

Commissioner calls current dispatch agreement unfair and stupid

(KLZA)-- 911 dispatching in Richardson County has been a topic of debate for a number of years. The idea of a combined dispatch center between the Sheriff's Office and the Falls City Police Department has been discussed but no agreement has been reached.

The Falls City Police Department handled the emergency dispatching for the Richardson County Sheriff's Office for many years but since 2021, the 911 dispatching for Richardson County, outside of Falls City has been contracted out to Southeast Communications 911 in Beatrice.

During that time conversations about having the emergency dispatching returned to the Falls City Police Department has been taking place. This past August, a proposal to renew the contract with Southeast Communication 911 sought an increase in cost to Richardson County from \$190 thousand to nearly \$360 thousand annually.

When the dispatching discussion was on the table again during Tuesday's Richardson County Commission meeting. Commissioner David Sickel voiced his displeasure with the current arrangement, calling it unfair to taxpayers in the county and in town, labeling the current arrangement as stupid.

Richardson County Sheriff Rick Hardesty has been in favor of having the dispatching brought back to Richardson County, via the Falls City Police Department, which he believes would be cheaper for everyone involved.

The idea of a combined dispatch has been discussed over the years. Falls City Police Chief Jamie Baker said it will take time to develop a single dispatch center, including hiring additional dispatchers and reaching an agreement between the City and County.

Baker estimates it would take up to two years to hire the required additional dispatchers for a combined dispatch and to get them trained as 911 dispatchers.

Baker says it typically takes 4-6 months to get a new dispatcher trained in 911 procedures, depending on the person. Chief Baker says it would be a costly and time consuming effort.

No decisions were made during Tuesday's meeting. More meetings are expected involving City and County representatives to come to an eventual agreement over the dispatch issue.

Many Signals Communications