



# City of West Allis Police Department

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## Inter-Office Report

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Date: Friday, December 16, 2016  
To: Chief Patrick S. Mitchell  
From: Deputy Chief Christopher Botsch  
Subject: Civilianization of the West Allis Police Department Communications Unit

### Introduction

The West Allis Police Department has a current allotment of 132 sworn personnel. This includes everyone from the Chief of Police to the most recently hired front line police officer. Of these 132 sworn personnel, there are a number of positions that perform functions that do not require sworn personnel to fulfill these roles. These functions could be completed by non-sworn personnel in a more cost effective manner, and in many cases, with increased efficiency. One such area ripe for civilianization is the Communications Center.

### Phase #1 – Replacing Desk Sergeants with Civilian Supervisors

The West Allis Police Department Communications Unit is comprised of (9) full time civilian dispatchers and (6) full time sworn desk sergeants. All Communications Unit personnel are overseen by the Lieutenant of the Communications Unit. (We are also allotted (8) part time civilian dispatchers to fill in when openings exist.) We adopted this staffing model from the Green Bay Police Department in 1995. The Green Bay model utilized civilian dispatchers and a “Desk Sergeant” who provided supervision for the dispatchers and assisted with the dispatching functions. (It should be noted that the Green Bay Police Department no longer utilizes this staffing model.)

In an effort to provide improved dispatch services in a cost effective manner, we have examined the possibility of replacing our (6) sworn desk sergeants with (6) civilian Communications Unit Supervisors. Throughout this proposal, we will attempt to outline the benefits and consequences of civilianizing the West Allis Police Department Communications Unit.

### Reasons for Civilianization

Civilian dispatchers receive a great deal more training as compared to that of a desk sergeant. New civilian dispatchers participate in two weeks of classroom training followed by 28 weeks of on-shift training under the supervision of a Communications Unit Training Officer. A new desk sergeant, who is considered the on-shift supervisor of the civilian dispatchers and is paid significantly more than a civilian dispatcher, receives approximately four hours of classroom training and two weeks of instruction from another desk sergeant. As a result of the disparity in training, the desk sergeant does not possess the technical dispatching skills of the civilian dispatcher.

In addition, civilian dispatchers are responsible for the majority of the call taker and dispatching functions during normal operations. Desk sergeants have a supervisory role but will assist with dispatch functions if the dispatchers are busy or unable to take a call or dispatch units. Because civilian



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dispatchers handle the bulk of the dispatching functions, they are, for the most part, technically more capable and more effective in their role as a dispatcher compared to that of a desk sergeant.

West Allis dispatchers can earn \$47,028.80/yr + \$2351.44 (Holiday pay) for a total of \$49,380.24/yr, whereas desk sergeants can earn \$81,830.00/yr (including Holiday pay). (Above rates are per 2016 wage rates). That equates to a difference of \$32,449.76/yr. While we recognize that a Communications Unit Supervisor has greater responsibility and requires greater compensation, we believe a civilian supervisor would be a more effective option. We believe civilian supervisors could be compensated at approximately the City of West Allis P-22 pay rate (\$22.74/hr - \$28.43/hr or \$47,299.20/yr - \$59,134.40/yr). With Holiday pay of 104 hrs, this equates to a range of \$49,664.16/yr to \$62,091.12/yr. (This civilian supervisor pay rate is roughly in line with external agency comparable data.) At \$62,091.12/yr, this is a savings of \$19,738.88/yr as compared to the current desk sergeant pay. Replacing (6) desk sergeants with (6) civilian dispatch supervisors would result in a salary reduction of approximately \$118,433.28/yr.

In speaking to Nicole O'Connor from the City of West Allis Finance Department, the fringe benefit cost for a desk sergeant at top pay participating in a family medical plan is approximately \$32,000/yr. The anticipated fringe benefit cost of a civilian supervisor at top pay making \$62,091.12/yr would be approximately \$26,000/yr. This would result in an approximate savings of \$6,000/yr per position or a savings of \$36,000/yr for the (6) positions.

