



Corporate Report

NO: R017

COUNCIL DATE: February 2,

2004

REGULAR

TO: Mayor & Council DATE: January 29,
2004

FROM: City Manager FILE: 7150-20/7150-
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SUBJECT: 9-1-1 Administration and Funding

RECOMMENDATION

That Council support:

- 1) The transfer of the administration of the 9-1-1 service from the GVRD to E-Comm, Corporation, and
- 2) The collection of the 'call-answer' costs for the 9-1-1 service be administered by Telus.

BACKGROUND

In the mid-1980's a number of municipalities looked at establishing a 9-1-1 system. However, the technology in place at the time could not split a telephone exchange between two or more municipalities. Having a region-wide system was the only possible solution.

In 1988, letters patent were issued to the GVRD, granting them the authority to collect the cost of a 9-1-1 service from the municipalities through the member's Annual Tax Requisition. The hardware for the telephone switches and other control equipment as well as the ongoing maintenance of the lines were supplied by BC Tel (now Telus) who charged the GVRD on a monthly basis. The 9-1-1 component of the Annual Tax Requisition included the following:

- Costs related to answering 9-1-1 calls, (call-answering) which, included office space, furniture, equipment, maintenance, staff, supervision and training, and
- Monthly charge from BC Tel for the hardware, line maintenance and the use of the BC Tel database for customer information.

A copy of the 2003 Annual Tax Requisition is attached for information (Schedule 'A'). The City is responsible for collecting this from the property owners and is the GVRD Levy that appears on the individual property tax notices due July 2nd. The full amount is then remitted to the GVRD on August 1st of each year.

The GVRD then entered into a contract with the City of Vancouver to establish a Regional Control Centre to receive all 9-1-1 calls from the entire area and route them to the appropriate emergency service for response. This 9-1-1 service was operated by the Vancouver Police Department. All 20 municipal members of the GVRD participated in the function. The Resort Municipality of Whistler and the Sunshine Coast Regional District were also included through separate contracts with the GVRD.

In 1998, B.C. Tel (Telus) applied for and was granted a tariff to provide 9-1-1 service throughout the Province. Improved technology had removed the need for regional districts to purchase their own telephone switches and other control equipment to answer 9-1-1 calls. BC Tel then began directly charging a monthly levy on each telephone number in the Province. CRTC determined the cost of the new direct levy would be sixteen cents (\$0.16) per telephone number and would be collected monthly on the telephone bills. This new charge replaced the monthly fees that BC Tel (Telus) had charged the regional districts for the dedicated telephone networks and the use of the BC Tel database for customer information. The Annual Tax Requisition was therefore reduced by that amount. The tariff also allowed for the collection of local government 'call-answer' centre costs through an additional fee on the telephone bills. However the GVRD continued to collect for this service through the Annual Tax Requisition.

In June 1999, the E-Comm Corporation began operation and created a relationship with the Vancouver Police Department for the dispatch of its services and distribution of the 9-1-1 calls. This effectively severed the association between City of Vancouver and the GVRD. Since E-Comm Corporation is a non-taxing authority, the GVRD agreed to continue collecting the 911 'call-answer' levy through the annual tax requisitions to the member municipalities on behalf of E-Comm Corporation.

DISCUSSION

The GVRD subcontracts the provision of 9-1-1 services to E-Comm, who have recently reported that the cost to provide this service is \$3.8 Million annually. The GVRD collects \$2.6 Million for the service through the Annual Tax Requisition. The shortfall (\$1.2 Million) is passed on to the users of the E-Comm services through its member levies.

Telus has offered to collect the 'call-answer' fees on the monthly telephone bills for a fee of seven cents (\$0.07) per subscriber. The full cost of the 9-1-1 'call-answer' service is estimated to be twenty-five cents (\$0.25). The total new levy would therefore be thirty-two cents (\$0.32) per telephone line.

Proposed Monthly 'Call Answer' Levy per Telephone Line:

Telus 9-1-1 Service	\$0.15	to Telus (Reduced by 1 cent 2004)
GVRD 'call-answer' levy	0.23	to E-Comm
9-1-1 Administration fee	0.07	to Telus
GST	<u>0.02</u>	
Total Monthly Levy	<u>\$0.47</u>	

Alternatives

1. The GVRD Board could support E-Comm's request to transfer the full responsibility for the 9-1-1 function to E-Comm. **(This is the recommended alternative).**
2. The GVRD Board could direct staff to explore the possibility of introducing a 'Call-Answer Levy' on all telephones in the GVRD with a view to reduce or eliminate funding from property taxation and in the meantime continue with its current method;

3. The Board could continue with the existing 9-1-1 governance function using the GVRD as an intermediary with E-Comm and keep the funding structure through property taxation. Negotiations with E-Comm would resume;
4. The GVRD could, at the end of the term of the Telus 9-1-1 service agreement in June 2004 cease to offer 9-1-1 service. Each municipality would then be free to operate its own 'call-answer' centre at their local police or fire dispatch centre or to negotiate a contract for 'call-answer' services with E-Comm or another agency. How the cost of the service is recovered would be at the discretion of the municipality, or
5. As in 3 above, the GVRD could continue with the existing 9-1-1 governance function using the GVRD as an intermediary. However, if it was felt that the market might offer a better estimate of value for service, the GVRD could consider using another organization to provide a similar type of service.

CONCLUSION

At the June GVRD Board Meeting, E-Comm Staff presented this proposal to Finance, Corporate and Intergovernmental Committees. The GVRD is now requesting comments from the member municipalities. I have concern that the collection fee of seven (\$.07), as assessed by Telus, is an actual reflection of the true cost to collect the proposed levy. The President of E-Comm has made a formal request to Telus for a review of this charge. The Fire Chief, represents the 'British Columbia Fire Chiefs Association' at the 'Provincial 911 Users Association'. He has served a notice of motion to the '911 User Association' for it next meeting to held on February 17, 2004. If the motion is successful, the 911 User Association will lobby the CRTC and Telus to review this fee.

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City Manager