

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. BACKGROUND

As a result of federal initiatives and state legislation geared toward interoperability and reducing costs via increased shared services, Atlantic County (County) has recognized the need to evaluate the 9-1-1 call handling and emergency dispatch model currently in place in the County. In the County's present 9-1-1 call handling and emergency dispatch operational model, multiple localized service providers answer 9-1-1 requests from the public. Many local agencies, primarily law enforcement, have maintained separate public safety answering points (PSAPs). Though these PSAPs take great pride and care in the handling of emergency calls, there are certain problems inherent in this system. First, in general terms, an operational model based on many localized PSAPs tend to have a much lower level of interoperability among agencies which can hamper multi-jurisdictional responses. Second, cost-efficiencies only obtained through a consolidation of services are not achieved in the current model, placing an undo burden on the individual municipalities and the taxpayers of Atlantic County. In general terms, a consolidation of 9-1-1 and emergency communications services can provide county residents and responders with the following:

- Services improvements and efficiencies
- Technology advancements
- Funding opportunities
- Regional, state and federal partnering opportunities
- Equality of service across all agencies for all citizens and visitors in Atlantic County

In an effort to improve the countywide level of service to the community in an effective and efficient manner, L. Robert Kimball & Associates (Kimball) was commissioned to assess the feasibility of consolidated public safety communications in the Atlantic County area. Kimball provided an assessment and recommendations of consolidation options, including staffing, organizational structure, facilities, and technology that may prove suitable for the County.

1.2. SCOPE OF WORK SUMMARY

The scope of this project can be best summarized as follows:

- To provide the County with an overview and analysis of the current model in place across the County for the handling of 9-1-1 and emergency dispatch communications. The current model encompasses approximately nineteen individual public safety answering points (PSAPs) and public safety dispatch points (PDSPs) that provide services to individual agencies or municipalities.
- To assess the feasibility of a countywide consolidation of 9-1-1 and emergency communications services into a single agency. The feasibility assessment includes political, operational, and technological perspectives.
- To provide, if consolidation is deemed feasible, potential organizational models, governance structures, high-level preliminary planning estimates for operating and capital costs associated with a consolidation, and provide recommendations as to the best plan of action

for the County to ensure services provided within the County meet 9-1-1 industry best practices and standards.

Detailed scopes of work for each task can be found within the individual executive summaries for those tasks.

1.3. TASK METHODOLOGY

The complete PSAP consolidation analysis for Atlantic County is broken down into four components as listed below. The specific methodology for each task is as follows:

1.3.1. Task 1 Report – Current Conditions / Consolidation Feasibility Assessment

The first report focuses on the assessment of current conditions and a consolidation feasibility determination. As a basis for assessing current PSAP/PSDP conditions within Atlantic County, Kimball developed two surveys to collect the required operational and technological data from the participating agencies and stakeholders. In conjunction with the data collection surveys, the Kimball team scheduled meetings with management staff from each of the PSAPs and PSDPs. Additionally, the Kimball team held four meetings to obtain stakeholder and agency input regarding a potential consolidation.

1.3.2. Task 2 Report - PSAP Model Comparison, Organizational Structure, Equipment Assessment, Preliminary Cost Estimates

The second report identifies potential consolidation models and recommended the option(s) that represents the best fit for the County. Included in this report were preliminary recommendations on technology, organizational structure, recommended service levels, human resource planning, and a high level facilities overview. To provide these recommendations Kimball utilized on-staff experts in PSAP operations / consolidation, facilities, computer aided dispatch, radio, and telephony in conjunction with industry best practices and standards. This report also provided *preliminary* staffing, operational, and capital cost estimates.

1.3.3. Task 3 Report- Governance Models, Revised Staffing, Facilities, and Technology Costs, and Funding Options

Based on County input, the report further develops the operational model deemed most feasible from the Task 2 Report, provided revised estimated cost comparisons, and offered recommendations for next-step consolidation planning. This report also outlines the decisions that will need to be made by the County and participating agencies before more definitive cost and staffing estimates can be made.

1.3.4. Task 4 – Report Compilation

Reports from Tasks 1 – 3 are combined into a single document.