The total salary and fringe benefits savings for replacing (6) desk sergeants with (6) civilian communications center supervisors would be \$154,433.28/yr. *(The initial cost savings would be much higher since the new position would not be at top pay for a few years.)*

In addition to the cost savings, civilian dispatchers, who currently work in what is considered an upwardly static ("dead end") position, will have a promotional path available to them. This will make the "job" of dispatcher more of a career and should help improve both dispatcher retention and dispatcher self-image. This should help to improve morale inside of the dispatch center. Because the dispatch center will be staffed with three fully-trained dispatchers, the level of productivity and technical knowledge inside the dispatch center should increase.

An added benefit is that the (6) civilian supervisors will be assigned to dispatch at all times, with (2) working each of the (3) shifts. The (2) civilian supervisors on each shift will partially overlap coverage with one another. This is very different than the desk sergeants, where when overlaps occur, one is assigned to the dispatch center and one is assigned to the front desk (This is explained in greater detail in the following section.) The overlap supervisor could assist with other administrative functions (i.e. Emergency Medical Dispatching-Quality Assurance, digital media requests, warrant entry, etc.) In addition, the "overlap" of civilian supervisors would allow us to reduce overtime when dispatchers are out of work because of sick time, vacations, FMLA, training etc.



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### Things to Consider

This strategy means eliminating (6) sworn positions and replacing them with (6) civilian positions. Despite the fact that we as a department give up a sworn law enforcement position each and every shift to the position of desk sergeant, the (6) positions of desk sergeant are viewed collectively as “available bodies” for law enforcement purposes. In addition, the position of desk sergeant has traditionally been made available to officers who are on light duty or otherwise unable to perform full law enforcement duties.

Also, because of their rotating 4-2 schedule, the desk sergeants usually spend two work days in dispatch and two days working the front desk handling walk-in and telephone complaints and other various functions. A civilian communications supervisor would NOT be able to staff the front desk position. This means that each shift will still need to assign one officer to the front desk position. In addition, the elimination of the desk sergeant will remove the law enforcement experience factor from inside the dispatch center.

### Addition of Community Service Officers

As stated above, the elimination of the desk sergeant position would create a coverage issue for the front desk of the police department. This front desk position is necessary to take walk-in and phone complaints, field questions from the public, assist with station security and perform miscellaneous other tasks as needed. A solution to the loss of a desk sergeant to staff the front desk is to hire (8) part time LTE Police Aides/Community Service Officers (CSO). The Police Aide/Community Service Officer Positions could work the front desk as well as deploy in the field. They could take minor reports and minor calls for service, along with assisting with paperwork and other miscellaneous tasks.

In addition, this position could potentially be a feeder program to a police officer position. Police Aides/CSO’s are typically hired under the condition that they are actively pursuing a criminal justice education with the goal of obtaining a career as a police officer. While pursuing their educational requirements, they gather experience working with a police agency. In return, the police agency gets a closer look at a potential police officer candidate. Once completed with their educational requirements, these individuals would be eligible for hire as a police officer. Having been a Police Aide/CSO, they will have a better understanding of the responsibility and expectation associated with being a police officer for our department, and the WAPD will have had a chance to review their abilities and potential prior to them being hired as a police officer. With dismal recruiting numbers for the police officer positions, this could provide a valuable pool to draw from.

Compensation for the position would be approximately \$12.00/hr - \$15.00/hr. (Surrounding agencies are currently paying the following to their CSOs: Greenfield PD - \$14.00/hr, Menomonee Falls PD - \$10.99/hr - \$11.45/hr, and Oshkosh PD - \$10.35/hr (2016 data).) Each of the (8) employees would be allotted up to 24 hours per week for a maximum yearly total expenditure of approximately \$149,760.00. (These would be part time LTE employees; therefore, there would be no costs for fringe benefits.) These positions would primarily be staffed during 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> shift. The 3<sup>rd</sup> shift would not generally be



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staffed by Police Aides/CSOs; therefore, they would have to staff the front desk with sworn personnel, or leave the front desk unstaffed and respond only when needed.

