RESOLUTION NO. 20221027-065

WHEREAS, the introduction of texting 911 to emergency call centers from mobile phones opened up a new way to contact public safety answering points (PSAPs); and

WHEREAS, wireless customers with Short Message Service (SMS) are able to send emergency SMS messages to a PSAP by using the single code "911" as the destination address of the SMS message ("text-to-911"); and

WHEREAS, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) encourages emergency call centers across the country to accept SMS text messages, but it is up to each call center to decide the particular method by which to implement and deploy text-to-911 technology; and

WHEREAS, FCC rules require all wireless carriers and other providers of text messaging applications in the United States to deliver emergency SMS text messages to call centers that request them; and

WHEREAS, text-to-911 is available in the 10-county Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) including Bastrop, Blanco, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Hays, Lee, Llano, Travis, and Williamson Counties; and

WHEREAS, the Capital Area Emergency Communications District (CAECD) in Austin was the first in the state to adopt the NextGen 911 call system; and

WHEREAS, the City has had text-to-911 available to its service area since September of 2017; and

WHEREAS, according to the United States Census Bureau, about 30.5 percent of Austin residents speak a foreign language at home, more than the national average of 20.8 percent; and

WHEREAS, text-to-911 can possibly save lives in dangerous situations where voice calls are not possible; and

WHEREAS, there is currently no federal standard or solution in place to address a growing need for text-to-911 translation; and

WHEREAS, there is an increasingly pressing need for PSAPs to be able to translate text-to-911 messages sent in languages other than English; and

WHEREAS, this service is especially beneficial to those who are hard of hearing, deaf, or speech-impaired; and

WHEREAS, this service is additionally beneficial when the caller has poor reception and can only send out a text message or when phone lines and cell phone towers are overwhelmed and only texts can get through; and

WHEREAS, in a NextGen 911 environment consumers are able to make voice, text, or video "calls" from any communications device via Internet Protocol-based networks; and

WHEREAS, such calls may provide additional useful information to the 911 center, such as the caller's medical history, the schematics of a building or images of an accident scene; and

WHEREAS, the City and the 911 community is constantly striving to meet the evolving needs of the public; and

WHEREAS, translating non-English voice calls requires an extra step depending on the language of the caller; and

WHEREAS, text-to-911 calls have the potential to further complicate call handling due to limitations for the telecommunicator to share the caller's interaction in real-time with a language service provider; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Manager is directed to issue a request for proposals (RFP) or other applicable procurement procedure related to translation technology and services for 911 call takers and dispatchers, and return to Council to provide an update on the procurement process within six months after passage of this Resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The RFP or other procurement procedure issued by the City Manager should take into consideration the following, but should not be limited to:

- The translation must run through more than one Application Programming Interface (API) service for enhanced accuracy.
- The backend, evidence storage must have encryption to ensure authentication.
- There must be language identification and translation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Council supports a national standard for text-to-911 communication and encourages the Texas Legislature and broader community to support enabling legislation for the development of such a standard.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to send copies of this Resolution to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House, the Austin state and federal legislative delegations, and to the President of the United States.

ADOPTED: October 27, 2022 **ATTEST:** _____
Myrna Rios
City Clerk