



*Marshall County
Communications Center*

*2023
Annual Report*

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Director's Message



Marshall County Communications Center, also known as MCCC is the primary public safety answering point (PSAP) for Marshall County, IA.

As you review this report, it is my hope it will increase your awareness and understanding of the services provided by the Marshall County Communications Center. The employees of the MCCC are a dedicated group of professionals who strive to improve the quality of life in our municipalities by providing the highest level of professional emergency communication services to our citizens, visitors, and partner agencies. Since its inception in 2018, the MCCC has continued to explore and implement updated equipment, technology and methods to deliver quality service to the public. Innovations and continued reassessments, along with an extensive training program and dedicated staff have allowed the Marshall County Communications Center to be at the forefront in its industry as we continue to work with our emergency services partners.

The professionals of the MCCC, along with 911 Leadership Team, is justifiably proud to serve our public safety partners and residents of Marshall County. We look forward to the future, and continuing to provide the highest level of emergency communications and exceptional customer service in a very cost-efficient and effective manner. I am proud of the accomplishments our team has made and the goals we have set as we look toward 2024 in Marshall County.



Mission Statement

The Marshall County Communications Center is committed to serving with integrity, compassion and care for the welfare and safety of our citizens and personnel. We support expedient, quality services through the industries best practices. Our standard is excellence and the road to success is through our teamwork. We serve as the critical link between the citizens and, visitors of Marshall County, and the public safety Agencies that serve them.

Safety is our First Priority

Integrity is our Commitment

These Values We Believe

Harmony ~ We trust, respect, and care for each other and treat everyone as a valued member of our team

Service ~ Safety is our first priority – citizens are the focus of everything we do

Integrity ~ We are committed to the highest level of professional and ethical conduct

Teamwork ~ Cohesively working together to achieve a common goal for the betterment of the individuals we serve and the future of our center

Fun ~ Every day we will give our best effort and have fun along the way

Vision Statement

To provide service in a manner that fosters trust, respect, confidence and appreciation as a trusted and valued member of the Marshall County Communications Center.

Agency Profile

Since February, 2018, MCCC has been the single-source 911 call and dispatch center in Marshall County. Marshall County Communications Center (MCCC) provides vital public service functions in Marshall County. MCCC receives and records all 911 emergency calls for help within the County, and dispatches the appropriate public safety responders to the emergency. MCCC provides dispatch services to the city of Marshalltown, Marshall County Sheriff's Office, Volunteer Fire and EMS communities as well as Unity Point EMS within Marshall County.

MCCC 911 Communications Specialists are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to receive and record both 911, and ten-digit emergency and non-emergency calls from the public. These calls are dispatched at the appropriate level of public safety response based on protocols determined in conjunction with law enforcement, fire service, and EMS. The center is staffed with civilian personnel working together as 911 Communications Specialists in law enforcement and Fire/EMS dispatching, CTO's (Communications Training Officer), Supervisor, Leads, and the Director.

The Marshall County Communications Center is responsible for answering both emergency and non-emergency calls for service on a regular basis. The Comm Center monitors up to eleven (11) radio channels, and has the capability to monitor an additional fourteen (14) channels if necessary. It also is responsible for three (3) E911 phone lines and an additional ten (10) emergency and non-emergency lines. In FY23, the Marshall County Communications Center handled a total of 79,020+ phone calls including emergency and non-emergency. In April 2023 Prepared Live was implemented – an intuitive program working in conjunction with cell phone or computer-based technology that allow responders to see what is happening on scene while providing the location-based services of the caller's location.

The Marshall County Communications Center has been recognized for professionalism, commitment to public safety, leadership, and innovation. Performance and training are measured against the standards provided by the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO). The MCCC's authorized strength is fifteen (15) full-time employees to include eleven (11) 911 Communications Specialists, two (2) 911 Lead Communications Specialists, one (1) 911 Communications Supervisor, and one (1) 911 Communications Director.

The Marshall County Communications Center operates three (3) twelve-hour shifts and one (1) four-hour shift on Fridays for a total of forty (40) hours per week in accordance with FLSA. We have four (4) Communications Training Officers (CTO) certified in through APCO to meet national standards.

Marshall County Communications Center Staff

Rhonda Braudis, CPE, RPL, NREMT ~ 911 Communications Director
Tiffany Eibs, CTO, Tactical Dispatch Coordinator ~ 911 Communications Supervisor
Shane Andrews ~ CTO, Tactical Dispatcher, 911 Lead Communications Specialist
Caitlan Reineke ~ CTO, 911 Lead Communications Specialist
Tammy Bowman ~ CTO, 911 Communications Specialist
Shannon Wegner, CTO, Tactical Dispatcher, 911 Communications Specialist
Zac Mann, Tactical Dispatcher, 911 Communications Specialist
Kayla Ball ~ 911 Communications Specialist
Alyssia Klosterman ~ 911 Communications Specialist
Nathan Overmann ~ 911 Communications Specialist
Samantha Aman ~ 911 Communications Specialist
Kassandra Rader ~ 911 Communications Specialist to begin January 3, 2024
Taylor Nelson ~ 911 Communications Specialist to begin January 8, 2024
Kelsey Staker ~ 911 Communications Specialist to begin January 8, 2024
VACANT ~ 911 Communications Specialist
Melinda Ruopp, Tactical Dispatcher ~ PRN 911 Communications Specialist
Hayley Paige ~ Tactical Dispatcher, PRN 911 Communications Specialist
Caden Hobson ~ PRN 911 Communications Specialist

Collectively, the years of dispatch service, talent, and experience at the Marshall County Communications Center amounts to decades of experience – clearly indicating the drive, passion, and dedication to public service projected from a team of true professionals.

Training and Quality Assurance

The Marshall County Communications Center implemented a full standardized training program in 2020 following the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) standards, and continue this today. Proper training is extremely important to the MCCC, as public safety agencies are held legally accountable for the actions of their personnel. Procedures included in the communications training program provide a standardized and systematic approach to training. The training is designed specifically for the purpose of career development of all employees.

The Communications Training Officer (CTO) program continues to be redesigned to focus on essential elements and components of a one-on-one standardized training program, specifically through the use of Daily Observation Report's (DOR's). Standardized training provides similar training to all new employees. Each employee is exposed to the same training experience, and

each is provided the same opportunity for success. As we continue implementing changes within the training program following APCO and national standards through the San Jose model the program continues to grow in strength and validity.

The core of any training program is the trainer – the person who conducts the training and helps the student build skills, knowledge, and abilities. While the Director, and the Supervisor can have a positive effect on the overall program as Training Coordinators, the CTO is the key entity that delivers the training. CTO's make sure that citizens and internal customers continue to receive a high quality of service while transforming new hires into effective employees. The Marshall County Communications Center CTOs are all certified through the APCO Communications Training Officer Course as instructed by APCO or the Director/APCO Adjunct Instructor.

Abiding by Iowa Code 501-13.3(1) (80B) requirements, all 911 Communication Specialists are required to take the 40-hour Basic Communications course within the first year of employment. In accordance with ILEA training exception all 911 Communication Specialists continue to receive the APCO Public Safety Telecommunicator 40-hour basic course. The APCO Public Safety Telecommunicator (PST1) Course, is a level up from the State basic course and can be customized to Marshall County specifics for training purposes. The Marshall County Communication Center also requires that Supervisors, be certified through the APCO Communications Center Supervisor Course. Supervisor Eibs and Director Braudis continue to ensure the Public Safety Telecommunicators course is delivered to all new hires of the MCCC.

Training is a constant mission in the Marshall County Communications Center. Not only are 911 personnel required to take their initial certification classes, they must also participate in Continuing Dispatch Education (CDE) training sessions for annual training minimums. These training sessions may be in the form of quizzes, dispatch related articles, protocol-driven exercises, in-service classes, or anything else deemed an appropriate learning related activity. In an ever-changing profession it is essential to continue dispatch education. There is always something new to learn in an industry that is constant in change.

Several forms of training were received throughout the year to include online learning, virtual live online learning, as well as in person classes to maintain their skills. In order to maintain their certification with PST1 and EMD completion of a quiz, twenty-four hours of training/CDE's and CPR/AED re-certification also occurred.

In an effort to continue training all 911 Communications Specialists within the Communications Center, talented members of our team have taken the necessary steps to become agency instructors for the disciplines taught. CTO Shannon Wegner, signed up to take the Emergency Medical Dispatch Instructor course through APCO in 2022 with completion in early 2023. As new hires enter the MCCC, CTO's Wegner and Reineke will continue to work in collaboration with each other as they educate our new hires.

CTO's Wegner and Reineke each bring experience, education, and a desire for teaching to the forefront of our center. Both Wegner and Reineke have been very excited about starting this next journey and have much to offer. I look forward to the progressiveness they will bring.

Emergency Medical Dispatch ~ Instructors



Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) is a systematic program of handling medical calls for assistance. Trained telecommunicators, using locally-approved EMD Guidecards, can quickly and properly determine the nature and priority of the call, dispatch the appropriate response and then give the caller instructions to help treat the patient until the responding EMS unit arrives. Topics Include: Roles, Responsibilities and Resource Allocation, Legal & Liability Issues (National & State Standards), Call Taking & APCO EMD Guidecard Information, Chief Complaint Types Review, Anatomy & Physiology, Quality Assurance and

Recertification, Stress Management. The classroom setting provides practical exercises to help the new EMD become familiar with the theories and practices of EMD and students will practice with either their agency's Guidecards or the APCO Institute Training EMD Guidecards in simulated EMD calls.



Organizational Integrity

The Marshall County Communications Center has adopted the Telecommunicator Code of Ethics published by the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials – International (APCO). Members of the Marshall County Communications Center are required to abide by the Code of Ethics, especially when situations arise which are not directly addressed by other policies. The Code of Ethics is located within their personnel files. All personnel are required to read, acknowledge receipt of, and abide by the Code of Ethics.

Training Accomplishments – Just a few to Highlight

PST1 (APCO Basic 40hr) ~ An introduction to the critical principles in support of public safety and techniques for handling domestic violence, potential suicide, hostage, and civil unrest situations as a public safety telecommunicator. Techniques to overcoming barriers, achieving effective communications, handling difficult callers, listening effectively and resolving conflicts will be addressed. This course will provide the information necessary to understand the job of a public safety telecommunicator and is the foundation to begin working in police, fire and EMS or a combined service communications center. Ideal for training the new-hire or as a refresher for existing staff, APCO's PST1 course covers the basics skills, knowledge and abilities every successful public safety telecommunicator needs to meet the demands of this critical work.

Students successfully passing the final exam receive APCO Institute certification demonstrating completion of a training course that meets and exceeds industry accepted national basic training standards, including the APCO/ANS 3.103.2.2015 and NFPA 1061 2014 Edition.

Building on foundational topics such as communication skills, call taking and radio techniques, the PST course blends in the most up-to-date information on technology and work-related issues in public safety communications centers. "Hot" topics include NextGen 9-1-1, emerging technologies, continuing ed., and liability.

