for cross training as fire call takers/dispatchers. This group then will join with the current MCFRS civilians to provide operational coverage for the fire ECC operations floor allowing the rest of the MCP ECC staff to be cross trained as depicted below.

- 2) Please briefly describe the three new positions recommended in the FY17 police budget: Deputy Director, QA, and IT.

**Deputy Director – Support (grade M3)**

In FY17, ECC Consolidation will witness the increased cross-training of dispatchers and call takers, development of service level agreements / expectations between FRS and MCP, increased focus on performance management of the service delivery model, an increase in staffing by MCP, and MCP handling a majority of the 9-1-1 calls to the center as Universal Call Taking nears completion. In order to efficiently manage a Consolidated ECC and account for the management role currently performed by FRS, MCP will create a second Deputy Director (M3) and separate its *operations* and *administrative* functions between two positions.

**Quality Assurance Specialist (grade 21)**

Beginning in FY17 MCP will begin the process of transitioning to quality assurance review of 9-1-1 calls in the center for both MCP and FRS. This function is currently performed by three Quality Assurance Specialists and managed by a Program Manager II. Following the institution of Universal Call Taking (UCT), the workload of these positions is anticipated to increase by approximately 20%. This position will assist in mitigating this increase as FRS resources are assigned elsewhere.

**IT Specialist III (grade 23)**

The IT Specialist III position will augment the current complement of IT support in the Consolidated ECC, currently made up of a Program Manager II, Senior IT Specialist and an IT Specialist III. Within ECC dedicated service and support is paramount in meeting the demands of a large 9-1-1 center and Consolidation will increase the number of clients relying on this effort as FRS reassigns its current support structure.

While some of the current vendors are moving from support oriented roles; i.e. Verizon, the workload of the MCP—IT Support is expected to increase considering the needs of the new phone system and its relationship with Premiere One CAD. Next-Gen 9-1-1 will also be a consideration during FY17, bringing a great deal more IP-related data, applications, and security risk into the center.

- 3) The MCFRS budget includes a reduction of 9 FTE and \$435,694 attributed to “Consolidation and civilianization of the ECC”. What positions are these? What is happening to them? If you could provide a position crosswalk, that would be helpful.

The positions were the nine (9) Firefighter positions as explained above in #1. MCFRS had nine (9) PSCS vacancies added to their complement at the start of FY16 which was to facilitate the hiring and training of replacements for the nine (9) Firefighters. Given all the program

interdependencies as stated above, the decision was made to end the hiring of civilians for fire ECC and instead to cross train MCP call takers and dispatchers to perform fire call taking and dispatcher duties. MCP then also assumed the responsibility for hiring of all new PSCSs. This has started the process of transferring PSCS positions from MCFRS and MCP. During FY16, twelve (12) vacant PSCS positions were transferred within the OHR system from MCFRS to MCP.

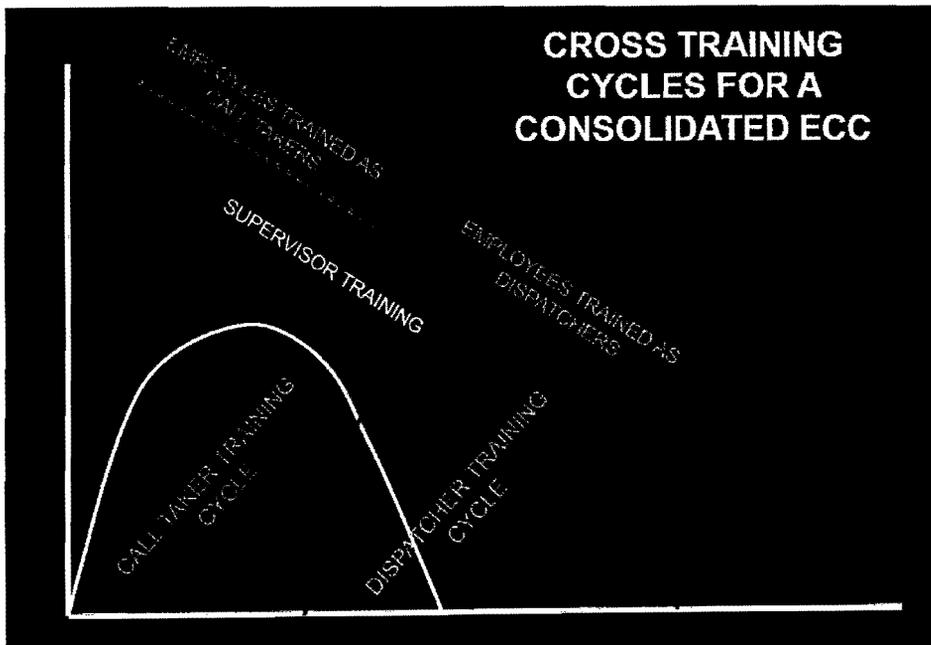
	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19
<b>POLICE</b>					
PSEC II	3	3	0	0	0
PSCS III	98	109	0	0	0
PSECS (New Series)			116	125	148
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>FIRE</b>					
PSCSIII	9	18	0	0	0
PSECS (New Series)			23	23	0
FF3	24	24	21	15	0
MFF	9	9	9	9	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>148</b>

