



Westport Municipal Advisory Council

P. O. Box 307, Westport, CA 95488
www.westportmac.org

January 8, 2016

Supervisor Dan Gjerde
Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
501 Low Gap Road, Room 1010
Ukiah, CA 95482

Dear Supervisor Gjerde:

Citizens of the Westport area are concerned about the early termination notice issued by the Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) for Calfire's 911 emergency dispatch services. While competitive bidding is good public policy, it is not reasonable to expect Calfire to operate with a staffing plan for a three year contract when there is uncertainty about this pending early termination. For that reason we urge the Board of Supervisors to direct HHSA to promptly notify Calfire that the current 911 dispatch contract will remain in effect until its stated termination date of June 30, 2018.

A December 23, 2015 press release by the Executive Office and HHSA mentions a process to involve stakeholders in development of a 911 Dispatch RFP. We urge significant involvement by first responders and the affected public in the scoping of that RFP, targeting a starting date for those services of July 1, 2018. That procurement must meet the very highest standards and thus deserves careful consideration. It also needs to provide for a seamless transition if a new provider is selected.

The health and safety of residents and visitors depends on prompt, knowledgeable, and well-coordinated dispatches. Like many parts of the county, our area depends on first response from dedicated local volunteers. The Westport Volunteer Fire Department indicates Calfire is providing excellent dispatching and other support. While costs should be evaluated, Westport area residents think these other criteria also deserve careful consideration during the RFP development process:

- Prioritize a dispatch facility within Mendocino County staffed by people familiar with the local geography and local mutual aid arrangements. There is no substitute for local knowledge when lives are on the line and time is of the essence. This also keeps jobs in our county.
- Prioritize coordinated dispatching for all fires, traumatic injuries, and medical emergencies. This is more efficient, avoids critical gaps in service, and is crucial when lives depend on timely response. Small rural Fire Departments depend on a knowledgeable centralized dispatch facility that can coordinate responses to multiple emergencies.

The priority should be ensuring public health and safety. Please contact me at 964-7272 or thad@mcn.org for any clarification.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thad M. Van Bueren".

Thad M. Van Bueren, Chairperson

Cc: Board of Supervisors, HHSA Director, County CEO