

# Local E-911 dispute goes to Nashville

By Darrell Zuercher

On Jan. 15, representatives from the town of Mountain City and the Johnson County E-911 service met with the Tennessee Emergency Communications Board in Nashville. This meeting occurred in order to resolve a dispute over the amount of money that Mountain City would contribute to the E-911 service. A dispute that has been going on for several months without a successful resolution. Fortunately, both sides have worked together so that service has not been interrupted for Mountain City residents.

Traditionally, the Mountain City and Johnson County governing bodies have funded county-wide efforts equally. However, because of the cut in state funds, the Board of Mayor and Aldermen elected to fund these types of projects based on the percentage of Johnson County residents that live within the Mountain City town limits. Currently, this sets the town's funding level at 15 percent of what the county government contributes.

Because of the reduction in funding from Mountain City, the E-911 service was forced to trim its operating budget. Some of the proposed budget cuts would involve a reduction in personnel. This cut would have resulted in some shifts having only one dispatcher on duty. According to Eugene Campbell, the E-911 Director in Johnson County, this would reduce the quality of information passed on to the caller from the dispatcher. With two dispatchers per shift, emergency care instructions can be given while the emergency response units are en route. With only one dispatcher, this type of information would have to be limited because of the other responsibilities of the dispatcher.

Since the two sides could not reach an agreement, they sought arbitration at the state level. The results of the meeting were presented by the E-911 service to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen at their monthly meeting on Jan. 20.

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## E-911

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According to the directives from the Tennessee Emergency Communications Board, the Board of Mayor and Aldermen voted to continue funding E-911 through June. During this time, the E-911 service will catalog the calls it receives. From this catalog, E-911 will determine the number of calls originating from Mountain City residents. This number will be compared to the number of calls from Johnson County residents living outside Mountain City.

Although there are some towns in Tennessee that fund their E-911 districts according to population level, Lynn Questell, General Counsel to the Tennessee Emergency Communications Board, confirmed that. "The majority of funding levels are based on call

volume."

There is still a disagreement concerning the amount to be paid by Mountain City. While the town government voted on \$35,000, the E-911 service is expecting \$70,000. According to Campbell, the state recommended that \$70,000 be contributed for the entire fiscal year, which expires at the end of June.

The town voted to fund a prorated amount, since the fiscal year was now half complete. The transcripts from the meeting are not yet available. When they are available, they will be used to determine if the town will need to fund the full amount. With the \$25,000 already funded by Mountain City prior to the meeting in Nashville, the vote at the January meeting

brings the total amount funded for this fiscal year to \$60,000.

According to Terry Reece, Mountain City's Recorder, "Until we get the transcripts, the other \$10,000 is still up in the air."

The town government also requested that the E-911 service begin proceedings to raise the fee charged on residential and business telephone service. In order to do so, Questell said, "The application needs to be accompanied by a signed, interlocal agreement between E-911 and Mountain City, and another such agreement between E-911 and Johnson County, stating what the respective contributions would be."

While this is going on, the dispatching services will remain unchanged.