

DOUGLAS COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

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G. Craig Weinaug
County Administrator

January 12, 2012

Dave Corliss, City Manager
6 East 6th Street
Lawrence, Kansas 66044

Dear Dave:

On November 17, 2011, you and I met with the 911 Advisory Board that provides operational policy direction for the Emergency Communications Center. This board informed us that we face a significant challenge to update our center to replace aging and obsolete equipment, and to comply with federal mandates to convert the radio frequencies used by our center.

This situation is very similar to the challenge that we faced in the early nineties when the City and County needed to update the center by installing the original Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) technology. At that time, it made no sense to purchase two systems for two separate emergency communications centers, so a decision was made to merge the two dispatch operations, and to jointly finance the equipment.

The center's technology has again become obsolete, and the equipment is reaching the end of its useful life. The replacement technology is even more expensive, and the federal government is forcing us to convert to the new technology, with a deadline when portions of the old technology will, in effect, be turned off.

Under the interlocal agreement that was negotiated in 1995 to implement a merged emergency communications operation, it was agreed that the City and County would split costs for the merged operation based on what the City and the County had spent in the past for their own separate operations, with the end result being that neither the City nor the County had to pay significantly more than they had previously spent for operation of their separate dispatching operations. As a result of this agreement, the City of Lawrence pays 66% of the cost of the operation of this center and Douglas County pays 34% of the cost of the operation. The merged operation enabled the City and the County to jointly finance a significant upgrade to the technology in the center, substantially improving the service levels for both units of government.

The 911 Advisory Board has done a significant amount of research exploring the various alternatives to meet the challenge, and determining a cost estimate of this project that we must complete within the next two years. As you and I were informed on November 17th, the board is estimating that the cost for the necessary rehabilitation of the center will be up somewhere close to 7 million dollars. Because of the time that it will take to plan and construct the rehabilitation of the center, the decisions on how the cost for the center will be shared by the City and the County, and how each of us will finance the cost must be determined within the next few months.

Section 5 of the agreement between the City of Lawrence and Douglas County that established the joint emergency communications center in 1995, states the following:

Financial Participation by the Parties. Each year, the Center Administrator shall submit to the County and the City a budget for the operation of the Center. Upon approval by each governmental body, the budget shall be adopted and the cost of the operation of the Center shared by the parties according to the following percentages:

County	34%
City	66%

The City shall pay to the County its proportionate share of the operating expenses no less frequently than quarterly. County shall pay directly all operating costs of the Center.

Unlike the interlocal agreement that created the Lawrence Douglas County Fire Medical Department, the agreement establishing the joint communications center does not have a separate section addressing how capital costs are to be split. Under the agreement setting up the fire-medical department, capital costs that support only the fire function (like fire trucks or fire stations that do not house an ambulance) are paid by the City, capital costs that support only the medical function (like an ambulance or a station that does not support the fire service) are paid 100% by the county. The Fire-medical contract does not address how those capital costs necessary to support both the medical and fire functions are to be split.

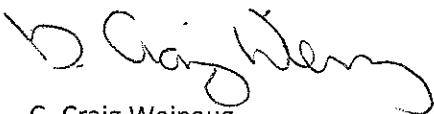
When the City decided to build a new fire/administration station at 1911 Stewart several years ago, the City and the County agreed that the station would be used to support both the county responsibility to provide medical services to Douglas County residents and the City responsibility to provide fire services to Lawrence residents. Based on that consensus, the County agreed to pay for a share of main fire station based on the same proportionate share that the county pays of the operating costs of the merged department, even though the contract creating the Fire Medical Department did not explicitly require the County to pay anything.

Based upon this precedent, the County Commission has directed me to ask the City to agree to pay for a proportionate share of the cost of the essential upgrade to the joint emergency communications operation, based on the same percentage that the City pays for operation of the center: 66%. At this percentage and based on our current estimate of the costs, the City's share would be up to 4,620,000.

We look forward to meeting with you to negotiate an agreement that will enable the City and County to jointly make the necessary hard choices that we both face to assure that our jointly operated center continues to be able to provide essential emergency communication services to all of the citizens that we both serve.

Call me so we can work out a timetable for the negotiation and development of the necessary agreements.

Sincerely,



G. Craig Weinaug
County Administrator