- 4) There had been some discussion about reclassifying certain call takers or dispatchers to reflect material changes in duties, including new training. Please provide a status update on these efforts.

A new position series was drafted by a joint working group with MCGEO. The series has been approved by the MSPB and is awaiting final approval from the OHR Director.

- 5) Please provide a description of the proposed next steps, including a timeline for each component (CAD, training, civilianization in MCFRS, any others).

See #1.



The plan's timeline for MCFRS/MCP Consolidation and Civilianization\* as proposed follows with annotations to reflect actual dates for items already accomplished.

- June 2015
  - last Fire class / MCFRS stops hiring civilians
- ~~February 2016~~ JANUARY 2016
  - ~~4MCP communicators assigned to long term temporaries in MCFRS~~—ECC Six (6) PSC Specialists, one (1) PSC Supervisor, and one (1) PSC Operations Manager were detailed to Fire call taking and dispatching operations as cross over class 1
  - MCFRS begins training MCP communicators and supervisors
- ~~April~~ May 2016
  - ~~MCFRS holds second MCP training class of 8 communicators~~ Six (6) PSC Specialists and two (2) PSC Supervisors to be detailed to Fire call taking and dispatching operations as cross over class 2
- November 2016
  - Twelve (12) Cross-trained MCP (fully functional) staff join with existing MCFRS civilians/firefighters to handle 9-1-1 and dispatching for MCFRS
  - MCFRS begins Fire Call Taker training for remainder of MCP ECC staff
  - Sixteen (16) MCP staff complete training every 5 months
- October 2017
  - MCP assume all 9-1-1 calls in the ECC
  - Need for extra MCFRS Lieutenant to monitor Call Takers ends, providing overtime cost avoidance
- November 2017
  - MCFRS begins Dispatch training for remainder of MCP ECC staff
  - MCP assumes Call Taker Training

- April 2018
  - MCP assumes all training near 18-month mark
  - Training continues until all MCP staff are cross-trained
  - MCFRS civilians must be trained as MCP dispatchers
  - Target OCT 2019 for complete Consolidation

\* Dates above are estimates as actual time necessary to train an MCP incumbent is unknown. Currently the times have been set at: 12 weeks for Call Taker training; 16 weeks for Dispatcher training.

In FY16, the following items have been completed:

- MCFRS added nine (9) new PSC Specialist positions;
- MCPD ECC added 23 new positions but with only 2.5 FTEs for FY16 (Nineteen of the positions were created in FY16 to allow recruitment to proceed for a training class to begin in July 2016). One (1) PSC Operations Manager and two (2) PSC Supervisor positions were filled to facilitate the police to fire cross training sessions;
- Completed Emergency Police Dispatch (EPD) certification with program implementation on 3/1/2016;
- Creation of new Public Safety Emergency Communication Specialist Series expected to be completed by 5/1/2016;
- AECC Facility Modifications are scheduled to be completed 5/1/2016.

In FY16, the following items have been initiated and are in progress:

- Three (3) Firefighter positions that are currently vacant will be eliminated in FY16. Six (6) more will be eliminated in FY17, immediately after CAD burn-in. The delays in CAD have delayed the associated CAD training and therefore additional staffing is required until after CAD burn-in, as well as to staff MCFRS ECC while the MCP cross over classes complete cross over training and become operational as fire call takers and dispatchers;
- CAD Train the Trainer is scheduled for Spring 2016 and end user training will follow in late summer 2016;
- PSCC facility modification planning has commenced with actual modifications targeted for 1H FY17.

