

Staff Report

Origin

At their January 14, 2002 meeting, Council directed staff to undertake a review of Richmond's participation in the EComm project. This review has been actively underway since that time, with updates provided to Council at appropriate times.

At the January 14, Closed Council meeting, a resolution was passed, which in part read as follows:

THAT EComm be advised that the City will not participate in any services beyond the currently authorized radio function until the concerns outlined in the staff report have been addressed to the satisfaction of Richmond senior staff', and

"THAT staff examine and report back on the feasibility and cost to provide combined RCMP, Fire Rescue and Works-Yard dispatch services, and a corporate call center locally."

Purpose

This report addresses two issues:

- A. The status of the outstanding issues from the January 14th report that staff have been addressing with EComm, and
- B. Whether or not the City should join EComm for "dispatch" services.

Analysis

Richmond's Concerns regarding EComm Issues

The concerns covered by the first part of the January 14th resolution, (noted above), are presented in Attachment "A", which provides a summary of the Richmond issues that required resolution. Staff reports that EComm has addressed all our major concerns, with a positive resolution on all significant issues. In summary, EComm has adequately addressed Richmond's concerns in the principle areas of governance, costing model, and management/financial performance issues.

Dispatch/Call Centre Function Costing

The second part of the resolution from January 14th that staff have been examining, is concerned with the development of a "Richmond solution" as an alternative to the City joining EComm for dispatch purposes.¹ To address this issue, two scenarios were developed, and the feasibility and appropriateness of the Richmond solution assessed. It should be noted that in both scenarios, Richmond would continue to use the EComm radio system. The first scenario represents the "EComm Solution"; the second scenario represents the "Richmond solution".

¹ Richmond is presently a member of the EComm Wide Area Network radio system.

Scenario 1 (EComm Solution)

- a) Richmond joins EComm for Fire Rescue and RCMP dispatch and records management services (as per cost study review by KPMG), and
- b) Richmond operates a Corporate Call Centre for the management of all customer enquiries and service requests, and a computer monitoring and alarm function. (This includes items such as the City switchboard and Public Works Dispatch functions, SCADA and other alarm monitoring functions, City registration systems, etc.)

Scenario 2 (Richmond Solution)

Richmond provides a Communications Centre that would include all functions outlined in Scenario 1. It would include a Corporate Call Centre, and dispatch/records management services for Fire Rescue and RCMP.

The January 14th report contemplated that if all “communications” functions provided by the City were addressed in a single integrated centre, there would be synergies that would result in significant cost savings to the City. What was determined as a result of the review was that the anticipated synergies did not materialize to the extent anticipated. There were some savings to be had through shared management and technical support, but these savings could also be achieved through joining EComm.

The costs for the dispatch function for the two scenarios are shown in Table 1. The ‘difference’ in costs, represents the fact that the capital costs for the EComm building, and the technology to provide dispatch for Fire and Police services are already in place, and to provide the same facilities and technology in a “Richmond Solution” would require that we duplicate facilities that are already available.

Table 1

Comparison of Dispatch Function Costs ²			
	Scenario 1 EComm Solution	Scenario 2 Richmond Solution	Difference
Capital	\$41,500	\$3,542,135	\$3,500,635 ³
Annual Operating	\$2,924,535	\$3,861,582	\$ 937,047

² These are "order of magnitude" costs. They are very preliminary assessments based on the sketchiest of information, which were developed only for the purpose of assessing whether or not the City should pursue one scenario over another. There has been no technical software design or system design for these applications. The estimates reflect the experience of others, and actual costs could vary by as much as 50%.

³ For costing purposes, it was assumed that the Communications Center would be constructed within the proposed Community Safety Headquarters building.

Part of the costing activity for this report included the development of a cost for the provision of a corporate call centre, and an alarm and monitoring centre, in addition to the costs for the dispatch function. A summary of the capital and operating estimates for each function is shown in Table 2 for information only:

Estimate of Costs ⁴ - Call Centre & Alarm & Monitoring Centre		
<u>Table 2</u>	Call Centre	Alarm & Monitoring Centre
Capital	\$2,431,100	\$2,313,500
<u>Annual</u> Operating	\$1,274,851	\$1,066,534

The level of work performed in developing these estimates was adequate to demonstrate that a decision on the call centre and the alarm and monitoring centre do not impact the decision regarding dispatch. Therefore, they will not be addressed further in this report. However, it became apparent early in the staff review, that there is a strong link between these other two activity centres and the proposed Community Safety Headquarters building. Given that the new Headquarters building will be a post-disaster design, it is the only city facility that has the potential to house these functions. Consequently, staff will bring separate reports on these functions to Council at a later date, as part of the headquarters project.

