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**STATE EXPLORING OPTION OF FULLY FUNDING ESSEX COUNTY REGIONAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION CENTER**

Representatives from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts met yesterday with Sheriff Kevin Coppinger and the members of the Financial Advisory Board of the Essex County Regional Emergency Communications Center (ECRECC) to discuss future options for the center.

The ECRECC, located in Middleton and which currently falls under the Sheriff’s oversight, has been in operation since 2013.  It serves as both a regional dispatch center for the towns of Amesbury, Essex, Middleton, Topsfield and Wenham and a Wireless Call Center for the state, processing approximately 500,000 emergency cell phone calls annually across 70 plus cities and towns.

Currently, the ECRECC is funded through three revenue sources: an assessment paid by the member towns, a Support and Incentive grant from the State 911 Department, and a subsidy from the Sheriff’s Department.   Since 2017 when Coppinger took office, he and the Joint Advisory Board, made up of stakeholders from the 5 towns serviced, have worked jointly with State 911 to improve operations and fiscal management of the center.

A comprehensive operational and fiscal audit commissioned by the group shone light on several areas needing attention and improvement in order to situate the ECRECC for future sustainability.  “I have always believed in regionalization and the potential of the ECRECC,” stated Coppinger, “since the release of the audit we have been diligently working with our partners at State 911 and our member communities to affect the necessary changes needed to both stabilize and structure the ECRECC for the future. We have made significant progress instituting new management, reworking the budget to yield something that is both fiscally and operationally responsible, and streamlining and universalizing operational procedures.”

As part of the ongoing effort to right-side the ECRECC, Coppinger met with Secretary Daniel Bennett of the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS), who proposed the idea of moving the ECRECC under the management of the State 911 Department.

On July 1, 2018, the State 911 Department launches its new operational division overseeing the 911 Wireless Call Center in Framingham.  As part of this new division, the ECRECC could join in July, 2019 as a phase two addition.  “It makes a lot of sense to me” Coppinger said, referring to transitioning the ECRECC over to State 911 operations.  “Today, State 911 funds the regional services, provides and maintains the equipment as well as the infrastructure, sets the training standards, and provides operational policies and procedures.  It’s a perfect fit for the State 911 Department to oversee the operation in its entirety!”

Matthew Moran, EOPSS Undersecretary for Forensic Science and Technology, and Frank Pozniak, Executive Director of the State 911 Department, indicated that it is the Commonwealth’s intention to add the ECRECC to their new operational division effective July 1, 2019. They stated that once the ECRECC was part of the State 911 Department, they would fully fund the entire operation, which would eliminate any costs to the participating communities.

"We had a productive and encouraging meeting with the Sheriff and the Finance Advisory Board today," said Undersecretary Matt Moran. "The State 911 Department is appropriately positioned to provide the critical resources to support the financing and operations of the ECRECC, while ensuring that the highest level of public safety services are provided to each member community. We look forward to continuing the discussion around this partnership."

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