



**COUNTY of FREDERICK, VIRGINIA**

---

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS**

1080 Coverstone Dr. Winchester, VA 22602

540-665-6356

Tamara Perez  
Director

**FREDERICK COUNTY**  
**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**  
**AGENDA**

**August 26, 2021**

**8:30 A.M.**

**\*\*C.I.D. conference room – second floor next to elevator \*\***

**Public Safety Building  
1080 Coverstone Dr., Winchester, Virginia**

**Call to Order: Thursday August 26, 2021 at 8:30 a.m.**

**Agenda Items:**

- 1. Request for funding of additional personnel within the Communications Department – Director Perez**
- 2. New positions awarded to the Sheriff's Office by the Comp Board – Sheriff Millholland**
- 3. Other Sheriff's Department information – Sheriff Millholland**

**New Business:**

**Next Meeting Date: Thursday October 21, 2021**



## COUNTY of FREDERICK, VIRGINIA

### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS

1080 Coverstone Dr. Winchester, VA 22602

To: Public Safety Committee

From: Tamara Perez, Public Safety Communications Director

Date: August 26, 2021

Ref: Addition of three (3) Emergency Communications Officer FTE & one (1) Shift Supervisor

The Public Safety Communications Department is requesting the addition of four FTEs: three (3) Emergency Communications Officers and one (1) Shift Supervisor. Current, Public Safety Communications staffing is 10 full-time dispatchers, 1 part-time dispatcher and 2 shift supervisors. Fully staffed our allotted staffing is 14 full-time dispatchers, 1 part-time dispatcher and 3 shift supervisors. We currently have 2 people in training, and we are looking to start an additional 4-6 new hires in the next few months. We are presently at critical staffing minimums, which includes the Operations Supervisor and the Director picking up shifts to provide consistent coverage. I would note that the last time the Public Safety Communications department requested positions was in 2012 and we received 3 additional positions. We recognize, due to the nature of the job, that it is a challenge filling the vacancies that we currently have and that hiring more communications officers will not give provide instant relief.

Staff is seeking a recommendation of approval to hire three Emergency Communications Officers and one Shift Supervisor. These positions were not part of the departments 2021-2022 budget request, which was prepared last November. A supplemental appropriation in the amount of 138,079.38 would be needed to fund these positions through the remainder of the fiscal year. If the Committee endorses these positions, staff will then go to the Finance Committee to seek the necessary funding.

### **BACKGROUND**

We have lost 3 tenured Communications Officers: one individual with 2 years of service and two with over 5 years of service. Each of those individuals cited the need to have a life outside of the dispatch center as well as a desire to have a more consistent schedule. Our staff is currently working numerous hours of overtime and lack the ability to truly use personal time off (PTO). As a result, current staff is experiencing burnout due to constantly working, the lack of a work life balance, and a lack of adequate staff to allow them to take a lunch break or really any real break away from their console. We



## COUNTY of FREDERICK, VIRGINIA

### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS

1080 Coverstone Dr. Winchester, VA 22602

make every attempt to approve all request for time off, however even when the time off request is approved, the staff are not truly able to use their time, as the hours they work before and/or after their vacation equate to a full-work week so they do not get the full benefit of their PTO nor do they truly have the opportunity to rest/refresh themselves mentally and physically before they return to work.

During the hours of 2300-0700 daily, there are only 2 Communications Officers on duty, one person to work the police console and another to work the fire console. They are also required to answer all non-emergency and 9-1-1 lines as well as complete any administrative duties.

The Communications officers are tasked with completing, not only call taking and dispatching both emergency and non-emergency calls, but they also complete all VCIN (Virginia Criminal Information Network) entries for Frederick County, Middletown, Stephens City as well as for the Community College Police. All of transactions must be performed in a timely manner and in accordance with the Virginia Criminal Information Network (VCIN) standards.