Operational Considerations

In addition to costing considerations, the two service providers impacted by the proposed scenarios were asked for input regarding the operational implications of the two scenarios. Their comments have been paraphrased for brevity as follows:

- RCMP Position (paraphrased from RDMS #808138)

There are some concerns regarding the loss of the ability to use the Communications Centre as an “EOC” to plan, map, strategize, etc., in response to incidents. Generally, however, it is felt that the regionalization of “complaint taking” and “dispatch” functions will enhance the ability of police agencies to respond to criminal activity within the region. All operational concerns related to remote dispatching and complaint taking were discussed with the Watch Commanders at Richmond Detachment. Based on an evaluation of RCMP operational issues, the original rationale for moving these two functions to EComm, still exists. The benefits of consolidating the two functions is in the best interest of police services. Regionalizing these functions is also consistent with, and

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further supports, the on-going regionalization of other area/functions of police service delivery currently being implemented and considered.

□ Fire Rescue Position (paraphrased from RDMS #775802)

An Emergency Communications Centre, (Com Centre), is the point through which nearly all emergency and non-emergency information flows, is processed, and then acted upon. Fire Rescue communications includes the methods by which the Com Centre can notify the proper fire fighting resources and relay information between all personnel involved at the scene of an emergency. The Com Centre is not only the central point of contact between fire-rescue and the public, but also between the different shifts and fire stations of the department. The expedient handling of fire alarms and/or calls for help is a significant factor in the successful outcome of any incident.

The City's Fire Rescue Department has expressed concerns regarding the transfer of dispatch functions to EComm. There is concern the City will be compromising some of the benefits of a locally managed command model, including such concerns as the distribution of resources during emergency events, the development and implementation of response policies, the coordination of operations with YVR, RCMP and City Works Yard, and finally, the notification and call back of off-duty fire fighters during major emergencies.

On the other hand, Fire Rescue point out that a centralized approach to dispatch is the only viable way to address the issues of resource deployment along our boundaries with other communities. The current model tends to create silos with very little cooperation in the development of automatic aid agreements. A centralized dispatch model would support a more cooperative deployment model that, in the end, would be the most beneficial for our collective customers.

Labour Relations Considerations

This report has not been discussed or reviewed with the CUPE 718 or IAFF 1286. Council made their decision on this issue in 1997, and this report does not propose a change to that decision. Consequently, there are no labour issues arising from this report. However, staff is aware that there is interest on the part of IAFF 1286, and some of the police dispatchers, to retain dispatch as a City function. Individual considerations were not addressed, as they are not considered within the scope of this report.

In the event that a Richmond Call Centre is created, appropriate discussions with Labour will take place. With the decision to transition to EComm, the Communications Operators at the RCMP will be affected and the necessary steps to address transition issues will be taken as per the Collective Agreement. All City Communications Operators have been kept advised of how the transition would be effected.

Financial Impact

As shown in Table 1, the City would incur significant additional costs to provide a “Richmond Solution” to dispatch for Fire and police services compared to EComm. Additional capital costs are estimated at \$3.5 million. Additional annual operating costs are estimated at \$1 million.

Commentary

In the opinion of the Author, there is no one way or even a “best way” to operate a police or Fire Communications Centre. There are many examples of consolidated centres such as EComm, and independent centres such as Richmond’s, all of which provide excellent dispatch and call-taking functions. The most significant hurdle from an implementation perspective is the resistance to change, both from the individuals involved and from the agencies that must adopt new business models. The reality in this decision is that for both of the options available, there will be significant systemic change for both individuals and the agencies. Therefore, the issue of change is considered common to both options, and will have to be addressed during the implementation phase of the project.

To gain some personal insight and understanding into the issues confronting those who must deliver the services and those who are the recipients of the service, I spent time in the field and in the two Richmond Emergency Communications Centres. It is my belief that a local communications centre would allow for better management of incidents, principally because of the intimacy and confidence that develops between the operators and the field teams. They become one, and a level of trust and understanding develops that could not develop over a phone connection. Having a City Emergency Communications Centre in the new proposed Community Safety Headquarters, using the latest technology, would be the ideal solution if there were no other factors impacting the decision. But there are!

Most of the operational issues related to a transition to EComm can be addressed by the application of technology. The larger issue is, that moving to EComm means a commitment to work within a regional system for the greater good of the region. This ultimately will mean sharing, compromise and consensus for all participants, and that ultimately translates into a loss of local control over some issues. In our earlier report to Council on this issue, staff identified that they recommended joining this initiative because we felt that ultimately, it would be to the City’s and the Region’s long-term benefit. We had serious reservations regarding that recommendation a year ago. Our reservations were not related to the technology or the concept of a regional communications network. Rather, they were focused on a number of governance, business and financial aspects of the EComm Corporation that had to be addressed before the operational benefits of the network could be considered. Since then, on Council’s direction, the City has aggressively pursued the many issues that were problematic to the City. Those issues have been addressed to our satisfaction.


