



# ***TOWNSEND FIRE-EMS DEPARTMENT***

*Proudly serving the citizens of Townsend since 1875*

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Townsend, MA 01469**

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Chief of Department**

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## **MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Board of Selectmen  
James Kreidler, Interim Town Administrator

**From:** Mark R. Boynton, Fire – EMS Chief *MRB*

**Subject:** Nashoba Valley Regional Dispatch District

**Date:** November 10, 2016

As you know Townsend 911 Communication Center has been a concern of the Fire/EMS department for a number of years. The center does not meet national standards for staffing and redundancy. Two way radio communication coverage is spotty and less than desirable. This coverage is critical to the Fire-EMS Department as we depend on this system to active pagers our members carry to notify them of emergencies. The infrastructure including phones, computers, radios are failing with little or no back-up systems in place.

Over the past six months Police Chief Robert Eaton, Town Administrator James Kreidler and I have explored all viable options ranging from rebuilding our center, building our center into a regional center to joining another center in the area. During this process it was agreed rebuilding or attempting to regionalize our center is not economical or fiscally responsible. It would cost the taxpayer of Townsend an estimated one million dollars to rebuild and staff the center for the first year alone. Geographically we are located in a less than desirable area to regionalize with NH to the north and towns that have already regionalized to the south. We lack the elevation and towers needed to broadcast radio communications to the East and West.

As you witnessed in the public information meeting held on November 1<sup>st</sup> joining Nashoba Valley Regional Dispatch District (NVRDD) is our best option and a win-win. If we joined we would be part of a center that meets all the applicable national standards. Cost for service would be \$157,000 annually compared to current cost of \$520,091 or estimated cost of \$774,318 if we increase our staffing to meet the standards. Grant funds in the amount of \$310,000 have been awarded to NVRDD to replace our failing computers, phone, create redundant systems and give us access to systems and information we currently do not have. These are cost the Townsend taxpayers would have to fund if we stayed with our stand alone center. We will have access to additional regional grant funds to expand and maintain this infrastructure. Emergency response times would stay the same or in some cases decrease. The level of service to the community and our first responders would meet and in many cases exceed expectations if we joined NVRDD.

Based on the information above as the Fire-EMS Chief I recommend the following:

1. Townsend join Nashoba Valley Regional Dispatch District for services and discontinue providing our own communication service as soon as feasible. Nashoba estimates this to take six months or less.
2. All savings including benefit load from regionalization of this service be reallocated the next 3-5 year to rebuild and expand emergency services radio communications infrastructure. Also to rebuild, replace, service and maintain information technology equipment and systems.
3. The responsibility and associated budget of rebuilding and maintaining the emergency service radio communication infrastructure become the responsibility of the Fire-EMS Department.
4. The responsibility and associated budget of replacing, maintaining and servicing emergency services information technology equipment and systems remain the responsibility of the Police Department

In closing I want to thank the Board of Selectmen and Police Chief Robert Eaton for including the Fire-EMS Department in this process and critical decision. Over half of the 911 emergency calls for Townsend require a response from the Fire-EMS Department. How these are handled have a direct effect on our safety and success.