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**Date:** April 14, 2004  
**To:** Gerald R. Miller, City Manager *g r Miller*  
**From:** Curtis Tani, Director of Technology Services *C Tani*  
**For:** Councilwoman Laura Richardson, Sixth District  
**Subject:** 3-1-1 Update

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This memorandum is in response to your request for information about the status of a 3-1-1 communications center in Long Beach.

### Background

The City of Long Beach provides a wide range of services to its residents and businesses. We interact with our "customers" through numerous channels including walk-up counters, telephone, Internet and cable television.

Annually, we receive over one million customer contacts related to police, utility, refuse, fire, building, animal control and other City services. Many of these customer contacts result in requests for service, which are handled routinely.

However, customers can sometimes find it difficult to identify the right department or person to ask a question or to request a non-emergency service. Moreover, once they have requested service, customers can find it challenging to determine the status of their request.

Some large cities, including Los Angeles, have implemented 3-1-1 centers to facilitate communication with their customers. Initially, the Federal Communications Commission created 3-1-1 to relieve 9-1-1 of congestion due to unnecessary calls and to provide quick access to non-emergency police and other government services. Over the past couple of years, cities such as Los Angeles, New York and Chicago have implemented 3-1-1 for general city services.

In September 2002, Governor Davis authorized local agencies to establish 3-1-1 systems. However, unlike 9-1-1 which is funded through a fee on telephone bills, there was no funding source created for 3-1-1.

### 3-1-1 for General City Services

The purpose of 3-1-1 for general city services is to improve customer service by providing a simple way to obtain information and request service. A model for 3-1-1 would include the following:

- Available 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

- Trained operators have access to a service inventory database and an integrated customer information/service request system.
- Operators enter service requests that are automatically routed to appropriate departments.
- Operators can provide the status of requests.
- Self-service would be available through a touch-tone telephone and the Internet.

### **3-1-1 in Los Angeles**

Recently, the City of Los Angeles implemented a 3-1-1 call center to handle general city services. The City renovated an existing facility to establish a 3,400 square foot call center. The existing call centers in the Water and Power and Transportation Departments were not consolidated under 3-1-1.

Approximately 50 operators staff the center. It receives about 34,000 calls per month. The call center has a service goal of 80 percent of the calls are handled by 3-1-1 operators and 20 percent are transferred to the departmental service provider. Currently, approximately 50 percent of the calls are handled by 3-1-1 operators. About ten percent of these calls generate a direct service request to the service providers.

The City of Los Angeles' information technology staff developed a computer system to support call center operators which provides information about city services, events and locations, and phone numbers. The public can also access the system via the City's web site.

An initial consultant report included a cost estimate of \$40 million to establish a 3-1-1 center in Los Angeles. It envisioned call center staff of approximately 250 operators. The actual call center is much smaller in scope. The start up cost was \$6.45 million. The current annual budget is \$4.3 million.

### **Customer Service in Long Beach**

Due to our current budget environment, we have not pursued the implementation of a 3-1-1 call center. It is important to note that unlike some other cities that have implemented 3-1-1, Long Beach currently does not experience congestion of 9-1-1 due to unnecessary calls. For many years, it has been the practice of our Police and Fire Departments to encourage the public to call 9-1-1 in the event of a possible emergency.

Over the past few years, the City has focused on less costly ways to improve customer service and to facilitate access information and request service. Example initiatives are highlighted below.

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### Customer Service Training

Our Human Resources Department has provided an ongoing customer service training program since the year 2000. From the beginning of 2000 through the middle of 2001, approximately 1,500 City employees participated in program. While participation levels have decreased in the past year, the plan is to refocus our emphasis on the program in the near-term, targeting employees who have regular contact with the public.

### Telephone and Internet Services

In addition, we are implementing new interactive telephone and Internet system capabilities to increase access to information and improve customer service. Since May 2003, utility customers have been able to check their account balance and pay their bills remotely through the City's website or by telephone 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This capability has been expanded recently as customers can now request additional utility services online such as service turns ons and transfer services from one location to another. Also, within the next few weeks, building permit customers will have the ability to schedule and check the status of inspections using our website or by touch tone telephone.