A review of the long-term EComm financial projections, coupled with discussions with senior EComm staff, have satisfied City staff that there are no major financial unknowns that have not been disclosed. However, given EComm is a somewhat new venture, with some unknown territory lies ahead, staff anticipate there will be increases in costs over the next five years. Even

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with these increases, however, there will be less impact on the City than by creating our own Communications Centre. The steps that staff have taken to ensure greater accountability with EComm budgets will ensure we have an opportunity to influence appropriately.

Conclusion

A review of the most current information leads staff to conclude that there would be a very significant cost to the City to consider providing a "Richmond Solution" to emergency dispatch; with very little argument to be made that there is a corresponding "offsetting" operational benefit. In arriving at a recommendation, staff referred back to our earlier report, where we indicated strong support for the principles and resulting benefits of a regional communications function, providing the decision did not compromise the City's ability to manage its financial and operational needs. In this context, the recommendation is supportable.



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Status Update		
Issues Relating to Richmond's Review of EComm		
Issue	Comments	Estimated Completion
1. Continued use of radio system	Currently operational.	In place.
2. Reduced payment for inferior RFR radio product	Payment to EComm will be reduced by \$4,000 per month effective January 15, 2002.	Evaluation of radios by RFR complete. Report due mid-August. Anticipate successful evaluation.
3a) Establish a Review Panel to evaluate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Governance Structure - Cost Allocation Model - Mgmt/Admin Accountability - Financial Accountability - Labour Relations Long-Term Impacts - Liability Protection for Members 	<p>The EComm Board was not in favour of a Review Panel. Instead, on February 27, 2002 the Governance Sub-Committee of the Board was expanded to include the additional members proposed in the City's Review Panel. Richmond staff considers this an acceptable approach. The City is represented on the sub-committee by the CAO.</p> <p>Action on individual items listed is being approached in ways other than through the Review Panel concept. The status of these items is provided in 3) (b) to (f) below</p>	<p>Preliminary response - June, 2002.</p> <p>Completion ... Fall, 2003 if AGM approval is required for any Sub-Committee recommendations.</p>
b) Cost Allocation Model -	<p>The Board directed EComm management to undertake a review. A facilitated review with member representation (including Richmond) has concluded.</p> <p>EComm management will report to the Board, with recommendations from the review committee. The current model has been supported by the committee as a fair and workable model. Richmond provided letter of support for current model.</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p>
c) Management/Administrative accountability	<p>Richmond had proposed a "Management Resources Support Team" made up of staff from member organizations. EComm's President will address the issues identified by Richmond and "will seek consultation when required".</p> <p>EComm have agreed to use Service Level Agreements as proposed by Richmond</p> <p>A "Principal Contact Person" has been appointed by both the City and EComm</p>	<p>On-going</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p>

<p>d) Financial Accountability</p>	<p>EComm proposes that the Board's Audit Committee review the method in which EComm's budget issues are presented to ensure individual member levy impacts are identified. Richmond's representative is on the Audit Committee.</p> <p>EComm has accepted assistance offered by City of Richmond's Finance Department staff.</p>	<p>Recommendation will go to the August Board meeting</p> <p>Complete</p>
<p>e) Labour Relations</p>	<p>EComm's President and Manager responsible for Labour relations assure Richmond that labour strife is not anticipated in future. Conditions related to previous contract negotiations have been resolved. All necessary steps to ensure efficient operations and to mitigate future labour issues have been taken.</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>f) Liability Protection</p>	<p>The EComm President has advised that prior to pursuing new ventures, a risk analysis will be undertaken and reported to the Board in order that risks can be weighed against benefits.</p>	<p>Addressed through Audit Committee as noted in 3(d).</p> <p>Complete</p>
<p>4. PRC CAD Shortfall</p>	<p>EComm has proposed a number of strategies to address the shortfall including cost reductions, charging costs to new members and allocating non-member revenues. The funding strategy proposes that costs to original participants remain at the amounts previously identified. This translates into no increased costs for Richmond, and staff supports this approach.</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>5. No further participation by Richmond in EComm until issues resolved.</p>	<p>EComm has accepted Richmond's proposed concept of a "Model Service Level Agreement" and is working cooperatively with Richmond's to develop one.</p>	<p>Specific agreements to be developed as required</p>
<p>6. City to provide own dispatch for RCMP and RFR</p>	<p>Currently operational.</p>	<p>In place on temporary basis until transition to EComm occurs</p>
<p>7. Report back to Council on the feasibility and cost to provide our own dispatch for RCMP, RFR, Works Yard, alarm monitoring and a Corporate Call Centre.</p>	<p>This is a Richmond initiative that does not require a response from EComm. Details will be reported as part of a report to Council</p>	<p>July 2002</p>

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