EMD 5.4 (Basic 40hr pre-requisite) ~ An introduction to the critical principles in support of public safety and techniques for preparation needed to receive a call requesting assistance for emergency medical services (EMS) and allocate community resources in response to such requests. Techniques to overcoming barriers, achieving effective communications, handling difficult callers, listening effectively and resolving conflicts will be addressed. This course will provide the information necessary to understand the job of an emergency medical dispatcher and is the foundation to begin working in a fire, EMS or a combined service communications center. Topics covered provide the student with the knowledge and foundation to answer calls for emergency medical service and properly prioritize the response. The course also provides the student with the knowledge needed to convey proper pre-arrival instructions to the caller when needed. Topics include: Roles, Responsibilities, and Resource Allocation; Legal & Liability Issues – National/State Standards; Calltaking and APCO EMD Guidecard Information; Chief Complaint Types Review; Anatomy and Physiology; Quality Assurance and Recertification; and Stress Management. The classroom setting provides practical exercises to help the new EMD become familiar with the theories and practices of EMD and students will practice with either their agency’s APCO EMD Guidecards or the APCO Institute Training EMD Guidecards in simulated EMD calls.

INTD (Incident Tactical Dispatch / FEMA) ~ An Incident Tactical Dispatcher is a specifically trained individual qualified to operate away from the dispatch center in a command post, base camp or at the incident scene. Incident Tactical Dispatchers leverage the multi-tasking, communication, accountability and documentation skills of successful Telecommunicators to provide public safety communications expertise and support at planned events and extended incidents such as hostage situations, multi-alarm fires, search and rescue operations, bombings, and active shooter incidents. Incident Tactical Dispatchers may support the Communications Unit as a single resource or as part of an incident tactical dispatch team. This course provides a basic understanding for the roles and responsibilities of an incident tactical dispatcher working in a tactical environment. Pre-requisites for this course were ICS (Incident Command System / FEMA) IS-100 (Introduction to the ICS), IS-144 (Telecommunicators Emergency Response Taskforce), IS-200 (ICS for Single Resources and Initial Incidents), IS-700 (National Incident Management Systems NIMS Introduction), and IS-800 (National Response Framework NRF Introduction). Members of the Tactical Dispatch Team attended this training. Supervisor Tiffany Eibs, CTO Shannon Wegner, and Part-Time Melinda Ruopp all attended this four-day course and passed earning certification as INTD. They now have 2 years to complete their incident tasks books to be recognized by the state of Iowa.

Guardian Training Institute ~ The **Comprehensive Resilience Program** is a two (2) day training that helps gain the skills needed to take control of your life. First responders battle with anxiety, depression, job satisfaction, and conflict every day. The program instructed is made up of domains and tenets. The tenets include Mental, Physical, Social, and Spiritual. A key component to a comprehensively fit individual is resilience. People are not born resilient; they learn to be resilient through life experiences. Staff enjoyed this training so much they requested we host, a request for grant training was made and accepted to host in Marshall County.

Guardian Training Institute ~ The **Guardian Project** is designed to help Emergency Responders identify when they, or a coworker require peer assistance, providing the skills needed to actively intervene, lessening organizational and personal liability. The training enhances knowledge and gives the confidence to become an “active bystander”. Over time, we all reach a

breaking point in our careers. The Guardian Project helps you recognize the signs and symptoms of burn out and personality transformation. Students leave with a basic understanding of the effects of trauma on the brain, acquire positive coping skills, and break down the stigma of mental health. Staff enjoyed this training so much they requested we host, a request for grant training was made and accepted to host in Marshall County.

Public Safety Leadership Bootcamp ~ An intense, high quality leadership training presented through IEMSA (Iowa Emergency Medical Services Association) in West Des Moines. This was a two-day seminar instructed by Jon Politis. Topics included making the transition from buddy to boss, learning to lead, ethical boundaries, analyzing performance issues, case studies in supervision, just culture in public safety, coaching counseling and corrective action, progressive discipline, communication and role playing, and case studies in supervision. The Leadership Team attended this together allowing debriefing time to discuss new and innovative ideas to add to our workplace culture. With staffing now getting where we need it, as a team we continue to work and improve workplace culture making Marshall County Communications Center the MECA of 911 dispatch centers!

APCO/NENA State Spring Conference ~ This year's APCO (Association of Public Communications Officials) and NENA (National Emergency Numbers Association) State Conference provided motivational and dynamic speakers such as Tyrell Morris (Fellow CPE Alumni Class #13 Graduate) and Tracy Eldridge. First responders rarely put themselves first. The presentations peeled back several layers of mental health, wellness, and interpersonal understanding. PTSD, risk factors, warning signs, ways to help, and how to help others who may be suffering. The #SHOWUP campaign developed by Executive Director Tyrell Morris was designed to clearly define the service expectations of staff on each and every interaction they encounter throughout the day. Understanding that our workforce is driven by human emotions, #SHOWUP provides a clear path to correct behavior when the standards are not quite met. "Instead of showing out, #SHOWUP. With staffing increases this year we were truly fortunate to allow five (5) Communications Specialists to attend the APCO day on May 1st, and six (6) Communications Specialists to attend the NENA day on May 2nd, receiving a total of eighty-eight (88) hours of continuing dispatch education.

APCO/NENA State Fall Conference ~ This year's APCO (Association of Public Communications Officials) and NENA (National Emergency Numbers Association) State Conference provided motivational and dynamic speakers such as Kris Inman and Adam Timm. The fall conference partnered up with The Healthy Dispatcher to bring two full days of classes. The presentation on day one, "Play like you practice! Getting back to the Basics in your Comm Center" instructed by Kris Inman focused on our origins as we get back to the bedrock principles of what matters in 911: Excellent customer service, effective communications, cooperative teamwork and principled leadership. The presentation on day two, "Crack the Code: How to Create a Positive Work Culture" instructed by Adam Timm focused on Culture. "When I ask a manager or supervisor what they see as their center's biggest challenge, I often hear, "The culture. If we could improve the culture, then we'd be in a much better place." The problem with this statement is that center culture is not a single challenge. It's the sum of many different parts, all of them important. In this interactive 8-hour course, students learned the essential ingredients that comprise their center's culture, and began to formulate a plan they could actively begin to begin to create a team people want to be a part of. With staffing increases this year we were truly fortunate to allow five (3) Communications Specialists to attend the NENA day on October 30th,

and six (3) Communications Specialists to attend the APCO day on October 31st, receiving a total of forty-eight (48) hours of continuing dispatch education.

Communications Center Supervisor (Basic 40hr pre-requisite) ~ This course is designed for prospective, new or experienced communications supervisors who want to enhance their supervisory skills and knowledge. Practical exercises help students apply the lessons to their own agency policies and procedures. Students not only learn supervisory topics, but also learn how to work together in groups and cooperate to attain common goals.

Defusing Comm Center Conflict (The Healthy Dispatcher) ~ Difficult conversations and tense moments are the norm in 911, and negative interactions can quickly go sideways, posing challenges at both ends of the line. With tools learned in this class, students can improve call-taking ability and learn ways to effectively navigate interpersonal conflict within the center, which can be even more harmful than over the phone. Learning objectives included: stay focused when you've lost patience; identify and get out of negative thinking traps; defuse conflict, work through it and gain common ground; and assess your current communication effectiveness and create a plan to improve.

People Driven Leadership (The Healthy Dispatcher) ~ The strength of a communications center's leadership team defines the culture, daily expectations, and working conditions. When a center's leadership team is not working as a cohesive unit, the challenging work of 911 can feel even more difficult. The training was designed to increase trust and foster accountability. Learning objectives included: understanding where your teammates' personal leadership style comes from; defining and choosing the most appropriate leadership style for motivating your team; and defining a clear vision forward for the center and outlining specific goals to get there.

These are specialized courses attended throughout the year, in addition to this numerous additional training opportunities were offered and taken to continue Dispatch Education.

It is essential to note the value of training in a professional organization. When employees undergo training, it improves their skills and knowledge of their profession and builds their confidence in their skills and abilities. This will improve their performance and make them work more efficiently and effectively. It's no surprise that employees who get regular opportunities to learn, develop, and advance are more likely to stay with an agency. The 911 Communications Specialist development is the continuous effort to strengthen work performance through approaches like coaching, training sessions, and leadership mentoring. Training is a specific event that teaches new information or skills. While training is often provided to new or newly promoted employees as you see it is essential to all staff and the growth that comes from it is without measure.



Personnel Actions

ACTION	2022	2023
Verbal Warning / Training	Continuous Training	Continuous Training
Counseling	4	8
Written Reprimand	1	4
Suspension	0	4
Termination	0	0
Fit for Duty / Retirement	0	0
Total	5+ Training	16+ Training

Warrants

Category	2022	2023
Active	203	212
Served	1,003	1,004
Recalled	88	87
Detained	19	24
Posted Bond	16	18
Cleared	1	2
Cancelled	21	20
Total	1351	1,367

NCO's – No Contact Order / Exparte

Category	2022	2023
Served	213	205
Not Served	16	38
Not in Effect	101	84
Total	330	327

911 Dispatch Statistics

Calls Received	2021	2022	2023
911	16,037	14,473	15,654
Administrative	60,524	60,322	59,707
Crime Stopper	400	273	266
Ring Down	4,343	3,350	3,393
Total	81,304	78,418*	79,020

National standards 3.1 as published in the NENA Call Answering Standard/Model Recommendation 56-005.1 (revised 2017). Ninety percent (90%) of all 9-1-1 calls arriving at the Public Safety answering Point (PSAP) shall be answered within ten (10) seconds during the busy hour (the hour each day with the greatest call volume, as defined in the NENA Master Glossary). Ninety-five (95%) of all 9-1-1 calls should be answered within twenty (20) seconds. The Marshall County Communications Center greatly exceeds this standard with an average ring time of three (3) seconds.

Call for Service Statistics

Fire Related Incidents	2021	2022	2023
Marshalltown Fire Department	3,209	3466	3467
Albion Volunteer Fire Department	78	76	70
Clemons Volunteer Fire Department	26	29	27
Ferguson Volunteer Fire Department	4	0	10
Gilman Volunteer Fire Department	43	66	52
Green Mountain Volunteer Fire Dept	45	58	62
Haverhill Volunteer Fire Department	46	44	58
Laurel Volunteer Fire Department	25	30	31
Legrand Volunteer Fire Department	54	82	81
Liscomb Volunteer Fire Department	44	53	51
Melbourne Fire Department	57	53	58
Rhodes Volunteer Fire Department	56	48	57
State Center Volunteer Fire Department	89	145	111
.... TOTAL	3,776	4,150	4,135

Medical Related Incidents	2021	2022	2023
Unity Point Hospital	4,619	4,898	4869
Albion First Responder	172	135	162
Gilman First Responder	136	172	165
Green Mountain First Responder	94	109	154
Haverhill First Responder	5	0	2
Laurel First Responder	2	3	2
Legrand First Responder	162	210	188
Liscomb First Responder	171	137	164
Melbourne First Responder	139	162	157
Rhodes First Responder	139	158	154
State Center First Responder	195	209	264
.... TOTAL	5,834	6,193	6,281

Law Enforcement Related Incidents	2021	2022	2023
Marshalltown Police Department	28,120	27,711	30,679
Marshall County Sheriff's Office	20,512	24,217	26,571
Melbourne/Rhodes Department	63	35	MCSO
State Center Police Department	1,346	1,272	1,906
Outside County / SCSO ~ ISP ~ Tama	27	24	27
.... TOTAL	50,068	53,259	59,183

Call Handling Procedures

The Marshall County Communications Center continues refining policies, procedures, and guidelines for handling all types of calls for service. Communications personnel receiving phone calls, judge the characteristics of the call, to determine whether it is an emergency, or non-emergency. The Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system is programmed to assign a given priority to each type of incident based on the call type chosen; however, the dispatchers have the option to notify field personnel and assign additional responders to higher priority calls when appropriate. As EMD IntelliComm continues to evolve, its purpose is to process priority and special response calls; and provide instructions when needed for Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD). Rollout of this program was November 1st 2021 with Quality Assurance / Quality Improvement continuously ongoing.

