



Item No. 7 Town of Atherton

CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT – STUDY SESSION (REPORT #3)

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
GEORGE RODERICKS, CITY MANAGER

FROM: STEVE McCULLEY, CHIEF OF POLICE

DATE: JANUARY 13, 2021

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATOIN TO RECLASIFY THE LEAD DISPATCHER
POSITION TO COMMUNICATIONS SUPERVISOR

RECOMMENDATION

Consider a proposal to reclassify the existing Lead Dispatcher position to Communications Supervisor for inclusion in the FY 2021/22 Budget.

BACKGROUND

In 2000, the City Council approved a Communications Supervisor position to manage the Communications Center and to supervise the work of four (4) full-time dispatchers. Additionally, the Communications Supervisor was responsible for shift scheduling, training and employee evaluations, dispatcher relief, and serving as the CLETS (California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System) and RIMS (Record Incident Management System) coordinator.

In 2001, the Department began hiring part-time per diem dispatchers who were paid an hourly wage without benefits. At one point, the Department had as many as ten (10) per diem dispatchers used to fill shift vacancies when full-time dispatchers were absent due to vacation, sick leave or assigned to training. The use of per diem dispatchers helped to offset overtime, reduced employee fatigue, allowed the Communications Supervisor time to fulfill supervisory duties, and provided greater staffing flexibility, particularly in the event of a major disaster or other large-scale emergency.

In 2011, the Town laid off thirteen (13) employees due to budget constraints. As part of the overall cost reduction strategy, the Town eliminated the Communications Supervisor position as part of the overall cost reduction strategy, an annual cost savings of savings of \$144,406.

However, the cost savings has not come without consequences as it has shifted significant workload of the Communications Supervisor to the full-time dispatchers and shifted supervision of the Dispatcher personnel to a Police Sergeant and other management staff.

ANALYSIS

In FY 2015/16, the Council approved the return of a 5th Dispatcher position. To provide for a separation of authority and quasi-supervision, the Town rotates the assigned responsibility of “Lead Dispatcher”. The role of Lead Dispatcher provides an additional 5% Special Assignment Pay pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding. Because Special Assignment positions rotate by design, the position cannot provide direct supervisory responsibility in the context of personnel evaluation, recommendations for discipline, etc. Police management staff currently continue to provide this oversight.

The Communication Center is the only unit in the department that is not directly supervised by an employee familiar with their job duties. Reclassification of the Lead Dispatcher Special Assignment to a Communications Supervisor allows a current division employee to assume responsibility for managing the various detailed and technical aspects of a communications center.

POLICY FOCUS

Reclassification of the Lead Dispatcher Special Assignment to a Communications Supervisor will be beneficial in and ensure the following:

- Someone with first-hand knowledge of policy, procedure and performance expectations as it relates specifically to dispatch/records job duties will manage the Communications Center.
- Scheduling communications center personnel for shift assignments, including day to day operation, vacations, sick time, overtime and minimum staffing requirements and training assignments (coordinated with the Training Manager), can now be monitored by a trained dispatcher in a supervisory role.
- Allows an experienced dispatcher to delegate, assign, review and participate in the work of the Communications Center.
- Provides an assurance of work quality and adherence to established policies and procedures.
- Employee performances and evaluations will be completed by a person familiar with the requirements of the position.
- Direct coordination with IT and outside vendors monitoring/scheduling the ongoing maintenance and repair of dispatch and 911 equipment.
- The liaison with the Department of Justice, preparing recurring studies, audits and reports as required as the Agency Terminal Coordinator (ATC).
- Management level development, review and update of written manuals, procedures, instructions.

Additionally, this reclassification will create an opportunity for career advancement for communications personnel and will also allow sworn personnel to once again focus their attention on the Patrol and Investigations Division.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Department budget for FY 2021/22 for regular dispatch salaries is anticipated to reach \$550,000. Other neighboring agencies with a Communications Supervisor position shows the following

AGENCY	POSITION TITLE	ANNUAL SALARY RANGE*
Menlo Park	Communications and Records Manager	\$114,941 to \$138,766
Redwood City	Communications Manager	\$128,916 to \$174,036
Colma	Police Dispatcher / Records Supervisor	\$113,422 to \$126,048
Hillsborough	Communications Manager	\$122,824 to \$149,266

*For comparative purposes, the ranges do not include benefits.

The current role of Lead Dispatcher is compensated at a yearly salary of \$108,900. This amount includes the special assignment pay of 5% or \$5,174. Staff recommends the salary for the Communications Supervisor be set to a range of \$115,000 to \$130,000 in order to remain competitive with our neighboring agencies. With the new pay range, the cost differential is an additional \$21,350 to \$25,613 in salary for the supervisory position. The benefits differential is \$3,341 to \$4,008. The total Salary and Benefits is an additional cost increase of \$24,691 to \$29,621 to the Police department budget for the approval of the Communications Supervisor position. There would not be any special assignment pay with the new position.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with this agenda item being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting in print and electronically. Information about the project is also disseminated via the Town’s electronic News Flash and Atherton Online. There are approximately 1,200 subscribers to the Town’s electronic News Flash publications. Subscribers include residents as well as stakeholders – to include, but be not limited to, media outlets, school districts, Menlo Park Fire District, service providers (water, power, and sewer), and regional elected officials.

