

## **Legislative Findings**

The General Assembly finds:

- (a) the majority of fire protection and emergency medical services around Vermont are provided by volunteers, including departments that belong to the Vermont Firefighters Association and the Professional Firefighters of Vermont, who along with other emergency service providers, have urged that the four state operated Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) remain open;
- (b) Approximately 40 emergency responders testified on March 24, 2015, at a joint public hearing of the House and Senate Government Operations Committees that they can better protect the public and more effectively respond to emergencies with regional dispatch centers familiar with the personnel and terrain in their respective regions.
- (c) Certified, trained and experienced PSAP emergency call takers and dispatchers routinely avoid the need to call out state police troopers and other emergency responders by addressing many calls and complaints in the most efficient and least expensive manner.

## **Legislative Intent**

It is the intent of the General Assembly to ensure that adequate support services are in place to achieve structural costs savings without disrupting public safety and without disrupting employment opportunities and careers in areas of the state with high unemployment.

## **Appropriation**

1. \$437,000 is transferred from the universal service fund to the Department of Public Safety in FY16 (this reduces the cut to roughly \$1.3 million) for operation and staffing four PSAPs and dispatching centers.

2. In consultation with the chairs, or designees, of the E911 Board, the Vermont Chiefs of Police Association, the Vermont Sheriffs' Association, the Vermont Police Association, the Vermont Firefighters Association, the Professional Firefighters of Vermont, the Vermont Ambulance Association, and the Vermont State Employees Association, the secretary of administration shall study and by September 1 recommend to the Joint Fiscal Committee whether:

(a) the appropriation made to the Department of Public Safety, the personnel employed by the Department of Public Safety at the four PSAPs, and the office equipment used at the state's four PSAPs should be transferred to the E991 Board, and if so, on what terms and conditions; provided however, that the employees shall be considered individuals employed on a permanent status basis by the State of Vermont and subject to the rights

and benefits of state employment, including maintaining pay grade, steps, seniority and all other benefits of employment now accruing to the impacted employees; and

(b) dispatching fees should be charged by users of the state's four PSAPs, and if so, to recommend one or more fee schedules comparable to the fees charged by the non-state PSAPs around Vermont on comparable terms and conditions. (Note: all non-state PSAPs charge dispatching fees.)

### **Conditions Of Appropriation**

3. the state's four PSAPs in Williston, Rutland, Rockingham and Derby shall remain open and each PSAP shall be staffed for three eight hour shifts with employees working in the currently existing state positions, included in their existing bargaining units, subject to existing collective bargaining agreements, and without break in service, or loss of pay, benefits or service.

4. No PSAP call taker or dispatcher employed by the Department of Public Safety as of March 1, 2015 shall have his or her duty station changed involuntarily, unless:

- a) Recommended by the secretary of administration with the approval of the Joint Fiscal Committee; and
- b) such action is taken in a manner that is consistent with any applicable collective bargaining agreement.

5. (a) The number of PSAP administrators shall be reduced from four to two positions. Two PSAP administrator positions shall remain vacant as each current employee leaves the position, but not as a result of a reduction in force (RIF) personnel action. When the position becomes vacant, it shall be eliminated. When each position becomes vacant, the administrator's duties shall be assumed by the remaining PSAP administrators.

(b) The number of employees assigned to each PSAP shall through attrition be reduced by one position from each of the 4 PSAPS. Positions shall remain vacant as each current employee leaves the position, but not as a result of a reduction in force (RIF) personnel action. When the position becomes vacant, it shall be eliminated. A currently vacant position shall prioritized for elimination over any position which is presently occupied

6. The commissioner, in consultation with the PSAP call takers/dispatchers, by and through their recognized collective bargaining agent, shall:

- (a) Promptly implement a revised schedule to more efficiently cover shifts. (NOTE: PSAP call takers/dispatchers think that with better scheduling, the equivalent of two positions can be eliminated and those employees used to reduce overtime, and better cover sick leave, family leave, training and other emergencies.)

(b) Promptly implement a new schedule at the Rutland PSAP to eliminate what may be unnecessary overtime caused by a unique scheduling demand that was implemented.

**Studies And Implementation.**

7. The commissioner of the Department of Human Resources shall study and recommend to the secretary of administration by August 1, 2015 whether filling vacant full-time or part-time PSAP call taker/dispatcher positions will reduce overtime and achieve overall cost savings. (NOTE: If each PSAP is allowed to hire to its full capacity, the amount of OT would be drastically reduced. No need to add more dispatchers above and beyond what the schedule requires, but hiring to fill schedule holes in the schedule. For a long time, there was a hiring freeze and no dispatchers could be hired to fill the vacant positions -- hence MANDATORY OT and the use of temporary workers.)

8. Notwithstanding any provision of law, the secretary of administration, with the approval of the joint fiscal committee and subject to any applicable collective bargaining agreement or obligation to bargain, is authorized to:

- (a) implement the recommendations of the study;
- (b) take other actions necessary to implement the intent of this section;
- (c) implement PSAP and dispatching fees effective on or about October 1, 2015, but the actual collection of those fees may be delayed until the entity using the PSAP/dispatch service begins a new budget year; and
- (d) after consulting with the E911 Board, increase the universal service fund proportional surcharge to help pay for the cost of operating the four PSAPs and dispatch centers, which may be adjusted as revenue is received from the imposition of dispatch fees effective October 1, 2015.

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