1.4. TASK REPORT SUMMARIES

The following report summaries contain a variety of staffing levels and equipment and facilities cost projections. It should be noted that much of the actual raw data normally used for these calculations was not available to Kimball. Therefore, where noted, some of these calculations are based on estimates,

industry standards, and data from comparable municipalities. These estimates should be used for broad planning and budgetary purposes only. Should the County decide to move forward with a consolidation, these estimates will need to be refined as more accurate data is obtained and various consolidation related decisions, as outlined in the Task Reports, are made.

1.4.1. Task 1 Report – Current Conditions and Consolidation Feasibility Summary

An assessment of current 9-1-1 and emergency communications within the County found the following:

- The majority of county PSAPs/PSDPs are part of a law enforcement agency
- While all agencies report compliance with the State of New Jersey training requirements, there are varying degrees of training provided in addition to the basis requirements.
- Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) is applied inconsistently within the County and often with no quality assurance program in place creating potential liability for the municipalities and staff.
- Current PSAP equipment such as CAD, CPE, radio consoles, and logging recorders are of varying ages and cannot always provide the statistical data needed for proper work load evaluation.
- There are varying degrees of planned redundancy and back-up plans or facilities. In fact, multiple agencies cite use of the County's mobile command post / communications vehicle as one of their primary back-up plans. However, in a large scale incident or natural disaster the same equipment will not be available to all agencies that would expect or need to utilize it to continue to provide emergency communications. The lack of adequate back-up planning on the municipal level and countywide can lead to an inability to provide emergency services to the community when it is most needed, significantly impacting safety of citizens and field personnel..
- There is duplication of PSAP CAD, CPE, radio and other PSAP systems and equipment among the disparate centers. This duplication means that, collectively, the costs for purchasing and maintaining the equipment are unnecessarily high.
- The quality and level of service provided to the community and public safety agencies varies. In particular, fire and EMS do not appear to be receiving the same level of service from the PSAPs as do law enforcement agencies. This is, in part, caused by a lack of dedicated fire / EMS PSAP staff and a lack of training for law enforcement staff on the needs of fire and EMS field personnel. The end result of this deficiency can be:
 - Injury to citizens and/or firefighters and EMS personnel
 - Delayed response of field units potentially increasing the level of property damage and, again, increasing the potential for injury and/or death
 - Increased municipal liability by failing to meet the level of service that citizens are provided routinely in other jurisdictions by having dispatch personnel who are trained to handle fire and EMS responses appropriately.
- The financial burden of maintaining a dispatch center for some agencies or the high cost of contracting with other agencies for services is an increasing problem for some agencies. In some cases, service levels have not met expectations.
- Vague or inequitable methods of determining the cost to contract for services with another PSAP are of significant concern to some public safety agencies in the County.

1.4.1.1. PSAP Consolidation Feasibility

Consolidation Positives and Negatives

The data collection surveys, interviews with the management staff and meetings with the stakeholders revealed the following potential positives and negatives to a consolidation as listed in the Task 1 Report:

Positives:

- Standardized call handling, dispatching protocols, and training decrease opportunities for error and enhance safety of responders and the public, improve service and lessen liability potential.
- Improved coordination of multi-jurisdictional and/or multi-class of service incidents through increased interoperability between user agencies.
- Increased opportunities for grants and state funding to support public safety operations and interoperability within the County.
- Cooperative consideration, responsibility, interoperability, and action across local government boundaries.
- Centralized authority to address operational and service efficiencies, equity, and accountability.
- Economies of scale in procurement, maintenance, upgrades and replacement of systems and facilities.
- Career ladder for PSAP employees which can reduce employee turnover and lower costs associated with hiring and training new employees.

Negatives:

- Perceived loss of the personal touch and knowledge of residents currently provided by the local dispatchers
- Perceived loss of control of PSAP staff by the current PSAP management / law enforcement agencies
- Loss of 24/7 staff to perform other tasks not traditionally considered to be true emergency communications functions, such as monitoring holding cells, staffing walk-in complaints windows and serving as a receptionist.
- Loss of intimate geographical knowledge of local jurisdictions.
- Start-up capital costs can delay the realization of cost savings.

As indicated in the Task 1 Report, while some of these issues can be mitigated by the use of technology and dispatcher learning curves, the reality of consolidation is there are trade-offs, such as the loss of staffed complaint windows on a 24/7 basis and the higher level of face-to-face interaction between the police department and the community, that must be made by the user agencies if they choose to participate in the consolidation,. Each agency will need to weigh the positives and negatives for their agency before determining if a consolidation is an appropriate choice for their agency.

