

Testimony of Lieutenant Brett Mahoney, Waterford Police Department in favor of proposed bill, SB 475 **AN ACT CONCERNING MUTUAL CONSOLIDATION OF DISPATCH FACILITIES** before the Public Safety and Security Committee February 17, 2015.

Chairmen Dargan and Larsen, Senator Guglielmo and Representative Zupkus:

The municipalities of East Lyme, New London, and Waterford have been studying the ability to regionalize their dispatch centers for several years. The municipalities appointed several people from various disciplines to work on a committee to ascertain the feasibility of a regional dispatch facility, the first of its kind in Connecticut to combine Police, Fire, EMS, regional Paramedics, and other entities (Public Works, Schools, etc.)

What was initially thought to be able to be handled through an interlocal agreement between three towns has proven to be far more complex.

As the group progressed through the project they realized several benefits that a regionalized municipal dispatch had to offer, the ultimate goal being increased service and protection for those in all three communities. Second, increased efficiencies between the emergency services in town, and last, potential long term cost savings and decreasing the number of public safety access points (PSAPs) as requested by the State of Connecticut.

The municipalities involved wish to comply with the state's request for reducing the number of PSAPs, but have to do so in a way that their needs and requirements are met. Simply put, the municipalities involved do not wish to privatize dispatch for multiple reasons.

- Privatization does not lend itself to the top down structure (especially emergency services structure) municipalities currently deal with. If privatized, the municipality would have dispatch as a vendor, they wish to retain control.
- The municipalities do not wish to lose the ability to set policy, structure, and guidelines.
- The municipalities wish to retain their employees as municipal employees.
- Municipal employees from one town cannot work for supervisors from another town, this will be in direct violation of existing labor contracts.
- Municipal employees participate in differing retirement systems, some in CMERS, some in town run funds that will not coincide in an interlocal agreement.
  - One of the towns(Waterford ) is under CMERS, another is in the final stages of negotiation to go to it (New London). Can CMERS employees operate under a 501c3 as a private center?

All of the municipalities involved wish to apply for grant opportunities (Federal and State) that they currently can for their respective dispatch centers. The ability to regionalize affords them more opportunities to apply for grants, which the municipalities involved obviously want to do. Privatization under a 501c3 structure will inhibit some of that ability.

The police departments involved have their own COLLECT/NCIC machines, and operate under the strict protocols for that system set forth by the Connecticut State Police. The police chiefs of those

municipalities will not relinquish control of COLLECT/NCIC to a private entity, as it will be in violation of the rules set forth. While it can be done, the rules of privatization become more complex. East Lyme has the ability to query information only through their NCIC terminal, they must contact the State Police for entries. Having two municipalities and one State agency using a bifurcated NCIC system under private control will be extremely problematic for BEST/DOIT.

The regional private entities currently in place throughout the state are doing a great job for their respective communities. This legislation is requested because the three municipalities involved are different from those being served by KX Colchester, Litchfield County, Quinnebaug Valley, and Valley Shore. East Lyme, New London, and Waterford all have paid fire personnel, East Lyme and Waterford also utilize volunteers. New London has a fully paid fire department, and all three have full time police departments.

KX in Colchester, Quinnebaug Valley, and Valley Shore represent mostly smaller towns, and focus almost exclusively on volunteer fire departments. Litchfield County has one police department – Torrington, KX has one police department - East Hampton, and Valley Shore has no police departments.

Combining three municipalities and their respective emergency service and every day needs is a radical departure from what has been the norm in Connecticut. The municipal heads involved look at this legislation as a way of strengthening the bonds between the communities, and establishing a legal framework to operate under, similar to regional legislation that is already in place in the State of Massachusetts.

I urge that you strongly consider this legislation as a way for us to complete our mission of serving our communities in a positive manner.

Respectfully,

Lieutenant Brett Mahoney  
Waterford Police Department