Relevant information for each request for service is obtained and recorded to include control number, date and time of request, complainant information, incident type and location, units dispatched, time, arrival and return of service for each unit, as well as record of the final disposition or status of the incident. Misdirected calls are appropriately handled and rerouted, including correcting database errors.

Marshall County Communications Center personnel have received specialized training to include but not limited to: Emergency Medical Dispatch, Communications Center Supervisor, INTD (Incident Tactical Dispatcher), Child Abuse Mandatory Reporter, Dependent Adult Abuse Mandatory Reporter, Fundamentals of Tactical Dispatch, The Guardian Project, Comprehensive Resiliency, 911 Staffing Crisis Summit, Saving Lives on Both Sides of the Call, Autism Awareness, Public Safety Bootcamp, Effective Communication, Diversity Awareness, Improve Communication Among Conflict, Empathy & Vulnerability in Public Safety, Bullying in the ECC, as well as attending the Iowa State APCO/NENA Spring Conference, APCO National Conference, webinars, as well as other courses for CDE credit. These courses and like efforts contribute to trailblazing efforts with the objective and priority of providing Marshall County's emergency responders with a standard of care that corresponds with the mission, vision and values of its core team / 911 Communications Specialists.

Processing emergency/non-emergency calls can be inherently taxing, as callers are often dealing with traumatic events. Telecommunicators are trained to ask key questions, pertinent to each unique scenario, and obtain the nature and extent of the incident. Once this is ascertained they then determine what resources are needed to respond and dispatch the appropriate units. Due to the demands of this job and the need to get the right resources to the correct location the training program has been revamped; there is a thorough twenty (20) week, training program as well as continued training requirements for all personnel in the center. Training includes weekly and monthly required trainings in police/fire related topics, as well as online training and in person seminars and scenario training.

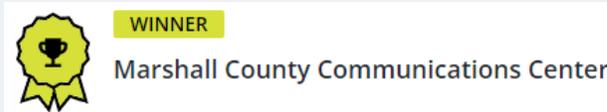
Communications Center Achievements - 2023

In 2023, MCCC continued team building, making incremental improvements and preparing for agency projects. The leadership team continued to focus on improving customer service, product quality and staffing. A lot of energy and effort was dedicated to our workplace culture as staffing continued to improve. In 2023 The Marshall County Communications Center was selected as a Center of Excellence for Innovation in Emergency Response. We are one of two agencies selected in the state of Iowa.

Technological Advantages ~ The Marshall County Communications Center has been recognized by the Prepared team as a Center of Excellence. We were identified as a result of our leadership in bringing innovation to 911 and pushing the industry forward. Each of the 911 Communications Specialists are leaders in our industry, leveraging cutting edge technology to better serve our community and we are proud of our achievement! Prepared Live provides 911 Communications Specialists and first responders with access to live video, photo, GPS location, and other real-time data to better assess emergencies. It has shown to add essential data to the 911 process, alongside vastly improving efficiency for various incident types, including fires, domestics, and more. We are excited to see the hard work of our team recognized and hope you'll join me in recognizing their achievement!



Best of the Best ~ In 2023 the Marshall County Communications Center was chosen as Best of the Best in the Times-Republican in the category of Emergency Services. While the Marshall County Communications Center is the only option for Marshall County residents to be chosen under the Best of the Best Reader's Choice Awards is an honor!



Commission Directives ~ Through what is best described as another tumultuously unpredictable year after 2022, mixed with disaster and the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, all directives set forth by the Commission have been at the forefront while still navigating the events of 2023. We have stopped questioning the status quo and began establishing “what’s next” preparing for what is around the corner. Quality assurance is being performed randomly on calls taken to ensure standards are being met and succeeded, the national standard is 7-10% of calls, MCCC completes 20%.

Training ~ In 2023, the Communications Training Officer (CTO) program continues to be reviewed and restructured if necessary to make better use of the skills and talents on in-house Communications Specialists. The CTO program consists of three phases and a final shadow phase. Training includes one on one on the job instruction, scenarios, as well as classroom training for APCO Public Safety Telecommunicator (40hr Basic) and APCO EMD instruction as they learn the disciplines of call receiving and police, fire, and ems dispatching. CTO's play a large role in the successes of the training program, serving as role models and mentors to new employees just beginning their career at MCCC. It was determined while in training, the initial 12-hour shifts, as well as extended time off created a lack of skill retention within the trainee. Currently the program during its first phase will implement five 8-hour training days with set days off to assist in this deficit. Thereafter moving into phases two and through the end the trainee will rotate through with a trainer to best conform to the schedule set of a 911 Communication Specialist. The MCCC leadership team will continue to monitor this for continued success.

Quality Assurance ~ MCCC began work on expanding the current Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement (QA/QI) program for 911 Specialists in order to provide a larger review of call intake within the communications center. Customer service is extremely important in an organization. These changes provided information on gaps in training as well as highlighted exemplary actions of specific individuals and/or calls.

Tactical Dispatching Program ~ The specialized position of Tactical Dispatcher continues to be a success. The mission of the Tactical Dispatch Team is to provide emergency field communications support to a critical incident or event outside of normal operations. The Tactical Dispatch Team has the ability, equipment, and expertise to assist and support operations at the scene of an incident or from the communications center. The functionality of the team is solely dependent upon the staff and operations of the Marshall County Communications Center. The team employs a selected group of communications personnel who are trained to respond to a major incident with the capability, equipment, and knowledge to facilitate and support communications operations in the field. The concept of the tactical dispatcher is to integrate their unique skills (multi-tasking, attention to detail, active listening, etc.) into a command post environment or a large-scale mutual aid-type incident. Their primary focus is communications, accountability, documentation and resource allocation. We have added this year to the Tactical Dispatch program, we currently have seven Tactical Dispatchers: Melinda Ruopp (PRN dispatcher), Shannon Wegner, Shane Andrews, Zac Mann, and Hayley Paige. Supervisor Tiffany Eibs continues to serve as Tactical Dispatch Coordinator over the program. Training for the Tactical Dispatchers will be ongoing to ensure readiness. Training coordination with the SWAT Team and Task Force continue to strengthen the program.

Recruitment ~ As a public service organization staffed 24/7, recruitment and retention efforts are critical to ensure that staffing levels are met and employees are able to maintain a healthy work-life balance. As in previous years, MCCC operated at less than full-staffing levels due in part to normal attrition, life events, and those failing out of the training program. On-going recruitment program efforts leaves one position open after the three new hires start. One position will begin on January 3rd, while two other positions will begin on January 8th.

Communications Center Manger 1st Edition ~ One of the several committees Director Braudis serves on is the Association of Communications Officials training updates committee. This is a new course that has been in the making for the past seven years. With its finalization this year it will debut in 2024. Additional manuals continue to be updated with the PST1 8th edition coming soon as well. This not only highlights the staff of the Marshall County Communications Center but promotes the agency itself and accomplishments of this center and its team!

Phoenix G2 ~ Within a consolidated dispatch center such as Marshall County Communications it is essential dispatching is consistent in the way it is dispatched verses different operational features based on each entity. Unity Point EMS was the final entity not moving to the Phoenix G2 system. Working with Shari King in 2022 we focused as a team on how to get them connected not only to the Phoenix G2 system (Thank You Chief Rierson) but also moving towards implementing the new technology. While this started in 2022, this was completed in 2023.

911 Communications Trailer ~ The Marshall County 911 Communications Center like many other dispatch areas did not have a 911 back-up center. While the state has a trailer in the event of a disaster we would be extremely low on that priority level to get usage of it. In 2022, grant money was provided through the Marshall County ARPA funding. This trailer will be shared by

the 911 Communications Center, Marshall County Sheriff's Office, and the EMA. This will not only ensure its usage but also provide added benefit to Marshall County. In the event of a disaster 911 Communications have first right to the trailer, however it was built that it could be shared in the event two of the three parties have been displaced. It will also be used for exercises and events. The 911 Communications Trailer was completed in 2023 and ready for usage. The value this brings to Marshall County is exciting.

Communications Center Goals - 2024

Emergency Medical Dispatching ~ In 2022 a monumental task of continuous guidecard and system review for accuracy and best practices was conducted for the EMD maintenance team. This team consists of our Medical Director D. Blaine Westemeyer, 911 Communications Director Rhonda Braudis, and Communications Center Supervisor Tiffany Eibs. Implementation of the electronic version of guidecards IntelliComm was completed in 2022 and review and monitoring with quality assurance will continue throughout 2023. Fundamental practice of guidecards usage continues to remain the same however efficiency and ability to filter information directly into the CAD system without shifting back and forth improves immensely the workload of the 911 Communications Specialist allowing more focus to be placed on the caller and responders in the field.

Training / Continuing Dispatch Education ~ Training is essential within this profession, at the conclusion of 2023 the goal of the Communications Center is to have all personnel, and new hires trained in Public Safety Telecommunications (REQUIRED Basic-40hr), Emergency Medical Dispatch (REQUIRED, EMD), and Fire Service Communications. Further training will be sought out to enhance areas for continuous improvement within the Communications Center.

Grants ~ Budgets continue to remain an obstacle in emergency services. Grants have been an essential piece over the past four years in obtaining equipment, and training. In 2024 the team hopes to continue to seek out and obtain grants for future expansion.

Employee Handbook ~ In 2023 the Teamsters Union Local 238 decertified the communications unit due to lack of participants. An employee handbook was created, reviewed by the sub-committee commission members Evan Folk, and Madaleine Welton, and is now in final stages. The goal is to have this completed, and approved by the commission to be in effect in 2024. In conjunction with policy and procedure, this has been a top priority not only for the Commission but the 911 Communications Director. Policy and procedure are a set of documents that are reviewed annually for accuracy.

911 Fundraiser ~ The Marshall County 911 Communications Center each year attempts to find a way to raise money or provide donations to those in need. While it is not yet determined what fundraiser will arise in 2024 the goal is to have one near the holidays.

911 CAD System ~ In 2019 a member of the volunteer fire department requested the usage of Run Cards. During this initial discovery there was little to no help from the CAD company without spending money for the project. Due to the potential cost this did not happen. In late 2022 in helping the Marshalltown Fire Chief with their RMS program this project has come alive again. Now with a clear path that will not cost budgets the project has begun. This is a several step process and we're are in phase III, the slow and tedious space of data entry while we work through the 17,008 addresses within Marshall County. This project will take the majority of 2023; however, the goal is to have it completed at the conclusion of 2023.

Summary

It is the vision of the Marshall County Communications Center to achieve the highest degree of public confidence. Our personnel are recognized for their professionalism, integrity, exemplary customer service, commitment to public safety, leadership and innovation. Marshall County Communications Center personnel are committed to saving lives, protecting property, assisting the public in their time of need, and ensuring the safety of our first responders through prompt, accurate, impartial, and professional call taking, dispatch and support services.

