SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT

Foreword:
What follows is an analysis of the personnel, infrastructure, hardware, software and other aspects of the County Police 911 Center and Technology Sections, along with the Office of Information Technology (OIT). These are broad topics and the responsibilities of the 911 Communications Center and Police and OIT technology staff are wide-ranging. These support services are indispensable to the mission of the Police Department. Unfortunately, it is clear that they have been neglected and marginalized for too long. There are enormous deficiencies and a failure of the administration of the Police Department, OIT and the Executive's office to recognize the long-term, far-reaching effects of the failure to prioritize these issues appropriately.

New focus is needed on improving the working conditions of personnel in these units and on providing them adequate physical space and resources to accomplish their mission effectively. New ideas and a commitment from all levels are needed to leverage the incredible capabilities that technology can provide to our County Police and the citizens it serves. It is telling of the County's current state of technological affairs that the information provided to this and other transition committees was provided in printed binders instead of electronically!

911 CENTER REPORT

Introduction:
The employees of the police 911 center have an extraordinarily difficult job. These dedicated employees are accomplishing the task set to them by the County and its citizens with distinction and doing so despite crisis level staffing, morale, and physical facility problems. The County should, without delay, work to improve conditions in the 911 center before disaster overwhelms its capabilities.

Staffing and Compensation:
The ranks of PCO I and II are DANGEROUSLY understaffed—a combined vacancy rate of 25% is placing the public and police officers at an unacceptable risk. This point has been underscored in the reports of prior transition teams and the IACP report. The rank of PCO II (police dispatcher) is approximately 35% understaffed. The failure of administration after administration to address this ongoing issue has placed the County in a precarious position of legal and moral liability.

911 Call Center is 35% understaffed placing officers and the public at an unacceptable risk.
Dispatchers (PCO II) and call-takers (PCO I) are regularly called upon to fill minimum staffing vacancies through over 29,000 work-hours and $400,000 of overtime staffing. The current shift-schedule of 8 hour days of 6 days on, 3 days off, places heroic stress on these employees to regularly work 12 hour days, often times for all of their normally scheduled work days. Additionally, many employees use accrued annual leave and then work an opposite shift for overtime on the day they would normally be off. This constant burden and lack of personal time has multiple effects on these employees, the department and the County.

Morale in the 911 Center is abysmally low. Job satisfaction is down and job stress is up. Physical and mental exhaustion haunts each employee and places police officers and citizens at risk. Coupled with low wages and the ability to move laterally, for the same pay, to another position within county government which does not require the same work schedule pressure, there is little incentive for PCOs to remain on the job. This results in a “churning” of employees at the lower levels of experience. New employees are brought in no faster than current employee are departing. Meanwhile, experienced employees are also departing, draining the department of job experience that is crucial to effective training and operations. As has been seen in other Transition Team meetings, County Personnel has a stranglehold on hiring practices that has been a contributor to attrition in newly hired classes that is greater than Navy SEAL training. As an example of a poor hiring practice, communications personnel have been barred from validating entry-level testing procedures to ensure qualified candidates are selected and prepared for the job ahead.

Finally, additional tasks are consistently being placed on PCOs who are already overworked. The proliferation of license plate readers (LPR), closed circuit television monitoring, and GPS tracking devices has burdened PCOs with monitoring these systems, some of which present critical public safety events. For example, a PCO tasked with monitoring the LPR system may miss an alert for a vehicle involved in an Amber Alert because the PCO is working on other tasks. Thus the opportunity to recover a missing child may be missed by the delay associated with the PCO’s split-attention. It is also clear that the agency has failed to leverage technologies and policies to increase efficiencies, increase officer safety, and relieve PCO workload such as teletype functionality at dispatch consoles, allowing dispatcher greater call discretion and trust and other similar issues.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staffing must be increased without delay. Additional tasks not directly related to call-taking, dispatching, and teletype operations, should be de-staffed from minimum staffing PCOs. The department should consider a separate monitoring unit for these technologies as their advancement and proliferation will rapidly increase in the coming years.

