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Police Services Study Fact Sheet No. 7

(TX)

THE UNIVERSAL CITY JOINT DISPATCHING SYSTEM

by

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ACQUISITION

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**WORKSHOP**  
in  
Political Theory and Policy Analysis

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Indiana University  
Morgan Hall 121  
Bloomington, Indiana 47401

## THE UNIVERSAL CITY JOINT DISPATCHING SYSTEM

In October 1973, four contiguous suburbs of San Antonio/Texas signed a contract establishing the Universal City Joint Communication System (UCJCS). By terms of the agreement, the four cities cooperate in managing and paying for a common police dispatching system.

The UCJCS is managed by a Governing Board consisting of the City Manager of Universal City and the mayors of Converse, Live Oak, and Selma. The Governing Board is assisted by an Advisory Board consisting of the four police chiefs and the chief dispatcher.

The initial equipment costs were largely met by LEAA funds directed through the Alamo Area Council of Governments, the regional planning agency for the San Antonio area. Since the original grant, the Governing Board has been responsible for planning an annual budget for the agency. Annual costs are split in proportion to the 1970 Census Bureau population figures for the four cities. Universal City, with more than 7,600 residents, pays 62 percent of the costs. Live Oak, with more than 2,700 population, pays 23 percent of the costs. Converse and Selma, with a combined population of less than 2,000, split the remainder. The current operating budget is \$41,000. The proposed budget for the year beginning October 1, 1975, is \$51,058. In the future, a fixed charge of \$250 a month is expected to be assessed, with the remainder of the costs being split on a pro-rata basis.

The Joint Communication System employs five civilian dispatchers who serve 26 sworn police officers. Twelve of these are on the

Universal City force; six, in Live Oak; five, in Selma; and three, in Converse.

Besides the primary dispatch frequency, UCJCS has a frequency available to allow communication among units throughout Bexar County, and a state-wide inter-city frequency which is continually monitored. The dispatching office also monitors the Bexar County Sheriff's Office.

The regional planner, city officials, police officials, and chief dispatcher unanimously regard the system a success. According to the Universal City Manager, "The primary advantage, of course, is cost." Since 4.5 to five dispatchers are often regarded the minimum number to operate a full-time dispatching service, the cost of separate operation would be prohibitive for the three smaller cities. Without a cooperative system, the smaller cities would have to rely on over-crowded Sheriff's frequencies for dispatch -- something other cities of comparable size in the county do.

Another frequently cited advantage is improved back-up. Because the four police departments serve contiguous cities, they are able to call on each other for frequent mutual aid. This is especially valuable for the three smaller forces, which normally have only one officer patrolling at any time.

A third advantage is increased information exchange. Local officials mentioned that the exchange of ideas relating to on-going criminal investigations has increased markedly since the establishment of the system.

One disadvantage has been voiced: According to one city official, the cooperative management approach is less efficient than one where a single city retains management responsibility and provides neighboring cities dispatch service on a contract basis. This city official reports that cooperative management has allowed petty jealousies and squabbles to occasionally disrupt the orderly operation of the dispatching system. But others interviewed were satisfied.

## APPENDIX A

### CONTRACT FOR PURCHASING AND PROVIDING LAW ENFORCEMENT AND EMERGENCY DISPATCHER SERVICES

The undersigned signatories, each signature being in the representative capacity therein indicated and duly authorized by resolution heretofore passed by each respective city hereby agree to the following terms and conditions and bind their respective cities by their signatures hereto:

#### Section I.

The undersigned cities agree to purchase law enforcement and emergency dispatcher service from the City of Universal City, Texas and the City of Universal City, Texas agrees to provide law enforcement and emergency dispatcher services to the undersigned cities.

#### Section II.

The undersigned mutually agree that the cost of such services are to be based upon actual operating costs as determined by the City of Universal City, Texas and that the proportionate share of such costs to be paid by each city is to be based upon the percentage of population of each individual city in comparison to the total population of all participating cities. The initial population figures are to be based on the 1970 Census.

#### Section III.

1. Short Title. These provisions may be referred to as "Universal City Standard Entity Dispatching Contract Provisions".

2. Captions. The paragraph captions contained herein are for convenience of reference only and are not intended to define, extend, or limit any provisions of this contract.

