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**TO:** Honorable Mayor & Members  
Fort Lauderdale City Commission

**FROM:** Lee Feldman, City Manager

**DATE:** October 16, 2012

**TITLE:** Funding of Countywide Consolidation of E-911 Communications

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**Recommendation**

The City Commission adopt the attached resolution requesting the Broward County Board of County Commissioners to fully fund the regionalization of E-911 and dispatch communications through County ad-valorem taxes.

**Background**

In 1992, Broward County created a regional communications system, fully funded by County revenues, utilizing an 800 MZ system, and offered all other agencies the opportunity to join the regional system at no charge. Some agencies joined the regional communications system and provided their radio frequencies to Broward County for use by the system, but numerous other agencies continued to operate their own dispatch systems.

Following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack, additional concerns were raised regarding interoperability of the various dispatch systems operating in Broward County. Ultimately, in 2002, the electorate of Broward County voted overwhelmingly to amend Section 5.03(A) of the Broward County Charter to provide for the establishment and County funding of a communications infrastructure for fire and emergency medical services, as follows:

The County Commission with cooperation from Municipalities shall establish a countywide communications infrastructure for fire and emergency medical services. The County shall provide funding for the communications infrastructure and all service providers will utilize the elements of the communications infrastructure. The communications infrastructure shall facilitate closest unit response for life-threatening emergencies and support for regional specialty teams.

Notwithstanding the 2002 amendment to the County Charter, there continues to be 10 independent dispatch systems operating in Broward County. In 2010, the Broward League of Cities initiated a "Public Safety Answering Points Task Force," a multi-jurisdictional and multi-disciplinary team of public safety professionals, staff, and elected officials. Subsequently, on October 21, 2010, the Communications Technology Division of the Broward Sheriff's Office issued an extensive "Consolidation Feasibility Analysis", which highlighted that there were 10 different Public Safety Answering Points ("PSAPs") for the purposes of E-911 Communications and Dispatch, which provide differing levels of performance, costs per call, and equipment utilization.

The Consolidation Feasibility Analysis concluded that E-911 Dispatch operations for all Broward County Police, Fire, EMS and Sheriff agencies should be fully consolidated into three PSAPs, under a unified organizational structure, which would improve citizen/officer safety, eliminate call transfers that result in delayed response, result in significant cost savings, and promote efficient and cost effective migration to new technologies. The Consolidation Feasibility Analysis study was presented in November 2010 to the Broward League of Cities, and as a result it was agreed that a taskforce should be formed to further consider implementation.

In 2011, the Public Safety Committee of the Broward League of Cities, the Fire Chief's Association of Broward County, the Broward County Chiefs of Police Association, the Fire-Rescue Services Council, the Broward County City Managers Association, and the Board of Directors of the Broward League of Cities all adopted and supported resolutions calling for an implementation process for cooperative consolidation of E-911 communications and dispatch.

On November 1, 2011, the County Commission ratified the formation of the Broward County Consolidated Communications Committee, and on March 1, 2012, the Broward County Consolidated Communications Committee, co-chaired by a representative of the Board of the County Commissioners and Broward League of Cities, issued a Report and Recommendations for Cooperative Consolidation of E-911 Communications. The Report and Recommendations of the Broward County Consolidated Communications Committee provided that funding must be equitable, stable and predictable; funding must take into account that this is a regional function; and that any interlocal agreements should provide for equity of funding.

The Broward County Consolidated Communications recommended three potential funding options, including a Municipal Services Taxing Unit Millage set by Broward County Commission and dedicated to communications only; a service agreement predicated upon usage, population, taxable value, or some combination of the three; or County funding through ad valorem taxes.

The Broward County Commission adopted a resolution creating the Broward County Consolidated Communications Implementation Advisory Board (the "IBoard"), for the purpose of reviewing, considering and making recommendations to the Broward County Commission and municipalities relating to the creation, governance, funding, and operations of a regional and cooperative consolidated E-911 communications system, and to develop an interlocal agreement to be utilized by all participants in the regional and cooperative consolidated E-911 System. The IBoard has held numerous meetings and it has become clear that the only feasible, truly stable and wholly equitable method of funding a consolidated communications and dispatch system is through County ad valorem taxes. This conclusion was based upon several factors:

- the consolidation of 911 communications is a critical public safety function, stability of funding is a crucial component of any regionalization plan;
- the uncertainties about the stream of funding, either because of doubts about any single individual municipality or group of municipalities being able to meet their financial obligations or the potential implementation of protest strategies surrounding funding, would destabilize the system and jeopardize the safety of residents, officers, and fire-rescue personnel; and
- that the countywide communications system is a regional service, analogous to regional libraries and regional parks, Broward County should operate the system (or contract for its operations) and should fully fund the systems through County ad valorem taxes; and

On September 21, 2012, the IBoard voted 16-2 (with only Broward County and Coral Springs dissenting), to support this resolution and the adoption of a plan for cooperative countywide consolidation of E-911 communications and dispatch, to be operated (or contracted for operation) by Broward County, and to be wholly funded through County ad valorem taxes.

**Attachment :** Proposed Resolution

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