As 911 communications professionals, we strive to earn the public's trust and are challenged daily to maintain that trust. Every telephone call, every radio transmission and every service we provide demands our utmost attention and effective response. We effectively manage the resources, with fiscal prudence, in order to ensure an effective public safety response and a financially secure and well-maintained 911 Communications Center and communications infrastructure.

As trailblazers in the field of emergency communications, we embrace a future course of change, improvement, and challenge focused on accomplishing our strategic goals, including keeping pace with advances in technology that improve interoperability and accessibility to our services; efforts to control escalating operating costs; replacement of aging or inadequate communications infrastructure; and the all-important sharing of resources.

The Marshall County Communications personnel continue to form integral partnerships with our customers, all levels of city and county government, neighboring jurisdictions, State and Federal agencies, and our collaborative partners, and will work together in accomplishing the strategic goals of Marshall County as a whole.



**** IN CASE YOU MISSED IT ****

Supervisors opt to rescind radio access fees

JAN 18, 2023

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T-R PHOTO BY ROBERT MAHARRY — State Center Fire Chief and Marshall County Fire Chiefs Association President Brad Pfantz spoke to the Board of Supervisors about access fees during Tuesday morning's regular meeting. The board voted unanimously to rescind the fees, which had been set at \$10 per radio per month.

During Tuesday morning's regular meeting, the Marshall County Board of Supervisors revisited the issue of radio access fees for public safety agencies for the first time since new members Jarret Heil and Carol Hibbs were sworn into office and voted unanimously to rescind them.

The matter took up the majority of the hour-long meeting at the Election Center, and several local fire chiefs attended to voice their opinions. It was discussed during multiple meetings in

2022 before the board, which at the time included former Supervisors Bill Patten and Dave Thompson, reached a compromise in October and voted to charge public safety agencies \$10 a month per radio while charging UnityPoint the full price of \$33 per month because it is a private organization.

Heil, the new board chairman, kicked off the discussion by noting that several of the townships in the county are already at their levying capacity and that the fees could “tip the scales” on them. Supervisor Steve Salasek, who previously voted in favor of the \$10 fee but expressed trepidation about charging the small volunteer fire departments for the service, provided some background, and Hibbs asked if the number of radios per community was adequate for the new system.

State Center Fire Chief and Marshall County Fire Chiefs Association President Brad Pfantz then came before the board and shared his perspective, indicating that some departments have made cuts because of the costs associated with simply buying the new radios in the first place. Responding to Hibbs’s question, he said he was confident that the rural agencies had enough radios to operate, even if that didn’t necessarily mean an ideal number.

Pfantz then shared some history on the project and reported that all of the agencies had moved over to the new system and obtained their radios as of Monday. He spoke positively of the new towers at St. Anthony and Le Grand and said they had helped to fill a major hole in coverage, citing a recent call for service in the northwest corner of the county.



Clemons Fire Chief Larry Fricke, second from right, addresses the Board of Supervisors while other local fire chiefs look on during Tuesday morning’s meeting at the Election Center.

“I was able to key up the radio and talk back to dispatch and the incoming UnityPoint ambulance with no issue, so (that’s) just one brief testimonial,” he said. “And I’m sure the deputies who patrol every corner of the county could also attest that the coverage has greatly improved, so the project did meet our needs.”

Under the previous system, which was owned by RACOM, every participating agency was required to pay \$33 per radio per month, which Pfantz called “a non-starter” for volunteer agencies because in some cases, the access fees would be higher than the department’s operating budget. Most other counties under the Shared Area Radio Agreement (SARA) network opted for a county-owned network, so Marshall County chose to follow suit. Of those SARA counties, only Story County currently charges access fees.

The Marshall County Communications Commission (MCCC) has already agreed to cover the maintenance costs for the radios, which will still be paid to RACOM, but Pfantz said it had been difficult for some of the individuals involved in the project to understand why access fees would still be charged.

“We were operating under the presumption that there would be no recurring cost, so when the decision was made in the 11th hour, it kind of came as a shock to many of us,” Pfantz said.

Both the MCCC and its Technical Oversight Board recommended not charging access fees before the matter went to the Board of Supervisors, and Pfantz said all of the individuals he had spoken with about the project had asked him why agencies would be charged to use a county-owned system.

“Even at \$10 per month per radio, the percentage of (the volunteer agencies’) operating budget ranges from four to 12 percent,” Pfantz said. “It may not seem like much, but when those operating budgets range from \$4,100 to \$62,000, it’s a significant amount.”

He added that he has also faced questions of what will happen if volunteer agencies simply can’t make the payments, to which he responded “something will have to give.” Pfantz emphasized the collective benefit of the system and the collaborative relationship between public safety agencies in Marshall County.

Between public safety, county roads and UnityPoint, a total of 552 users will be on the system, which would generate about \$66,000 per year with \$10 a month access fees. Pfantz noted, however, that 158 of the users are affiliated with the county, so 29 percent of the fees would simply come from other county agencies while the amount of “new money” would be around \$47,000 per year.

Before he wrapped up his initial comments, Pfantz acknowledged that there will be expenses involved in keeping the system up and running well into the future and said they amount to

about \$59,000 annually in fixed costs with variable costs that could be as high as \$29,000 beginning in the third year.

“Worst case, starting year three, it’s about \$88,000 to operate a \$2.7 million system,” he said.

He then asked the board to re-evaluate the previous decision. Salasek told Pfantz he was under the impression the fees would serve as a savings account to replace radios “10, 12, 15 years down the road,” but the chief responded that it’s been assumed the agencies would be responsible for replacing their own radios.

Salasek said he originally thought the \$10 figure would be “palatable” to the rural departments, and Pfantz informally polled the chiefs in attendance, who seemed to indicate it would still be a burden. Le Grand Fire Chief Brad Mauseth said his department was already levying as much as it legally could and would have to make decisions on cutting equipment purchases out of the budget. As Pfantz noted, the costs of basic equipment and uniforms have only continued to increase in recent years.

County Auditor/Recorder Nan Benson, who previously served as the Washington Township Clerk, concurred.

“Expenses are a whole lot different than they were 10, 15 years ago. A lot more expenses, and I think it’s something we need to change legislatively,” Benson said. “Do we want to cripple everybody with more taxes? No, but we also need to provide the service properly... I don’t see any of the fire stations I listen to that are doing anything exorbitant. They’re just trying to get by and provide good service, but we can’t levy enough money.”

Green Mountain Fire Chief Patrick Cornwell then weighed in and said while he was hoping there wouldn’t be a fee, his department had wiggle room in its budget. He added that he viewed the radios as an extension of 911 service and questioned whether the stated goal of protecting rural taxpayers from paying for radios in Marshalltown “missed the mark.”

Marshalltown Mayor Joel Greer was in attendance and said that while the city comprises the majority of the county’s population and provides the communications center, he believed the radios should be a county expenditure. He also said the rural areas of the county deserved coverage for emergency communications.

“As somebody who’s probably taxed doubly as a citizen of Marshalltown to pay for things outside of Marshalltown, I’m all for it and I think it ought to be spread through the whole county. And the county should absorb it,” Greer said.

Marshall County 911 Director Rhonda Braudis, Shari King of UnityPoint and Clemons Fire Chief Larry Fricke also weighed in before the supervisors decided on a course of action. Heil

said that while he understood the original logic of charging fees to help recoup the costs, he didn't like the concept of pitting governmental bodies against each other.

"I see this as something that would be much simpler if it's broad across the entire county, that all county taxpayers pay for the fixed operating costs because the county owns it," Heil said. "In the end, it's probably more efficient to have the county paying under Marshall County as a whole pay it vs. pitting governments vs. governments."

Heil said while he supported waiving the fees for now, the board would need to look at infrastructure needs for the future to avoid a "catastrophic" situation 10 or 15 years down the road. A motion to waive the fees for all of the aforementioned entities including UnityPoint carried by a unanimous vote.

In other business, the board:

- Approved a proclamation for Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month.
- Approved a total of \$111,736.61 in change orders on the courthouse project — \$97,048.06 in damages (paid by owner), \$13,359.55 in code improvements and \$1,329 in storm (insurance) expenses.
- Approved a quarterly transfer of \$700,000 from the rural services fund to the secondary road fund.
- Approved the hiring of Emily Herring as the new Marshall County Conservation Director at an annual salary of \$63,716.29.
- Approved hiring Shari Coughenour as the County Veterans Service Officer part time at 28 hours per week at an hourly rate of \$21.06.
- Approved the hiring of James Hall and Brian Thompson as permanent full time jailers at a rate of \$20.41 per hour.

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Proposed 911 communications lease modification sparks conversation at council

FEB 1, 2023

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T-R PHOTO BY ROBERT MAHARRY Marshall County 911 Communications Director Rhonda Braudis addressed the Marshalltown city council at Monday night's special meeting during a discussion on a proposal to change the Marshall County Communications Commission's lease agreement at the new Police and Fire building. The MCCC currently pays \$1 a year in rent.

In addition to proposed — and since scrapped — mandatory furloughs for city employees, another suggestion to raise the Marshall County Communication Commission's rent at the Marshalltown Police and Fire Building from a nominal annual fee of \$1 to something closer to market rate garnered strong reactions during Monday night's special city council meeting.

The proposals are part of a package presented by City Administrator Jessica Kinser to address a \$312,000 general fund deficit heading into fiscal year 2024, and her initial suggestion was an

annual payment of \$6,392, which was described as “a prorated share of the MCCC space in the entire building (3%) that does not seek extra for use of common spaces.” The current lease requires a one-year notice before it can be terminated.

Councilor Dex Walker asked Kinser if the \$6,392 was enough considering how much energy the MCCC, which operates 911 dispatch services for all police, fire and ambulance departments in the county, uses, and he wondered how the figure was reached.

Kinser said she examined the “true costs” of the building and figured the electricity alone was around \$93,000 per year, but she didn’t include common spaces in that calculation. The MCCC also pays a third of the internet bill at the building.

“That was the most logical way to get there only because we have no way to determine how much electricity they’re using, which is by far our overriding largest cost at that facility,” Kinser said.

Councilor Gary Thompson asked Kinser why the MCCC’s expenses couldn’t be metered out separately, and she responded that while it was a conversation when the new Police and Fire building was still under construction but ultimately determined not to be feasible due to wiring after conversations with representatives of Alliant Energy.

Thompson also wondered what would stop the MCCC from moving out of the building if the rent is raised, specifically alluding to the possibility of the county engineer’s office downtown becoming available in the future, and Kinser said that would be a choice they could make if they wanted to proceed with such a course of action.

Finally, Thompson asked if the proposal would truly benefit taxpayers as they are already funding the 911 center, but Kinser said it would spread the cost out across all of Marshall County as opposed to just Marshalltown. He then inquired about what services the city provides the MCCC and vice versa, and Kinser said the city provides administrative payroll services for the commission.

Mayor Joel Greer commented that among the members of the MCCC, which is mostly comprised of the mayors of Marshall County’s incorporated communities, Marshalltown is considered the “rich uncle” that can afford to house 911 dispatch out of the new building, but he added that he felt it was “logical” to spread the cost across all county residents.

Thompson, however, was still skeptical.