Overall, Kimball found no significant technological, operational or political constraints or roadblocks to pursuing a consolidation. While consolidation will present challenges in all of these areas, they are balanced by significant potential for operational, administrative, and *long-term* financial benefits.

Politically, there appears to be sufficient interest in developing a more detailed plan for further consideration by the various stakeholders.

1.4.2. Task 2 Report – PSAP Model Comparison, Organizational Structure, Equipment Assessment, Preliminary Cost Estimates

1.4.2.1. PSAP Model Comparison

The Task 2 Report evaluates two potential PSAP models; a single countywide PSAP and two regional PSAPs that split service to the County between them. Staffing levels, operational issues, and facilities, personnel, and equipment costs are estimated for each model then compared to determine the best choice for the County. The staffing levels are based on preliminary estimated data and are obviously quite high. These figures were refined after additional data collection in the Task 3 Report. In an effort to avoid confusion and maintain clarity, no Task 2 figures are cited in this Executive Summary, but can be found in the full Task 2 Report.

Based on the assessment of current conditions, the preliminary cost estimates, and prior experience in consolidation projects, Kimball's strong recommendation is that a single PSAP model, *with an appropriate back-up plan or facility*, be used. While a two-regional PSAP model offers the obvious advantage of live mutual redundancy, much of the operational advantage of being in a consolidated environment is lost while costs of maintaining two facilities from an administrative and systemic perspective is significantly higher. A complete analysis can be found in the Task 2 Report.

1.4.2.2. Organizational Structure

The organizational structure Kimball recommends is a multi-tiered structure that includes call takers, dispatchers (either police or fire), supervision, management staff, and support personnel. This expanded structure will enable the staff to process incoming 9-1-1 and handle radio communications in the most effective method possible. Further, this expanded structure provides a career path for employees thereby increasing employee retention and lowering personnel costs associated with overtime and hiring and training of new staff.

1.4.2.3. Equipment Assessment

An assessment of primary PSAP systems needs was done including CAD, CPE, radio, and logging recorders. While it is possible that some equipment could be reused, Kimball recommends procuring new systems for a consolidated center. The issues that arise from moving existing equipment such as CPE, radio consoles, and logging recorders, of varying ages and condition make attempting to re-use equipment in the primary facility a potentially problematic decision. The existing PSAPs use several different CAD systems. However, an in-depth analysis of the needs of a consolidated center must be done in conjunction with determining whether any single current CAD vendor has a system that is robust enough to handle the work load of a countywide PSAP before a decision on re-use can be made. It is likely, however, that some cost efficiencies can be realized by utilizing existing equipment at a back-up site.

1.4.2.4. Preliminary Cost Estimates

The Task 2 Report provides preliminary cost estimates for systems and facilities. However, these figures were refined after additional data collection in the Task 3 Report. In an effort to avoid confusion and

maintain clarity, no Task 2 figures are cited in this Executive Summary, but can be found in the full Task 2 Report.

1.4.3. Task 3 Report – Governance Models, Revised Staffing, Facilities, and Technology Costs, and Funding Options

1.4.3.1. Governance Models

The governance model chosen to provide oversight for the PSAP is a critical decision and can impact the success or failure of a consolidation. Three governance models were examined for this report. The models are:

- Model 1: Independent Entity with a Municipal Affiliation (such as a separate County department or division within another department that will not be a user agency of the PSAP)
- Model 2: Part of a Current PSAP or Law Enforcement Agency
- Model 3: Independent Entity with No Municipal Affiliation

Of these three models, Kimball recommends Model 1 as it would provide the most positive environment for long-term development of PSAP staff, provision of services to user agencies and the community, and provide the most stable long-term political environment. Implementing a governance structure such as Model 1 can be a significant culture change for user agencies, especially for those accustomed to having complete control over dispatch functions. However, it should be noted that a consolidated PSAP establishes its service levels and operational criteria based on the levels already in place within the user agencies. For example, a consolidated PSAP under this governance model would not decide how many police or fire units to send to a particular type of incident. Those decisions belong to the user agencies themselves. The PSAP dispatches according to pre-determined criteria set by the user agencies. User agency command personnel also still retain the ability to alter any field response as deemed necessary on a situational basis. The PSAP's primary function is to provide 9-1-1 and dispatch services in a manner that is consistent with pre-determined service levels and criteria. In general terms, the relationship between the PSAP and user agencies becomes a partnership rather than a subordinate one.