*See the attached breakdown of costs associated with implementing Phase #1.*

### **Phase #2 – Replacing Communications Lieutenant with Civilian Communications Manager**

Currently the Communications Unit is overseen by a lieutenant, who is a member of the command staff. On a daily basis the communications lieutenant is faced with numerous management challenges but few of them require an actual law enforcement decision. Replacing the communications lieutenant with a communications manager would result in a substantial savings without a reduction in service.

A communications lieutenant earns approximately \$90,830.00/yr, whereas a civilian communications unit manager could be compensated at the approximately the P-27A pay rate (\$29.24/hr - \$36.55/hr or \$60,819.20/yr to 76,024.00/yr). This is similar to other supervisory positions throughout the City and is in line with external agency comparable data. (This position would NOT receive Holiday pay as they would work a Mon-Fri schedule and would not be working holidays.) Replacing the communications lieutenant with a communications manager would result in an annual salary savings of \$14,806.00/yr.

In speaking to Nicole O'Connor from the City of West Allis Finance Department, the fringe benefit cost for a lieutenant participating in a family medical plan is approximately \$34,000. The anticipated fringe benefit cost of a civilian communications unit manager making \$76,000.00/yr would be approximately \$28,000. This would result in an approximate savings of \$6,000/yr.

The total salary and fringe benefits savings for replacing the communications lieutenant with a communications unit manager would be \$20,806.00. (*The initial cost savings would be much higher since the new position would not be at top pay for a few years.*)

The budgetary cost savings to the department is the most positive aspect of this proposed strategy. This strategy could also be viewed as a possible additional step in the career path for the civilians in the Communications Unit. A civilian unit head position would also allow the department to impose higher educational standards than those that are currently in place for civilian dispatch employees. Currently, the civilian dispatchers are only required to hold a high school diploma or GED.

### **Financial Impact - Civilianization of the West Allis Communications Unit**

#### Phase #1

Replace (6) desk sergeants with (6) civilian communication unit supervisors. The (6) civilian supervisors would be compensated at the P-22 pay rate (\$22.74/hr - \$28.43/hr or \$47,299.20/yr. - \$59,134.40/yr).



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With holiday pay included, this would increase to \$49,664.16/yr to \$62,091.12/yr. This civilian supervisor pay rate is roughly in line with external agency comparable data.

\$81,830.00	(Desk Sergeant Pay - 2016)
- \$62,091.12	(Civilian shift supervisor - Top Pay)
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\$19,738.88	(Salary Savings per position)
\$19,738.88	
x           6	(Communication Supervisor positions)
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\$118,433.28	(Annual salary savings for replacing (6) desk sergeants with (6) civilian Communication's Unit supervisors)
\$32,000.00	(Fringe benefit costs per desk sergeant with a family medical plan)
- \$26,000.00	(Fringe benefit cost per civilian supervisor with a family medical plan)
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\$ 6,000.00	(Fringe benefit savings per position)
\$ 6,000.00	(Fringe benefit savings per position)
x           6	(Communications Supervisors)
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\$ 36,000.00	(Total Fringe benefit savings)
\$118,433.28	(Salary savings)
+\$ 36,000.00	(Fringe savings)
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<b>\$154,433.28</b>	<b>(Total Savings / year)</b>

Creation of (8) part time Police Aide/Community Service Officer. The new position would be compensated at \$12.00/hr - \$15.00/hr. Each of the (8) employees would be allotted up to 24 hours per week for a maximum yearly expenditure of approximately \$149,760.00.

**\$149,760.00** (Annual Cost to create (8) Police Aide/CSO positions)

\$154,433.28	(Savings from replacing (6) desk sergeants with (6) civilian supervisors)
- \$149,760.00	(Annual Cost to create (8) Police Aide/CSO positions)
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**\$4,673.28** (Annual Savings from Phase #1)



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Phase #2

Replace Communications Lieutenant with a civilian Communications Unit Manager. The Manager would be compensated at the P-27A pay rate (\$29.24/hr - \$36.55/hr or \$60,819.20/yr to 76,024.00/hr). This is similar to other supervisory positions throughout the City and is in line with external agency comparable data.

