



Central Vermont Public Safety Authority

"Together is Better"



Minutes December 6, 2018

BOARD PRESENT: Tom Golonka, Mike Smith, Donna Bate, Kim Cheney, Will Schwarz, Sally Dillon, Sam Dworkin, Doug Hoyt.

OTHERS: Paco Aumand, Bob Sager, Tony Facos, Joe Aldsworth, Carolyn Earl, Steve Whittaker, Steve McKenzie, Doug Bent, Robert Gowans

CALL TO ORDER 6:30 by Golonka, Agenda unanimously approved, Minutes of November 1, 2018 approved, Payments approved by earlier email ratified and approved. Paco Announced that Web site was complete and up to date with historical data included.

DISCUSSION concerning joint council meeting of Barre and Montpelier held November 14th in Montpelier to consider CVPSA Plan for single site dispatching. Neither Council held a formal vote on whether to proceed with CVPSA recommended plan. However, all councilors were asked to state a personal view as to whether or not to proceed with the plan. Only one councilor expressed a positive attitude. All others were either negative or stated had insufficient information on which to proceed. Each Council left open the possibility of a future meeting with an actual vote.

CVPSA Board members were asked to express their view of the outcome of the joint meeting and their opinion of next steps. Golonka reported that Martin Prevost had resigned from the Board. All Board members present expressed an opinion that neither city was prepared to move towards a regional dispatch system as recommended by CVPSA. Member Hoyt to resign. Others expressed similar views but did not take that action.

Steve McKenzie, City manager of Barre, discussed the "going dark" issue, i.e. if Barre Dispatchers were relocated to single site in Berlin as recommended by CVPSA, there would be times when the Barre Police Dept Building would be vacant. McKenzie passed on to the Council a memo to him from Chief Bombardier which McKenzie said was exaggerated in cost and effect which could be explored. Board members had previously mentioned that there were times when both Barre and Montpelier had only one dispatcher on duty which was a safety issue, if that person became disabled or overwhelmed by calls. McKenzie commented if that situation was dire, he had not been informed about it. He thought regionalization was good idea but difficult to implement.

Montpelier Police Chief Facos commented that "going dark" was not an issue for Montpelier, the issue could be managed with technology. Failure of the CVPSA plan had serious consequences of the Cap West towns. Their obligation is to provide radio communications equipment. If a Radio Tower goes down it is their responsibility to replace or repair, not the City of Montpelier which could manage its own needs. He saw

no legislative effort to provide funds, and no Federal Grant availability. CVPSA efforts had improved communications between Barre and Montpelier.

Montpelier Fire Chief Robt Gowans saw no city interest in regionalization.

Barre City Chief Doug Bent commented on Chittenden County plans to have a single site PSAP combined with local dispatching which was estimated to save 78 seconds in response time, for a total of under three minutes which could be lifesaving. Local response is now around four minutes. There have been no improvements since 1992. Having two dispatchers on duty at all times as called for in the CVPSA plan would significantly improve services. He noted that a recent fire at a Spa on the Barre -Montpelier Road the firefighters emergency radios would not work – they must connect to a dispatch center and were unable to do so.

Joe Aldsworth, Barre Deputy Chief commented that management needed to be frank that there have times when breakdowns occurred. It is unsatisfactory that dispatchers must leave the door to the rest room open while using it, so they can manage emergency calls. At time the overwork leads to people being short of patience and are frazzled. At one time a police officer had to handle a 911 call which he was not trained to do. There should be help in reserve as CVPSA planned.

Carolyn Earl, an attorney representing the dispatchers noted it would be naïve to expect them to contradict their leaders and point out problems with the existing system. However, the CVPSA plan had benefits for them, and they would like to work collaboratively.

Paco Aumand noted 6 assumptions that were the basis of the CVPSA plan (1) cost containment is desirable (2) The dispatches would held harmless, (3) joint management of dispatching would improve services, (4) Montpelier did not want to be a PSAP, (5) it is prudent to build capacity slowly and (6) don't assume that change is bad.

DISCUSSION NEXT STEPS . Board voted to meet monthly on the 3rd Tuesday of each month in 2019. Paco recommended working with the Central Vermont Planning Commission, there is no money for an executive director, but other detailed discussion postponed to December 20th CVPSA Board meeting.

ADJORNMENT voted at 8:07 PM

Submitted by Kimberly Cheney