Most importantly, the current pay system that groups PCOs in with labor and maintenance employees is ineffective as a means of justly compensating these employees for the job they perform. This pay structure completely fails to recognize the PCO as a public safety employee and does no justice to the hours, stress and tasks they perform. The County should also explore enhancing retirement benefits.
to increase recruitment and retention of qualified employees. It is clear that the current compensation model has been a complete failure at retaining qualified employees and it must be addressed without delay. Additionally, hiring should be removed from County Personnel control and returned to the Police Department which possesses the skills and knowledge relevant to the hiring of PCOs. Internal quality assurance assessments should be implemented to ensure quality of service is not sacrificed to quantity of employees and the agency must review policies and technology to increase officer safety and decrease PCO workload.

**Work environment:**
The communications center facility is woefully inadequate for its assigned task and has a negative impact on public safety and employee morale. The space given to the call and dispatch center is too small, too dark, and insufficiently equipped to handle its daily tasks, let alone a large-scale public emergency.

The communications facility is buried in the basement of police headquarters. It has been plagued by defects in the physical plant such as flooding and power loss requiring operations be shifted to the County’s backup site at the EOC/RCC. Additionally, the environment, dimly lit and without windows, presents a distinct morale problem for the employees.

The facility is inadequate in size. This means that there are often insufficient seats to handle incoming calls and limits to the expansion of dispatch stations to better divide workload into the envisioned five, instead of four, police districts. PCOs are cramped in close with each other which means that conversations of one employee can easily distract others. This is a particular problem when a trainee and trainer are working together in conversation. The lack of physical space between these parties and other working employees is distracting to call-takers and dispatchers whose complete focus is required to safely handle emergency calls. During the 888 Bestgate Rd. active shooter, call takers had to stand and work as there was insufficient seating space for them to do their job.

The limited space also limits the total number of trainees to approximately 12 per class. Although the agency is receiving applications for more than 12 qualified applicants, the inability to accommodate training has limited the agency to mere replacement of departing employees. There is physically no ability to actually bolster staffing levels that are already critically low.

Additionally, the new Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) software has been plagued with glitches, freezes, and general slow-downs. Employees are able to out-pace the computer in data entry and other management tasks. This results in unacceptable safety sacrifices due to computer system lag or complete system seizure. It also results in additional frustration and morale problems for the employees who have to fight the computer to accomplish their mission.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Immediate work should commence on a new and revitalized 911 center. Consideration should be given to a joint-emergency call center with the County’s fire department. Cross-training of tasks between police and fire can result in a greater pool
of employees to draw from for minimum staffing. Additionally, a new, comfortable workspace would be a welcome change to employees that are being run ragged on a daily basis. The County should cease applying temporary fixes to this problem and develop a comprehensive solution. Although this may take more time, it will realize greater cost savings in the long run as employee retention rises and liability for negligent mistakes falls. This task is a great one that has been discussed for many years, but seen no substantive action. The cross-departmental nature of this project means there is no party in County government suited to lead such an endeavor. The County Executive should, therefore, appoint a 911-center project manager. The sole task of this party would be to realize the goal of creating a new facility, properly staffed and equipped to serve the County’s emergency call and dispatch needs for the next 20-30 years. This project may include upgrades and improvements on the 911 call system (the upcoming Next-Generation 911) and upgrades to the police records management, computer aided dispatch, and police mobile data systems. (See Technology Section for a detailed discussion of these other issues).

The new facility should consider ergonomic best practices for workspaces and provide suitable accommodations for rest and recovery for PCOs working stressful incidents. It should provide sufficient over-capacity to allow for growth AND large-scale emergencies. Co-location of police administration (headquarters functions) is NOT a requirement for an effective call center. Co-location of department technology personnel and resources would be a logical accommodation due to the technology-dependent nature of call center responsibilities. Consideration should be given to under which agency’s administrative umbrella the 911 Center should fall: Police, Fire, EOC, or an independent, new agency reporting to the CAO or County Executive. Making a definitive determination is beyond the scope of this committee’s purview. It is important to note that federal funding is pending that will greatly offset costs but temporary solutions may jeopardize the availability of these funds as much as delay in implementation.

