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Mr. Jason Molino
City Manager
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City Centre
Batavia, N.Y. 14020

Jason,

I would like to thank you and Chief Sehm for allowing me to monitor the city police dispatch operations yesterday for seven (7) hours from 1:30 PM – 8:30 PM. Lt. Jankowski conducted a tour of the building which included seeing the detective bureau, juvenile detective area, Neighborhood Enforcement Team, drug enforcement, and other functions our police department performs.

This opportunity helped enabled me to obtain a working understanding of the police dispatch function and operations. It enabled me to observe first hand what dispatchers do on an hourly basis and how they interact with our enforcement and crime suppression officers, the public, and especially victims of crimes or those that had domestic problems.

Here are some observations that I would like to share with you and council.

First the City of Batavia has a professional, dedicated, and well organized police department. They function as a well knit team. The police patrol officers, supervision, and dispatch staff knew their job. They are serious about their work, they enjoy their job, and they are proud of their profession.

In my job as a professional salesman, I meet hundreds of people in manufacturing facilities each year which include CEO/owners, plant managers, engineers, supervisors, and many production workers. The level of admiration and respect the entire police force has for Chief Sehm, is remarkable in comparison with any other group of people that I call on. A satisfied team results in an efficient, productive, and proficient workforce and department. This is a critical factor in enabling the police department to accomplish their mission and handle police enforcement duties.

The city dispatch operations played a key role in this effort. I sat along side dispatcher Mike Sheflin. His shift started at 2:30 PM and during the time he was on duty he received about 60 telephone calls. Some were 911, many others were police related non-emergencies, and some were from other law enforcement agencies.

There were 911 calls that required police patrols to be dispatched for domestic violence reports. While the officers were en-route to those addresses, the city police dispatcher used the city owned IMPACT Software to call up previous incident reports to those same addresses and confirmed to those officers en-route whether or not there is history on file and what it says.

The city police operations had an accumulation of furniture and equipment that was obviously not purchased new. There were a number of older computers of multiple types being used some of which came from seizures and old police cases, etc. This told me they make do with what they can get at little or no cost. They had no complaints regarding this. There was not a single expensive or executive desk or item on hand. They are not wasting tax payer's money on any frills.

Here is a synopsis of the most important things I learned about the dispatch operations and police department in general.

- The dispatch operation plays an integral part to operating the crime suppression and enforcement function of protecting our citizens.
- The dispatcher is the primary coordinator between road patrol police officers, police officers on duty, and he(or she) has to prioritize multiple events that occur at the same time, most of which need to be responded to by a police patrol unit.
- The dispatcher is the key element that makes things flow smoothly and in order of priority. It is critical that this person be intimately knowledgeable of city police operations, the location of all our streets, and have received the right kind of training needed; the right communication equipment, software, and hardware to best support the police department's mission of protecting the citizens.
- The majority of the calls the dispatcher receives are not 911 calls.
- The dispatcher and road patrols rely heavily on their Impact Software to obtain vital information in a matter of seconds while they are en-route responding to a crime suppression situation or following a vehicle which they wanted driver and owner information about.
- The Impact software enables the dispatcher and a road patrol officer to obtain a complete history of an address or person that on file for the past seven years, since its inception. This accumulation of past incident and crime information is vital to those officers responding.
- There were occurrences where the dispatcher recognized the address or name of a caller as being a location that extra caution was warranted because of Impact software data on file, and he advised the patrol of that.
- Having the police station manned by a dispatcher for walk in emergencies, people in distress, and stressful situations is absolutely critical to those people and victims. You can see the stress drain from their face as the dispatcher calms their fears, deals with their issues, dispatches road patrols or directs them to the appropriate people or agency, and makes telephone calls to other authorities on their behalf. It is difficult to put in words what you sense this does for those

victims. It is the one-on-one, face-to-face, immediate assistance victims receive, that tells the dispatch story for keeping our operation open 24/7 and manned with our own dispatchers.

