



Conor Baldwin
Chief Financial Officer

MEMORANDUM

TO: Eileen Donoghue, City Manager *EMD*
FROM: Conor Baldwin, Chief Financial Officer *[Signature]*
DATE: July 5, 2018

SUBJECT: MOTION RESPONSE: M. Samaras - Req. City Mgr. Review The Costs Of Creating A “311” Number For The City Of Lowell.

Non-emergency constituent phone service (also known as “311”) is a growing nationwide trend among municipalities looking to provide more efficient services and improve communications with their citizens. According to an ICMA report, about 15% already use such a system, and another quarter are considering one. As an example of 311’s effectiveness, 43% of local governments reported a significant decrease in non-emergency 911 calls following implementation of a centralized customer service system. While Lowell does not have a traditional 311 system, we have several communication tools that mirror such a system.

In Massachusetts, 311 began to gain popularity in and around the early 2000s. It is currently well embedded in at least five municipalities (i.e., the cities of Somerville, Springfield, Boston and Worcester; and Dukes County), and there numerous others considering it. More recently, though money available from the Governor’s Community Compact initiative has allowed other municipalities to fund implementation costs for such programs. Fall River, Haverhill, and Revere have been awarded grants of \$68,700, \$59,500, and \$54,000, respectively. While other major cities have chosen to institute a more formal 311 system, it has come at a cost to the taxpayer. In Somerville, for example, the FY18 budget for their 311 operation is roughly \$750,000.

The attached report from the Collins Center at UMass Boston provides a very brief overview of the “311 call center” service in the Commonwealth, as well as country-wide information from ICMA studies (International City/County Management Association) on the matter. Costs are included for each community, but are varied depending on the exact model used in each community. While the fiscal constraints of the FY2019 budget do not afford the city the ability to appropriately staff a call center this year, the city will look to the next round of funding from the Community Compact, as well as other outside funding sources to implement such a program.

In the meantime, residents have a number of options for communicating service requests to the city, such as the website (www.lowellma.gov) or on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/cityoflowell/>) and Twitter (@CityofLowellMA), by visiting city hall, or by calling the main number for the office of the City Manager at 978-674-4400. Also enclosed with this report is a guide for citizens for the appropriate contact for different types of service requests.

Please let me know if there are any questions.

10-24-2008

Operational Services Brief: 311 in Massachusetts

Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public Management, University of Massachusetts Boston

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OPERATIONAL SERVICES BRIEF *311 In Massachusetts*

Executive Summary:

Non-emergency constituent phone service (also known as “311”) is a growing nationwide trend among municipalities looking to provide more efficient services and improve communications with their citizens. According to an ICMA report, about 15% already use such a system, and another quarter are considering one. As an example of 311’s effectiveness, 43% of local governments reported a significant decrease in non-emergency 911 calls following implementation of a centralized customer service system.

In Massachusetts, 311 is just starting to gain popularity. It currently exists in at least five places (i.e., the cities of Somerville, Springfield, Boston and Worcester; and Dukes County), and there numerous others considering it.

The following provides a very brief overview of this service in the Commonwealth, as well as country-wide information from ICMA studies (International City/County Management Association) on the matter.

Overview of Massachusetts 311 programs:

What follows is very basic information on the existing 311 programs in Massachusetts:

- Somerville: operational 311 municipal service.
 - First implemented: December, 2005
 - Source: http://www.mma.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1273&Itemid=95
 - Initial startup cost: \$50,000
 - FY07 budget appropriation: \$186,663.70
 - Proposed FY08 budget appropriation: \$318,457.54
 - Source: http://www.ci.somerville.ma.us/CoS_Content/documents/forms/FinalBudget6.4.07_Reduced.pdf
- Dukes County (Martha’s Vineyard and the Elizabeth Islands): operational 311 service.
 - Source: http://www.dukescounty.org/Pages/DukesCountyMA_Sheriff/3-1-1
- Boston: operational 24 Hour Hotline for Constituent Services.
 - Number: 617-635-4500 (not 311)
 - Source: http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/editorials/articles/2008/04/14/boston_misses_the_call/
 - FY09 constituent services budget appropriation: \$838,627
 - Source: http://www.cityofboston.gov/TridionImages/01%20Mayor%27s%20Office%20Cabinet_tcm1-3128.pdf
- Worcester: operational 24 hour Customer Service Center administered by the city’s Technical Services Division (TSD).
 - Number: 508-929-1300 (not 311).
 - <http://www.ci.worcester.ma.us/> (follow “Customer Service Center” link)
 - FY09 TSD budget appropriation: \$3,243,190.16 (does not describe specific appropriation for Service Center).