Kimball is aware that deciding upon a governance structure can be a complex process that is often driven by county or local needs that may not have been apparent during the data collection phase of this project. The municipalities participating in a consolidation will be in the best position to determine the model that represents the best fit for the municipalities involved. Regardless of the governance model chosen, Kimball strongly recommends planning for the long-term health and stability of the consolidated PSAP and isolating it as much as possible from the impact of political changes. Ultimately, the PSAP needs to be able to do what it is intended to do; provide critical emergency services to the community and field personnel.

1.4.3.2. Revised Staffing Projections

The following projections are based on the recommendations in the Task 2 Report that a multi-tiered organizational structure of call takers, dispatchers, and front line supervision be used. Each of these positions must be calculated separately as coverage is based on different criteria and needs as outlined in the sections below. The calculations also assume full countywide agency participation, including Ocean

City with the exception of Atlantic City. In an effort to provide the most accurate planning projections as possible, Kimball evaluated the staffing levels and underlying data and revised the call taker staffing projections to reflect the likely reduction in the administrative call volume to be handled by a consolidated center. In addition, supervisory staff recommendations were reduced to reflect a minimum level rather than a perfect world recommendation as was made in the Task 2 Report (a reduction from 14 to 7 supervisors). Complete calculations can be found in Appendix L.

Using the revisions stated above the total recommended minimum staffing for planning a consolidated countywide center are as follows:

Consolidated PSAP Recommended Minimum Staffing Levels		
Position	Single PSAP Staffing Needed***	Current Staffing Levels
Call Takers	24	
Combined Call takers Dispatchers	0	132
Fire / EMS Dispatchers	14	
Police Dispatchers*	85	
Frontline Supervisors	7	
Training / QA Supervisor	1	
Deputy Director – Operations	1	
Deputy Director – Technology	1	
Director	1	
Admin Support	1	
PTE Combined Call takers / Dispatchers**	0	46
Total	135	132 FTE 46 PTE

*Please note that in Kimball’s estimation the number of needed police dispatchers may still be high. However, until the number of police console positions can be definitively determined these numbers should be used for high level “**not more than**” planning. Also, additional technology support staff may be needed in addition to the Deputy Director – Technology. PSAP systems are complex, therefore, if managing the systems is a function that will be kept “in-house” additional support positions may be needed. Final support staff levels will be driven by County defined needs and parameters.

**Staffing for the consolidated center does not include part time employees as the knowledge base needed in a fully consolidated center became difficult to maintain when working on a part time basis.

***These numbers reflect the minimum number of staff needed based on current data available. The County may wish to increase supervisory levels and technology support as those estimates are “bare minimum” recommendations.

These revisions reflect a total reduction in estimated staff of 20 employees (155 estimated in the Task 2 Report to 135 estimated in the Task 3 Report). It is Kimball’s opinion that a staffing level of 135 is still

high for the size center the County will need. However, these figures are based on the raw data currently available to Kimball. The County will need to refine the numbers once decisions have been made about the number of calls that will be handled by the PSAP and the number of actual police dispatch positions has been decided.

1.4.3.3. Task 3 - Revised Personnel Costs

Based on the revisions outlined in the section above, new personnel costs planning figures were developed. The charts below show the estimated current costs for all PSAPs countywide (exclusive of Atlantic City) and Ocean City and the projected personnel costs based on the new staffing projections.

Current Individual PSAP Model Combined Personnel Costs		
	# of Staff	Total Annual Cost
FTE Mgr/QA/Training*	0	\$0
FTE Shift Supervisors	0	\$0
Telecommunicators**	178 FTE / PTE	\$5,348,820
Reported Annual Overtime***		\$180,959
Subtotal*	178 (132 FTE)	\$5,529,779
Estimated Benefits****		\$2,371,074
Totals	178	\$7,900,853

* FTE Mgr positions are generally handled by sworn personnel.

Cost estimates for sworn personnel time were not provided.

**This figure is a combination of actual reported salaries and estimates where data was lacking. Estimates used mid range salary figures provided during the data collection phase and include both FTE and PTE.

***Actual reported overtime only. Many agencies did not provide this information.

****Benefits costs were not supplied in the majority of cases. Benefits costs where not supplies were estimated using the County rate of 50.4%.

