February 19, 2020, Special Board Meeting **T-478**

On Wednesday, February 19, 2020, at 10:00 a.m., Chairperson Patti Peretto called a special meeting to order. The meeting was held at the Caspian City Volunteer Fire Hall at 1 Museum Drive, Caspian, MI. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Roll call was taken with the following board members present: Chair Patti Peretto, Commissioner Sharon Leonoff, Commissioner Mike Stafford, Commissioner Tim Aho and Commissioner Ray Coates. Board of Commissioner's Administrative Assistant, Mary Dalpra was present and requested by County Clerk Julie Kezerle to take the meeting minutes due to the Clerk's absence.

Also present: Iron County Central Dispatch Director, Vernon Jones, Iron County Civil Counsel, Steve Tinti, IC Dispatcher Ashley Schmidt, Gogebic County Emergency Manager/ 911 Coordinator Heidi DeRosso and Assistant Emergency Manager / 911 Coordinator Andrew Westeen, Caspian City Mayor Mark Stauber, Caspian City Manager John Stokoski and the following members of the UP 911 Advisory Board; Iron County Sheriff Mark Valesano, Iron River City Police Chief Kurt Bristol, Michigan State Police Chief Paul Campbell, and Aspirus Hospitals Emergency Services, Joel Bach.

Moved by Stafford, supported by Aho to approve the agenda. Voice vote, motion carried.

New Business:

Central Dispatch Director Vernon Jones opened discussion with an overview of his recent appointment to director, the status of the current state of the central dispatch department and also offered a historical overview of 911 at Iron County. He further went into lengthy discussion regarding the dire financial realities of running this department; the budget absorption to wages, unbalanced service agreements with other units, lack of short and long term equipment planning, and continual bailouts from the county general fund in addition to an annual appropriation. After his own lengthy investigation into the department's operating budget for this and prior years, he went on to state that his analysis and findings forecast a sure uncertainty for the continued operations of the Iron County Dispatch as they are currently run. Jones then went into discussion on the upcoming possibility of running a county wide millage that would completely support the department and possibly allow for a small financial cushion. He cited the fact that in this current budget cycle there had already been an unexpected health insurance cost which upset the amount budgeted for equipment replacement and no other reserves in place. Prior action by the county board had approved a .25 mill request and he strongly felt that selling a full 1 mill request to the voters would be the key to this operation moving forward successfully and thereby alleviating all general funds appropriations in future budgets, currently in the area of $180,000 annually. An important piece of delivering the sale of the 1 mill to voters would be the elimination of the $2.70 per device surcharge. He strongly felt that eliminating this fee with a mill replacement would alleviate expense to the taxpayer and ensure stable funding to the department.

At this point, Jones requested commentary from other attendees. Heidi DeRosso from Gogebic County stated that their current contract agreement with Iron County for dispatch services would be expiring at the end of 2020. Gogebic has recently placed an RFP out for these services of which Iron County would be able to submit a bid. She also stated that Gogebic County residents will be asked to approve a 5 year Millage proposal to sustain 911 services in that county. Aspirus representative, Joel Bach, along with DeRosso further explained that the medical upgrade portion to the CAD response system was still not in place and both of their respective units had bought into that program at $3250.00 each. They both placed emphasis on that piece being active in the future. There appears to be an incompatibility with the medical portion and it's functionality within the CAD. Caspian representatives, Mark Stauber and John Stokoski both viewed the favorability of keeping the dispatch department with Iron County, but Stokoski stated that the numbers should be scrutinized to merit the end value of keeping the program in- county versus contracting with the Michigan State Police. Sheriff Valesano went on to state that he placed a lot of weight on the ability for the county to retain the 11 positions of employment and also the easier access to information that would be in-house versus requesting that same information from an outside agency and the time constraints involved. Chief Bristol and Chief Campbell concurred on the remarks made for in-house access and the immediate availability of access to records and warrants that would otherwise take more time. Other comments included the positive economic impact on the county with the 11 positions as well as the local knowledge brought in with those individuals.

Final thoughts were to move forward with selling and educating the Iron County taxpayers with a millage proposal that would sustain general operations of the Iron County Central Dispatch department. The Iron County Board of Commissioners will place on their next regular agenda for further consideration. Moved by Aho, supported by Leonoff to Adjourn. Voice vote, motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Patti Peretto, Chairperson Mary Dalpra, Administrative Assistant