3. Definitions.

a. Contracting Parties. "UNIVERSAL CITY", where used herein, means the City of Universal City, Texas. The term "ENTITY" as used herein, means the city, town, or political subdivision, using the Universal City Dispatching System under the terms of this contract.

b. Entity Area. The term "ENTITY AREA", as used herein, means the geographical areas or locations under the political jurisdiction of, or served by, the Entity, as shown in Exhibit A, attached hereto.

c. Entity Area Population. The term "ENTITY AREA POPULATION", as used herein, means the number of persons as reported by the last Federal Census. Where an Entity area is unincorporated, then the number of persons shall be estimated by the Entity and approved by the Board of Directors. Population bases may be revised by mutual consent.

d. Board of Directors. The term "BOARD OF DIRECTORS", as used herein, means the governing body of the Universal City Dispatching System established by the Entity appointing one representative to serve on the Board at the pleasure of the Entity. The duties and responsibilities of the Board of Directors are defined under Section III, Paragraph 5.

e. Dispatching Service Charges. The term "SERVICE CHARGES", as used herein, means the monthly dispatching service charge of the Entity, based on an annual pro rata basis of the Entity Area Population to the total of all participating entity population based on the Actual Cost of Operation of the Dispatching System.

f. Universal City Dispatching System. The term "DISPATCHING SYSTEM", as used herein, means all apparatus and equipment used by Universal City to provide dispatching service to Entity, including Base Station, Apparatus, Office Space, Employees, Telephones, Furniture, Etc., which will be used in determining the cost of operation of the Dispatching System to calculate the Entity Pro Rata Service Charge.

g. Base Station Apparatus. The term "BASE STATION APPARATUS", as used herein, means the radios, receivers, antennas, etc., reimbursed and funded by a Federal Grant on behalf of Universal City and Entity. Also any future furniture, equipment, or apparatus purchased for the Dispatching System and paid for by Universal City and Entity.

4. Dispatching Services. Universal City shall furnish Police and Emergency Dispatching Service to the Entity. Universal City shall have complete control of day to day operation and maintenance of equipment and apparatus. All employees will be employed by Universal City and supervised by same. The Entity does not have any control over any employees, operations, equipment, or apparatus, under Universal City's operation of the system.

5. Board of Directors. The Board of Directors shall be composed of one representative designated by the Entity and who shall serve until replaced by the Entity. The purpose and function of the Board of Directors shall be:

- a. To approve the Annual Budget of the Universal City Dispatching System.
- b. To approve any additional Base Station apparatus after the initial funding.
- c. To hear complaints and settle any disputes between Universal City and Entity.
- d. To meet at least once each quarter of the fiscal year to handle the above mentioned functions or to discuss new developments of Communication Dispatching System.
- e. A majority of the Board of Directors present at any properly called meeting will constitute a quorum. An affirmative vote by a majority of the Board of Directors is required to approve substantive items. Where a quorum exists, a majority of Directors present is required to approve procedural matters.
- f. The Board of Directors at their first meeting of each fiscal year shall appoint a Chairman and a Secretary.

6. Annual Budget. Prior to the beginning of each fiscal year, Universal City shall prepare an Annual Budget of the projected cost of operating the Dispatching System for the coming year. The monthly Entity Service Charge shall be approved by the Board of Directors. Universal City may at any time during the year amend the Annual Budget with the approval of the Board of Directors.

7. Billing. Upon approval by the Board of Directors of the Annual Budget and Entity Service Charges the Entity will be notified the amount of the monthly Service Charge. Entity shall pay to Universal City stated monthly Service Charge prior to the 10th day of each calendar month of the fiscal



year. Upon amendment of the Annual Budget, the Entity will be notified of recalculated Service Charges.

8. Final Billing. Within sixty (60) days after the end of the fiscal year, Universal City will determine the Actual Cost of Operation of the Dispatching System and bill the Entity for any amounts not covered in the Annual Budget or return to the Entity any amounts of overpayments made by the Entity.

9. Fiscal Year. The fiscal year shall begin 1 October and end 30 September of each year.

10. Termination. The contract may be terminated by the Entity upon ninety (90) days written notice and Entity shall forfeit any vested interest in the Base Station apparatus. Universal City may terminate the contract upon one (1) year written notice and reimbursement of any amortized vested interest in the Base Station apparatus of the Entity.

WHEREFORE, WE HAVE HEREUNTO SET OUR HANDS AND SEALS on the date next appearing to our signatures.

Date: 10-2-73

Joseph J. Atandt  
City of \_\_\_\_\_ Mayor

ATTEST:

Amy Hagedorn  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

John F. Parater  
City of Universal City Mayor

ATTEST:

Robert H. Green

**END**

*7. 11. 1944*