

To: Safety and Facilities Services Committee

From: Tracy Adams, Chief Administrative Officer,
Office of the C.A.O.

Report Number: SF-23-11

Date of Report: March 15, 2023

Date of Meeting: March 20, 2023

Subject: Potential Consolidated Fire Services Dispatch Centre

Ward: All Wards

File: 03-05

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to obtain Council's endorsement to advance discussions with the Town of Ajax to determine the financial and administrative implications for a potential consolidated fire services dispatch centre.

2.0 Recommendation

That the Safety and Facilities Services Committee recommend to City Council:

1. That Council endorse, in principle, the plan for a potential consolidated Fire Services Dispatch Centre as outlined in Report SF-23-11, dated March 15, 2023; and,
2. That the Fire Chief be directed to advance discussions with the Town of Ajax to determine potential financial and administrative costs associated with a potential consolidated Fire Services Dispatch Centre; and,
3. That staff report back with the potential costs and implementation plan.

3.0 Executive Summary

Not applicable.

4.0 Input From Other Sources

- Oshawa Fire Chief and the Fire Services Senior Leadership Team
- Oshawa Fire Services Chief Communications Officer
- City Solicitor

- Commissioner, Corporate and Finance Services
- Town of Ajax
- Region of Durham municipal Fire Chiefs

5.0 Background

Municipalities are authorized by subsection 2(5) of the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act* S.O. 1997, c.4 (“Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997”) to enter into agreements with other municipalities to provide and to receive fire protection services, as well as section 20 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, S.O. 2001, C.25. (“Municipal Act, 2001”) to enter into an agreement with one or more municipalities. The provision of fire dispatch services has been recognized by the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management (“O.F.M.E.M.”) Public Fire Safety Guidelines PFSG 04-09-12 as a fire protection service that can be provided to a participating municipality through an established agreement, in accordance with the authority granted under both Acts.

Over the last several years many municipalities have undertaken the process of consolidating their respective fire dispatch centres into one (1) centre to achieve resource and cost efficiencies; for example, the City of Windsor, the City of Burlington, the City of Kingston, the City of Barrie and the Region of Waterloo.

Both the City of Oshawa and Town of Ajax operate Public-Safety Answering Point (P.S.A.P.) communication/dispatch centres. This is in conjunction with the primary P.S.A.P. 911 centre located within Durham Regional Police Service. Both Oshawa Fire Services and the Ajax Fire Services utilize the identical Computer Aided Dispatch system (CriSys), Regional Radio system (Harris), Voice Recording system, and have many similar operating policies and guidelines.

Oshawa Fire Services currently operates an Emergency Communications Centre (“ECC”) located at Fire Services headquarters which serves as a Public Safety Answering Point (P.S.A.P.) fire dispatching centre for six (6) municipalities: Oshawa, Clarington, Whitby, Scugog, Brock and Uxbridge. The Town of Ajax provides fire dispatching for two (2) municipalities: Ajax and Pickering.

Since July 2022, Oshawa and Ajax Fire Services initiated preliminary discussions regarding the possibility of consolidating Oshawa and Ajax’s fire dispatch centres into one (1) P.S.A.P. More recently, in January of 2023, discussions have advanced to consider consolidating both Oshawa and Ajax P.S.A.P. services located at Oshawa Fire Services ECC.

The potential consolidation would provide a coordinated fire dispatch response which would improve response times, allow better co-ordination for major incidents and improve co-ordination of firefighting in border areas. In addition, it could lead to greater efficiencies, cost reductions and improvements in public safety. Improvements in collaboration and communication between the Region of Durham lower-tier municipal fire services and other emergency services would also be achieved. Additional expansion and consolidation with other fire dispatch centres outside of Durham Region could also be considered in the future after consolidation of Ajax and Oshawa.

5.1 Next Generation 9-1-1 (“NG 9-1-1”)

The implementation of Next-Generation 9-1-1 (NG 9-1-1) will take place throughout the Province of Ontario and Canada over the next two years. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (“C.R.T.C.”), which regulates telecommunications in Canada, has mandated this change. The current system is reaching end-of-life capacity and will be decommissioned by March 2025. The timeline required to transition from existing systems to an NG 9-1-1 compliant system is expected to take twelve (12) to eighteen (18) months.

NG 9-1-1 will enable new methods of communication such as text, photos and video which can be sent to P.S.A.P. This will provide greater situational awareness and enable efficient sharing of information to deliver the right resources to the right location, in the fastest way possible to people in need of emergency response. For example, residents could stream videos from an emergency incident, send photos of accidents, a fleeing suspect, or send personal medical information, including accessibility needs, which could greatly aid emergency responders (“C.R.T.C. 2022”).

NG 9-1-1 is an internet protocol (“I.P.”) based 9-1-1 service. Bell Canada, which is the lead for the NG 9-1-1 transition, requires that P.S.A.P.’s have dedicated staff for network security and cyber security. In addition to this, emergency communications centres will require 24 hours per day, seven days per week, information technology monitoring and support.

On January 19, 2023, City Council passed the 2023 municipal budget which funded the acquisition of a new fire Computer Aided Dispatch and Next Generation 9-1-1 system as required by legislation (Capital Project 30-0099). In addition, two new full-time positions were approved in Information Technology Services branch to support the new system: Dedicated ITS Resource – Fire Services NG911 and Infrastructure Analyst.

5.2 Mandatory National Fire Protection Association Certification

In 2022, the Province of Ontario passed Ontario Regulation 343/22, Firefighter Certification under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 (“O. Reg. 343/22”). This regulation requires that Fire Services ensure that they are certified to a series of National Fire Protection Association (“N.F.P.A.”) standards by July 1, 2026, and July 1, 2028 (technical rescue). In relation to emergency call-taking and dispatching, this means that all personnel who work in a Fire Services emergency services dispatch centre are required to be certified to N.F.P.A. 1061 – Standard for Public Safety Telecommunications Personnel Professional Qualifications by July 1, 2026. Additional information regarding N.F.P.A. 1061 is provided below.

