



The Chairman's Corner

by

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COUNTY 911 DIRECTOR LOPEZ RETIRING

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All Columbia County residents should join me in extending to outgoing Columbia County 911 Director Rob Lopez a happy retirement this month. With a call to 911 just a health incident or accident away, we owe Director Lopez a debt of gratitude for his many contributions to its development.

Director Lopez has served Columbia County 911 since the department's formation in 1994. He is the last of those who were there at the creation of Columbia County 911.

He joined the county in 1989, when he served as a corrections officer for a short time before transitioning over to the sheriff's department in communications. He served as 911 deputy director before eventually becoming director in March, 2006.

"I've seen all the evolutions of the 911 system's call processing," said Director Lopez. "I saw us go from answering 10-digit emergency lines to actually answering 911 landlines, then wireless, then text-to-911. We were in 1960s technology at the start, but now we're there, we're where we need to be."

"My goal has always been to enhance our capabilities and make things better and easier for all of us, and I'm proud of the progress we've made," he said to his staff upon announcing his impending retirement.

Over the course of his 911 career, Director Lopez has been involved in the following:

- * Implemented wireless 911, including text to 911
- * Streamlined our processes by going paperless
- * Established a fully redundant 911 backup location
- * Implemented computerized MPDS
- * Brought in Pictometry and Rapid SOS
- * Moved into a new center in 2008, and are now slated to move to another in October of this year
- * Modernized the radio system, bringing everyone to the VHF HB platform and mitigating gaps by building out new sites
- * Upgraded CAD and the phone system several times
- * Established a radio cache of portables
- * Migrated to a new Motorola console in 2019, with a new Motorola core and console currently being installed
- * Installed the National Interop calling channels and several of the TAC channels

"Rob Lopez has been a longtime and important part of public safety in Columbia County," said one-time sheriff and current Emergency Management Director David W. Harrison, Jr. "There are few people in our region who have his knowledge and experience, and he (and his team) are the reason the radio tower system, 911 Center and overall emergency communications in our county have progressed to where they are today."

Columbia County wishes Director Lopez a long, happy retirement, whether on the golf course, bass fishing, or hanging with the grandchildren!