



TOWN OF PEPPERELL

OFFICES OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN/TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

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May 31, 2017

Dear Pepperell Resident:

I am writing to provide an update on our initiative to improve public safety and dispatch services, while securing significant grants to help keep your taxes low. Also attached is a fact sheet on this initiative.

On April 10, 2017, the Pepperell Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to join the Northern Middlesex Regional Emergency Communications Center (NMRECC) District. Under the authority of M.G.L. Chapter 6A and the resolution voted upon by the Pepperell Board of Selectmen, as approved by Town Counsel, the Town Administrator signed the amended NMRECC District Agreement effective April 28, 2017. The signing of this amended NMRECC District Agreement ensures that Pepperell receives priority funding through the State 911 Department Development Grants. There are plans at the state level to reduce funding for “stand-alone” communication centers and provide this additional funding to regional dispatching centers (2 or more communities). Additionally, regional dispatch centers will be able to receive wireless (cell phone) calls directly upon the approval of the State 911 Department, thus increasing the revenue flow to those regional facilities. (Please see the fact sheet attached). Here are the facts:

- ✓ A grant application for \$5,669,003 in Development Grant funds was submitted to the State 911 Department on May 15, 2017 by the NMRECC to build the NMRECC facility, provide project oversight, hire an Executive Director and equip the Tewksbury facility, as well as to ensure interconnectivity with Pepperell, Dracut and Tewksbury. Among the items included for equipment were Radio Towers, CAD/RMS, Radio Systems, Radio Consoles, Station Alerting and Infrastructure, Fire Alarms and Security Systems.
- ✓ Pepperell is in line to gain \$247,015 in FY 2019 and \$326,021 in FY 2020, while significantly upgrading our police and fire dispatching capabilities. Additional savings will be reoccurring annually. These savings from the NMRECC can be dedicated to hiring new police and fire personnel to be deployed on the streets, plus new equipment in order to improve public safety in Town.
- ✓ As highlighted previously, the consistent State revenue source, provided from an already existing tax on cell phone usage, will provide Pepperell with future funding opportunities to maintain the highest standards, with a schedule for new State-funded equipment on a 3-5 year basis.
- ✓ The new center in Tewksbury will be fitted with state-of-the-art communications equipment to receive all emergency calls, while our public safety equipment remains in Pepperell.
- ✓ There will be no delay in any emergency calls. In fact, with the new equipment, increased reliability will enhance our safety standards.
- ✓ Regional Centers allow for the pooling of resources, better training and certification as well as employment and advancement opportunities for dispatchers.
- ✓ Each of the three towns will have “one equal vote” for making management decisions, regardless of size.
- ✓ Our Dispatchers will have an equal opportunity to apply for 21 new positions at the NMRECC.
- ✓ Our Pepperell Public Safety Complex will be staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (including evenings and early mornings) with savings from the NMRECC.