While these new positions will not immediately alleviate the strain on our staff, they will help going forward with the increased call volume, as well as provide staff some assurance that we are proactively addressing the staffing problem, and that we recognize the burnout they are experiencing. From the time a potential candidate applies to become a telecommunicator, to the time they are working without a trainer, can take up to 7 months. It is important to point out that despite our efforts to vet out the candidates through criti-call, polygraphs, observation time and background review, we often lose employees within the first couple of weeks of their employment due to the amount of emotional stress associated with the position of Emergency Communications Officer. When these instances happen, we are then forced back to the beginning stages of the hiring and recruitment process, which ultimately delays our ability to provide staff relief.

During my brief time as Director, we have attempted to modify our training program so that we are able to produce a Communications Officer that will have the ability to work solo sooner. This is done by training them on one discipline at a time instead of all aspects at once. This allows the trainees to become more comfortable in their position as well as helps to elevate some of the overtime.



## COUNTY of FREDERICK, VIRGINIA

### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS

1080 Coverstone Dr. Winchester, VA 22602

Currently, if we have someone call out due to illness, our staff is pushed to the limit and could work every day in a week without any days off. Approving personal time off is becoming more difficult, however, we know that our staff need breaks from the stress of working in the communications center.

As the Director, I am worried about my staff's mental health and their longevity in this line of work. They are tasked with listening to some of the most painstaking phone calls as well as making sure our first responders get to go home safe every day. Day in and day out they go above and beyond what is asked of them when it comes to working and making sure that the shifts are covered. Each trained Communications Officer is working an average of 6-10 hours a week in overtime.

Currently, our Shift Supervisors and the Operation Supervisor are required to help fill the schedule. While this has worked over the last several years, as we bring new hires into the communications center, they will need supervision and someone that they can look to for answers and guidance as they continue to learn their career. Given our current state, our Shift Supervisors are unable to supervise because they are also manning a console. Our staff, both new and tenured, need guidance. The shift supervisors have their own administrative tasks, including verifying that the incoming shift has coverage when someone calls out due to illness or emergency or has scheduled time-off, as well as, serving in a quality assurance and control role in reviewing incidents to look for learning opportunities and assist in investigating complaints.

Due to our current staffing and the lack of a work/life balance, we continue to lose staff and I fear we will be unable to retain our new staff since the current staffing levels are not favorable to ensure a long-term future nor is the environment conducive for meeting familial responsibilities, being present for family events, etc.

If we can consistently hire instead of waiting until we are at critical staffing, we can start working to overcome our current situation and work towards providing critical support for our law enforcement and fire and rescue personnel as well as improve work/life balance for our communications staff.

- The Sheriff's Office was able to get 4 new positions filled out of the 14 that are owed by the comp board. These 4 are from the Civil Sheriff positions.(see below)
- I would also like to talk to them about my desire to have 2 motorcycle traffic units. That can be utilized for a number of agency needs.
- Shift shortages we are dealing with. The inability to hire quality people because of the starting salary

**NEW POSITIONS**

**FORMULA**

FIPS	LOCALITY	# POS ALLOCATED	REQUESTED CLASS	REQUESTED SALARY	FY22 COST	FY22 REIMB SAL	7/1/21 INCR COST
047	Culpeper	3	CS7	\$33,475	\$101,317	\$92,056	\$0
057	Essex	1	CS7	\$33,475	\$33,772	\$30,685	\$0
063	Floyd	1	CS7	\$33,475	\$33,772	\$30,685	\$0
065	Fluvanna	1	CS7	\$33,475	\$33,772	\$30,685	\$0
069	Frederick	4	CS7	\$33,475	\$135,089	\$122,742	\$0
081	Greensville	1	CS7	\$33,475	\$33,772	\$30,685	\$0
093	Isle of Wight	2	CS7	\$33,475	\$67,545	\$61,371	\$0
097	King and Queen	1	CS7	\$33,475	\$33,772	\$30,685	\$0
099	King George	1	CS7	\$33,475	\$33,772	\$30,685	\$0
101	King William	1	CS7	\$33,475	\$33,772	\$30,685	\$0
107	Loudoun	2	CS7	\$33,475	\$67,545	\$61,371	\$0