



Memorandum

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Mayor Sam Liccardo

SUBJECT: 9-1-1 and 3-1-1 CALL
ANSWERING AUDIT

DATE: March 18, 2019

Approved

Date

3/19/19

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the report on the 9-1-1 and 3-1-1 Call Answering Audit and direct the City Manager to:

- 1) Expedite the bifurcation of the call handling process such that 3-1-1 calls are handled by non-emergency call-taking staff in the IT department or elsewhere, and
- 2) Refer additional staffing and equipment costs to the 2019-2020 budget process to address chronic workload challenges.

DISCUSSION

Thank you to the Auditor and her team, staff from the San José Police Department and the San José Fire Department for assistance in compiling the information and recommendations in this Audit. Our hardworking, understaffed Fire and Police communications divisions have dramatically improved their ability to meet call response standards, and I applaud them for their progress despite considerable obstacles. The Audit makes additional recommendations for reducing call answering times through technology upgrades and additional hiring to handle the growth in call volume and workload.

A particular finding, however, is noteworthy: non-emergency calls make up approximately 40% of police communications call volume. Using highly trained—and hard-to-hire and difficult to retain—9-1-1 call takers to handle non-emergency calls merely increases the workload and stress on overworked police communications team members, and constitutes an inefficient use of resources. The City Manager's response suggests the use of a consultant to assess the proportion of public-safety related 311 calls, but regardless of that proportion, it seems wasteful to have such non-emergency communications clog our ability to respond to the most urgent calls for service. A consultant may well be needed to implement a switch, but not to evaluate its propriety.

I urge that we shift responsibility for answering non-emergency calls to the City Customer Contact Center so that our community can continue to see improvements to emergency call times, and to provide some long-needed relief to emergency call center staff.