

DATE OF MEETING 2023-DEC-18

AUTHORED BY TIM DOYLE, FIRE CHIEF

SUBJECT E-COMM 9-1-1 CALL ANSWER CENTRE 2024 SERVICE AGREEMENT

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To seek Council authorization to enter into an agreement with E-Comm Emergency Communications for British Columbia Incorporated for the provision of 9-1-1 Call Answer Centre Services in 2024 on behalf of the City of Nanaimo as a stakeholder in the Central Island 9-1-1 (CI911) partnership (City of Nanaimo, Cowichan Valley Regional District and the Regional District of Nanaimo).

Recommendation

That Council authorize the Mayor and Corporate Officer to sign the 9-1-1- Call Answer Service Agreement between the CI911 and E-Comm Emergency Communications for British Columbia Incorporated, for the purposes of providing 9-1-1 Call Answer Centre Services, for a one-year term to expire on December 31, 2024.

BACKGROUND

What is E-Comm 9-1-1?

E-Comm PSAP (Public Safety Answering Point) call-answering service is where 9-1-1 calls are routed to when someone experiencing an emergency dials 9-1-1. E-Comm is responsible for answering 99 per cent of 9-1-1 calls made throughout the province of British Columbia, and their role in the 9-1-1 process is to connect the caller to the correct agency. This process typically takes less than a minute. Local Governments contract 9-1-1 call-taking services to E-Comm to be the primary call-taking service for emergency calls before they are distributed to their respective dispatch providers. E-Comm processes 5,700+ 9-1-1 calls per day, in 2022, E-Comm's call volume was more than 2.1 million calls.

In Nanaimo's case, after E-Comm performs the PSAP call-answering service, RCMP is dispatched out of the Island District Operational Communications Centre (IDOCC) located in Courtenay and Nanaimo Fire Rescue is dispatched from Surrey Fire Dispatch Centre.

Central Island 9-1-1 (CI911):

In 1994, the City of Nanaimo entered into an agreement with the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) and Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) to establish and operate a 9-1-1 call answer service for the central Vancouver Island. Concurrently, in 1994, Cowichan Valley Regional District and the City of Nanaimo fire dispatch Centres were established.

In 2003, fire dispatch consolidation discussions began and, as a result, the RDN, CVRD, and the City of Nanaimo CI911 dispatch partnership was formed and the CI911 agreement came into

effect in 2004. Although the City of Nanaimo no longer operates the CI911 fire dispatch Centre, for the purposes of the CI911 partnership, E-Comm 9-1-1 contract, and collection and distribution of the call-answer levy, the CI911 partnership has been maintained. Since 2004, the CI911 partnership agreement has been renewed on at least four occasions and the current agreement expires June 30, 2026.

In respect to the 9-1-1 emergency communications call-answering services that E-Comm 9-1-1 provides, until 2015, the City managed the 9-1-1 call answering function within the police building when the police dispatch function was relocated to the IDOCC in Courtenay by RCMP E-Division. At that time, the 9-1-1 call-answering service was transferred to E-Comm. The net result is that 9-1-1 emergency calls for the City of Nanaimo are firstly answered through E-Comm in Vancouver; afterwards, the RCMP is dispatched out of the Island District Operational Communications Centre (IDOCC) located in Courtenay and Nanaimo Fire Rescue is dispatched from Surrey Fire Dispatch Centre.

Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911):

The current 9-1-1 emergency call answer system has been successful for more than 30 years, however, it has reached its limits and can no longer keep up with evolving technologies, nor meet public expectations of a modern 9-1-1 system. As a result, in Canada, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission has mandated a change from the current 9-1-1 analog system to a digital NG911 system.

When fully implemented, NG911 is intended to:

- Increase compatibility with emerging communication trends
- Support text, video, and other multimedia applications 911 calls
- Be more flexible and resilient during disasters, allowing for more flexible network routing options to mitigate outages and reduce vulnerabilities
- Allow 911 Centres to exchange additional data and information with responders, improve call processing times, enhance situational awareness, and increase responder safety

The NG911 soft launch of real-time text services is anticipated to begin in May 2024, and the current analog 9-1-1 network is mandated to be decommissioned by March 2025. This means every PSAP in the country must transition to the new platform prior to that date. PSAPs electing not to transition to the NG911 platform will not be able to process 9-1-1 calls after March 2025.