- The Dispatch operations go way beyond the importance of budget financial analysis; we absolutely need our city dispatch operations to continue as they are, using our own city dispatch and keeping our police department open and manned with police dispatchers 24 hours a day.

The 12 cents a day average cost to the taxpayer that the proposed consolidation report says can be saved which amounts to \$43.80/year, is a tiny and insignificant cost to continue the outstanding dispatch work that is being done within our police department.

Other troubling questions about the proposed consolidation are as follows:

Remarks concerning the proposed consolidation of the police dispatch operations of the city and county.

Of Critical Importance:

- **#1 – City Council, the city manager, and the chief of police will lose immediately control over a major part of their police department.**
- Presently policy changes involving dispatch that impact the police department are made quickly by the chief as the need arises. These policy changes impact the entire department. Under consolidated dispatch, the chief will have to bring the change to the E911 board for consideration and approval. This may take weeks or months and he may not get approval. He and council will lose functional control of dispatch operations.
- This can have a dramatic affect on public perception of police efficiency in addressing their problems and create frustration for the officers.
- **#2 - The secure housing of those arrested by our city police department has not been resolved under this consolidation proposal.**
- Sheriff Maha received a letter on Friday November 29th by the State Commission of Correction in Albany in response to his request for a ruling for use of the County jail facility adjacent to our police department, that it cannot be used to house or hold individuals under arrest by the city police department. It advised that only certified Genesee County Jail correction officers could supervise the city detainees in the county jail.
- It further stated that there was an insufficient number of correction officers at the jail to supervise additional arrestees that were not planned for.
- It further stated that additional correction officers would need to be hired.
- There were strict rules on how long a person could be held in the holding pen which was variable with how many people were in that holding area.

- It is clear that the jail cannot be used to house city arrestees and there is no other agreement in force to provide for the security and supervision of them. This along prevents any potential consolidation of the city and county police dispatch from occurring. No grant should even be applied for. Attached is a copy of the letter referred to.

#3 The City's Impact software data history of 7 years may be lost and not available to city police during police calls. New World has advised the police department that they may not be able to convert all the data and that some data may be lost. The cost for New World to convert was estimated at \$50,000. or higher .

- The information in the software provides increased safety to our police road patrol officers by having the dispatcher advise them of criminal history and other police data regarding the location they were responding to.
- Thousands of dollars of regular and overtime hours would be required to convert this information to the Sheriff departments "New World" software and it is not designed to receive this transfer of information, so conversion is going to be costly.
- There is no agreement in place indicating that the Sheriff's department would even allow that to happen.

#4 Sheriff's Department New World software has not been proven as equal or better than the city's Impact Software. There are strong indications it is less desirable and it has an inconclusive history of reliability, use, and utility.

- There are many on-going court cases that rely on the data in the city's Impact software. We do not know what will happen if some of this data is missing later and no longer available if we were on the New World software. It does not make sense to maintain two software systems for multiple years to determine if anything is needed from Impact.
- The city police department relies heavily on its Impact software to provide instant and complete information to the city dispatcher and city road patrols. A great deal of this information is contained in 7 years of data input of local criminal activity of individuals and at specific addresses. **Most of this vital data will not be available to police patrols responding to criminal activities if the city has to convert to New World software. New World software does not allow officers on patrol to view reports on their mobile computers after they are filed due to the way the software program was written. Dispatchers cannot broadcast sensitive information over the radio. Therefore police patrols will have to drive to police headquarters to obtain it or do without it and risk not knowing vital data. If there was an outstanding arrest warrant, or an on-going investigation, the patrol officer may never know or review it.**
- After the initial purchase of new computers and software to convert to New World software, it will have to be upgraded on a regular basis which most likely

will cost thousands of dollars every few years. If the county elects to update the software the city must up date theirs also, no debate, just take out the check book and do it. The city will lose control of its police department computer and software costs and upgrades if it adopts the New World software of the county. The city's Impact Software is updated as frequently as the city police department needs it and the updates are at no cost because they are part of a maintenance agreement. City police personnel are trained and can do this as part of their regular work day however Impact software provides this service as part of the maintenance agreement.

