

An Open Letter to Residents of the Town of Pepperell:

We would like to address the recent decision by the Board of Selectmen (BOS) and Town Administrator (TA) to shut down Pepperell's Communications Department and join with Northern Middlesex Regional Emergency Communications Center (NMRECC).

Currently, Pepperell's Communications Department is staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. They handle 911 calls for Police, Fire and EMS. In 2016, the staff of 5 local dispatchers handled approximately 1000 calls per month for the residents of Pepperell. Most are residents themselves and are invested in the safety of the townspeople.

Originally, three options for regionalization were presented to the BOS. They included Nashoba Valley Regional Dispatch District (NVRDD), NMRECC, and the Town of Groton. NVRDD is located in Devens and currently has eight member communities, including Townsend. Groton's communication center currently dispatches for Groton and Dunstable. NMRECC will be physically located in Tewksbury and its current members are Tewksbury, Dracut and Pepperell. The facility is not yet built and is not due to be built for at least 18 months.

We would like to make it clear that we are not in favor of joining the NMRECC. We feel that the short-term financial savings to Pepperell are outweighed by increased potential for officer safety issues, and reduced services to town residents. We are deeply concerned by the BOS and TA ignoring the opinion of Town Department Heads and furthermore, making such an important decision without giving residents a voice.

There has been no discussion as to whether the police station will be staffed after hours. It currently is. Will the doors be locked after 5PM with an intercom system connected to Tewksbury or will the Town hire Police Officers to cover walk-in's? If they hire someone, what will the cost be?

There has been no discussion about who will watch the cell block when a prisoner is being booked, a task currently handled by dispatch. Will someone in Tewksbury be watching via remote camera feed? Maybe. Maybe not.

There has been no discussion as to who will run and print out BOPS, Warrants, and other necessary paperwork for arresting officers; a task currently handled by dispatch. Can officers on duty be sure that they will receive BOLO's from surrounding communities?

There has been no discussion as to who will dispatch for the DPW, yet another task currently handled by dispatch. Will Tewksbury handle them even though they don't fall under the purview of Public Safety? Or will they have to dispatch themselves? If so, will that be another employee hired and how will they talk to Police and Fire, which they can currently do?

Even if we were to support a move to regionalize, we fail to understand why NMRECC was chosen over the two other options. Both NVRDD and Groton are geographically closer than NMRECC. Both NVRDD and Groton include communities with a similar demographic to Pepperell. Both NVRDD and Groton were willing to let Pepperell join. Both NVRDD and Groton are already up and running, unlike NMRECC,

which won't have a facility built for at least 18 months. Finally, the cost to join the Groton facility is approximately \$50,000 per year less than joining NMRECC .

In conclusion, we respectfully request the TA and BOS give the residents of Pepperell the opportunity to voice their opinions on this matter and hold a town vote. Just as the residents of Pepperell have a say as to where their tax dollars are spent; they should also have a say in the safety of our first responders and ultimately themselves.

Respectfully,

MassC.O.P. Local #288 - Pepperell Police Patrolmans Association

MassC.O.P. Local #288a – Pepperell Police Superior Officers Association

Pepperell Firefighters Association

Pepperell Firefighters I.A.F.F. Local #5018

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Council 93, AFL-CIO Local #1703