“I just don’t like the idea that we don’t have an exact feel for what the costs are. No one living in an apartment building wants to pay a percentage of a utility bill without knowing what their

fellow apartment dwellers are paying,” he said. “I don’t like the idea that you can’t meter that out.”

Councilor Jeff Schneider then weighed in, suggesting a slight premium closer to \$8,000 to account for maintenance and other unforeseen costs. Councilor Gabe Isom said that without having a true cost in front of him, he would defer to the 80/20 rule and favor charging the MCCC \$18,000 annually as that would be about 20 percent of the annual electrical expense.

The conversation circled back to what services the agencies provide each other, and Marshalltown Police Chief Mike Tupper said he was not aware of any services specifically provided to the MPD that the MCCC doesn’t also provide to other law enforcement and fire agencies in the county. Tupper deferred to 911 Communications Director Rhonda Braudis to fill him in, and she came to the podium next.

According to Braudis, the commission answers vestibule and lobby phones for the MPD, opens garage doors for officers coming and going and answers administrative lines for both Marshall County, the MPD and Marshall County Crime Stoppers. After fielding a question about her organization’s cash reserves, Braudis told the council she was “confused” by the proposals being discussed.

“Is this not kind of equivalent to the (radio) access fees that the Board of Supervisors just went through? So we’re taxing to tax to tax to tax? I’m just a little bit confused on that,” she said. “I wasn’t here for the decisions or the original creation of the 28E (agreement), but I’m not sure where that’s gonna go, especially since my budget’s already done.”

Tupper then returned to the podium and said the MCCC answers administrative lines for the sheriff’s office along with the MPD. He added that Marshalltown taxpayers were paying for a portion of the employees’ salaries who answer the lines, and he didn’t feel like a lot of people called the Crime Stoppers line anymore, preferring to text.

“I know that the city is providing payroll assistance and HR assistance, so I feel like it’s kind of a wash on some of these issues,” Tupper said. “But we do appreciate their help. They do a good job, but I don’t think that there’s an unfair balance of sharing the workload here. And certainly the city of Marshalltown taxpayers are paying their fair share.”

When the item was opened for public discussion, Mark Eaton was the sole commenter and worried that raising the rent would cause the MCCC to increase its tax levy and in turn raise taxes on Marshalltown residents. Kinser then clarified that it was separate from the city’s maximum property tax levy.

A motion from Isom to move forward with the \$18,000 annual figure ultimately carried by a 5-2 vote, with Thompson and Al Hoop opposing. Before voting no, Thompson opined that if the

rent is raised, MCCC employees should have the same access to the workout facilities as police officers and firefighters.

Kinser said the item would be back on the agenda at the Feb. 13 regular meeting for official action. Marshall County Board of Supervisors Chair Jarret Heil told the T-R Tuesday that while he understood the need to balance the budget from the city's perspective, he hoped the council would scrap the lease modification proposal.

“While on the surface, the rent can appear like a good idea, but just the same as the access fees for the county on the radio project, on the surface it seemed like a good idea, and in the end, it was just pitting governments vs. governments,” Heil said. “My guess is when the final proposal comes out (is) that it’s not gonna be on there, and I would hope they do not have that rent on there based on the good faith that we are working with them as well.”

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Council votes to terminate current 911 communications lease

FEB 14, 2023

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T-R PHOTO BY ROBERT MAHARRY Marshall County Sheriff Joel Phillips, pictured, addressed the Marshalltown City Council about a proposal to terminate the current lease agreement between the city and the Marshall County Communications Commission during Monday night's regular meeting.

After discussing the matter at a pair of previous meetings, the Marshalltown city council voted 5-1 to terminate its current lease with the Marshall County Communications Commission

(MCCC) on Monday night, opening the door for a renegotiation of the agreement that allows the organization to operate out of the city's police and fire station at 909 S. 2nd St.

At present, the MCCC, which operates the 911 dispatch services for all police, fire and ambulance services in Marshall County, pays \$1 a year in rent for the space it utilizes, and in response to a \$312,000 budget deficit heading into fiscal year 2024, City Administrator Jessica Kinser suggested raising the rent as one of 10 potential solutions to address the situation.

Because the current lease requires a one-year termination notice, the change will not take effect until Feb. 29, 2024, and Kinser said that would provide ample time to potentially renegotiate with the county.

Rhonda Braudis, who serves as the director of 911 communications for Marshall County, attended the special meeting on Jan. 30 to express her concerns with the proposed modifications, and several other county department heads attended Monday, with some speaking out against the motion on the table.

County Assessor Blaze Wurr warned the council that if the city is determined to be charging a market rate rent to a nonprofit, they could lose their tax-exempt status, and that portion of the police and fire station could be declared taxable. Sheriff Joel Phillips spoke next on behalf of the MCCC, on whose board he serves as the chairman, and he stressed that 911 communications benefit all residents of the county, including those who live both inside and outside of Marshalltown.

Phillips then recalled the Citizen Advisory Board established to assist in devising plans for the facility, which opened in 2019.

“Please ask yourself, is this the vision they wanted? To be able to charge another public safety (agency) providing service to our community rent?” Phillips asked. “I understand the troubles that many city and governmental agencies are having balancing budgets. That’s our responsibility. That’s we’re elected for and appointed for... We’ll work things out between city and county government. I have no doubt in that. I just hope that we can come to a resolution where we’re not bringing this up every year, every two years or every three years. We like to have consistency in our public service.”

Braudis herself came forward next and addressed previous questions about what services the MCCC provides specifically to the Marshalltown Police Department, and she noted that they serve as the administrative line for the MPD — specifically highlighting examples of their number being listed as the primary line.

“The Marshalltown Police Department, it’s always dispatch first. If you look at the officers’ business cards, it’s dispatch’s telephone number. So when I say that we are the administrative lines, we are truly the administrative lines,” she said.

In response, Marshalltown Police Chief Mike Tupper said the city provides payroll and human resources services to the MCCC along with hosting their information on the city website and added that the number Braudis cited is for non-emergency calls.

“I think there’s a lot of things that the city does for 911 that is not accounted for at all. So we appreciate the great work that our 911 operators provide. They do a great job,” Tupper said. “Obviously, I think it’s important that when people have a need, especially a 24/7 need, we want them to call the non-emergency number when they can.”

The council ultimately voted 5-1 to terminate the current lease, with Gary Thompson opposing and Mike Ladehoff absent. A new lease with a modified rental rate will require approval from both the city and the county, and that amount has not yet been finalized — though Councilor Gabe Isom did suggest charging roughly \$18,000 a year during the Jan. 30 meeting.

In other business, the council:

- Approved setting the maximum property tax levy for fiscal year 2024 at \$11,899,977, or a rate of \$12.52848 per \$1,000 of valuation.
- Approved officially changing the days and hours of operation at the compost facility to 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Fridays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and noon to 4 p.m. on Sundays as part of the consent agenda.
- Approved the rest of the consent agenda as listed.
- Approved a motion to use Local Option Sales Tax dollars to cover a deficit in Fund 183 Economic Development Initiative.

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Supervisors accept compensation board recommendations for elected officials

Sheriff to receive 20 percent raise, all others get 10 percent bump

TODAYS NEWS
FEB 16, 2023

ROBERT MAHARRY
Managing Editor



T-R PHOTOS BY ROBERT MAHARRY — Marshall County 911 Communications Director Rhonda Braudis, left, addresses the Board of Supervisors while Compensation Board Representative Mark Eaton, center, and County Treasurer Deann Tomlinson, right, look on during a discussion about the compensation board’s recommendations for elected official pay increases.

T-R PHOTOS BY ROBERT MAHARRY — Marshall County 911 Communications Director Rhonda Braudis, left, addresses the Board of Supervisors while Compensation Board Representative Mark Eaton, center, and County Treasurer Deann Tomlinson, right, look on during a discussion about the compensation board’s recommendations for elected official pay increases.

After tabling action on the compensation board’s recommendation for elected official pay raises on two prior occasions, the Marshall County Board of Supervisors bucked a recent trend and accepted the increases as presented during Wednesday morning’s regular meeting.

Although the board eventually opted to approve the compensation board’s full recommendation — a 10 percent raise for all elected officials except Sheriff Joel Phillips, who would receive a 20 percent pay increase — Supervisor Carol Hibbs initially motioned to give Phillips a 14 percent raise, seven percent for the county auditor/recorder, attorney and treasurer, and 3.5 percent for the supervisors themselves. In previously tabling action, the supervisors cited potential legislation at the Statehouse that could modify budget calculations, but Board Chairman Jarret Heil said that possibility had been “built in” to the current budget the county is set to publish.

Once the original motion had received a second, Supervisor Steve Salasek asked to hear from the compensation board, and Mark Eaton, who serves as the sheriff’s representative on that board, took time to explain his viewpoint. Eaton noted that Phillips receives the lowest annual pay among sheriffs in any of the counties comparable to Marshall, and as stipulated in Iowa’s new “Back the Blue” law, his pay is now legally required to be set at a level “comparable” to city police chiefs in similar-sized communities and administrators and command officers with the Iowa State Patrol and the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation. Currently, Phillips makes just over \$100,000 annually, and Marshalltown Police Chief Mike Tupper and State Patrol Major David Halverson, who is assigned to Marshall County, are both paid over \$130,000.

Eaton said he hopes to get Phillips’s compensation to that level within a few years, but he worried about waiting too long to do it. He also pointed out that Lee County, which is smaller than Marshall County in population, gave its sheriff a 45 percent pay increase due to the Back the Blue law.

“If we keep holding the sheriff back and we keep holding the deputies that are tied to him back and keep squeezing that percentage between negotiated union and non-union people... I understand it’s a lot to ask, but with inflation and what everyone else is doing to fill this Back the Blue requirement, we’re just putting ourselves behind the eight ball if we keep holding that down,” Eaton said. “I think we did a good job of working hard to get it at 20 percent, so I’d like to see the supervisors take the recommendation. Otherwise, there’s no point for the commission to exist. We work hard at this. We don’t take our jobs lightly, and there are many people on the commission who are jaded from many years of being beaten down. We really need to fix this.”



Marshall County Chief Deputy Ben Veren, left, and Jail Administrator Patrick White, right, participated in the conversation about the compensation board’s recommendations.

Marshall County Chief Deputy Ben Veren, left, and Jail Administrator Patrick White, right, participated in the conversation about the compensation board’s recommendations.

Chief Deputy Ben Veren also weighed in, arguing that it was frustrating to see large amounts of money routinely approved to go toward expenditures like the courthouse project while employees simultaneously see their raises reduced by the supervisors. Marshall County 911 Communications Director Rhonda Braudis encouraged the board to do whatever it takes to attract top-tier talent to the county.

According to IT Director James Nehring, Marshall County, which ranks 15th out of Iowa’s 99 counties in population, is currently 51st in treasurer pay, while the supervisors are 30th, the sheriff is 42nd, the auditor is ranked 21st (but Marshall County is one of only two in the state of Iowa where the auditor and recorder position are combined), and the county attorney is ranked 32nd.

“The reality is Marshall County is behind. We have pride in our elected officials, pride in our people, and we want to have the best here. We believe that we’re the best, and the pay should reflect that,” Heil said.

Heil commended county departments for keeping their budgets tight and looking for cuts wherever possible, and he then asked whether it made more sense to bump pay in “small or medium bites” to catch up or to take a big bite this year. Veren said he would like to see the county do as much as it could now and then reassess come budget time next year.