Further, the new web content management system that we are implementing will include answers to dozens of the most frequently asked questions by the public. This information will also be accessible by City staff as reference when they receive telephone inquiries from the public.

### Potential Customer Service Request Systems

Moreover, we are currently identifying a potential enterprise information system that would support organization-wide access to customer and service request information. An enterprise system would have the capability of processing and managing service request and work order information. We will provide the City Council with an update of on our review of these systems in the next few months.

Please contact me at 8-6234, if you have any questions or need additional information.

CT:ct

cc: Christine Shippey, Assistant City Manager  
Suzanne Mason, Deputy City Manager  
Jyl Marden, City Council Liaison

# Want to contact city hall? Just dial 311

**Question:** I would like to bring to your attention a problem that I see on the weekends, as sanitation department and animal control is not available on the weekends.

On Jan. 31 at about 10:30 p.m. we noticed a lot of trash in the street at Gaffey and Seventh streets. When I got home, I called the police department to report the incident and she said they would have a police car go by and they would handle the situation. The following morning at about 7:30 a.m. I go by the same intersection and realized that the debris consisted of at least one dead animal.

I feel that it is unfortunate that the sanitation department cannot be open for half days on the weekend, because trash and animals that get run over do not wait until Monday morning.

— JOHN WINKLER  
San Pedro

**Answer:** I wanted to respond to your question this week to let you, and all San Pedrans know what to do when you need city services on the weekend.

First, it is important for you to know that the city does provide emergency services on the weekends for urgent matters that cannot wait until regular business hours, and dead animal pick-up is one of these services.

Our Sanitation Department, Department of Water and Power, and many other departments do have staff available for weekend issues that cannot wait. If you call 311 and let them know that you need an emergency pick-up of a dead animal, that animal will be picked up.

JANICE HAHN



In 2002, Mayor Hahn created the 311 program, making Los Angeles the largest city in the United States to implement a non-emergency city information phone number.

From any phone within the city of Los Angeles, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, residents can access all city services by dialing 311. You can also get connected to my office or to my staff by calling 311.

The number 311 has greatly simplified things for Los Angeles residents. Instead of having to remember a variety of numbers, you can now dial 311 and your call will be answered and transferred to the appropriate department. 311 operators also take service requests directly. For instance, you can report a pothole or graffiti by calling 311 anytime.

The 311 system is receiving about 40,000 calls a month, and we anticipate this number to grow. 311 was originally set up not just to make the lives of residents easier, but also to free up our emergency 911 lines.

Many times, when people didn't know who to call for various services, they would dial 911 — thus preventing our emergency operators from responding to people in real emergencies.

Prior to the implementation of 311, about 40 percent of 911 calls made in the city were non-emergency calls.

The 311 program has been successful in reducing nonurgent calls to 911 — allowing real emergency calls to get the

attention they deserve. Our police officers are already understaffed and busy combating crime on our streets, so for issues such as dead animal removal, I really encourage everyone to use 311. We all want our streets to be clean of trash

and debris, so I also encourage ever resident of Los Angeles to be vigilant in reporting dumping, graffiti and other issues to our 311 operators. Remember, one call to city hall does it all.

Have a question for the councilwoman? E-mail [moresanpedro@dailybreeze.com](mailto:moresanpedro@dailybreeze.com).

## “We choose a great lifestyle.”

*“There’s so much to like about life at Belmont Village. Dad has chefs to cook his meals, a driver to take him places, and social events with breathtaking views. He has all the amenities — email and internet, a fitness center, even a heated pool and spa. Most importantly, dad has a reliable staff for hands-on assistance whenever he needs it. He likes to say Belmont Village is a lot like home — only better.”*

### “We choose Belmont Village”

- Chef-prepared, restaurant-style dining
- Free scheduled transportation daily
- Fitness and social activities
- Licensed nurse onsite around the clock
- Medication management
- Housekeeping and laundry
- Assistance with daily living
- Short-term stays available

Opening in  
Rancho Palos Verdes  
this month!