Estimated Single Consolidated PSAP Personnel Costs		
	# of Staff	Total Annual Cost
FTE Mgr/QA/Training/Admin***	5	\$288,000
FTE Shift Supervisors****	7	\$341,873
FTE Call Takers*	24	\$920,976
FTE Police/ Fire/ EMS Dispatchers**	99	\$4,317,093
Estimated Annual Overtime		\$100,000
Subtotal	135	\$5,967,942
Estimated Benefits @ 50.4% of Annual Salaries and Overtime		\$3,007,843
Totals	135	\$8,975,785

*Based on Average Pay of \$38,384 Obtained Through Agency Interviews

**Based on Average Pay of \$43,607 Obtained Through Agency Interviews

*** FTE Mgr/QA Training numbers DO NOT include frontline supervision.

****Supervisor pay is based on the average dispatcher pay plus 12%.

Although the projected personnel costs for a single countywide consolidated PSAP are \$1,074,932 higher than the combined costs reported by and/or estimated for all PSAPs countywide, the following should be noted:

- The combined estimates for all PSAPs countywide should be considered “ball park” figures only as much of the underlying data was estimated and costs extrapolated from those estimates.
- The combined estimated do not include the cost of sworn personnel that are used to manage the various PSAPs while the projected consolidation model costs do include management support.
- The costs for the projected consolidated PSAP are based on proposed pay ranges. These numbers will need to be re-calculated should the actual pay ranges be significantly different.
- Higher consolidated PSAP personnel costs are also the result of the provision of a higher level of service. This service improvement is based on the addition of fire/EMS dispatchers, dedicated call takers, and an expanded administrative support staff.

Each individual municipality will need to complete an in-house non-biased cost analysis that includes all costs associated with supporting its own PSAP before determining if a consolidation would be cost effective for that municipality. However, choosing to consolidate is not a decision that should be made based on financial criteria alone. Even if more costly, Kimball fully endorses a consolidation as the improved level of service to the community and user agencies and improved interoperability warrant the additional cost in most circumstances.

1.4.3.4. Task 3 – Revised Facilities and Technology Capital Costs

Facilities Costs

The following chart represents budgetary planning figures for a facility sized to include a consolidated PSAP and Emergency Operations Center. These figures are based on general industry guidelines for facilities of this type, include all operational, office, kitchen, locker room, training, and administrative space and allow for current and future space needs. This chart should only be used to provide high level planning information. As the planning process progresses the size of the facility can be more closely determined and the associated costs can be adjusted accordingly.

Single PSAP Facility Cost Estimates Inclusive of an EOC				
# of Positions	Sq Footage/Position	Building Sq Footage	Cost/Per Sq Foot	Total Estimate
32	800	25,600	\$450	\$11,520,000
32	900	28,800	\$450	\$12,960,000
32	1,000	32,000	\$450	\$14,400,000
32	1,100	35,200	\$450	\$15,840,000
32	1,200	38,400	\$450	\$17,280,000
# of Positions	Sq Footage/Position	Building Sq Footage	Cost/Per Sq Foot	Total Estimate
32	800	25,600	\$500	\$12,800,000
32	900	28,800	\$500	\$14,400,000
32	1,000	32,000	\$500	\$16,000,000
32	1,100	35,200	\$500	\$17,600,000
32	1,200	38,400	\$500	\$19,200,000
# of Positions	Sq Footage/Position	Building Sq Footage	Cost/Per Sq Foot	Total Estimate
32	800	25,600	\$550	\$14,080,000
32	900	28,800	\$550	\$15,840,000
32	1,000	32,000	\$550	\$17,600,000
32	1,100	35,200	\$550	\$19,360,000
32	1,200	38,400	\$550	\$21,120,000

Technology Costs

As discussed in the Task 2 Report, Kimball recommends procuring new systems such as CPE, CAD,

radio consoles, and logging recorders for a consolidated center. Cost estimation for these new systems is based on appropriate sizing of the systems. Sizing is based on number of workstations and call volume for a complete countywide consolidation.

Actual initial capital costs for systems procurements will depend on how many agencies decide to consolidation and how many training and expansion work positions the County deems necessary. The costs in the combined chart below reflect a complete countywide consolidation, exclusive of Atlantic City, with all workstations equipped with the appropriate equipment. Ocean City participation is also assumed for these estimates. The chart below illustrates a combined facility and technology capital cost estimate.

