

Jersey County Board Considers Options On Move of 911 Office In Or Out Of Sheriff's Office, Costs, Safety, Part Of Decision

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JERSEY - There is discussion within the Jersey County Board after a request that the county's 911 office dispatchers need more space for their work.

The 911 office in Jersey County is presently in the sheriff's office. Jersey County Chairman of the Board Don Little said the 911 office has requested more room for their dispatch area.

Little said he is definitely interested in providing more working area for 911 dispatchers but has to take the financial considerations into account for what provides the best amount of increased work area for dispatching.

Little said he and the county board are not close to an official decision on what to do with 911, but said he wants to get the facts and figures down before that happens.

“911 needs more room in its dispatch operations and right now potential conversion of the conference room in the sheriff's office seems to make more sense,” he said. “We want to get formal plans together. That would be financially more feasible. There was an option to add on to the existing sheriff's jail facility, but that has been discarded because it was determined to be too costly. The other is to move the dispatch operation from where it is within the confines of the sheriff's office to an area in the lower level of the old bank building. We are also getting facts and figures on that. The conversion of the conference room of the sheriff's office keeps the 911 operations within the sheriff's office per the sheriff's request and it also causes a lesser expenditure of money from county or 911 considerations.”

Jersey County Sheriff Mike Ringhausen said he understands the options on the table to provide the 911 dispatchers more space. The sheriff's main argument against moving it outside the sheriff's office is it decreases the amount of security for correctional staff if it is moved out.

“I am concerned about the safety of the correctional staff if dispatch leaves the sheriff's office,” he said. “The worry is some of those being held in the jail are sometimes under the influence of alcohol or narcotics and without 911 there, they may not have time to reach easily for help when other staff is not present. The majority of these incidents come at the spur of the moment. I have offered up what I think it takes to do this for the safety of my officers. There has been talk of moving 911 to the basement of the old bank building across the street, but I don't think that is a good idea. I think we should be kept together. There is also the cost of such a move within or outside the office to be considered.”

Chairman Little emphasized the issue is still under study and no where near a final decision. He also said it is important to get all the financial considerations and overall plans together for the options before the final decision is made by the board.