

STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS TASK FORCE

Special Meeting No. 16 – Meeting Minutes

March 20, 2024

Via Microsoft Teams

11:17 AM - Call to Order

Co-Chair Neal brought the meeting to order and conducted roll call for Task Force members. She reminded the attendees that the meeting was being recorded.

The following were in attendance:

Task Force Members Present

Barbara Neal, E911 Director, Co-Chair
Jennifer Morrison, Public Safety Commissioner, Co-Chair
Paul White, Regional Dispatch Working Group, Vice-Chair
Mike Doenges, Mayor, Rutland City
James ‘Jim’ Mack, Shelburne Dispatch
Ron Kumetz, VSFA

Task Force Members Absent

Michael Wright, CEO of Calnex Ambulance

Others Present

Cally Audet, Task Force Clerk
Rance Duffy, Mission Critical Partners
Rick Burke, Televate
Dominick Arcuri, Televate
Phillip Sisk, Mission Critical Partners
Jeff Burnham, Springfield Police Department, Chief
Kim Cheney

Approval of Agenda

No Changes.

Public Comment

Co-Chair Neal opened the floor to public comment. No public comments.

System Planning Team Introductions and Kick-Off Presentation – Mission Critical Partners

Co-Chair Neal introduced the Mission Critical Partners team members in attendance.

Ron Kumetz entered the meeting at 11:21 AM.

Rance Duffy, System Planning Project Manager from Mission Critical Partners (MCP) introduced himself, and provided a brief overview of the materials that would be covered in the presentation, to include topics such as project overview, defining success, open discussion, and next steps.

Mr. Duffy walked through a number of examples of similar projects at both a state and regional level that MCP has worked on, to include the following:

- Tarrant County, TX – Consolidation/Regionalization Study
- Maryland Association of Counties – Statewide NG911 Staffing Studies
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts – P25 LMR Engineering Design and Implementation Services
- Arizona Department of Public Safety – Microwave and LMR Implementation Project Management
- Northwest Central Dispatch System II – CAD/MDS/RMS Project Management

Mr. Duffy provided an overview of the MCP Team Members (Phil Sisk, Rance Duffy, Bonnie Maney, Scott Neal, Jack Dougherty), and also displayed an organizational chart identifying other involved team members from MCP.

Mr. Duffy defined the reason for MCP's involvement in this process as the need to help the State of Vermont, more specifically the Vermont Public Safety Communications Task Force to establish a statewide, reliable, secure, and interoperable public safety communications system, which also comprises the integration of 911 call taking for a regional dispatch system. They also hope to collaborate with the Task Force to create multiple different models to select from in the future that would allow for a more equitable, sustainable, and universally accessible system for everyone in the state.

Mr. Duffy provided a visual for an Expanding Emergency Communications Ecosystem and walked through the different phases (voice and data incident, 911 emergency communications center, responder communications systems, and partner agencies/entities). He explained the State of Vermont as currently having 38 independently operating ecosystems and expressed that the goal moving forward is to help produce recommendations that would integrate all independent ecosystems into one collective system.

He explained that this does not in any way mean that they are advocating for one stand alone location/facility, rather they intend to produce recommendations that work to integrate existing ecosystems into one cohesive system with a variety of options.

He went on to provide a brief overview of MCP's background and experience, and provided details regarding the project overview, to include the following information:

- Phase 1 – Data Collection and Analysis

- Data Collection
 - Existing research and state initiatives
 - Site visits to inventory and benchmark current state of each ECC, system, and service
 - Surveys and Questionnaires, including stakeholder who utilize the existing LMR network and the existing dispatch infrastructure
 - Alternative data collection methods as needed
- Analysis
 - Collected data and information will lay the foundation for practical, executable recommendations and strategies, potential models, cost estimates, and timelines for a statewide public safety communication system.
- Establish Stakeholder Outreach Strategy Workflow to help manage expectations, maximize collection response, reduce risk, build trust, improve decision making, and promote collaboration.
 - Televate has already initiated some of this process.
- Conceptual Outreach Strategy Summary
- Phase 2 – Design Planning and Decision Making
 - Access info gathered and developed a schedule to conduct a series of system design planning and decision-making workshops with key stakeholders to discuss the potential models and recommendations.
 - Will work to gather any missing information
 - MCP will deliver a draft copy to the Task Force for stakeholder review, and comments incorporated to final proposals
- Phase 3 – Implementation
- Project Initiation: Establish mutual acquaintance, clarify roles, review, and align desired outcomes and deliverables, mutual understanding of project success

Mr. Duffy and the Co-Chairs opened the floor to the Task Force members to share how they individually and for their constituents would define success as it pertains to this project. Task Force members provided the following responses:

- Jim Mack defined success as a system that enhances the human element of public safety communications as it pertains to the recruiting, training, and retaining adequate staff at communication centers, and implementing and utilizing technologies to improve the efficiencies of the staff.
- Ron Kumetz defined success in two parts, the first being to somehow direct the legislature to a model that more effectively pays for dispatching by unburdening the taxpayers, and the second

being from the fire service perspective as maintaining local and regional control as is very important to the way that the many local response agencies do business. He shared that many Vermont communities do not have the simple pleasure of purchasing expensive equipment to instantaneously fix these issues. P25 subscriber units are too expensive for the vast majority of fire departments in the state of Vermont. He envisions success being a quilt of frequency diverse simulcast voting systems that are under regional control and are subject to change.

