

Dispatch updates recommended

By Sean Delaney

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Shelby Township's emergency medical dispatch system is in need of a serious upgrade, according to Fire Chief Jim Swinkowski.

"Right now, we're using index cards," Swinkowski said. "It's an old flip card system that has been outdated since 2005."

In an effort to bring the department into the modern age, Swinkowski addressed the Board of Trustees during a Jan. 11 work session and expressed his interest in upgrading the outdated system.

"This is something I've been working on for over a year now," he said. "It's a battle I tried fighting a couple administrations ago and it didn't get anywhere. Money was a concern, but now that we've cut costs and consolidated, I think we're in a position to finally do it."

According to Swinkowski, the emergency medical dispatch system is used to enhance public safety services by allowing the call taker (dispatcher) to quickly nar-

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row down the caller's type of medical or trauma situation so as to better dispatch emergency services and provide quality instruction to the caller before help arrives. "Our dispatchers are not doctors, paramedics or nurses," he said. "This (system) allows them to help the bystanders or whoever is with (the victim) to render aid before we get there

in every type of medical situation, whether it's a heart attack, stabbing, shooting, or delivering a baby. That's what emergency medical dispatch is."

While the department's dispatchers are trained in emergency medical dispatch, Swinkowski said the outdated system makes their job more difficult than it needs to be.

"Our dispatchers do a great job," he said. "But right now, they have to go off memory, use an outdated card system, or hope

that we have someone close by."

While addressing the Board of Trustees, Swinkowski said that he had identified two versions of emergency medical dispatch software that could be integrated into the department's existing operations.

"One is called PowerPhone and the other is called ProQA," he said. "The Macomb County Sheriff's Department, when they recently upgraded their dispatch center, went with

PowerPhone. The Oakland County dispatch, which is our overflow center should a disaster take out the police and fire departments, uses ProQA. So not only have we looked at both systems with the salesmen, but we were able to look at both of them from the user side of it as well."

After reviewing both systems, Swinkowski recommended PowerPhone based on its "user friendly" interface.

"We can design it, shrink it down and make it more user friendly for us," he said. "It can also be integrated with our computer-aided dispatch for the fire department, so when the information comes in it transfers right over. And if you're having something like a heart attack, chest pains, etc., it tells you what to do."

According to Swinkowski, PowerPhone costs about \$37,229, plus an additional \$3,600 to install it at three different



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work stations.

"Of the two major options, it's much cheaper and we already have the training certification," he said.

Swinkowski also noted that the system could also be integrated with police dispatch services, as well.

"They (the police depart-

ment) are aware of it and it's something that could be easily added on in the future," he said. Swinkowski's recommendation generally received overall support from the Board of Trustees, which is expected to discuss the issue at a future meeting.

