

Richardson County Board discussing regional dispatching
(KLZA)-- Richardson County continues to look at options concerning 911 dispatching services.

Tuesday, Beatrice Police Chief Bruce Lang and members of the Beatrice 911 program that serves all of Gage County as well as the City of Crete which is in Saline County met with the Richardson County Board to discuss a proposal for the Beatrice 911 provide dispatching for Richardson County outside of Falls City. Lang did say that they would be glad to provide dispatch services for Falls City as well.

Lang said that training and staffing requirements are pushing emergency dispatching toward consolidation of services. He said the days of the "Jailer/Dispatcher" are coming to an end because the requirements just won't allow that to happen.

The Falls City Police Department currently serves as the Public Service Answering Point for 911 calls for all of Richardson County. Richardson County earlier this year proposed combining the City and County dispatching into a single dispatch center in an attempt to save tax dollars. Following an exchange of proposals, the City Council said the City would continue to serve as the PSAP and not take part in further negotiations.

Richardson County Sheriff Rick Hardesty said following that, the Beatrice Police contacted Richardson County Commission Chairman David Sickel to see if Richardson County would be interested in being part of their 911-dispatch group.

Lang told those in attendance, which included members of the Falls City Police Department and Administration along with representatives of the Humboldt Ambulance Squad and Richardson County Rural Fire Mutual Aid that they are also looking to include other counties including Johnson and Jefferson Counties.

Lang said no one is making money on this, but by having more members resources could be shared and the service should be better.

Lang said he knows it's hard to make change, but that all the counties and cities are too small to make it on their own. He said sometimes understanding what is best and what we want can be difficult.

While the up-front costs for Richardson County have not been determined, Lang

estimated the annual cost to be in the neighborhood of \$180-thousand.

Those up-front costs would include a new radio tower and radio consoles. He also said the proposal would be for a three-year contract. Lang said he believed making the change would save Richardson County more than a million dollars over a five-year period.

Doug Phillips with the Humboldt Rescue Squad asked what the benefits would be for groups such as the Humboldt Rescue Squad and Fire Department over the current system. Lang noted sharing resources, being able to include mobile data terminals in emergency vehicles is possible. He said that by later this Fall,

Beatrice will have a tornado resistant back-up 911 dispatch center inside the new \$9-million Beatrice Fire Station that is being built.

Lang said with the current technology, it makes no difference where the dispatching is done from, the information would be the same and there would be no time delay.

Sheriff Hardesty said he feels it would be a benefit for the residents of Richardson County and that he hopes Falls City will also jump on board.

Hardesty reiterated his feelings that he thinks having all the dispatching in one place is the best situation for the citizens of Richardson County.

The next step will be Doug Ostengard with First Wireless determining the radio needs, phone line needs and tower needs and coming up with the “up-front” costs. At that point they can come up with more solid numbers for the cost.

Lang said they could also meet with other entities such as rural fire departments and other first-responders to discuss their concerns about making such a change. He also said they would be willing to meet with Falls City representatives if they were interested in being part of the regional dispatch center.

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