

Central Vermont Public Safety Authority Special Board Meeting
Tues August 20, 2019 DRAFT Minutes
at 6:30pm CV Chamber Conference Room

Bd members Present: Kim Cheney, Chair; Dona Bate, Sally Dillon, Ashley Hill, Doug Hoyt, Martin Prevost, and Will Schwarz.

Other Attendees: Paco Aumand, Tim Bombardier, Tony Facos, Ken Jones, Terry LaValley, Jim Ward and Stephen Whitaker.

Special Meeting

Kim called the meeting to order at 6:36pm.

Doug made motion to approve the agenda amended to include Dona's request to talk about the notice for the director's vacancy. Sally seconded and motion passed.

Doug asked Chair to do a round table introductions as we had some new guests and everyone gave their name and affiliation.

Sally made motions to approve July 18 Minutes, Doug seconded, and motion passed.

Kim spoke at some length about his vision for CVPSA to improvement communications. Improvements to improve how fast, clear and uninterrupted messages to and from first respondents are. He also spoke about making the most of our remaining funds. We have a common idea and need to find a common path to achieve mutual goals. He asked that we talk about what needs to be done and not the cost at this time. He asked Terry LaValley from the Vermont Department of Public Safety (DPS) to share his information first.

Terry LaValley works for DPS as a FirstNet Officer & Director of Radio Technology and said there continues to be work done towards a reliable wireless (cellular) system for Vermont and the US. Terry handed out a May 2019 newsletter **FirstNet for First Responders** which is quoted here. "FirstNet is a federal program managed within US Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration. AT&T was awarded the contract to build, operate and maintain the national network. In Vermont, AT&T continues work on new site builds. AT&T has until 2022 to fulfill its commitment to build 36 new tower sites in Vermont. . . AT&T will also be upgrading fourteen existing Vermont towers. FirstNet subscribers will have priority and preemption on all bands of the network. "

Tony asked about whether Verizon and AT&T could work together. Montpelier Police has Verizon Cellular. Terry said they can be connected, but both companies are very proprietary and don't share well. Stephen referred to the Massachusetts contract that is the first multivendor public-safety wireless data contract with Verizon & AT&T. Stephen said AT&T hasn't yet complied.

Massachusetts website said the RFR required bidders to indicate their approach and commitment to interoperability with other wireless data carriers. Bidders had to explain how their approach achieves interoperability now and in the foreseeable future between users of different carriers and different public-safety wireless broadband data cores. Goal is to create an environment where

all responders to an event or incident can seamlessly communicate, share data and use common applications across wireless service providers. Meanwhile, Terry said there is no multivendor operations in Vermont at this time.

Terry said AT&T has a five-year buildout planned, yet even when done Vermont will need both Cellular and Land Mobile Radio (LMR -hand held radio) technologies, as some terrain will prevent cellular connection. Cellular and LMR are complimentary and each are appropriate in different towns and locations.

Kim asked Terry about simulcast radio and not having enough channels or frequency. Terry spoke about needing to know who is talking to who; who is backing up who; and where do you want to go. For many service providers the simulcast radio is the best solution for their location and best mix with their current equipment. FirstNet is not realistic for everyone due to lack of coverage and aspects like firefighter cannot handle small cell phones with their big gloves or ear plugs with their helmets.

Ashley arrived at 7pm and joined the discussion to asked if we know what we have; what we need; and what users expect. She felt we should hire a consultant to answer these questions and have a more comprehensive view of the needs and the solutions. Dona asked to hear what the two Chiefs and Cap West thought the best way to assess needs of their operations and what they thought of information shared by Terry.

Tony shared that his public safety communications target/goals have moved over time as we've gone through this process. We've examined a broader vision when we considered doing an RFI and then moved back to working on a more realistic Radio RFP. He has recently learnt more about fire department communication problems and see their need as a safety priority for the region. Ashley was not feeling well and left the meeting at 7:25pm.

Chair called on Ken Jones, who then spoke about how CV Fiber and EU Fiber could help design & build out fiber system to support public safety wireless communications. Fiber is faster and handles more volume; can send signal in the air or thru cable; and can mix voice with digital. Fiber is the backbone to improved transmitting.

Martin talked about doing simulcast in stages and felt there was an engineered solution to meet the different needs and different financial resources. Doug asked Terry about his preference of Vendor solution vs Consultant solution. Terry said sometimes a Consultant can take a broader look to solutions when that is the goal. Often that broader solution is not affordable. When you have limited equipment and financial options then a well-done RFP can get good results from Vendors.

Tim said there were two elephants in the room: 1. Firefighters losing communications when inside (burning) buildings; 2. Cap West has frequency problems which leads to hearing other stations who can't hear Cap West and with Canadian interference.

Paco agreed with Terry that a well written RFP could be done by the Chiefs and Cap West with perhaps assistance from Paco or another consultant to put it all together, would get good results. Need to list and prioritize problems, list what you have and what you need. Will wants a single document which pulls together all the needs, problems and existing equipment. Jim and Martin both commented that Barre City would benefit from simulcast radio. Tony said the new frequency that Cap West is working on will resolve current problem with the Canadian radio interference.

Doug made a motion to have the three entities put together a concise list of prioritized issues; such as communications to/from firefighters inside and outside buildings, radio interference, two dispatchers on 24/7; and submit such a list to CVPSA Board by its Oct 17th meeting. Martin seconded motion. Dona shared that she felt conflicted with seeing this motion as a good next step yet had a directive from the Montpelier City Council to move towards coordination with CV Fiber.

Dona read the following prepared statement: "On Aug 14 Stephen & Kim appeared before the Montpelier City Council asking the city to direct its CVPSA Reps (Ashely & Dona) to support Stephen's proposal for CVPSA to use its remaining funds for a consultant to develop a regional telecommunications system. Instead the council directed its Reps to advance a broad, holistic, regional approach for assessing and improving communications for all public safety services and to create a collaborative partnership with CV Fiber. And to do that whether using a consultant, RFI or RFP. Dona felt getting a well-done RFP would best serve the current public safety services and felt CVPSA should work with CV Fiber on a regional, multi-service cellular network. Doug didn't see a conflict with supporting both efforts.

Stephen disagreed with Dona's summarized statement of what the Montpelier Council directed her to do and referred to the City Clerk's draft minutes of the Aug 8th council meeting. Tony had watched video of Aug 8th council meeting and agreed with Dona's statement. Stephen strongly objected to Dona & Tony's version of council directive. Kim called for vote of Doug's motion, which passed unanimously.

Tim reviewed the \$5,000 Dispatch Training Request from the Cities of Barre & Montpelier for each city to send two dispatchers to become APCO certified at the cost of \$2,500 for each city. Tony explained the goal was to establish a standard, create a professional culture and have all dispatcher become certified. Martin made motion to allocate \$5,000 as requested and Doug seconded, passed unanimously.

After distributing copies of her ad for the director vacancy and apologizing for not getting it circulated earlier, Dona read it and asked for comments. It was accepted without any changes to be posted on social media and websites (CVPSA and cities).

Kim cancelled the Sept meeting and set the next meeting for Oct 17 Thur at 6:30pm at CV Chamber. He adjourned the meeting at 8:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Dona Bate, Secretary