**Career advancement:**
Another problem facing the PCO corps is the inequities in pay for supervisors. PCO III and IV positions are non-bargaining unit positions and do not benefit from the longevity pay available to PCO I and II employees. These employees are denied raises equitable as compared to what lower ranked employees are receiving. This means that the supervisory ranks of PCO III and IV are often paid LESS than their subordinates of equal time of employment. This inequity is yet another negative impact on morale, not just for the supervisors that are earning less, but also the line-level employees who realize that their path of career advancement is illusory given the possibility of lower pay. Knowing they lack the ability to advance their careers and their income, the incentive to remain on the job is further diminished for all PCOs.

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**To alleviate the problems caused by insufficient facilities and abysmal morale, it is recommended that the County commence work on a new 911 call center that is properly equipped for the mission of providing emergency communications capabilities to the public and emergency services personnel**
**RECOMMENDATION:** It is recommended that a comprehensive review of PCO III and IV salaries be conducted by the Office of Personnel to resolve these inequities and insure that the supervisory ranks are justly compensated at least the statutory minimum of 5% above what their total base salary (including longevity bonuses) would have been had they remained a PCO II. This equity is demanded by the increased responsibilities placed upon these employees. Additionally, the Office of Personnel should study and implement procedures to avoid recurrence of this problem for future promotees, and additionally determine whether a 5% increase is sufficient to entice qualified applicants to seek promotion.

**Conclusion:**
It is imperative that the County work to implement fixes to the problems detailed above. The workload of PCOs must be reduced as it currently creates too great a hazard that fatigue will cause an error that can result in injury or loss of life. The County cannot place the burden of liability on its employees for such an event given its continued negligence to address the glaring problems that exist in its 911 call center. The administration owes it to its citizens to provide a 911 center that operates at peak efficiency to serve the public and ensure the safety of our county.

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**SWOT: 911 Center**

**Strengths**
- Skilled and dedicated staff
- Staff members are pushing for improvement of processes to relieve workload
- Plans underway to modernize 911 systems (text message based, location info, photo/video)

**Weaknesses**
- Staffing is DANGEROUSLY low resulting in massive overtime & over-working of employees
- Pay is not commensurate with job description
- Agency is stuck in failing to allow procedural improvements
- County Personnel control of hiring is ineffective
- Physical space is shockingly ill-suited to the mission
- New, upgraded Computer Aided Dispatch is substandard

**Opportunities**
- County should investigate a comprehensive 911 center solution, not just another temporary fix
- County should work with union to create separate pay schedule for Police Communications Operators that accounts for career advancement
- Police Department should seek to modernize operations and leverage under-utilized technologies

**Threats**
- High cost of capital construction and acquisition of new Computer Aided Dispatch systems.
- Capital project delays will impede ability to hire, train and retain staff due to limited training capabilities.
- Hemorrhaging of staff will create a “brain drain” of institutional and experiential knowledge.
TECHNOLOGY SECTION

Introduction:
The Police Technology Section is dually responsible for technical support for the entire police department and developing and overseeing various technology related projects and upgrades.

Staffing:
The Police Technology section is staffed by three sworn police officers, 1 civilian police management employee, and three civilian employees detailed from the county’s Office of Information Technology (OIT). Repeatedly, proposals have been developed or implemented to reduce or eliminate the sworn police contingent of staff members, and each time, these plans have failed. There are multiple reasons for this.

First, the office, like much of the department, is woefully understaffed for the job it is assigned. The large number of large-scale, department-wide projects and the small-scale, unit-specific projects that the section is responsible for require a huge investment in time, training, and development. On top of this, the section is tasked with technical support for the entire department, which regularly interrupts their project tasks. There is insufficient staff for 24/7 support, which requires the staff to rotate being placed in on-call status during off-hours.