\$90,830.00	(Communications Lieutenant Pay - including holiday pay – 2016)
-\$76,024.00	(Civilian Communications Unit Manager (no holiday pay) – Top Pay)
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\$14,806.00	(Annual salary Savings for replacing Communications Lieutenant with a civilian Communications Unit Manager)
\$34,000.00	(Fringe benefit cost for Communications Lt. with a family medical plan)
-\$28,000.00	(Fringe benefit cost for Communications Unit Manager with a family medical plan)
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\$6,000.00	(Fringe benefit savings)
\$14,806.00	(Annual salary savings)
+\$ 6,000.00	(Annual fringe benefit savings)
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<b>\$20,806.00</b>	<b>(Total savings for Phase #2)</b>

**Savings after Phase #1 and Phase #2 are Implemented**

\$ 4,673.28	(Savings from Phase #1)
+\$20,806.00	(Savings from Phase #2)
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<b>\$25,479.28</b>	<b>(Annual Savings from the above proposal)</b>

\*\*\*\*All data was calculated using the top rates of pay for each category at the resident rate of pay. Initial savings would be much more due to new positions starting out at lower rates of pay; however, there would be training costs associated with new hires.\*\*\*

**This savings could be used to address other shortfalls in the Police Budget. Please see below.**





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Maintenance Contracts – Account #100-2101-521-32-01 – This account has increased over the last few years as the cost of maintenance contracts has increased. In addition, we have assigned smart phones to investigative personnel; however, expenses have outpaced funding. We have absorbed some of these excess cost through the use of the Federal Equitable Sharing account; however, we would like to work towards incorporating funding into the appropriate accounts.

Safety Equipment – Account #100-2101-521-60-02 – This account is being utilized to purchase ballistic vests for our officers. The ballistic vests need to be replaced every (5) years. Until 2016, investigative personnel utilized pooled vests and did not have their own ballistic vests. In addition, command staff were not always provided ballistic vests on this (5) year rotation. An increase in this account would allow us to fund the timely replacement of ballistic vest for all sworn personnel.

### Implementation

Once a job description is created and compensation is established, we would like to move forward with the proposal. We would like to begin a hiring process to replace the (6) desk sergeants positions. To move in the direction of an all civilian communications center, we would need to do so incrementally over a period of time. There are several reasons for this incremental approach.

First, this would be a change in the way that we operate and we would need to integrate this position into our current operations. We would need to solidify any issues with regard to responsibilities and expectations for this new position. Some of these issues may not be fully realized until the real world utilization of the position occurs.

Secondly, the communications center does not have the ability to train a large number of personnel at once. Each person would need to learn the technical aspects of the position along with the structure and framework of our organization and the supervisory tasks associated with the position.

Thirdly, our center would be significantly impacted by having an influx of new and inexperienced personnel, which could affect our ability to successfully perform at a high level. While the initial training would prepare them to perform the job, experience will provide the repetitions for them to perform the job well on a consistent basis.

Fourthly, by replacing the desk sergeants with civilian supervisors, we are reducing our sworn staff by (6) positions. In order to move the desk sergeants back to a patrol function, we would need to ensure there are positions available so as not to go over our allotment for sworn personnel.

Lastly, we would need to hire Police Aides/CSO's. This incremental approach would give us the time to put this program together and hire and train the appropriate personnel in this area.



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We currently have (1) desk sergeant opening at this time. We would move to replace this position with a civilian supervisor and begin to integrate this into our operations. After the initial hiring of (1) civilian supervisor, we would move to hire (2) additional civilian supervisors 6 months later and then hire the remaining (3) civilian supervisors 6 months after that..

To help manage the transition, we would maintain the communications lieutenant position for (6) months to (1) year after the civilian supervisors are hired and in place. At that time, we would implement Phase 2 to hire a Communications Unit Manager.

We anticipate the transition would be complete by the end of 2018.