

Falls City Council discusses combining dispatching

(KLZA)-- Richardson County Commissioner John Caverzagie and Sheriff Rick Hardesty met with the Falls City Council Monday evening to discuss the future of 911 dispatching.

Caverzagie said Richardson County has been discussing new 911 equipment and needs to know if the City would be on board with the Sheriff's Department taking becoming the Public Service Answering Point for 911 calls and doing all of the dispatching.

Caverzagie said for the Sheriff's Office to take on the responsibility it would require an investment of more than \$1.2-million in new equipment, but the cost could be less if the City continued with 911 dispatching.

In order for the City to continue the emergency dispatching, upgrade costs to the City are estimated to be in the neighborhood of \$100-thousand.

Council member Mitch Merz said the number one thing is safety for all the citizens but also mentioned Richardson County stopped paying the City for 911 dispatching a few years ago, and wanted to know if the City would have that same agreement if the Sheriff's Office did the dispatching.

Caverzagie said while Commissioners have taken no formal action on a proposal, preliminary discussions were that the County would ask the City to pay the costs for the wages and benefits for one dispatcher.

Sheriff Rick Hardesty said that if the Sheriff's Office takes over, they would have two dispatchers on at one time due to the calls for service for the City, County and Fire Departments in the County. The Sheriff said whether it be under the City or County, the dispatching it would be beneficial to have one dispatch center due to the amount of time to pass information from one entity to the other during an emergency.

Falls City Police Chief Duane Armbruster said he likes the idea of discussing the possibility but noted there are lots of little things that need to be discussed. He noted that 911 Dispatchers are paid more than regular dispatchers. Armbruster said he feels a combined dispatch would be a money saver in the long run.

Sheriff Hardesty said he would like to see a new plan implemented by July 1 if the Sheriff's Office takes over the 911 dispatching since that is the start of a new budget cycle.

Councilman Don Ferguson said this seems like a good idea collectively for for all those involved, saying its good for all the citizens of the county.

The City asked the Commissioners to prepare a written proposal that a group representing the City and the County could review and decide how to move forward.

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