- Source: <http://www.ci.worcester.ma.us/reports/BudgetFY09.pdf>
- Springfield: implementing new CitiStat Department with 311 Citizen Service Center in FY09.
 - Springfield spent \$90,000 on start-up costs for 311 and anticipates annual operating costs of \$270,000, although the city already had call center within DPW that it absorbed into 311
 - Source: <http://www.mass.gov/Ador/docs/dls/publ/ct/2008/july08.pdf>
- Several other communities have 311 systems currently in various stages of planning

ICMA reports on 311:

The following summarizes information on 311 from the ICMA:

- ICMA Local Government Customer Service Systems 2007 Data Report:
 - Development and Implementation (defined as planning, design, consulting, and staff time): cost ranging from \$1,000 to \$4+ million.
 - Capital Expenditures (software and hardware): ranging from \$8,000 to \$525,000.
 - Annual Operating Expenditures (staffing, training, supplies, software, and non-capital hardware): ranging from \$1,350 to \$350,000.
 - Source: [http://icma.org/documents/ICMA%27s Local Government Customer Service Systems Survey, 2007.pdf](http://icma.org/documents/ICMA%27s%20Local%20Government%20Customer%20Service%20Systems%20Survey%202007.pdf)
- ICMA Article: “More U.S. Local Governments Turning to 311 Call Systems; 911 Calls Drop Sharply with 311 Use, Survey Shows”:
 - 42% of U.S. local governments have either implemented a centralized customer service system (15%) or are considering adopting one (27%).
 - 43% of local governments reported a significant decrease in non-emergency 911 calls following implementation of a centralized customer service system.
 - Source: <http://www.icma.org/main/bc.asp?bcid=923&p=1>
- ICMA Case Study: “Lynwood One Call City Hall”:
 - Lynwood, CA:
 - Population: 73,212.
 - Annual City Budget (FY 2006 – 07): \$92.3 million.
 - “One Call City Hall” Request for Services System budget appropriation (adopted in June, 2006): \$56,000.
 - Major System Components:
 - Physical Location: City Hall, City Manager’s Office.
 - Square Footage: 144 square feet office.
 - Number of phones: two (one for service requests and one for the hotline).
 - Number of computers: one.
 - Number of Staff: 1.25 full-time equivalents (FTEs), including a customer service manager to coordinate the system and a blockwatch coordination specialist who provides backup support.
 - Location within City Government: under the Quality of Life Department, reporting to the City Manager’s Office.
 - Type of System: centralized, online customer service request management system with a dedicated seven-digit phone number and voicemail.
 - Source: <http://icma.org/upload/library/2008-10/%7B53CF7BCE-5519-4CE1-86A6-9DFFFDAC93E9%7D.pdf>

See Something — Say Something

Who should I call in Lowell if I see a problem with...?

TRAFFIC LIGHTS
Police Department – 978-674-4500

STREET LIGHTS
Public Works – 978-674-4111

STREET SIGNS
Sign Shop – 978-674-1973

OVERHANGING SIGNS
Development Services – 978-674-4144

PARKING METER OR KIOSKS
Parking Department – 978-674-4014

TREE LIGHTS
Public Works – 978-674-4111

MAILBOXES
U. S. Postal Service –
978-441-2458

FIRE HYDRANTS
Water Department –
978-674-4240

TREES
Public Works – 978-674-4111

BANNERS
Cultural Affairs & Special Events (CASE) –
978-674-1481

CITY TRASH BARRELS
Public Works – 978-674-4111

STREETS OR SIDEWALKS
Public Works – 978-674-4111

GRAFFITI
Citizen Services Hotline – 978-674-4035

HANDICAP OR LOADING ZONES
Police Department – 978-674-4500

DUMPSTERS
Development Services –
978-674-4144

BENCHES
Parks Department – 978-970-4194

The City of
LOWELL
Alive. Unique. Inspiring.

Truancy Reporting
Police Department
978-937-3200

MORE RESOURCES
Other City Issues
Citizen Services Hotline
978-674-4035

Damaged Bus Shelters
LRTA
978-459-0614

www.lowellma.gov/requesttracker.aspx