“The last decade has set us so far back (that) we need, not little steps. We need several big steps just to get back on track, and that’s not figuring any increases. That’s just figuring flat where we’re at today,” Veren said. “I’m afraid that without taking that big step, we’re not gonna get there.”

The monetary difference between the compensation board’s recommendation and the initial motion, according to Auditor/Recorder Nan Benson, was \$22,007.10, and Braudis cited a cost saving measure she instituted to save Phillips about 70 percent on the language line bill the sheriff’s office uses to illustrate that employees could easily make up the difference.

“If every agency did something similar to that, I can guarantee you that cost savings is gonna far exceed that \$22,000,” Braudis said. “When people walk away and they feel appreciated, they have way more energization to eyeball every single thing that comes across their desk.”

Veren and Jail Administrator Patrick White worried that they would struggle to attract candidates for promotions because union hourly employees can make almost as much or more than their salaried, exempt counterparts by working overtime.

“At some point, sacrificing continually year after year after year with no improvement does get to be frustrating,” Veren said.

Citing his personal anti-tax positions, Eaton pointed out “at his own demise” that despite being the 15th most populated county in Iowa, Marshall County is in the 60th percentile rank on taxes, and Heil asked if the county was operating like one of the most populated in the state.

“We’ve cut corners in a lot of different ways, and I think we can do much better,” Heil said. “At the same time, it’s not necessarily raising taxes by that amount. We’re curbing back on our spending and being efficient. That’s our commitment... That’s what we’re working toward is how to be a more efficient, more robust county and targeting growth.”

With the caveat that the supervisors will likely have to reconvene with department heads to discuss additional budget adjustments, Hibbs modified her motion to accept the original recommendation of a 10 percent increase for all elected officials except for the sheriff, who will receive a 20 percent bump, and it carried by a unanimous vote.

Now that the new pay rates have been approved, salaries will be as follows beginning July 1, 2023: \$130,599.74 for County Attorney Jordan Gaffney, \$120,701.38 for Phillips, \$88,786.63

for Benson, \$76,435.66 for County Treasurer Deann Tomlinson and \$44,587.49 for each supervisor.

In other business, the board:

- Approved courthouse change orders totaling \$220,004.56 — Of those orders, \$28,498.50 will be paid by the owner (the county) along with \$1,848 in code changes (also the county's responsibility), and the remaining \$191,658.06 will be covered by insurance. The largest single expense was a lift rental cost of \$177,409, which will be covered by insurance.
- Discussed an insurance claim regarding water damage at the Annex Building with Bobby Shomo of Shomo-Madsen Insurance.
- Approved a three-year audit agreement with Eide Bailey LLP of Des Moines with payment not to exceed \$60,000 for fiscal year 2023, \$64,300 for FY2024 and \$68,600 for FY2025.
- Approved a change of status for Veterans Affairs Director Kevin Huseboe from part-time hourly to salaried 28 hours per week at \$28 per hour.
- Approved the hiring of Emma Bruck as an interpretive naturalist in the conservation department at an hourly pay rate of \$22.48.
- Approved the consent agenda as listed.

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Cough it up for the animals

FEB 25, 2023

RACHEL BUCHANAN

Contributing Writer



Spring time is just around the corner here in Marshalltown. That means the weather is warming up, animals are waking up out of hibernation and our second annual Furr Ball is coming up fast!

Our wonderful fundraising committee, headed up by Susan Krough and Peggy Hannam, envisioned and executed our new spring fundraiser the Furr Ball “Cough It Up For the Animals.” After its overwhelmingly successful premiere last year, it is back again for another round. Hosted by the Elmwood Country Club, this year’s event promises to be even bigger and better.

The Furr Ball is a live auction event that includes a buffet dinner, social hour, live entertainment, guest speaker and a unique “giving wall” that allows participants to pick from a

large range of donation opportunities. Auction items this year include trips to Mexico and Colorado, concert tickets to Chris Stapleton and Shania Twain, a hot air balloon ride, and a signed Kansas City Chiefs helmet. There are over 30 auction items to bid on, so something for everyone.

The guest speaker this year is Rhonda Braudis, head of the Communications Center and co-owner of Oliver Beene Designs. Braudis and her wife have been longtime supporters of the Animal Rescue League and have hosted adoption events at their store. She is a big proponent of responsible pet ownership and community involvement.

The B2wins (Brazilian Twins) will be returning as the live entertainment. The pair of brothers are high energy and charismatic and were definitely a highlight of the evening last year. They had everyone on their feet.

Furr Ball is our biggest event of the year and brings in a large portion of our yearly funds. Last year we were able to raise \$60,000 and the fundraising committee has a goal of \$100,000 this year to benefit the Animal Rescue League of Marshalltown. The event will be held at the Elmwood Country Club on Saturday March 25 at 5:30pm. Seating is limited and you must pre-register for the event. Tickets are \$75 each and can be purchased at <https://www.arlmarshalltown.com/upcoming-events/furr-ball/>. We hope to see everyone there!

Rachel Buchanan is the executive director of the Animal Rescue League of Marshalltown.

City council, supervisors talk downtown plans, 911 lease at joint meeting

MAR 24, 2023

ROBERT MAHARRY
Managing Editor
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T-R PHOTOS BY ROBERT MAHARRY — The Marshalltown City Council and Marshall County Board of Supervisors convened for a joint meeting at Veterans Memorial Coliseum on Thursday night.

The Marshalltown City Council and the Marshall County Board of Supervisors held a joint meeting at Veterans Memorial Coliseum on Thursday night and primarily covered two topics — the city’s plans for Main Street reconstruction and how they will affect the courthouse and annex, and the more controversial issue of a proposed rent increase for the 911 Commission at the city’s Police/Fire facility.

After a several year hiatus, the two governing entities met together last spring, and Thursday’s meeting was the first of 2023. According to discussions that occurred during the meeting, everyone in attendance seemed to agree on gathering quarterly going forward.

Bolton and Menk Landscape Architect Casey Byers was the first presenter of the night as he showed off the downtown improvement plan and mentioned the opportunity for collaboration between the city and county.

Byers said the idea was to add “decorative elements” to downtown and “change the character of the streetscape” for each individual road in the area. Bolton and Menk is designing up to the property line on the north side of the courthouse square, and the plan is to have parking on the street, a buffer zone and an “amenity zone” where street trees, decorative pavement, benches and site furnishings could be placed.

He cited other examples such as Springfield, Ill. with downtown common areas like a courthouse square and called that a unique opportunity for Marshalltown and Marshall County to create a hub for community events.



Bolton and Menk Landscape Architect Casey Byers presented on plans for Main Street improvements to the Marshalltown City Council and the Marshall County Board of Supervisors during Thursday night’s joint meeting.

“The message is about finding opportunities to expand that pedestrian space, and doing that right in the heart of downtown is going to be really vital to the vitality of the downtown,” Byers said.

After he opened up the floor to questions, City Councilor Gary Thompson asked about converting to entirely angle parking in the area around the courthouse, and Byers said it would be on three sides total. Because the public entrance to the courthouse will now be on the south side of the building, Thompson also suggested a permanent bandshell on the north side for performances and events.

Board of Supervisors Chairman Jarret Heil thanked Byers for his presentation and noted the sense of excitement as county department heads are planning their return to the courthouse. He also asked that County Buildings and Grounds Director Lucas Baedke be kept in the loop on any future developments.

“We’re just excited to be getting close to getting back into the courthouse, getting those fences down and getting those grounds back to being a central place of community and place of entertainment and something we can all celebrate,” Heil said. “We know that the more open layout makes the most sense for flexibility, and we’ll be happy to work with all of us here to have a great place for the community.”

Thompson then asked Heil if he was willing to commit to a new official reopening date. He respectfully declined, and Baedke joked that he “no longer makes commitments.”

“I can tell you (that) the fact that we’re starting to have move-in plans with department heads means it’s coming close,” Heil said.

“We’d like to surprise you,” Supervisor Steve Salasek added.

The board and council then moved on to the thornier matter of the city council’s decision to terminate the current \$1 a year lease agreement along with one-third of the internet for the 911 Commission — which is neither a city nor county entity and has its own levy — and discussions about raising the organization’s rent to as high as \$18,000 a year at the Police/Fire building. When the building was first opened, the dispatchers were still city employees, but the creation of the commission required a new agreement.

In the absence of Mayor Joel Greer, Mayor Pro Tem and Councilor Mike Ladehoff offered an explanation of why the city opted to make the move, which was first discussed as one of several potential budget deficit remedies. Ladehoff said annual electricity expenses at the facility are around \$93,000 on top of \$28,000 for natural gas.

“I think it’s just that the residents of Marshalltown are carrying more of the burden, and we have all of our expenses and lots of needs that we’d like to be meeting as well. So I’m just glad we’re having this meeting and talking it through,” Councilor Jeff Schneider said.

Councilor Barry Kell reported that he could not find a similar arrangement anywhere else in Iowa and characterized the situation as “pretty unique,” and both Ladehoff and Thompson mentioned the possibility of metering out electric and gas usage to see how much the commission is using.

“I just can’t believe that we can’t, in the very least, buy little units to put in every socket, plug them in and then plug their equipment into them to just read what they’re using for electricity,” Thompson said in an exchange with Public Works Director/City Engineer Heather Thomas.

Thomas said she has not been instructed to perform any sort of an energy audit yet, and Thompson wondered if Alliant Energy would do it themselves. He also opined that if the 911 Commission is required to pay a higher rent, its employees should have full access to the fitness center along with police officers and firefighters.

Currently, the 911 Commission occupies 1,800 square feet, or about three percent of the building, and because the lease requires a one-year notice before termination, the entities have until the end of February next year to either come up with a new agreement or part ways.

Heil noted the board’s decision to waive radio access fees, and Thompson highlighted several collaborations between the public safety agencies. Heil lamented the possibility of falling into a “tit for tat” situation in the future, and Thompson worried about the city and county “nickel and diming” each other.

911 Communications Director Rhonda Braudis provided insight on the potential for regionalization in the coming years and said she is positioning Marshall County to serve as a “Mecca” for a combined operation with Tama, Grundy and Hardin counties. She expects it to happen within the next decade.

“It is something that is coming,” she said. “We’d probably be taking them in because no one would be going to them. They would be coming to us as the Mecca, and that’s why I built it to be what it is as of right now. So if this happened tomorrow and the state flipped the switch, we’re ready.”

Braudis added that she would like Phillips and his deputies to have access to the facility without being buzzed in, and she also wondered if the rent would include utilities. She also asked that she be notified of any official decision on rent by Jan. 1, 2024 so she could plan her budget and levy accordingly.

Everyone in attendance agreed that more information was needed before an official decision could be made, and Councilor Dex Walker expressed optimism that a new deal could be reached.

“I think most of us around this table think the right place for this center is where it is currently. I just think we’re asking good questions to come up with what is reasonable and shared, and I think we’re all gonna get somewhere where we’re nodding along with that and we’re asking good questions,” Walker said. “I think we’ll have more to discuss in a few months.”

Schneider said the goal was not to recoup any capital investment but simply to split the operational expenses more fairly, and Braudis offered to reach out to Alliant to get a more accurate picture of how much energy the 911 Commission is using.

“I think in the end, we can come to an agreement that may not be perfect dollar for dollar because things do fluctuate, but it’s something that we can agree upon that’s fair to all,” Heil said.