DISCUSSION

CI911 E-Comm 9-1-1 Call Answer Centre Service Agreement Funding:

The CI911 Partnership has a Cost Sharing Formula that states that, “net operating costs will be shared on the basis of the populations of the jurisdictions of the Parties.” The current cost sharing model is based on population and breaks down as follows: City of Nanaimo 47%, CVRD 44%, and the RDN 9%. CI911 E-Comm call-answering contract costs are offset by a Call Answer Levy (CAL) placed on local subscribers (landlines only) telephone bills. CAL does not apply to cellular subscribers; cellular 9-1-1 calls account for a significant volume of E-Comms workload. In September 2023, Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) delegates called on the provincial government to improve the provincial emergency call system and put a monthly levy on cellular

customers to help pay for the system; however, the outcomes of that request have yet to be recognized.

CI911 E-Comm 9-1-1 Call Answer Centre Service Agreement Term:

Historically, the CI911 partnership has signed 9-1-1 Call Answer Centre Service E-Comm agreements that are longer than one year; however, at this time, due to NG911 cost implementation uncertainty, E-Comm 911 is only prepared to provide the CI911 partnership with a new agreement for 2024. Once the cost implications of NG911 are fully understood by E-Comm, which E-Comm suspects will be in 2024, E-Comm will be prepared to extend a longer-term agreement to the CI911 partnership.

CI911 E-Comm 9-1-1 Call Answer Centre Service Agreement 2024 Costs:

The proposed contract from CI911 E-Comm 9-1-1 for Public Safety Answering Services is for the amount of \$459,841. The 2024 budget for provision of PSAP 911 service is \$526,352 which includes related expenses and a small contingency in the event Vancouver CPI exceeds 3% in 2024. Per the agreement, if the annual CPI for Vancouver exceeds 3%, the operating costs will be adjusted by the % amount of CPI above 3%. 911 call answer levies are anticipated to fund \$400,000 with the remaining \$126,352 funded by the stakeholders in the CI911 Partnership. The City's share of the shortfall is budgeted at \$59,385.

OPTIONS

That Council authorize the Mayor and Corporate Officer to sign the 9-1-1- Call Answer Service Agreement between the Central Island Partnership and E-Comm Emergency Communications for British Columbia Incorporated, for the purposes of providing 9-1-1 Call Answer Centre Services, for a one-year term to expire on December 31, 2024.

Financial Implications:

- The 2024 – 2028 Provisional Financial Plan includes funding for the contract plus a small contingency in the event Vancouver CPI exceeds 3% in 2024. If Vancouver CPI is significantly above 3% additional funding may be required.

With the exception of one community, E-Comm 9-1-1 is the sole provider of 9-1-1 call-answer services for the Province of British Columbia. If an agreement is not reached, the City of Nanaimo, and by extension, the CI911 partnership, will not have 9-1-1 services.

SUMMARY POINTS

- E-Comm PSAP (Public Safety Answering Point) call-answering service is where 9-1-1 calls are routed to when someone who is experiencing an emergency dials 9-1-1.
- Emergency 9-1-1 calls for the City of Nanaimo are firstly answered through E-Comm in Vancouver; afterwards, the RCMP is dispatched out of the Island District Operational Communications Centre (IDOCC) located in Courtenay and Nanaimo Fire Rescue is dispatched from Surrey Fire Dispatch Centre.

- CI911 E-Comm 9-1-1 Call Answer Centre Service Agreement costs are partially offset by a Call Answer Levy (CAL) placed on local subscribers (landlines only) telephone bills.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Central Island Partnership Call Answer Service Agreement

Attachment B – How It Works Poster

Submitted by:

Tim Doyle
Fire Chief

Concurrence by:

Laura Mercer
Director of Finance

Dale Lindsay
Chief Administrative Officer