Second, police officers technology needs are vastly different than an average county employee. What works at a desk in an office is not effective in a police car or when used for various specialized tasks that police officers are assigned. Police officers are uniquely suited to understanding those specialized needs, and that understanding often escapes a traditionally trained non-police employee. Attempting to shoehorn civilian technology into police roles creates headaches and frustrations for the officers and decreases their morale and efficiency. Often, the clash between police officers and civilian IT employees causes this precise problem. Having police officers in the office tempers this issue substantially.

Lastly, the police department has little to no control over the civilian employees the Office of Information Technology supplies to the department. There is little ability for the police department to vet the employees for job knowledge, skills, and abilities and because the employees do not work for the police supervision structures, maintaining discipline, accountability and administration of those employees is difficult. If the police department does not approve of an employee assigned to them by OIT, it is difficult to get a different person assigned, and even more difficult to find an alternate that is not less qualified than the original!

On top of all of these factors, the staff are crammed into a space completely inadequate for their mission. The size of their small workspace was further reduced recently, and something as simple as a single equipment storage location is impossible, resulting in wasted time and effort shuffling and searching for equipment between the varied storage locations.
**RECOMMENDATION:** The Police Department must have greater control over its staff and additional staff must be hired to properly support and advance the agency's technology mission. The failure of the department to leverage technological efficiencies will cost the taxpayers more in the long run and will public erode trust in an agency that cannot be transparent with its data because it cannot sort it. The police department has ignored calls for a database expert and such a position should be revisited so as there is expertise available to leverage the data the department possesses.

**Collaboration with the Office of Information Technology:**
As highlighted in the staffing section, the interaction between OIT and the Police Department is often strained. OIT, like so many other county agencies, has a mission to serve internally. But because they have a monopoly on the services they provide, it is difficult for the Police Department to address problems that arise between the Police and OIT. Although the relationship has gotten better in recent times with the appointment of a project management liaison, day-to-day tasks are often difficult and OIT often does not consider the collateral effects its decisions have on police operations. Additionally, OIT often fails to recognize the 24/7 nature of public safety operations. As an example, general technical support is only available during normal business hours. This has the effect of hampering public safety operations and frustrating end-users. The Police Department is reliant on OIT for its technology support, but it is slow to respond to issues. Root problems with the systems and software that police officers use are unaddressed, leading to frustration within police ranks. In fact, officers often do not raise issues with OIT or police technology staffers because of the belief that they will be ignored and nothing will be fixed. Although major system failures are corrected relatively quickly, moderate to minor problems are often left unaddressed.

Furthermore, the lack of staffing and support inhibits the police Technology Section from advancing beyond day-to-day tech support issues. Technology training for officers is near non-existent, so even if new systems could be leveraged, there is no ability to to educate officers on the uses of those systems. Hence, even when the Technology Section is able to debut new features, they often go unused by officers because disseminating the features is so difficult.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Office of Information Technology must revamp its customer service ethos. Collaboration and communication with the Police Technology section must be established to a much higher level and OIT must learn to acknowledge the unique operational circumstance of 24/7 public safety operations. This represents a major cultural shift in the department that requires leadership from the top levels and effective personnel management. OIT should move to empower employees to communicate system deficiencies and MUST be reactive to those issues or risk losing further trust from the end users.
Deployed Hardware and Software Systems:
The Police Technology Section and OIT have struggled to keep up with evolving technology. This is evident in hardware and software systems. Postponement of prior hardware purchases have left the Police Department still seeking to recover and recent purchases have not sufficiently covered the replacement of outdated hardware.

Major software systems are also far behind. The largest programs in the department, Computer Aided Dispatch, Records Management, and Mobile Data, are extraordinarily outdated. This is an unaddressed legacy of the spectacular failure of a 6 million dollar upgrade attempt a decade ago. These systems fail to allow ease of data entry, retrieval, and organization. OIT and the Police Department have kicked the can down the road on these systems to a near breaking point. The new Computer Aided Dispatch system is sub-par, but was seen as the fastest way to replace the prior system which was decades beyond its useful life and susceptible to a disastrous and unrecoverable failure. Upon approval of the updated Computer Aided Dispatch project (which went over budget and took more than double the scheduled time to implement) OIT had promised the Police Department a collaborative effort to replace all three systems to begin six months after the going live. A year later, OIT has only begun fringe efforts to start this project. Not only has OIT and the Police Department failed to maintain modern systems, they have actually rolled back useful legacy programs for officers without providing updated or even equally capable replacements. Line level employees are also required to duplicate data entry in service of the general mission and informing agency commanders of relevant incidents. This administrative tasking is wasteful of police time that should be spent on police work, not data entry. There is no reason that even current systems cannot be leveraged to provide information, and future systems should be specified to do so as well.