- The Sheriff's department uses the latest version of New World software (MSP) of which only 25 police departments in the U.S. are using. One or more who purchased this very expensive program have actually stopped using it due to problems and continuing costs to maintain it. The city's Impact software is being used by hundreds of police departments in the United States and for these reasons support and upgrades for it should be available for quite some time.

#5 Citizen Face-to Face dispatch assistance is vital to victims.

- It is easy for any of us to proclaim things will be just as good if a citizen has to drive to the sheriff's facility and speak to a dispatcher on a wall phone. It is not that easy if you are the victim.
- If a crime occurs downtown, many residents can walk or run to our police station, not so to the sheriff's facility, especially if the victim is running away from the person who has caused him harm, injury, or is chasing them trying to rob them. We need our station downtown and open 24/7 to receive them, protect them, and give them immediately refuge.
- Road patrols are on the go constantly and barely have enough time to complete their reports. If they have to be called in to meet victims and stay with them, that cuts down their ability to protect the rest of the city by a 25% - 50% percent if 1 or 2 of the four patrols are off the road. Right now the dispatcher can perform a lot of these duties.
- The intimated knowledge of the city and the relationship bond of trust between our dispatchers and the road patrols play a significant role in keeping our citizens safe. The sheriff's dispatchers are undoubtedly just as good as ours are but they do not know our city and patrol officers like we do. If our dispatchers transfer to the sheriff's facility, there is no guarantee that they will be the one who is working with our patrols on a given call and they will not have access to our Impact Software.

#6 New York State Public Meeting rules strongly recommend that a Public Hearing on all controversial topics be held. This has not even been scheduled.

- City Council has refused to schedule a Public Hearing on this proposal. The rights of the citizens of Batavia to speak out on a critical public safety issue and the perception of safety are being denied. I have personally asked and written to the Council President requesting that the voters and citizens be given the right to

Speak out on this critical proposal in a formal public hearing that has to be publicized. He has steadfastly refused to schedule a hearing. This has resulted in insufficient citizen input for council to know what the public wants council to do with this proposal or application for grant funds. Public input to me via telephone calls and e-mail is running 85% in favor of keeping our city dispatch as is and the police station open 24/7. 15% percent were for consolidation but the total amount of people responding to me is far too few to know the wishes of all the public. A public hearing must be held.

Important:

- Since incoming 911 calls make up a lesser percentage of the overall calls, and many of the 911 calls are forwarded to the Sheriff's department because they involve calls for an ambulance or fire response which the sheriff's department presently handles. All cell phone calls presently go to the Sheriff as well.
- The Sheriff has a new facility ideally set up for 911 operations and he has requested that he be able to receive all 911 calls. There is no expense that I know of that would be transferred by the city or owed to the county for the transfer of the 911 calls, it would be cash neutral.
- In some cases the sheriff's 911 call volume to the sheriff's department can overflow their ability to receive them. Those roll over calls can be handled by the city police dispatch. This just occurred one week ago involving an accident on the thruway when many calls came in within a few minutes.
- Different agencies have different policies and procedures. The sheriff's department does not have identical policies to the Batavia city police department. The city has a special needs policy which may not be provided under the sheriff's policies. There is one or more of them now.

Overall Recommendation.

1 – Keep city police dispatch operations in the police department where they are now and keep the police station open 24/7.

2 – Give the sheriff all 911 calls

#3 – Upgrade the dispatch work area with bullet proof glass for dispatch safety.

#4 – Schedule a Public Hearing immediately.

\$5 – Do not waste time and effort applying for a grant for consolidation.