



Committee Report

To:	Warden Hicks and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	December 10, 2020
Subject / Report No:	PDR-CW-04-21
Title:	Next Generation 911 Preparedness and Primary Public Safety Answering Point – Owen Sound Police Services
Prepared by:	Randy Scherzer
Reviewed by:	Kim Wingrove
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	All Municipalities
Status:	Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution CW07-12; Endorsed by County Council January 14, 2021 per CC08-21;

Recommendation

1. **That Report PDR-CW-04-21 be received which provides an overview of the Next Generation 911 preparedness requirements; and**
2. **That staff be directed to enter into negotiations with Owen Sound Police Services, Grey County's current Primary Public Safety Answering Point service provider, and to bring back a draft contract renewal agreement for Council's consideration.**

Executive Summary

Owen Sound Police Services is the current Primary Public Safety Answering Point (PPSAP) operator for Grey County and provides 9-1-1 call centre services for all emergency calls made throughout Grey County. OSPS has provided excellent service to Grey County. All PPSAPs are required by the federal government to upgrade their systems to meet Next Generation 911 capabilities and decommission existing services. Owen Sound Police Services (OSPS) has been a leader in this regard, meeting or exceeding all the original deadlines set by CRTC. The OSPS upfront investment in NG911 technology is planned to be recouped through contract price increases at the time of renewal with the municipalities they provide PPSAP services to. Grey County's contract with OSPS expires this year and an increase of about \$14,000 in 2021 is anticipated. It is recommended that staff be directed to enter into negotiations with OSPS for a contract renewal agreement and bring this back for Council's consideration.

Background and Discussion

The CRTC is responsible for regulating the telecommunications service providers who provide the telecommunication networks across Canada to direct and connect 9-1-1 emergency calls to emergency call centres. In June 2017, the CRTC mandated that all telecommunication providers update their networks in order to be ready to provide Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911) voice, video and text messaging services throughout Canada.

The current 9-1-1 system was primarily designed for a landline system associated with a fixed address. Improvements to the system have been adapted to accommodate mobile technologies; however, the current system is not able to accommodate the digital information required to improve the ability to locate callers. There has also been a steady increase in the use of mobile devices in calling 9-1-1 and therefore a steady decrease in the use of landlines. The current 9-1-1 system is limited in determining a mobile caller's location accurately. This is why CRTC has mandated that networks and systems be updated to accommodate NG911 and to decommission the current 9-1-1 system.

NG911 automatically provides the 9-1-1 operator with the phone number and address or location of the caller. NG911 will also allow 9-1-1 callers to interact with 9-1-1 call centres using new and innovative services such as real time chat, texting to 9-1-1 services, and transmitting photos, videos, and medical records. For residents who have communication disabilities, or who are deaf or hard of hearing, will be able to text to 9-1-1 call centres using the new NG911 system. NG911 services will result in safer, faster and more informed emergency responses. Further information about NG911 can be found on the CRTC website at [this link](#). CRTC also has prepared a video regarding NG911 which can be accessed at [this link](#).

The County of Grey is responsible for the provision and operation of the Primary Public Safety Answering Point (PPSAP) for the 9-1-1 serving area under the current 9-1-1 Public Emergency Reporting Service (PERS) Agreement with Bell Canada. The Owen Sound Police Services (OSPS) dispatch has operated the PPSAP for the County of Grey under contract since the inception of 9-1-1 in Grey County which commenced in the late 90's. A link to the current PPSAP contract agreement with OSPS can be found in the 'Appendices and Attachment' section.

The current annual fee that is paid to the Owen Sound Police Services for the operation of the PPSAP is calculated at a rate of fifty-six cents (\$0.56) per person per year based on the number of permanent residents within the 9-1-1 serving area. In 2020, the total annual rate paid to Owen Sound Police Services was \$52,545 (based on 2016 Census Population – 93,830). The current agreement expires this year; however, there are provisions in the current contract for automatic renewal. There are also provisions in the current contract which allows the current per person rate to be renegotiated in the 4th and 5th years of the contract. OSPS have not requested an increase to the per resident rate in either 2019 or in 2020 being the 4th and 5th years of the current contract. The existing contract does not include wording with respect to service expectations regarding NG911. Therefore, it is prudent for the County to enter into discussions with OSPS on a new contact that will identify the requirements associated with NG911.

