

FANWOOD DISPATCHING TAKEN OVER BY UNION COUNTY

Dispatch operations for Fanwood's police, fire and emergency medical services were transferred from the Fanwood Police Department to Union County's Police Headquarters on Wednesday morning, September 15, 2010.

At about 9 a.m., the borough and county began the transfer of emergency 911 services from the Fanwood Police Department's front desk to the dispatch center located in the county police headquarters on North Avenue in Westfield.

Preparations for the transfer began in May, and the transition was expected to be "seamless," Union County spokesperson Sebastian D'Elia said in an email. Dispatch, phone, 911 and emergency services will not be interrupted during the transfer, he said, which is expected to take "several hours".

Fanwood entered the dispatch agreement with Union County in April as a cost-saving measure. Although the borough is reimbursing the county for the cost of extra personnel needed to oversee Fanwood's dispatch operations, the county estimated that Fanwood will save about \$230,000 over the first three years. Several other Union County towns were also interested in the service by the end of 2010 including Kenilworth and Summit.

For residents who called 911, the process remained the same. For residents who came to the Fanwood police station to do business, however, things were quite different. They now had to pick up a courtesy phone and talk to a dispatcher to state his/her business. Depending on the nature of the business and the time of day, the resident might have to wait until a police officer was dispatched to the police station to meet them since there was no longer a dispatcher at the desk 24 hours a day.

There were also initial problems with the radio transmissions, especially on the fire/EMS band where the rescue squad operated. Some tones and some voice messages from the dispatchers were not transmitted properly and audio levels were extremely low.



Union County/Fanwood Police dispatcher Dan Kranz at work with observers, left to right, Tom Kranz, Fanwood Rescue Squad President, Mary Jane Kowalski, Union County Freeholdere, Richard Trigo, Fanwood Police Chief, Kathy Mitchell, Fanwood Borough Councilwoman, John Piccola, Fanwood Deputy Fire Chief, David Clausen, Fanwood Fire Chief and Colleen Mahr, Mayor of Fanwood.