

Local Communities Join in Regional 911 Dispatch Feasibility Study

Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) is in the process of submitting a grant application and coordinating an effort to study the feasibility of regionalizing 911 dispatch centers. Over a dozen communities in southeastern Massachusetts have already agreed to participate in this study through a State grant.

Currently, each community has their own autonomous public safety dispatch center and some have separate dispatch centers for police, fire and EMS services. The foremost goal of this study will be to investigate ways to enhance public safety through improved efficiency. If awarded, the State grant will cover the cost of the feasibility study and avoid additional burden on local budgets.

The participating communities and the campus security department of a local university are joining together through the services of SRPEDD to submit this grant application. All participating communities have agreed that no changes in their operations will be made until the non-binding study is complete and has been evaluated by each community. Ross Perry, a Municipal Management Specialist with SRPEDD said the input from the represented municipal governments and public safety departments will be used to direct the investigative work of the consultant hired for this project. "It is important that the feasibility study look at the specific opportunities within each community and develop a recommendation that addresses their public safety requirements."

The Executive Office of Public Safety and Security State 911 Department recently announced its Fiscal 2011 Regional Public Safety Answering Point and Regional Emergency Communication Center Development Grant application program. The current list of participating communities includes: Acushnet, Berkley, Dartmouth, Dighton, Easton, Fairhaven, Fall River, Freetown, Lakeville, Mansfield, Marion, New Bedford, Raynham, Seekonk, Swansea, and UMass-Dartmouth. Mr. Perry stated that Feasibility Study Committee will be accepting additional towns in the grant application. However, the deadline for the grant submission is May 21, 2010 and interested towns should contact him as soon as possible to be included.

"This is a great opportunity for us to explore our options and investigate inter-discipline and inter-jurisdictional changes that will improve public safety," said Acushnet Police Chief Michael Alves who is cooperating with the study.