THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

STAFF REPORT

Council Meeting Date: November 9, 2021

Subject: Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) with Buncombe County to Consolidate 911

Staff Resource(s): Cathy Ball, Assistant City Manager
Peggy Rowe, Interim Assistant City Manager
Chief Scott Burnette, Fire Chief
Chief David Zack, Police Chief

Action Requested: Approval of an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) with Buncombe County to Consolidate 911 Services to occur on January 1, 2022; and the associated budget amendment in the Special Revenue Fund, in the amount of $837,605, from County contributions toward City's radio maintenance for the consolidation of a 911 System.

Background:

- The **goal** of this initiative is to consolidate and coordinate City and County emergency communications services and operations under one entity.
- This is the first step in reimagining the way we deliver services to the most vulnerable people in our community including the mentally ill, those with substance abuse disorder and homeless individuals.
- The IGA between the City of Asheville and Buncombe County addresses all the issues around consolidation including **cost**, **data access** and **operational decisions** to enhance continuity of service delivery.
- Currently the County 911 dispatch office receives calls for all fire departments in the County, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Services, Black Mountain and Montreat police departments and the Sheriff's department. These services include receiving, processing and dispatching Asheville Fire Department (AFD) calls.
- The Asheville Police Department (APD) is co-located with Buncombe County and considered a secondary dispatch service.
- The IGA would move 19 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions from the City to work for Buncombe County.
- All of the current City employees would be offered positions that would be under Buncombe County management.
- All employees would be made “whole” in terms of pay and benefits.
- City staff will provide backup dispatch services for up to six months as City staff are available.
- The costs to the City would be calculated as a percentage of population and calls for service for both Fire and Police calls.
- The same formula will apply to all municipalities in Buncombe County.
- The City is currently paying $1.6M for police 911 dispatchers and $210k to Buncombe County for fire 911 dispatch services.
- The City of Asheville will have all the access to what it currently has now except for audio recordings.
- Audio recordings will be provided as soon as possible but no longer than within a shift which is generally twelve hours.
- A Communications Steering Committee will be formed to address key operational issues and concerns.

- This group will be made up of representatives from the following organizations:
    - Buncombe County Director for 911 Communications,
    - Sheriff or designee,
    - Chief of Asheville Police Department or designee,
    - Asheville Fire Chief or designee,
    - Buncombe County Management designee,
    - A representative from among other municipalities' law enforcement agencies dispatched through the 911 Call Center,
    - A representative from among other municipal and county fire departments dispatched through the 911 Call Center and
    - 1 community member at large - Total of eight members
- Either party i.e. the City or County may terminate this Agreement by giving the other party written notice six (6) months in advance of the July 1st renewal date.
- Upon termination the City will reinstate the call center at 100 Court Plaza and the County will transfer equipment to the City.

Council Goal(s):
- Well Planned and Livable Community

Committee(s):
- Public Safety Committee - High Level Informational Only - August 24, 2021

Pro(s):
- The consolidation will:
    - Eliminate call transferring.
    - Provide for more consistent and effective service delivery.
    - Enhance opportunities for interagency response and backup.
    - Encourage data sharing between agencies and responders in the field.
    - Create more efficient and versatile staff to respond to a wide range of emergency and service calls.
    - Expand opportunities for alternate response methods through consolidated training and procedures.

Con(s):
- City will be billed for actual costs which could be an increase of $400k maximum.

Fiscal Impact:
- City will be billed for actual costs which could be an increase of up to $400k.
- The City currently has approximately $837k in radio maintenance reserves for improvements to 911 communication equipment that can be used to offset this increase for two to three years.

Suggested Motion:
- Motion to adopt a resolution to authorize the City Manager to enter into Inter-Governmental Agreement with Buncombe County to Consolidate 911 Services to occur on January 1, 2022; and the associated budget amendment in the Special Revenue Fund, in the amount of $837,605, from County contributions toward City's radio maintenance for the consolidation of a 911 System.

Attachment(s)
- Resolution
- Budget Amendment
- Inter-Governmental Agreement

RESOLUTION NO. 21 - ____

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE AN INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT WITH BUNCOMBE COUNTY TO CONSOLIDATE 911 SERVICES

WHEREAS, cities and counties are authorized to enter into joint undertakings as authorized by N.C. Gen. Stat. § 153A-445 and N.C. Gen. Stat. § 160A-461; and

WHEREAS, the County and City wish to consolidate their 911 services in Buncombe County in order to provide the highest quality 911 service; and

WHEREAS, both parties agree that the County shall be responsible for receiving and dispatching all calls for service for the City and County including Emergency Medical Services, and the Asheville Police and Fire Departments; and

WHEREAS, County and the City leadership have agreed that a 911 Call Center Consolidation is a mutually beneficial path for public safety entities in Buncombe County. The Parties agree that the benefit of 911 Call Center Consolidation include:

- Eliminate call transferring
- Staffing improvements to provide enhanced coverage for 24/7 operations
- More consistent and effective service delivery
- Greater opportunities for interagency response and backup
- Better data sharing between agencies and responders in the field
- Enhanced interoperability and ability to share information across jurisdictions
- Expanding opportunities for alternate response methods through consolidated training and procedures
- Enhanced opportunity to leverage 911 Fund allocation

WHEREAS, this Agreement establishes each party's commitment to Consolidation and sets forth the basic plan to consolidate personnel, share costs and an implementation timeline;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE THAT:

The City Manager is hereby authorized to enter into an interlocal agreement with Buncombe County to consolidate 911 services, effective January 1, 2022.

Read, approved and adopted this the 9th day of November, 2021.

_____ _____

City Clerk Mayor

Approved as to form:

_____

City Attorney

ORDINANCE NO. _____

BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

That Section 2 of the City of Asheville Fiscal Year 2021-22 Budget Ordinance be amended to provide an appropriation of $837,605 to budget currently available radio maintenance funds to offset the cost of consolidating 911 service as follows:

SPECIAL REVENUE FUND

Revenues:

Restricted Intergovernmental County Participation	$837,605

Appropriations:

County 911 Dispatch	$837,605

That this ordinance shall be in full force and effect upon the date of final passage.

Read, approved and adopted this 9th day of November, 2021.

_____ _____

City Clerk Mayor

Approved as to form:

_____

City Attorney