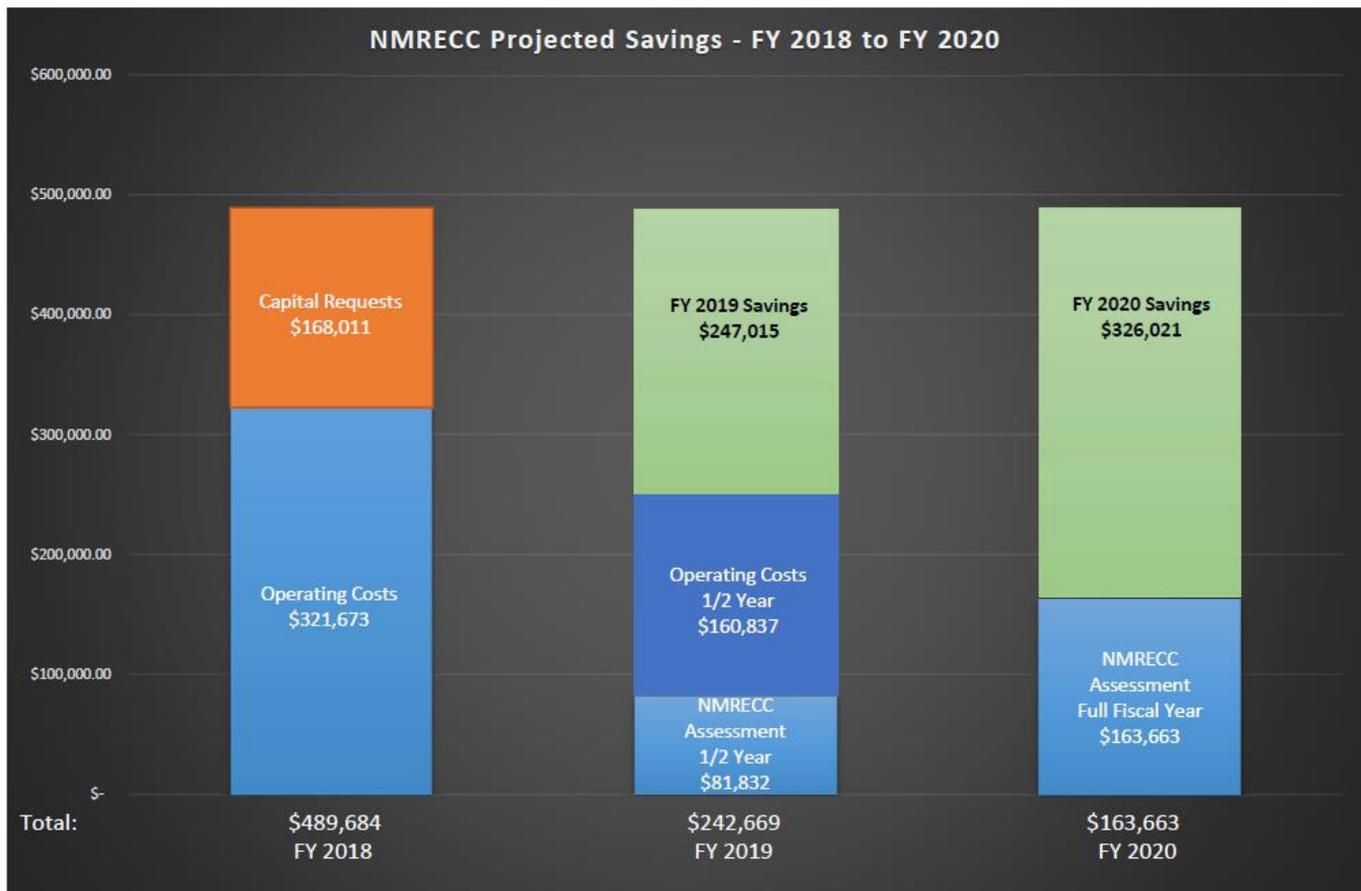
- ✓ Under this plan, State 911 calls would go directly to NMRECC in Tewksbury and straight to our Public Safety personnel in the field, thus saving response time.
- ✓ Our current center will remain open until the new NMRECC Center is completed in December 2018 and move-in is completed in January 2019. This will support regional and national communications preparedness, and thus, more opportunities for Federal and State grants (Please see below).

Emergency Communications during the Boston Marathon Bombings – April 2013

“Interoperability was a success story. Over the years, millions of dollars have been invested under local, regional and state interoperability plans, and our investments in mutual aid channels, tactical channel plans, radio towers, new radios, and specialized training allowed first responders, as well as command level personnel, to effectively communicate by radio between agencies, between disciplines, and between jurisdictions.”

– **Kurt N. Schwartz**, Undersecretary for Homeland Security & Homeland Security Advisor Director, Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency
 Testimony before the House Homeland Security Committee

On a historical note, your former Town Administrators have requested to join Regional Emergency Communications Centers in the past. Former Town Administrator Robert Hanson requested in May of 2009 and former Town Administrator John Moak did so in March of 2012. Additionally, former Lt. Governor Tim Murray spearheaded a drive to provide state incentives for regional emergency communications centers in 2010, given the tremendous advancements in communications technology and computer aided dispatching across the country. State Grants are available and have been endorsed as a solid plan for regionalization by our current State Government.