- Mike Doenges defined success is a document in a resulting set of suggestions and guidelines for policy and process. He echoed Ron's sentiment on defining a billing system for a regional dispatch solution that all remote communities can participate in. He also hopes to continue to build on prior state successes.
- Paul White defined success as communities having options so they are not locked into having to deal with just one dispatch agency whether they feel as though they are a good fit for their department or not, and where the communities have some level of control. He also shared that success for him is defined by financial equity for all communities. He shared two examples of how the system currently is not working and would like to see improvement in these areas by his defined successes. The examples were as follows:
 - Due to staffing constraints, the Town of Norwich Police Department currently has two active staff members, the Police Chief and one officer, when normally there are two to three times this amount. The Chief of Police shared that they currently have to pay the Town of Hartford \$100,000 a year to dispatch for their two officers, including himself. He shared that other departments (Fire and Public Works) are dispatched by Hanover, NH. However, in just the next town over, Thetford Police Department has their services dispatched by the State Police at no charge at all.
 - There are other communities in Vermont, such as Berlin who have their various first responders dispatched by a variety of facilities, at a variety of costs. Berlin Police Department, much like Thetford receives their dispatch services from the Vermont State Police at no cost, whereas the Berlin Fire Department is dispatched by either Barre City of Montpelier at a cost, and their EMS services are dispatched by Lamoille County Sheriffs Department at a cost. He shared that there are often instances where first responders from the variety of disciplines are dispatched to the same scene by their respective dispatch facilities, however said dispatch facilities have minimal to no communication among themselves about the incident causing a multitude of issues.
- Co-Chair Morrison thanked the Task Force members for their many great points, and defined her own vision of success to include:
 - A process that has robust public engagement that allows all stakeholders and interested parties to be heard and all voices equally valued.
 - Having multiple viable solutions to consider at the point of this process that presents multiple paths forward to consider.
 - Financial equity in that all communities are offered a fair mechanism to pay for their dispatch services regardless of their community wealth, but also that there is a base level of equipment and security measures that all first responders should have available to them

as the safety of our first responders should not be put at risk just because they come from a financially less capable community.

- Meeting all the requirements of Act 78 and ensuring that the Task Force has been diligent and honored the legislative intent of this process; and
 - The solutions being considered at the end of this process are ones that enhance the safety of the public and our first responder community.
- Co-Chair Neal echoed the other members sentiments, and defined success as,
 - Meeting all the requirements of Act 78.
 - The production of multiple potential models for a statewide public safety communications system that is solidly based on industry standards and best practices, both for technology and for operations.
 - That the system is reliably and sustainably funded, and that we have considered and incorporated to the greatest extent possible the needs of Vermont's emergency communication center, emergency response agencies, the personnel within all of those centers and agencies, as well as a system that will best serve Vermonters and our visitors.

Mr. Duffy opened the floor to the Task Force members for any questions. Nothing further.

Mr. Duffy shared the next steps to include tasks such as stakeholder representative engagement, establishing project progress calls, developing inventory and assessment schedules, on-site visits, and identifying any outstanding issues or expectations.

Co-Chair Neal provided the Televate Team members with the opportunity to ask questions of MCP. Dom Arcuri stated he had no questions at that time. Rick Burke commented that the process has been running smoothly thus far. He also noted that it was beneficial to gather feedback on resources and needs from the Task Force Members.

Mr. Duffy allowed Phil Sisk to add any additional comments or questions. He had no questions, but thanked the Task Force for sharing their thoughts and valued the diversity of responses.

Co-Chair Morrison asked MCP to consider the following moving forward:

- How are we going to identify dead zones; and
- Outreach to existing communications centers - We must establish what information is public versus what part is confidential.

Co-Chair Neal asked the Task Force if there were any further questions.

Paul White stated that the new system should also allow for redundancy. If the current system goes down in one facility, there needs to be a well thought out system to allow failover between dispatch centers.

Ron Kumetz shared from experience in the fire service that they rely very heavily on mutual aid partners and their dispatch facility keeping track of mutual aid plans. When looking at this redundancy,

information of this nature needs to be made available to any facility that has the ability to take over the dispatch functions.

Adjournment

The next regular meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 27, 2024, at 11:15 AM.

Motion: There being no further business, Ron Kumetz made a motion to adjourn; 2nd by Jim Mack. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 12:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Cally Audet

Cally Audet, Clerk

03/21/24

Date