The following items that were planned for FY16 have been deferred;

- Change Core Shifts from eight hours to 12 hours. Deferred due to plan modifications;
- Begin Unified Call Taker training in the spring of 2016. Deferred to the fall of 2016 due to plan modifications and to allow for completion of police to fire cross-over classes.

# Consolidation of the Emergency Communications Center

## Vision

The consolidation of police and fire dispatch and call taking functions within the Montgomery County Emergency Communications Center will create a singular point of contact for public safety and the community. The new ECC will be staffed by professional civilian police department employees responsible for unified call taking and dispatching of calls for service requiring fire, medical or police resources.

Consolidation is focused on the opportunity to realize greater service efficiencies through the elimination of redundant processes, infrastructure, and personnel and supervisory functions, while maintaining consistent service delivery to the public.

# ECC Consolidation Project Considerations

**Training**



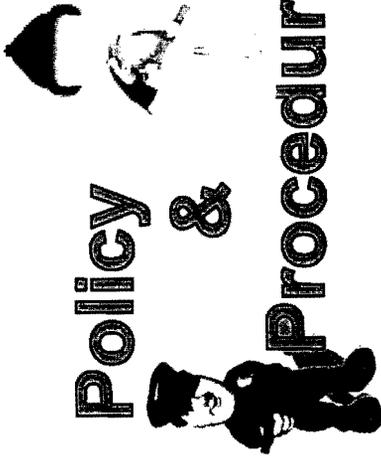
**Facilities**



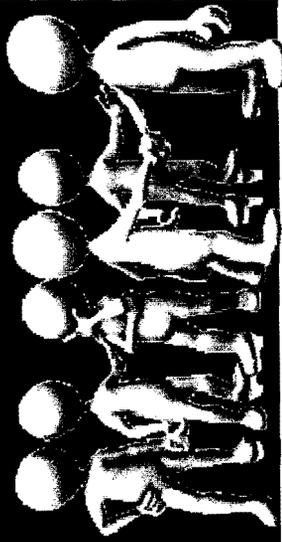
**Challenges**



**Policy & Procedures**



**Community**



# Training

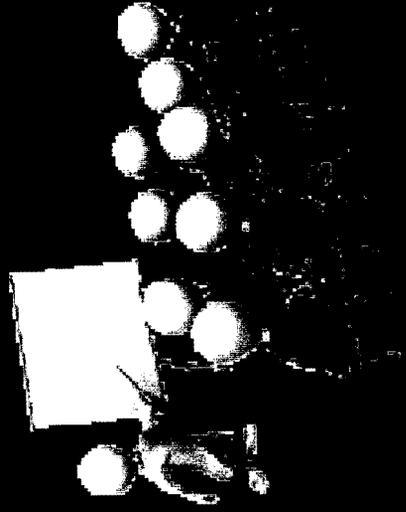


## PROTOCOL TRAINING

- Protocols allow for computerized call entry following a critical questioning script in order to assign the appropriate resources to the emergency. Certification is approved by the International Academies of Emergency Dispatch and is the standard for Maryland Communication Centers
- Protocols =
  - Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD – in place prior)
  - Emergency Fire Dispatch (EFD – implemented May 2015)
  - Emergency Police Dispatch (EPD – implemented March 2016)

## FIRE ADMINISTRATIVE CALLS

- Police trained for and assumed Fire administrative calls in April 2015



*Training Objectives continued...*

**PD to FD CROSSOVER TRAINING**

- To fill the gap in fire rescue call taking and dispatching
- Twelve (12) incumbent police ECC call takers and dispatchers (crossed over to fire call taking and dispatching to fill operational needs pending full consolidation
- Broken into 2 Classes – January 2016 and May 2016

**COMPUTER AIDED DISPATCH (CAD)**

- The CAD project currently planned for a Fall 2016 cut-over
- ECC staff must be trained in new procedures and technologies
- Training planned for late summer 2016