Pepperell Town Operating Dispatch

NMRECC

NMRECC

Sincerely,
 Mark J. Andrews, Town Administrator
 cc: Board of Selectmen

Informational Fact Sheet

Northern Middlesex Regional Emergency Communications Center District (NMRECC) that includes
Tewksbury, Dracut and Pepperell—

Here are the Advantages:

- ✓ Pepperell Dispatchers will be given due consideration for all new jobs created. This is estimated at twenty-one (21) new dispatcher positions, with an estimated salary of \$49,254, which is above Pepperell's current salary rate. Also, this salary rate is one of the highest in the region. In addition, there are four Supervisory positions, an Administrative Assistant, and a Director. There will be opportunities for upward mobility.
- ✓ The Executive Committee will handle all hiring and personnel matters. Pepperell represents 1/3 of this three member Committee and will vote on these matters.
- ✓ The quality of dispatching and response time will be equivalent or better than the Pepperell Communications Center with new advanced technology, specialized professional services and increased staff.
- ✓ State Grant Funding will be increased—Massachusetts State Secretary of Public Safety Daniel Bennett has stated that funding will be a top priority for “regional centers” vs. “single centers”. Under the Three Communities Model, it is estimated that the State 911 Department will fund +\$572,732 per fiscal year, for equipment and training needs, at a regional center. Currently, we receive approximately \$28,000, as a single center.
- ✓ Pepperell will gain approximately \$247,015 of total cost savings in FY 2019 and \$326,021 in FY 2020 that will be dedicated directly to new Police and Fire personnel and equipment in the future. It means more police officers and firefighters on the streets for the Town! Also, it will give our Police and Fire Chief more budget funds to work with to meet residents and business's needs.
- ✓ Pepperell will have equipment savings of \$164,041 for the next five (5) year with renewals to follow according to State funding grant guidelines.
- ✓ Pepperell will access the new state-of-the-art facility (e.g. 6,500 Square Feet) coupled with new (CAD) computers and visual aided equipment to better protect our residents and businesses. Single dispatch centers are not eligible for large capital expenses, such as the \$168,011 requested by the Pepperell Communications Department for FY 2018. This included: (1) \$135,000 for a new Radio Console; and (2) \$33,011 for a Radio Voter System, satellite receiver.
- ✓ Our dispatch console was installed in 2001 and is no longer supported with parts or service; our radio repeaters were upgraded in 2007 and are due to be upgraded this year; and the antennas at the Public Safety Building were installed in 1988.
- ✓ Pepperell will have new “Communications Partners” to continue to write new grants to meet our needs in the future. NMCOG will assist with future grant opportunities.
- ✓ Pepperell would gain the benefit of utilizing new, updated equipment with no added costs.
- ✓ Pepperell will maintain after hours personnel to cover the late night shifts for 24/7 walk in security for our residents and businesses at our Public Safety Complex.
- ✓ The Town would have a “United Nations” vote (One town = One vote) to participate in the operations and capital management of the new Regional Emergency Communications Center. This is key, as Pepperell will have direct management control at the Board of Directors and Operations Committees (e.g. the size of the Town does not matter).
- ✓ Both our Police and Fire Chiefs will have direct impact on public safety services and they will have voting rights at the Operations Committee.
- ✓ The future costs for health care (e.g. estimated at \$41,932 for the Department), retirement and other benefits would be covered by the NMRECC District and not the Town of Pepperell.
- ✓ The new \$3.75 million RECC Center, which is totally paid for the State, is expected to be constructed during 2017-2018 and operational in early 2019.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

SPECIAL TOWN ELECTION – JUNE 12TH – The ballot contains three questions for North Middlesex Regional School District for debt exclusions for building repairs.

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING – JUNE 19TH – A Special Town Meeting is set for Monday, June 19th due to the receipt of a Citizen's Petition. Meeting will be held at the Nissitissit School at 7:00 PM.

Further information, sample ballot, and Special Town Meeting warrant will be available on the Town's website once they are finalized – <http://town.pepperell.ma.us/>