



Staff Report for Committee of the Whole Meeting

Date of Meeting: October 22, 2025

Report Number: SRCS.25.16

Department: Community Services
Division: Fire and Emergency Services

Subject: **SRCS.25.16 – Municipal Fire Dispatch Service Agreements**

Purpose:

To obtain Council approval to delegate authority to the Fire Chief and Commissioner of Community Services to negotiate and execute new agreements for the provision of secondary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) services to client municipalities

Recommendation(s):

- a) That staff report SRCS.25.16 be received;
- b) That the Fire Chief and Commissioner of Community Services be delegated authority to negotiate and execute agreements with client municipalities for the provision of secondary PSAP and dispatch services.

Contact Person(s):

- Allie Sornberger, Assistant Deputy Chief, Ex. 2984
- Bryan Burbidge, Fire Chief, Ex. 2987
- Tracey Steele, Commissioner of Community Services, Ex. 2476

Report Approval:

All reports are electronically reviewed and/or approved by the Division Director, Treasurer (as required), City Solicitor (as required), Commissioner, and City Manager. Details of the reports approval are attached.

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Background:

Within the province of Ontario, the 9-1-1 system is structured around a two-tier Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) model. When a member of the public dials 9-1-1, their call is first answered at a primary PSAP. Within York Region, like much of the province, the primary PSAP is operated by the police service. At the primary PSAP, calls are triaged to identify the appropriate agency to respond to the emergency. If necessary, calls are transferred to a secondary PSAP, to initiate response from fire services or paramedics.

The City of Richmond Hill (the “City”) operates a secondary PSAP for fire services and receives calls transferred from York Regional Police when a fire response is appropriate. The City currently provides secondary PSAP and dispatch services for its own fire department and for the municipalities of Whitchurch-Stouffville, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, Newmarket, and Aurora through service agreements dating back as far as 2001. Once a call is transferred to the secondary PSAP, the City assumes responsibility for information gathering, incident triage, and the dispatching of fire resources to calls for service.

It is important to note that not all fire services in Ontario maintain their own dispatch capabilities, as evidenced by the municipalities that rely on Richmond Hill to provide secondary PSAP and dispatching on their behalf. Within the Region, but outside of Richmond Hill and our client municipalities, Vaughan Fire and Rescue Services provides secondary PSAP and dispatching on behalf of King Township, and Barrie Fire provides these services on behalf of Markham Fire.

Some outsourcing can be attributed to changes in the scope, complexity, and regulatory environment of fire dispatch that have taken place over the last decade. These changes include the establishment of regulatory compliance and mandatory certification of fire communications staff through O. Reg. 343/22 (Firefighter Certification) made under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, S.O. 1997, c.4 and changes in the technological landscape with the transition to Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911). From these legislated changes, significant investment has been made to equip our staff and meet the requirements established by the provincial and federal governments. Despite these pressures and while operating one of the twelve largest fire departments in the province, the City has positioned itself as a leader in providing dispatch services.

A staff report (SRFD.10.01) presented to Council at the Committee of the Whole meeting on February 16, 2010, included recommendations to delegate authority to the Fire Chief to both negotiate and execute agreements for fire dispatch services. A review of those meeting minutes indicates that not all elements of the recommendations were captured in the official record. In 2010, Fire Services was organizationally separate from the Community Services Commission, and as such, the Commissioner’s role was also not included in the delegation recommendation.

This report seeks Council approval to reaffirm the intended delegation of authority to the Fire Chief and extend it to include the Commissioner to which the Fire Chief reports, ensuring alignment with the organizational structure and corporate oversight in the

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negotiating and executing of agreements for the provision of secondary PSAP and dispatch services.

Discussion:

A detailed financial comparison was conducted in concert with an assessment of qualitative costs and benefits of maintaining or outsourcing dispatch services for the City. Without clients, the operation of the communications division of fire services carries costs that would otherwise be borne solely by the City. Maintaining fire dispatch as a service for clients based on a per capita rate model maximizes efficiencies, achieves economies of scale, and ensures the financial sustainability of the program.

Delegating ongoing authority to the Fire Chief and the Commissioner responsible for Fire Services is intended to streamline the process of both renewing and establishing client agreements. In doing so, it allows the City to respond quickly to opportunities to provide and expand secondary PSAP and dispatch services.

Dispatch service agreements will continue to provide call-taking, dispatching, and related support to municipal fire departments in accordance with established service levels and will offset those costs that would otherwise be borne solely by the city. All agreements will continue to undergo a review and sign-off by Legal and Risk Management staff prior to execution to ensure that appropriate protections are in place for the City.

Delegating authority to the Fire Chief and Commissioner provides the necessary flexibility to support and expand the communications division of fire services and its ability to generate revenues for the City through secondary PSAP and dispatch services.

Financial Implications:

Delegating authority to the Fire Chief and Commissioner, or their delegates, to negotiate and execute new dispatch agreements will not result in additional financial impacts to the City's tax base. Agreements will continue to include per capita rate increases, reflect population growth and offset costs otherwise borne by the City.

Relationship to Strategic Plan 2024-2027:

Entering into the dispatch service agreements and increasing the per capita rate is in line with Pillar 3 of the Strategic Plan (Strengthening our Foundations), and specifically Priority 1, making decisions that are evidence-based and data-driven to enable the City's long term financial sustainability, as well as social, environmental and economic sustainability.

Attachments:

The following attached documents may include scanned images of appendixes, maps and photographs. All attachments have been reviewed and made accessible. If you require an alternative format please call the contact person listed in this document.

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRCS.25.16 - Municipal Fire Dispatch Service Agreements.docx
Attachments:	None
Final Approval Date:	Oct 14, 2025

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Tom Raeburn on behalf of Bryan Burbidge - Oct 14, 2025 - 3:14 PM

Tracey Steele - Oct 14, 2025 - 3:20 PM

Darlene Joslin - Oct 14, 2025 - 3:51 PM