COMMISSION/COMMITTEE FEEDBACK/REFERRAL

This item ___ has or X has not been before a Town Committee or Commission.

- ___ Audit/Finance Committee (meets every other month)
- ___ Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee (meets as needed)
- ___ Civic Center Advisory Committee (meets as needed)
- ___ Environmental Programs Committee (meets every other month)
- ___ Park and Recreation Committee (meets each month)
- ___ Planning Commission (meets each month)
- ___ Rail Committee (meets every other month)
- ___ Transportation Committee (meets every other month)
- ___ Tree Committee (meets each month)

ATTACHMENTS

1. Communications Supervisor Job Description

TOWN OF ATHERTON

October 2000

COMMUNICATIONS SUPERVISOR**Definition**

Under general supervision, coordinates and oversees dispatch activities during an assigned shift; assists in the selection of staff and trains staff in work procedures; receives 911 police, alarm and medical emergency calls, answers non-emergency calls for public safety and other Town departments; provides a variety of office support work to public safety staff and the public; prepares, processes and distributes a variety of reports, records and other documents following standardized instructions; and performs related work as required.

Class Characteristics

This is a lead class in the non-sworn emergency dispatch and police records class series; responsible for scheduling, training and reviewing the work of Dispatchers/Record Assistants in addition to performing the full range of assigned work. Responsibilities of the unit are centered on extensive contact with the public, in person and over the telephone, in both emergency and non-emergency situations to receive, transmit and provide factual information, forms and reports. The work involves coordinating interdepartmental coordination within the Town as well as with other agencies throughout the County. All activities must be performed within specified legal guidelines. This class is distinguished from other Town technical office support classes in that the work requires knowledge of law enforcement and dispatching policies and procedures in addition to skill in training and reviewing the work of staff.

Examples of Duties (Illustrative Only)

- Plans, schedules and reviews the work of Dispatchers/Records Assistants; trains staff in work procedures, assists in the selection and work evaluation processes.
- Works with sworn staff to improve and implements dispatch and records retention procedures to meet legal requirements and departmental needs.
- Receives and evaluates 911 police, alarm and medical emergency calls and related business calls for the Town during specified hours; dispatches appropriate public safety staff; provides information and/or transfers calls to the appropriate department, agency or response organization.
- Logs call data in a written or automated format; monitors calls after initial dispatch to provide addition coordination, support or information.
- Accesses federal, state and local law enforcement information data bases to obtain information regarding outstanding warrants, criminal history, records information and vehicle data, relays such information to sworn staff.
- Provides initial non-emergency contact with the public and representatives of other agencies for the requesting police records or for fire or related services at a public counter or over the telephone; determines the nature of the contact; provides factual information regarding services, policies and procedures, or directs the caller to the proper individual or agency.

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- Following specific legal guidelines, prepares and distributes copies of police and other reports to individuals and agencies requesting such reports; explains requirements and limitations and collects, receipts and balances fees for services.
- Assists in the preparation and processing of a variety of warrants, reports and records, using a word processor and/or typewriter and following established formats.
- Distributes reports and records to the proper individual or agency, such as the District Attorney, Town Attorney, Probation Department, Sheriff's Office or court, following established procedures.
- Maintains accurate departmental records and files; researches and compiles information from such files.

Qualifications

Knowledge of:

- Basic supervisory principles and practices.
- Techniques for training staff in work procedures.
- Terminology and procedures used in public safety dispatching.
- Operation of communications equipment, including multiple telephone lines and radio systems.
- Law enforcement document processing policies and procedures.
- Standard office practices and procedures, including filing and the operation of standard office equipment.
- Applicable regulations, policies and statutes.
- Business arithmetic.
- Correct English usage, including spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Computer applications related to the work.
- Record keeping and filing principles and practices.
- Techniques for dealing with and solving the problems presented by a variety of individuals from various socio-economic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, in person and over the telephone.

Skill in:

- Planning, assigning and reviewing the work of staff.
- Training staff in work procedures.
- Assessing and prioritizing emergency situations while remaining calm and using sound, independent judgment.
- Memorizing codes, names, street locations and other information.
- Attending to multiple activities simultaneously.
- Obtaining necessary information from individuals in stressful or emergency situations.
- Performing detailed and responsible office support work.
- Applying and explaining policies, procedures and regulations.
- Compiling and summarizing information to prepare clear and accurate reports.

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- Maintaining accurate records and files.
- Understanding and following oral and written directions.
- Establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with those contacted in the course of the work.
- Typing or word processing at a rate of 40 net words per minute.

Education and Experience:

Equivalent to graduation from high school and two years of dispatching experience in a law enforcement or emergency services setting.

Physical Demands:

Must possess mobility to work in a standard office setting and use standard office equipment; stamina to maintain attention to detail and work on a computer for an extended period of time; vision to read printed materials and a computer screen; and hearing and speech to communicate in person and over the telephone.

Working Conditions:

Must pass a detailed background investigation. Must be able to work holidays, weekends and off-hours shifts.