In order to address the new NG911 requirements and to meet the deadlines set by CRTC, OSPS has been actively working on upgrades to the call centre infrastructure, software,

licensing and training for staff. This includes developing new protocols for handling the digital information (text messages, photos, videos, etc.), ensuring that the systems are secure, handling the storage of the digital information, etc. In 2020 alone, OSPS IT staff and contractors have spent approximately 400 hours in preparing for NG911 and testing the system. OSPS is the leading municipal service in Ontario and the only fire dispatch in Ontario when it comes to NG911 preparedness. They have recently completed redundancy testing which will put them very close to being 100% ready to go for NG911 services. The total costs for NG911 is estimated to cost over \$300,000 to launch and another \$50,000 to \$60,000 per year to maintain the system which does not include staffing costs.

The current estimated costs provided by OSPS for the PPSAP's on a per resident basis would be phased in over the next five years with 2021 being approximately \$0.67 per resident and increasing approximately \$0.02 per resident each year with the 2025 estimated costs being \$0.75 per resident. OSPS indicates that the final costs would be negotiated between Grey County and their Chief and Board to determine the final rates. The cost increase per capita is to recuperate a small amount of NG911 costs at the PPSAP level. OSPS notes that most of the recuperation of costs will be done through the Secondary PSAP's that they provide services for as they will utilize the new NG911 services the most.

County staff anticipate that the 2021 Permanent Census Population for Grey County will increase. The Ministry of Finance's recent population projections suggests that Grey County's permanent population will be 102,400 people in 2021. The actual Census population results are typically released a year after the Census period and therefore we anticipate that the population results will be released in 2022. Even if we estimate that the 2021 permanent population will be approximately 100,000 people, the 2021 PPSAP contract costs could be approximately \$67,000 which is an increase of just over \$14,000 from the current costs. The anticipated increase in the permanent population can be part of the discussions with OSPS to determine the final estimated cost if Grey County Council were to approve a contract renewal agreement.

In both 2009 and 2015, Council considered whether or not to issue a Request for Proposal for the provision of the PPSAP service. Council decided to single source the service to Owen Sound Police Services and to renegotiate a contract on the basis of maintaining the integrity of the 9-1-1 Public Emergency Reporting System. Based on the excellent service that OSPS has provided since the inception of 9-1-1 services in Grey County, and based on the estimated cost increases as a result of NG911 preparedness, and based on the fact that OSPS is leading the charge when it comes to being ready for NG911, and given that the current contract does not include wording with respect to the new NG911 requirements, staff are recommending that we enter into discussions with OSPS to negotiate a final price per resident over the next 5 years and to prepare a draft contract renewal agreement for Council's consideration.

Grey County staff did reach out to some of the Secondary PSAP's in our area to ask them if they have been experiencing any challenges with respect to getting ready for NG911. Most of them are utilizing OSPS for their dispatch services and since OSPS is NG911 ready that has allowed them to be ready for NG911. Others who don't use OSPS services noted that they are still in the process of preparing for NG911 but they all noted that they will be ready prior to the CRTC deadlines. Some of the challenges they noted include: costs, scheduling and conflicting priorities when it comes to testing/training, limited resources (financial and staff), and ensuring that their members have the technical expertise to implement the new changes.

Legal and Legislated Requirements

Agreement and Legal staff will be involved in the preparation of a contract agreement.

The original deadlines set by CRTC have been extended due to the pandemic, however the existing 9-1-1 will need to be decommissioned by March 30, 2024. NG911 service providers and network providers need to be ready to support NG911 voice calls by March 30, 2021, NG911 network providers need to have their networks ready to support NG911 text messaging by September 30, 2021, and Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) must launch NG911 text messaging services by March 30, 2022.

Financial and Resource Implications

The proposed 2021 budget will include an estimated increase for the Primary Public Safety Answering Point service of approximately \$14,000, for a total approximate cost of \$67,000. This is using the estimated new rate of \$0.67 per resident for an estimated total population of approximately 100,000 permanent residents in Grey County for 2021. Should Council direct staff to negotiate with OSPS, staff will bring back the final estimated costs and prepare a draft contract renewal agreement for Council's consideration.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal: Planning, Emergency Management, Paramedic Services
- External: Secondary PSAP's, Owen Sound Police Services, Bruce County

Appendices and Attachments

[Schedule to By-law 4909-15 - Primary Public Safety Answering Point Agreement - Owen Sound Police Services](#)