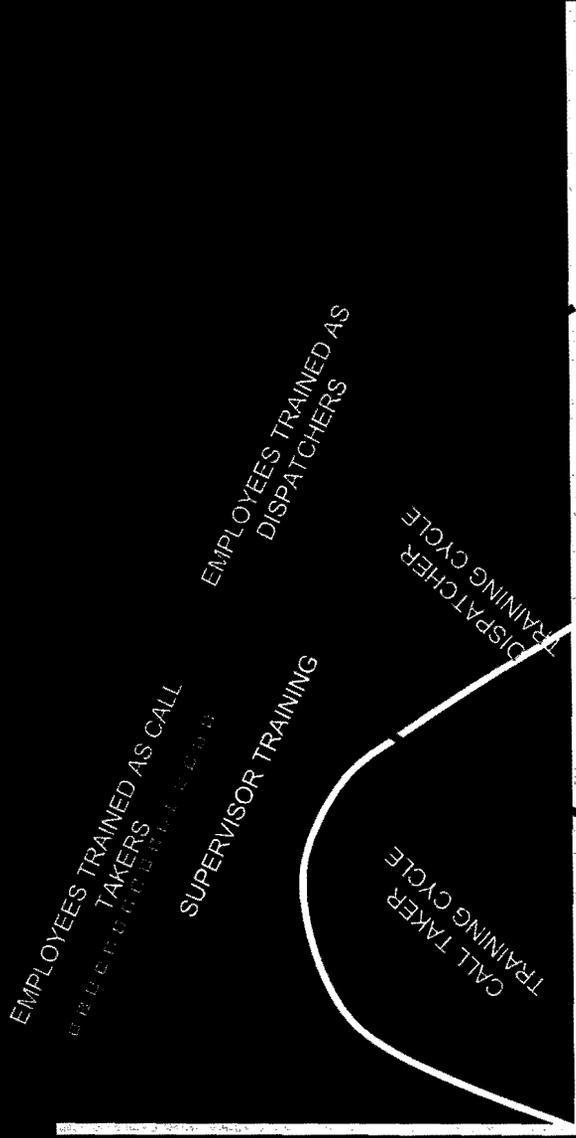
**CALL TAKER TRAINING CYCLES (Fire & Police)**

- Groups of police employees will be trained in Fire/EMS call taking
- Fire civilian employees will be trained in law call taking
- Once sufficient staff are trained, police will assume all call taking
- Cycles are scheduled to start in late 2016

*Training Objectives continued...*

**DISPATCHER TRAINING CYCLES (Fire & Police)**

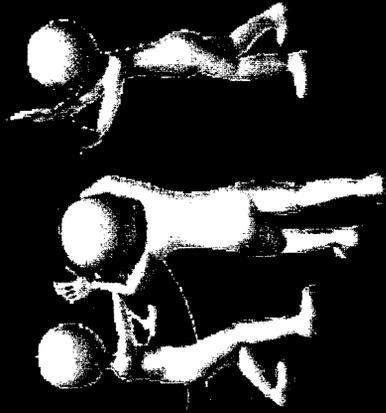
- Groups of police employees will be trained in Fire/EMS dispatching
- Fire civilian employees will be trained in law dispatching
- Once sufficient staff are trained, center consolidation will take place
- Cycles are scheduled to start in late 2017



**CONSOLIDATED TRAINING FOR NEW HIRES**

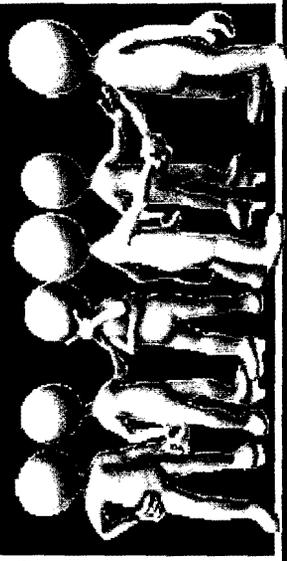
- Police Training Team is being cross trained in Fire/EMS call taker and dispatcher training by Fire Training Team
- Curriculum for a consolidated Emergency Communicator School for new employees is being developed jointly
- First consolidated school for call taking scheduled for spring 2017

# Policy & Procedures



- ECC operating as a Service Provider to both Police and Fire
  - Tasks required:
    - ❖ memorandum of understanding
    - ❖ established expectations and level of service
    - ❖ reporting agreements
    - ❖ policy and procedural education
  
- Standard Operating Procedures
  
- Performance reports and monitoring
  
- MOU's and service level agreements will be developed and roll out to correspond with the training/implementation phases
  - Fire Administrative Calls – Complete
  - Police SLA – On-going
  - Fire Call Taking Operations
  - Fire Dispatch Operations