Unfortunately, OIT is not equipped to handle more than one large-scale project at once. This represents a major roadblock to modernization when so many systems are behind. A failure to catch-up by modernizing multiple systems simultaneously will leave the County perpetually behind the technology curve. More critically, state and federal data reporting requirements must be met and current legacy systems are not up to the task. Continuing the County tradition of applying temporary fixes to problems such as these must be halted in favor of holistic and effective, permanent solutions.

Another problem is vendor cooperation. Many vendors of major systems are lackadaisical at providing necessary support. With no contractual mechanisms to enforce support agreements, the County is left struggling with systems that are limping along. The worst of the worst is the current vendor for the police records management systems. This vendor, Central Square (formerly Tri-Tech, formerly Tiburon) has proven to be devastatingly unhelpful. A simple system that allows a transfer of data between dispatch and records systems was supposed to be operative months ago. Its operation was even announced as...
successful, but it never actually functioned. This is par for the course with many technology vendors used by this County. The failure of adequate functionality of such software systems plays havoc with data entry, verification and analysis. Untold work hours are spent on these tasks which should be simpler or automated entirely. This constitutes a waste of time and money for the County and contributes to poor morale among sworn and civilian ranks.

There have been some successes. The Police Department recently acquired access to LexisNexis analytics software and is working on a number of other important mid-level projects such as: Telestaff, to improve staffing management and move away from outdated paper and dry-erase whiteboard solutions; Integrated Case Cracker, to improve and centralize criminal interview recording capabilities that are currently disparate and inconveniently distributed; Electronic Storage Crime Lab, for mass electronic storage of digital photographic evidence (although a full Digital Evidence Solution is planned); iSubpoena, to assist with court summons tracking and moving away from paper summonses for officers which require huge amounts of administrative time to sort, distribute and track; Data-sharing with the Office of the State’s Attorney to improve prosecutorial collaboration; and many others.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The County must cease delaying work on modernizing major police systems. The goal of data transparency is nearly impossible when data entry is so difficult and unnecessarily burdens line level employees with difficult and duplicative entry. The County must commit to a program of modernization that is collaborative and cooperative, with input from line level employees at all steps of development and implementation. It is shameful that employee groups were excluded from the Computer Aided Dispatch upgrade process at the very moment delays and overruns became problematic. Additionally, contracts should be written to assure vendor performance at expected levels. The County should cease short-changing cyclical technology purchases such as computers for line-level employees, as the costs of playing catch-up when these systems near a breaking point will be far greater than adequate planning and purchase on a timely schedule.

**Radio Communications Systems:**
The county is nearly a decade overdue for a replacement/upgrade of its radio communications system. Currently, a blanket contract has been awarded to provide the County with the up-to-date, advanced, interoperable system it requires. The current system has reached end-of-support from the manufacturer. The new system is slated to remedy coverage and capability gaps that leave public safety first responders with inadequate communications capabilities. This project is far behind schedule, full implementation (originally slated for 2020) not likely until late 2021 or 2022. The project includes replacement of mobile/portable radio hardware, 911-center console hardware, replacement of antenna stations and addition of new transmission antennas. Additionally, the County is in the process of adding vehicle-based radios to its police fleet. Although this
is relatively standard equipment for large suburban police agencies, administrative red tape and costs have delayed implementation.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The County should continue with deliberate speed in replacing the radio systems. Prudence in ensuring that speed of deployment does not compromise reliability standards should be continued. Upon completion, the County should immediately begin long-term planning for future upgrades and needs, with regular assessments to make certain that such an important project does not fall so far behind again in the future.