

South Sound 911 Executive Director Deborah Grady introduced herself to attendees and welcomed web and call-in attendees to the agency's first virtual community meeting.

Deputy Director Mark Mears provided a construction progress report on the public safety communications center (PSCC):

- Only one year ago the construction crew was pouring the first concrete slab for the building's foundation. Now, the project is approximately 74% complete and on budget.
- A lot of work is happening on the interior.
- Primary exterior work is the push to get all the windows installed.
- Timeline: The project is approximately 30 days behind the initial April 16, 2021, completion date, but there could be some compression in the schedule which could allow occupancy by the end of April 2021.
- At the end of January 2021, a big push will begin as technology starts being installed. The 13,000 sq. ft. communications center will get its raised floor, cabling, and carpet, before 73 dispatch consoles are set up in February.
- Security: There have been some break-ins recently, but no losses. Security is now in place overnight and on weekends, and security cameras are being installed. The cameras will be motion-sensing and will have an audible warning and security notification.

Interior planning has been underway for the majority of the year and is now in high gear. Employees participated in selecting the theme and color palette.

- Community Relations Manager Kris McNamar shared the Pacific Northwest-inspired design themes planned for the building's interior: earth, water, and air – a different theme for each of the three floors. The first floor will feature earthy green accents, and in the lobby, warm brown tones and woods. The second floor will have water "waves" replicated in patterns on glass and fabrics to go with the blue accents. And on the third floor, line art on interior glass will depict wind and clouds, to go with the blue-gray accent color.

Executive Director Grady expressed a desire for a future virtual community meeting. In the meantime, if other questions or concerns arise, please feel free to email South Sound 911 at info@southsound911.org or visit the project website at southsound911.org/pssc.

AUDIENCE Q&A:

Q: When complete, will this building house all of South Sound 911 under one roof?

A: Yes. South Sound 911 staff are currently divided between four different locations between Tacoma and South Hill. It will be the first time all Communications, Records, Technical Services, and Administration are able to work in the same building. It will be good for the organization and for public safety.

Q: How many employees are there per shift?

A: Approximately 60. Impact should be minimal during shift changes, as all parking is inside the secure, fenced area of the building. Employees should not be parking on the street.

Q: What happens if the fiber lines are severed?

A: South Sound 911 has its own fiber ring. This ring will run into the 35th Street facility where it will connect with the Tacoma Fiber Ring. In addition, our fiber ring branches off north and south to two different hubs for redundancy. So, if fiber fails on the south, the north picks up, and the same if there is an issue north, the south picks up. We also use Tacoma fiber for additional redundancy. We have microwave and it is used for redundancy as well.

Q: Will the new facility include any public space?

A: No. South Sound 911's facility is a secure facility. However, while there is no public meeting or event space available, with neighborhood input the design plan includes a lot of greenery and landscaping.

Q: What does South Sound 911 view as the biggest service change or benefit to the public?

A: More efficiency in the handling of emergency calls, particularly better coordination between law enforcement and fire/EMS calls, and the reduction in the number of call transfers.

While there is still some work with labor and planning, the agency's vision is to implement universal call taking. To the caller, this means that the person who answers the call can handle it from start to finish, without transferring to another call taker, regardless of whether it is a call requiring police dispatch, fire/EMS dispatch, or both. [However, the Tacoma Fire Department will continued to handle their own calls and dispatch for the cities of Tacoma, Fircrest, Fife, and Ruston.]

A more immediate benefit will be better coordination between the two dispatch disciplines. Currently, the two communications centers are in different buildings, separated by miles, which adds complexity to call handling coordination.

Additionally, the current law enforcement communications center will be getting some significant improvements and upgrades so it can be utilized as a hot backup facility. This is the first time Pierce County will have true redundancy for emergency communications.

Q: Will there be a fence around the property? If so, what type?

A: Yes. The new facility, including the parking area, will be surrounded by a 10' fence. The building and its design was intended to be both neighborhood friendly and secure, so the fence, while a necessary security component is also attractive. The photograph below shows the fence material and top.



Q: The building has two large generators. Have they been tested? I'm concerned about the noise.

A: The generators have not been tested yet, as the electrical work is not complete; however, we expect to conduct monthly generator tests. The generator decibel rating is 75 dBA at 23'.

Q: Will there be a public tour?

A: With COVID restrictions in place, we are discussing ways to get people in to see the building, once it is furnished.