Cost Summary - Single PSAP Model		
Category	Cost	Notes
Facility	\$19,200,000	1,200 square foot (sq. ft.) per position (32 positions) @ \$500 per Sq Foot inclusive of EOC space
CAD/RMS/MDC	\$2,525,000	New CAD/RMS Vendor including 300K for new servers
Radio/Logging Recorders	\$2,860,000	Primary/Back up facility, logging recorders, sample microwave hops
Telephony	\$650,000	CPE only - Does not include administrative telephone system
Dispatch Furniture/Chairs	\$512,000	Ergonomic dispatch furniture @ \$15,000 each and 24/7 chairs @ \$1,000 each
Total	\$25,747,000	Upper Mid-Range Estimate for Facility and Systems

1.4.3.5. Personnel and Recurring Systems Maintenance Costs

The chart below provides an overview of combined personnel and systems maintenance cost estimates. These costs are annually recurring costs and can be used for planning purposes. These costs do not include PSAP budget costs such as administrative costs.

Consolidated PSAP Annual Recurring Costs		
	# of Staff	Total Annual Cost
FTE Mgr/QA/Training/Admin***	5	\$288,000
FTE Shift Supervisors****	7	\$341,873
FTE Call Takers*	24	\$920,976
FTE Police/ Fire/ EMS Dispatchers**	99	\$4,317,093
Estimated Annual Overtime		\$100,000
Estimated Benefits @ 50.4% of Annual Salaries and Overtime		\$3,007,843
Personnel Total	135	\$8,975,785
System		
CAD/RMS/MDC		\$252,500
Radio		\$171,050
Telephony		\$128,000
Systems Maintenance Total		\$551,550
Total Annual Recurring Costs:		\$9,527,335

1.4.3.6. Other Costs

Costs the County can expect to incur during a consolidation project, but that cannot be estimated at this time a consolidation includes:

- Increased personnel costs during the planning and transition phase of a consolidation project. These costs include the hiring of a PSAP director and other support staff early in the process to assist in the planning and execution of the consolidation.
- Training costs associated with developing and implementing a training plan for all employees in the consolidated PSAP. This plan is critical so that the employees have the skill level to provide the expected service levels.
- Costs of professional services associated with facility design, planning, and programming, and systems procurement.
- Land and/or existing facility acquisition

1.4.3.7. Cost Summary

A consolidation of 9-1-1 and emergency dispatch services is initially an expensive undertaking as can be seen by the cost estimates in this report. As previously stated, these estimates should be used as high level budgetary planning purposes only. Until many of the variables regarding number of agencies consolidating, long term space needs, consolidation of dispatch positions, and detailed evaluation of administrative call volumes is done (usually in the planning process) these costs cannot be further refined.

Ideally, a 10 year cost-benefit analysis should be done to provide a more complete picture for the agencies

considering consolidation. However, Kimball was not able to perform such an analysis due to a lack of data from the municipalities. The cost estimates provided in this report are, at times, based on extrapolation of what data was collected which was at times minimal. Therefore, Kimball cannot with any confidence provide a detailed long-term cost-benefit analysis by agency and compare it to the costs estimated for a countywide consolidation. Kimball highly recommends that each municipality considering consolidation conduct its own internal study of the costs of maintaining its' own PSAP including not only the readily apparent costs such as personnel and equipment maintenance, but the personnel costs associated with sworn personnel support and management, other departmental support such as IT and Human Resources, and the elimination of expensive systems replacements over the long term.

Kimball strongly believes that a decision regarding consolidation should not be made on cost alone. The benefits of consolidating, as outlined in the Task 2 Report, are significant and would provide a dramatically improved level of service not only to the community, but to the police, fire, and EMS user agencies as well. Kimball also believes that the implementation of a fair and equitable funding mechanism will make a countywide consolidation financially feasible for the County.

1.4.3.8. Funding Mechanisms

There are a number of different types of costs associated with the establishment and operation of a consolidated PSAP. Different types of funding are generally used for the different types of costs. These funding mechanisms are determined, to a large degree, regionally as the availability of certain types of funds and the local political environment can have a significant impact available funding sources. Costs that need to be funded are:

- Initial capital costs associated with facility construction or renovation, procurement of PSAP systems, and facility furnishings
- Transitional costs associated with the planning and implementation process, hiring of PSAP management staff, and development and administration of a training plan for all PSAP employees
- Operating costs which include salaries and benefits, recurring maintenance costs for systems and facilities, and all other costs associated with the operation of the PSAP

There is a wide variety of methods used to fund these costs. These methods include local, state, and federal grants, bond issuance, implementation or shifting of taxes, capital and annual contributions from user agencies, or a hybrid created to best fit Atlantic County. Formulas for determining contributions by each municipality or user agency can be based on a variety of criteria such as population, number of access lines, PSAP usage, etc. The positives and negatives of these approaches are outlined in the body of the report.