Neither the board nor the council took official action on either of the agenda items. Before they adjourned after just shy of an hour, Ladehoff brought up the possibility of sharing fireworks expenses for the Fourth of July, and Marshall County VA Director Kevin Huseboe’s request for additional handicapped parking in front of the annex building was briefly discussed.

When Heil asked for a show of hands on who would be interested in making the joint meetings quarterly going forward, everyone in attendance raised his or her hand.

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Marshall County 911 team celebrates National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week

APR 14, 2023



T-R PHOTOS BY ROBERT MAHARRY — Several members of the Marshall County 911 Dispatch team — from left to right, Max Chapman, Zac Mann, Alyssia Klosterman, Tiffany Eibs, Shannon Wegner, Kayla Ball, Director Rhonda Braudis and Shane Andrews — pose for a photo at their office inside of the Marshelltown Police/Fire station on Tuesday morning. April 9-15 is National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week.

They're often referred to as the forgotten heroes of public safety or the most important people you never see, but here in Marshall County, members of the 911 dispatch team, who are housed out of the Marshelltown Police/Fire Station, know that the work they do is both necessary and appreciated.

Because of the nature of what they do, dispatchers are forced to stay on their toes constantly, and there's a running joke that their four major food groups are caffeine, chocolate, pizza and nicotine.

Marshall County 911 Communications Commission Director Rhonda Braudis and her squad all came to their jobs for different reasons. Max Chapman, an Eldora native, said he wanted to be a cop and figured dispatch would help him get his foot in the door.

"After taking a lot of different 911 calls and being able to help people in our own way that we do it, (having) that relationship with the public, with the officers, with the firemen and the first responders, I realized that I just wanted to stick around that," he said. "I really enjoy doing this, and it just feels like we get to do our part."

Another dispatcher, Alyssia Klosterman, said she toured a 911 center when she was in high school, and although she initially entered the nursing field, when it was time to make a change, she remembered her prior interest, showed up to take the test and started an entirely new career. She said being able to help is the greatest joy she gets from the job, adding that there's a lot more to it than people think.



Marshall County 911 Dispatcher Zac Mann mans his post on the phones during a recent shift.

But even though they love the work, they're quick to admit it isn't an easy job. Klosterman still has vivid recollections of a call when she was still in training, and a mother informed her mentor that her baby was unresponsive.

"That hit me right in the feels. I started crying. I wasn't even doing anything yet, and I haven't taken a hard call like that since, but that one hit me right in my feels," she said.

Most dispatchers have their own similar stories. Zac Mann has taken suicidal calls. Kayla Ball has taken them from her own family members. Shane Andrews got a call last year about a small child who had been run over, and Tiffany Eibs had to take the call when her father was having a heart attack.

"A lot of people think, you know, it's just answering phone calls, it's not hard, because that's what it sounds like it is. But you'll have people come and sit in here — officers, jailers — and

they're kind of in awe about what actually happens, how calls actually work and the actual things that we do," Chapman said.

In addition to answering the calls and dispatching the correct agencies to the scene, they also provide pre-arrival instructions until first responders get there. If they're ever short with a caller on the phone, Eibs added, it's not because they're disregarding anything, it's just because they're so busy.

Despite the heaviness of the subject matter they often encounter, the team finds ways to make it fun and keep the mood light. As Chapman explained, it's exciting, and it forces him to think on his feet and make split second decisions.

"I don't think anything else would give me the satisfaction of this job," he said.

"It's never the same day twice," Eibs added. "Every day you learn something new... It's nonstop, and it's very rewarding."

Iowa is the fourth state where Braudis has led an agency — previously, she served in Oregon, Arkansas and Missouri — and she said she did extensive research before coming to Marshall County in 2019. The ultimate reason she chose to work here, she said, is that the 911 Communications Commission, which is comprised of the mayors of each of Marshall County's incorporated cities along with representatives from the Sheriff's Office and the Board of Supervisors and the Emergency Management Coordinator, understands what needs to happen to position 911 for the future.

"In the 3 ½ years I've been here, I've been able to do a lot for this agency that sometimes I haven't been able to do for my previous agencies because they listen, they understand and they care," she said. "Just even in this past year, the things that we've been able to do here, the fact that we are now competitive with other agencies. They invest into 911. They invest into the community, and it's about the community."

And although Braudis joked that she and her dispatchers are "the brothers and sisters" nobody really asked for, they are most certainly part of the larger first responder family between police, fire and EMS. Within the county, they work with the Marshalltown Police Department, the Sheriff's Office, the State Center PD, Marshalltown Fire, UnityPoint EMS and all of the volunteer fire and ambulance services in each community.

Their efforts have not gone unnoticed. When reached for comment, Marshalltown Police Chief Mike Tupper, Sheriff Joel Phillips, Marshalltown Fire Chief David Rierson and UnityPoint Regional Director of Safety, Security and Transportation Nick Heintz all heaped praises on the local team.

“We have an outstanding public safety communications center in Marshall County, and the operators working in our center do a great job protecting our community and our first responders each day,” Tupper said. “These public safety professionals are the true first responder during every emergency event. It is the toughest job in public safety and we thank them for everything that they do.”

Phillips, who currently serves as the chair of the Marshall County Communications Commission, expressed a similar sentiment.

“The men and women who answer 911 calls need to be prepared for anything as they are the ‘true’ first responders to emergencies. If they do not react quickly or ask the appropriate questions, the emergency could have an entirely different outcome and, in some cases, it is life or death. This is a tremendous weight on their shoulders,” he said. “When a 911 call is received, communications staff must not only calm the caller but to receive and document accurate information then simultaneously begin to decide what resources are needed to respond to an emergency. This could be a combination of law enforcement, fire fighters, EMS/ambulance personnel, emergency towing/recovery equipment, emergency rooms, medical examiners, funeral homes, to public works and roads personnel. The Marshall County Sheriff’s Office is extremely proud of the entire Marshall County Communications Center staff for their sacrifices, dedication, and compassion for our communities.”

In a line of work where seconds are pivotal, Heintz is happy to work with a team he trusts completely.

“The dispatchers are an absolutely crucial part of emergency response,” he said. “In our world, time matters, and dispatchers are instrumental in ensuring we can provide an appropriate response to a critical incident. Their care and coordination allows us to provide the best patient care possible.”

Dispatchers have faced many challenges in the past, and they will most surely endure more in the future. But they are committed to the work they do, and they remain proud to serve their communities.

“They are the first point of contact. These are the men and women that are there to calm them in their time of need. They don’t get calls from people having a good day. They get calls from people potentially having the worst day of their lives,” Braudis said. “They get the right people to the right place in the right amount of time.”

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The heroes behind the headset

APR 16, 2023

RHONDA BRAUDIS

Contributing Writer



T-R FILE PHOTO Several members of the Marshall County 911 Dispatch team — from left to right, Max Chapman, Zac Mann, Alyssia Klosterman, Tiffany Eibs, Shannon Wegner, Kayla Ball, Director Rhonda Braudis and Shane Andrews — pose for a photo at their office inside of the Marshalltown Police/Fire station on Tuesday morning. April 9-15 is National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week.

This week we recognize the heroes behind the headset. You may be asking who these incredible individuals are that are rarely seen but always heard.

These, Marshall County, are your dedicated 911 Communications Specialists. We have had some tough years in the past, through COVID, civil unrest, staffing issues facing our center, and yet we carry on, never failing to give the very best to our community or the field responders we serve.

This is not a job, it is truly a calling! It is not for everyone. It is tedious, stressful, frustrating at times, and 911 Dispatchers rarely get to hear the words “thank you” enough, or just how much they really helped the caller, patient, victim, or their field responders.

When a thank you does go out, most think of the people they see on the scene, and not the First, First, Responders. This is natural because that is who we see in our times of crisis. There is much that happens behind the scenes that is not seen, however.

These dedicated men and women are there when the plea for help comes in, the first point of contact in an emergency situation, or just when you need help. Citizens don’t call in because

they are having a good day. Most often, they are calling in because they may be experiencing potentially the worst day of their lives and need help.

The 911 Communications Specialists serve because they choose to. It is not about the pay, it is certainly not the best hours or the best rewards, but it is meaningful. We are blessed in Marshall County to have a Commission that not only listens but supports its 911 Communications Specialists in their endeavors to provide for the citizens of Marshall County. The profession of a 911 Communications Specialist is one of the only careers in the world, where they can truly be the change for anyone they come into contact with needing assistance.

We must realize that the profession of 911 Dispatching is not that old of a profession, certainly not as old as law enforcement, fire, or medical. AT&T provided 911 for national usage, having the first call ever made in February 1968 in Haleyville, Ala.

We just celebrated 50 years of 911 in 2018. What many may not know is congress did not pass 911 for national usage until 1999. Then, in December 2004, Congress enacted the ENHANCE 911 Act of 2004 to accelerate the deployment of lifesaving, E-911 technology, which helps first responders pinpoint the location of individuals in need of emergency assistance. Technology is ever evolving and the role of the 911 Communications Specialist keeps pace with technology to provide the best service to Marshall County.

To other PSAPs (Public Safety Answering Points / 911 Dispatch Centers) celebrating this week, may you remember how much you are appreciated and respected. Your Marshall County Communications Center family sends their love and appreciation and celebrates you! We are an extended family serving together with our law enforcement partners, the Marshall County Sheriff's Office, the Marshalltown Police Department, and State Center Police Department; our fire department partners, Marshalltown Fire Department, all of our volunteer fire departments and emergency responders; and our EMS partner, UnityPoint Hospital.

Working with an industry that I have grown to love over the past 21 years, I remain in awe of the compassion and commitment of our 911 professionals everywhere. We have definitely had it rough these last couple of years, yet we keep our heads up, headsets on, and hearts full of love for the service you give selfishly to your community.

I thank my team for the service they give, and the sacrifices made. May you enjoy this week that is dedicated to you and feel the love and appreciation that you so deserve! To my Marshall County 911 Team, I am beyond blessed to work with each of you.

Happy National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week!

#thingoldline #herobehindtheheadset #bethechange #goldline #IAM911 #firstresponders

Rhonda Braudis is the director of the Marshall County 911 Communications Commission. is the director of the Marshall County 911 Communications Commission.



MARSHALLTOWN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Leadership Marshalltown

The inaugural class for Leadership Marshalltown held its final session and graduation on May 18, 2023. The class participants have spent the past 9 months learning about Marshalltown as well as developing a wide variety of leadership skills with the help of the teaching team and Kansas Leadership Center staff. The Leadership Marshalltown participants are now tasked with finding new ways to implement those skills and participate in the community in a meaningful way. Sponsors for the 2022-2023 class included ITC Midwest, Emerson, and MARSHALLTOWN Company.

Applications are now open for the next Leadership Marshalltown class. For more information visit www.marshalltown.org/leadership or reach out to Kyle Hall, Workforce Development Coordinator at khall@marshalltown.org.