5.3 Standards for Fire Communications Centre

In 2013, the O.F.M.E.M. announced adoption of N.F.P.A. Standards for all Ontario fire municipal departments. There are two (2) N.F.P.A. standards that outline best practice recommendations for the provision of fire dispatch services:

1. N.F.P.A. 1221 Standard for the Installation, Maintenance and Use of

Emergency Service Communications Systems. This standard applies to communications systems that support emergency dispatching systems, telephone systems, public reporting systems, one-way and two-way radio systems between the public and emergency response agencies, within a single emergency response agency, and between multiple jurisdictional emergency response agencies.

2. N.F.P.A. 1061 for the Standard for Professional Qualifications for Public Safety Telecommunications (P.S.T.) Personnel is the standard that identifies the minimum job performance requirements for personnel working in a public safety telecommunications role. This standard ensures that persons providing fire dispatch services are qualified to serve in public safety communications centres.

5.4 New Fire Protection and Prevention Act (F.P.P.A.) Regulations

In July 2022, a new regulation within the F.P.P.A. was established, Ontario Regulation 343/22, Firefighter Certification defines and outlines the mandatory certification of firefighters. The F.P.P.A. definition of a firefighter is as follows:

“means a fire chief and any other person employed in, or appointed to, a fire department and assigned to undertake fire protection services.”

As previously mentioned, the provision of fire dispatch services is recognized by the O.F.M.E.M. Public Safety Guideline PFSG 04-09-12 as a fire protection service.

This new legislation will require a significant amount of work and cost for fire departments. The O.F.M.E.M. certification program for Public Safety Telecommunicators must be coordinated in all Ontario fire dispatch centres by July 1, 2026.

Oshawa Fire Services Communicators have completed the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (“A.P.C.O.”) certification. A.P.C.O. certification aligns with N.F.P.A. 1061, referenced above. This places the Oshawa fire dispatch centre in a favourable position to meet the new F.P.P.A. regulations and O.F.M.E.M. certification requirements by the end of 2024. At this time, re-certification to N.F.P.A. 1061 has not been communicated by the O.F.M.E.M; however, Oshawa Fire Services has already established that re-certification every two (2) years will be required by all P.S.T.’s providing fire dispatch services in the Oshawa fire dispatch centre, which will ensure staff skills and knowledge remains current and aligned with any N.F.P.A. standard changes.

5.5 Rationale for a Consolidated Fire Services Dispatch Centre

Outlined below at a high level, are the financial and administrative benefits of a consolidated fire services dispatch centre in Durham Region:

- Shared operating costs.
- Cost sharing and service agreements will mitigate capital expansion costs by centralizing services and minimizing unnecessary overlaps in major systems such

as C.A.D. platforms.

- Having a consolidated fire communications dispatch centre (P.S.A.P.) that services the Region of Durham will provide for greater regional situational awareness at any time. Shared information for mutual-aid and automatic-aid will also be better realized through a single communications centre set-up.
- Improved call routing process from the Primary Public Safety Answering Point (P- P.S.A.P.), which locally is the Durham Regional Police Service.
- Compliance with new F.P.P.A. regulations requiring changes for mandatory certification of Public Safety Telecommunicators that meet N.F.P.A. 1061 skill and knowledge prerequisites.
- The P25 emergency radio system provides inter-agency communication between all the municipal fire departments within the Region of Durham and a single dispatch centre servicing all Regional fire departments supports improved emergency coordination occurring along municipal boundaries or during multi-jurisdictional emergency incidents (e.g. major weather events).
- The existing space and infrastructure within the Oshawa Fire Dispatch Centre has sufficient capacity to allow for future expansion. Oshawa Fire Services can accommodate the operational requirements to provide dispatch services and continue to provide fire dispatch services without any foreseeable enhancements to the service already being provided.
- Additional shared P.S.T. support during major and/or multi-jurisdictional incidents.

5.6 Items to be Considered

There are various items that need to be considered when evaluating the potential consolidation of the Ajax and Oshawa dispatch centres including but not limited to:

- Staffing analysis to determine operational levels.
- Adjustments to operating costs for salaries and benefits.
- Adjustments to the existing cost-sharing communications agreements.
- The proposed 2024 Operating and Capital budget would reflect the costs associated with a consolidated communications centre including infrastructure and information technology requirements. It is anticipated this will be a shared cost with Ajax and Pickering fire services under a consolidated communications agreement.
- Additional renovations or relocation of the existing communication centre as determined by Facilities Management Services
- Operational considerations to establish a contingency dispatch site.
- Engage local I.A.F.F. Associations to formalize a Memorandum of Understanding ensuring collective agreement clauses regarding communications staff are satisfied.

6.0 Financial Implications

Although a formal detailed financial analysis has not been determined, it is anticipated that there will be potential financial implications which will be subject to a future report including but not limited to:

- Proposed 2024 capital costs
- Approval for hiring a Project Manager to manage impacts of a consolidated physical space
- Assessment of existing infrastructure and communications systems
- Permanent backup centre
- Incorporation of Ajax/Pickering G.I.S. data and updates
- Staffing and associated operational shared costs

7.0 Relationship to the Oshawa Strategic Plan

This report addresses the Oshawa Strategic Plan by responding to the goals of Economic Prosperity & Financial Stewardship, Social Equity and Accountable Leadership.



Derrick Clark, Fire Chief,
Fire Services



Tracy Adams, Chief Administrative Officer,
Office of the C.A.O.