Given the wide variety of available funding mechanisms and the regional nature of solutions, Kimball recommends the following:

- Discussions between stakeholders should begin as soon in the consolidation process as possible to develop a fair and equitable funding mechanism(s).
- Research for all available potential grant funding, local, state, and federal, should begin as soon as possible.
- The County should include stakeholders in this decision making process wherever feasible. One concern that was repeatedly expressed by stakeholders interviewed as that prior

- proposed funding mechanisms were viewed as inequitable. This past negative impression could create a roadblock for this project should it move forward.
- If possible, the County should consider utilizing a tax based funding mechanism as it is a clean and equitable solution. Public education regarding a shift from a municipal tax to a county tax should also take place as soon as possible to avoid the appearance of a tax increase if this is not the case.

1.5. PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

The planning phase of any consolidation is complex and includes many tasks and subtasks. However, should Atlantic County decide to move forward with a consolidation the following tasks should be addressed early in the planning process:

- Decide upon a final consolidation model
- Identify potential facility sites and enlist the professional services of a firm qualified to determine the suitability of each site as the potential location for a PSAP
- Begin consensus building with Atlantic County municipalities
- Develop a governance structure and funding mechanism for the PSAP
- Establish preliminary agreements with agencies. Many agencies are not willing to commit to a consolidation until all of the details and costs have been determined. Conversely, not all details and costs can be determined until the participating agencies are identified. Therefore, when necessary, Kimball recommends developing a preliminary agreement between the County and the agencies contingent up finalization of project details.
- Establish a Consolidation Committee comprised of stakeholders from the various participating agencies and the County.
- Review administrative call volume. As discussed in this report, an estimated 30% or more of the administrative calls currently handled by the individual agencies would not be appropriate for routing to the consolidated PSAP. A policy needs to be determined regarding which calls will be handled by the PSAP and which will remain with the original agency. Once this process is done, more accurate staffing levels and space estimates can be determined.
- Enlist the professional services of a firm pertaining to the detailed requirements identification, programming, and design of a consolidated communications center.
- Consider enlisting the assistance of a consulting firm to assist the County in the planning and implementation project phase.
- Identify an organizational structure for the PSAP and begin working with New Jersey Civil Service to create new positions as needed.
- Establish pay scale and benefit levels for the new organizational structure
- Begin working with labor unions regarding employee transitional issues
- Identify any infrastructure needs such as tower sites and/or microwave hops. System specifications are normally done later in the project timeline. However, certain infrastructure issues such as the procurement of a new tower site can be protracted in the time needed to reach a resolution.

1.6. SUMMARY

Consolidation of 9-1-1 and emergency dispatch services have become a national trend as more agencies recognize the benefits in terms of service improvements and potential long-term cost efficiencies. Numerous national organizations promote the consolidation of public safety services, including

emergency communications, such as:

- The National Emergency Number Association (NENA)
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- The U. S. Conference of Mayors
- The National League of Cities
- The International City / County Management Association (ICMA).

At the state level, consolidation efforts for not only emergency communications centers, but all municipal services are being strongly encouraged by New Jersey Governor John Corzine who recently signed into law P.L. 2007, CHAPTER 56 (S45). The amended S45 document can be found in its entirety in Appendix G of the report.

In summary, consolidation is not only promoted from within the public safety environment, but also in response to the mandates of governmental entities that have begun to use consolidation for achieving cost savings and efficiencies. Accordingly, consolidation of emergency communications centers is currently driven by quality of service provided to the community and user agencies, the potential long-term financial efficiencies offered, technological and governmental purposes – local, regional, state, and federal – based upon clearly defined needs and desired results. In essence, consolidation is an approach that is proactive and vision-centric for the good of the public and the public safety service providers. In light of these national trends, state initiatives, and information developed in these reports, consolidation within Atlantic County is not only feasible, but highly recommended.