

Summary Fact Sheet on SNOCOM-SNOPAC Consolidation Discussions

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SNOCOM and SNOPAC are separate agencies created by interlocal agreement that provide 911-call answering, fire/police and emergency medical dispatch, and ancillary services including administration of public safety communication systems in Snohomish County. Collectively, the members of these two agencies include the County and all cities, towns and fire districts/fire authorities in Snohomish County.

In January 2016, following a study completed by the Matrix Group which concluded there is "significant opportunity for efficiency and effectiveness gains through consolidation," the two agencies formed a Joint Task Force charged with developing information to allow the SNOCOM and SNOPAC Boards and their member agencies to make a decision as to whether the two agencies should consolidate in some manner.

The Joint Task Force (JTF) is advisory to the two Boards and is supported by the Executive Directors of SNOCOM and SNOPAC and an independent facilitator.

The SNOCOM and SNOPAC boards identified four priority issues around consolidation:

- Service levels
- Costs
- Governance
- Redundancy/Resiliency of operations

Project Status:

Work is ongoing. There are no final recommendations from the JTF, or either Board. Analysis to date has resulted in the following major findings:

Service levels

- Consolidation would eliminate the transfer of 40,000 - 50,000 911 calls each year.
 - Because a large portion of south Snohomish County is served by both SNOCOM and SNOPAC, a large number of 911 calls received at one agency must be transferred to the other agency for dispatch. Current mitigation efforts using New World technology has reduced the impact of, but not eliminated, these call transfers. Resulting delays in dispatching of emergency calls is a safety concern for police and fire operators.
- Consolidation would allow all current service programs to continue and would provide for unified service levels across the county.

Costs

- Initial analysis by the Executive Directors indicates consolidation would allow for operating savings of just over \$1.1M a year in 2017 dollars. The savings are derived primarily from staffing reductions.
 - Both agency's governing bodies have committed that no layoffs will occur as a result of consolidation; however, historical staff attrition rates at the agencies are such that the staff levels are expected to be "right sized" within about a year of consolidation.
- Initial work also suggests there will be one-time transition costs to merge the two agencies into a single facility, of \$820K to \$1.15M.
 - Both agencies currently use the same software for call entry and dispatch, which avoids the need for substantial new equipment, software or training in the event of consolidation.

- An assessment formula has been proposed which melds the current SNOCOM and SNOPAC assessment formulas and more directly connects cost with workload drivers.
 - Operations costs of SNOCOM and SNOPAC are funded through member assessments each year and E911 revenues.

Governance

- Due to the large number of agencies that would be members of a consolidated agency—around 50 – a representative governance structure of some type is required. That is, not every agency would have a seat on the board that oversees policy direction and approves budgets for a consolidated agency.
- Both the SNOCOM and SNOPAC boards have adopted a set of governance principles to guide development of a countywide governance structure for a consolidated agency.
- The Boards are currently reviewing three different proposals for governance. All three proposals ensure representation from large, medium and small agencies, police and fire agencies, elected officials and senior operating staff.
- As proposed, all member agencies will have a voice and a vote in selecting their board representative.

Redundancy/Resiliency of Operations

- Compared to other counties in the state, SNOPAC and SNOCOM together have a relatively strong level of redundancy.
 - Today, in the event of an incident that shuts down operation of one of the two agencies, the other agency provides back-up operations space and facilities.
 - SNOPAC is approximately three-times the size of SNOCOM, in terms of population served/911 call load. As a result, SNOPACs operations can only be partially backed-up by SNOCOM. If SNOPAC needs to evacuate, its operation would move in part to SNOCOM and in part to Snohomish County DEM.
- Neither facility is fully-equipped to withstand a major earthquake (resiliency).
- The current SNOPAC facility in south Everett is large enough to house both agencies for at least ten (10) years, although space would need to be remodelled and some additional parking would need to be secured.
- The Joint Task Force is recommending that if consolidation occurs, the operation should move to SNOPAC, but the SNOCOM facility should be retained in readily-operable condition as a “warm” back-up facility.

Next Steps:

- Outreach to member agency finance staff to review the financial data is underway, as are council and commission briefings.
- The SNOCOM and SNOPAC boards will be meeting jointly again on April 20; the focus of the agenda will be on governance.
- If the Boards are able to reach agreement on a governance model and agree to continue the project, work will begin to draft a new interlocal agreement for review and approval by individual member agencies late in 2017.

For more information:

<http://snocom.org/public-records-request/snocom-snopac-consolidation-documents>

http://www.snopac911.us/Consolidation_Discussion.html

Kurt Mills, Executive Director, SNOPAC (425) 407-3911, kmills@snopac911.us

Terry Peterson, Executive Director, SNOCOM (425) 775-5201, tpeterson@snocom.org