## Staffing



- Staffing needs for Consolidated ECC have been identified
- Recruiting and hiring qualified and successful candidates through a single hiring process.
- Over-hiring to account for attrition and planned consolidation began December 2014
- Change management and organizational socialization continuing efforts
- Deploy the civilianized ECC staff to cover workload demands while establishing a manageable supervisor to employee ratio
- Establish a clear career track in the ECC for employee development and advancement commensurate with new duties, skills and abilities. A new position series is currently under review targeting summer 2016 for implementation
- Replace exiting uniformed fire positions with civilian police department employees. Ongoing effort



# Police ECC Proposed Position Series

## Current

Public Safety Communication Specialist  
Position Series

- Director (M2)
- Deputy Director (M3)
- Public Safety Shift Operations  
Manager (Grade 24)
- Communications Supervisor  
(Grade 22)
- Communications Specialist 3  
(Grade 19)
- Communications Specialist 2  
(Grade 17)
- Communications Specialist 1  
(Grade 15)

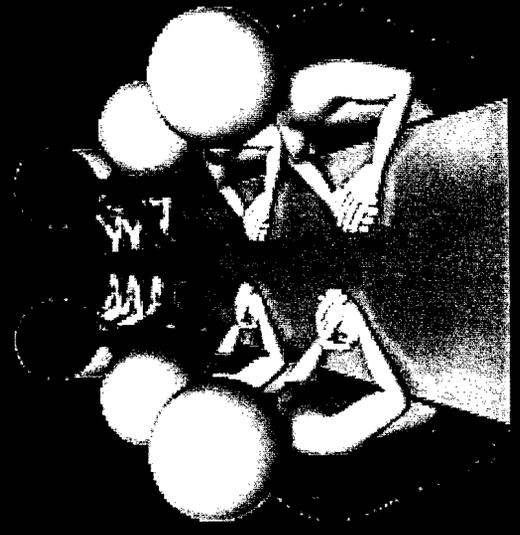
## Proposed

Public Safety Emergency Communication Specialist  
(PSECS) Position Series

- Director (M2)
- Deputy Director (M3)
- PSECS Manager
- PSECS Supervisor
- Senior PSECS
- PSECS IV
- PSECS III
- PSECS II
- PSECS I



- Current training space needs in the PSCC was modified to satisfy increased training needs of a consolidated ECC
- Modifications of the Alternate-ECC and the ECC become necessary with consolidation
  - AECC – Renovation targeted completion May 2016
  - PSCC – Targeting 2nd half 2016
- CIP -- Planning for a replacement Emergency Communications Centers
  - Current lease of the Public Safety Communications Center expires in November 2021
  - The future of the Alternate – Emergency Communications Center in Rockville





Computer  
Aided  
Dispatch  
System

Hiring and  
Retention

Text 2-911  
&  
NCS911

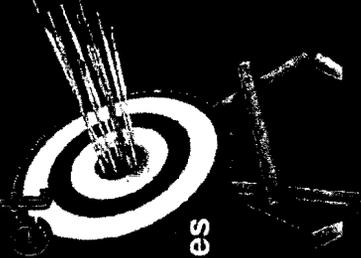
ECC  
Consolidation  
Project

Training

Radio  
Infrastructure

Time

## Milestone Summary & Reference Sheet



- Protocol Training for ECC beginning November 2014 thru February 2016
- Over-hiring to account for attrition & planned consolidation December 2014 - Continues
- Police employees began fielding Fire administrative calls – April 2015
- Police to Fire Crossover Training beginning January 2016 thru November 2016
- Police cut-over to Emergency Police Dispatch - March 1, 2016
- AECC call floor renovations targeted completion May 2016
- Implementation of a new Communications position series summer 2016
- Training for new CAD late summer of 2016 anticipating a fall 2016 cut-over
- ECC call floor renovations targeted completion end of 2016
- Call taker cross training cycles targeted for fall 2016 – thru spring 2018
- First consolidated fire/police call taker school targeted for spring 2017
- Police assume all 9-1-1 calls targeted for late 2017
- Dispatcher cross training cycles targeted for late 2017 thru 2019
- ECC consolidated under Police with Fire transition to an ECC Liaison function targeted for mid 2018