First Row (Left to right): Tasia Hulin, Erin Carpenter, Alex Klyn, Alex Craig, Hector Campos, Maria Rangel, Hector Hernandez Morales

2nd Row: Rachel Buchanan, Abby Woosley, Yolanda Smith, Kacie Monroe, Alicia Sears, Erica Finders, Amy Kacmarynski, Kendey Manners, Kohle Nieland, Heidi Dalal

3rd Row: Ryan Isgrig, Kyle Hall, Paul Waterman, Mark Dumbeck, Jared Wall, Ryleigh Feather, Josh Grosvenor, Robert Maharry, Becky Hassett

Not Pictured: Tony Wilsher, Rhonda Braudis, Charissa Baedke, Deann Tomlinson, Doug Bausman

Inaugural class graduates from Sheriff's Office Citizens Academy



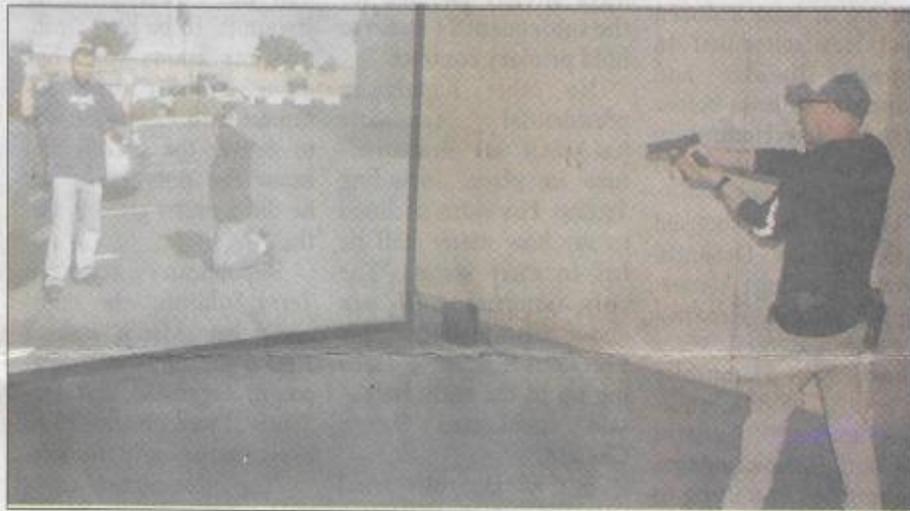
TR PHOTOS BY ROBERT MAHARRY
Eight graduates of the inaugural Marshall County Sheriff's Office Citizens Academy — Linnette Tuttle, Tia Tuttle, Lisa Crouch, Rhonda Braudis, Jackie Fiscus, Rich Isaacson, Penny Hartwell and Jason Wegner — pose for a photo after Tuesday night's ceremony alongside members of the county law enforcement and jail team.

By **ROBERT MAHARRY**

TIMES-REPUBLICAN

All eight of the individuals who recently completed the Marshall County Sheriff's Office's inaugural 10-week Citizens Academy came into the sessions expecting to learn something, and by that metric, they walked out of Tuesday night's graduation ceremony satisfied.

"I was pleasantly surprised on the amount of training you go through, and this may sound crazy, but they train to try to not kill people. They do everything they can to end that situation in a better manner than somebody dying, and I was impressed by the specialties of different deputies," said graduate Jason Wegner of Marshalltown, who owns and operates Larry's Towing. "It was very good. It opened my eyes up to a lot of procedures and the way they handle



Jason Wegner of Marshalltown participates in a virtual use of force training during the final session of the MCSO Citizens Academy on Tuesday night.

things. They're not just out to write people tickets or to put people in jail. They're out there to help people, and they put their lives on the line to do that."

Each of the 10 sessions focused on a different aspect of what Sheriff Joel Phillips and his deputies do — with one specifically

dedicated to the jail and correctional officers — and several of the students shouted out the lesson on crisis negotiation and SWAT as one that stuck with them.

"The training these guys do, and then the negotiators who come in and talk somebody off a ledge

and talk a gun out of their hand and do that without any weapons, just putting themselves out there like that," Wegner said. "That one hit me the hardest, I think."

Phillips credited MCSO Sgt. Louis Modlin with

ACADEMY | A5

Academy

CONTINUED | FROM A1

hatching the idea for a county citizens academy, and the Sheriff was onboard as long as a reasonable plan could be devised. Professionals from the jail, patrol division, civil division and the courts system were all willing to lend their time to the class.

"There's multiple divisions, but if one fails, we all fail. So we all have to work together to complete our mission," Phillips said. "There's a lot of different tactics or responsibilities involved in the Sheriff's Office, and I think we wanted to highlight those. With law enforcement, our responsibilities are much like a municipality police officer's... But they're a little bit different on some of the programs that we provide, so I think we really wanted to highlight our civil division, jail division and our court system."

The first class had more female graduates (six) than male (two), and Phillips said the goal was to keep the group small but also include a cross-section of Marshall County with a variety of ages and professions represented. Some of the participants, like Linnette Tuttle and Rich Isaacson, have already completed the Marshalltown Police Department's long-running Citizens Academy, but they were excited to broaden their knowledge of law enforcement even further.

"This one was more hands-on, and it opened my eyes to see what they have to go through and knowing the dangerous situations that they get in and how they get out of them," Tuttle said. "And I know sometimes some of them don't."

Isaacson, a service advi-

sor at a auto repair shop who has also completed the Marshalltown Fire Department's Citizens Academy, noted that while videos of police officers behaving badly and/or using excessive force are now quick to make the rounds in the media and on social media, taking the class gave him a renewed appreciation for the work they do.

"These guys are a family, a team. It's not 'Jailers are over here.' It's not 'Deputies are over here.' Everybody's one unit, and everybody has to do their job to make everybody else's go right," he said. "The training that they showed us they have to go through... I think if we can convince more people to come out and take this class, then maybe we can turn the tides and get people back on the right side."

He added that he wasn't sure if he could do the job for 10 hours a day while keeping his sanity intact, and because of the size of the Marshall County Jail, with 182 beds total, he was especially impressed with the work correctional officers do.

"You can see that their level of commitment is just the same as the deputies that are out doing the other stuff," Isaacson said.

On Tuesday night, the final training was virtual reality scenarios where the students, armed with a weapon, would attempt to de-escalate potentially violent situations and decide on when use of force — deadly or otherwise — would be justified. Drawing from his own background in the towing business, Wegner recalled instances where the people he interacts with can flip on a dime from friendly to angry and confrontational.

"That situation with

them is that it goes from they're talking to you to a gun's getting pointed at you, and without good training and techniques, they're gonna die," Wegner said. "And what we did down there was a good eye-opener on that too."

Some of the graduates, like Wegner and Marshall County 911 Communications Director Rhonda Braudis, already work in law enforcement adjacent careers — or, at least, jobs where they frequently interact with cops — so learning more about their side of the operation seemed to just make sense.

"To look at what they were able to do here, they brought it into more of the technique. There was a lot more hands-on (stuff). The benefit and purpose of that hands-on for people that are not in the field, it really goes to show just how much training they receive," Braudis said. "Because it is about the community. It is about making sure everybody is safe, life and property."

Tia Tuttle, a 27-year-old BCLUW graduate who took the class alongside her grandmother Linnette, is studying criminology and felt it was a good way to get her foot in the door, and Braudis even made a recruiting pitch to try to convince her to start out in the dispatching world.

"The SWAT or crisis or that stuff is what I would like to get into," Tia Tuttle said.

Braudis believes the experience, in turn, will make her a better 911 dispatcher, and she plans to put at least one of her team members through the class each year going forward. All of the other graduates, who were treated to a meal from

Smokin' G's and got their own personalized plaques, were in agreement that they would recommend it to others, and Wegner even suggested an advanced course for people like himself after they complete the initial academy.

Penny Hartwell of Conrad, who works in security at the hospital in Marshalltown, left Phillips, the deputies and the jailers with a poignant parting quote during the ceremony, personally thanking several of the officers in attendance for making a positive impact.

"You want to go out and you want to make a difference in everybody's life, but that's pretty much impossible. I think everybody knows that, but if you can make a difference in one person's life, you've done a lot," Hartwell said. "And I'm living proof that this sheriff's department did a lot for me."

Phillips and his team gained valuable information themselves: the class gave them a chance to step outside of what he described as the "Cop talk" bubble and explain things in simpler terms.

"It not only helps us in our daily activities, but it also helps remind us (that) when we talk to citizens, we need to be communicating and personable. That was a really good eye-opening experience for us," he said. "We need those partnerships. We always go back to 'The people are the police,' and we are the people. By doing these community outreach programs, we can help to support each other and make this a better place to live, travel and enjoy."

Contact Robert Maharry at 641-753-6611 ext. 255 or rmaharry@timesrepublican.com.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Marshall County 911 Communications Center recognized

Marshall County 911 Communications Center, has been chosen by the Prepared Live team, as a Center of Excellence, for Innovation in Emergency Response. The 911 Communications Specialists work diligently for the citizens and responders of Marshall County and are humbled to be recognized for the commitment of its team.

Council revisits 911 communication center rent discussion

DEC 26, 2023

ROBERT MAHARRY

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T-R PHOTO BY ROBERT MAHARRY Marshall County 911 Communications Director Rhonda Braudis addresses the Marshalltown city council during Friday afternoon’s meeting. The council voted unanimously to proceed with charging the communications commission a \$1,000 a month utility reimbursement as part of a renegotiated 28E agreement.

A topic of much conversation and debate earlier in the year came back to the floor during the city council’s final meeting of 2023 — a proposed increase in the amount of rent charged to the Marshall County Communications Commission (MCCC) for the spaces it uses at the new police and fire building.

During Friday’s meeting, City Administrator Joe Gaa provided a bit of history on the situation, noting that having the 911 center within the police/fire building has been “working well” but

adding that annual operations costs are around \$200,000, including \$125,000 for utilities. Up to this point, the MCCC has been charged a rent of \$1 a year, and back in February, the city council began to discuss the possibility of renegotiating the contract, with an annual rent as high as \$18,000 initially proposed.

Gaa attended last month's MCCC meeting and said that while there was obviously some initial concern about asking the commission to pay more, he felt they were able to work through it, and the new plan would require the MCCC to pay the city a \$12,000 annual utility reimbursement, or \$1,000 a month, about 10 percent of the building's total electric and gas costs. The rent would remain a dollar a year.

"Quite frankly, we have some benefit of them being there. Having the dispatch center in house is somewhat of a benefit for us, and we wanna maintain that relationship and arrangement," Gaa said.

After Mayor Pro Tem Mike Ladehoff asked a clarifying question, Councilor Jeff Schneider called the agreement "very reasonable" and said he felt the council should proceed with it. Councilor Gary Thompson then asked Marshall County 911 Communications Director Rhonda Braudis, who was in the audience, how she would recoup the \$12,000.

Braudis said it would be added to the organization's levy, and Thompson wondered if the commission would have time to get it in for the upcoming fiscal year. According to Braudis, the MCCC's budget hearing is Jan. 4, so she believes she'll have time to make it work.

Thompson also asked about the breakdown of calls within the city limits compared to the county at large, and she replied that she didn't have a specific breakdown but said calls within the city limits were "significantly more."

Without any public comments, Ladehoff weighed in that he felt the agreement was reasonable, and he commended Gaa for finding a solution to what was previously a fairly contentious issue. Thompson asked another question about how much the city would actually save by shifting the burden to the taxpayers of the entire county as opposed to just Marshalltown, citing the fact that about 10% of the county's population lives within the city limits.

Schneider then made a motion to proceed as outlined in the council memo, and it passed by a unanimous 7-0 tally.

