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**State of Vermont**  
**Department of Public Safety**  
45 State Drive  
Waterbury, Vermont 05671-1300  
<http://dps.vermont.gov/>

Regional Dispatch Working Group Agenda  
Date: August 10, 2022  
Time: 8:30-10:00 EST

1. Call to Order - 8:37 am

Regional Dispatch Working Group Members present:

- Paul White
- Brian Peete
- Lance Burnham
- George Merkel
- Anthony Cambridge
- Drew Hazelton
- Robert Schalacher
- Mark Anderson
- Barbara Neal
- Jack Helm

Admin Support present:

- Mandy Wooster

Members of the Public present:

- Stephen Whitaker

Regional Dispatch Working Group Members absent:

- N/A

2. Approval of Agenda

8/03/2022 & 8/10/2022 Agendas approved by the group.

3. Approval of Minutes of July 27 and August 3

7/27/2022 Mark Anderson has corrections for 7/27/2022 Meeting minutes. Hold approvals until next week when he can provide the corrections.



4. Review of documents provided by Barb Neal: Documents have been uploaded to the website under resources: <https://dps.vermont.gov/committees-boards/dispatch/resources>

Paul White - The documents only appear to include agencies that have 911 emergency response duties. There are a variety of agencies that still require dispatch services that do not have 911.

Barb Neal – We work through emergency service zones. Each town identifies Police, Fire, and EMS for the entire or a portion of the town. They can only identify one of each agency (Police, Fire, EMS) for each emergency service zone. There could be additional agencies that have a role, but they are not the primary agency identified by the town. Can get one more set of information to pull everything together – we work with emergency service zones – they identify the unique combination of responders for that geographic area. Some towns only have one, such as Burlington (Burlington Police and Fire). Others like Moretown have five within their boundaries depending on where they are geographically. Each are identified by an emergency service number. The list will have the name of the town and the emergency service zones with police, fire, EMS and dispatch agency. That might paint a better picture of the complexity without having to refer to multiple documents. Hope to have it to the group by next week. To the point, there are other agencies, we will need to get this from another source.

Paul White – May not include all agencies if they are not the primary agency designated for each town, but they still need dispatch services.

Mark Anderson – Looking at Dummerston – Brattleboro PD doesn't do anything for Dummerston. Also, Guilford.... Raising the concern that there is enough nuance to cause confusion. Previously, heard indications of desire for a one stage dispatch, I feel that could interrupt and confuse people.

Barb Neal – Does Brattleboro dispatch for any service? It may need updating. I will make a note. Might make the distinctions clearer with the new data plan to be provided. Will check into why changes are not reflected.

Mark Anderson – Is it possible that it could be visualized with the GIS folks? – Layers of EMS dispatch? Could we overlay the repeaters for the radio?

Lance Burnham – We have it and can add it, but it is daunting.

Barb Neal – It is not user friendly. Maybe if we could add or remove layers to see what you want to focus on. Have the GIS data for the 911. Let me work on that. We can share the one-dimensional map, but it is overwhelming.

Mark Anderson – That map might be a useful image of the problem we are trying to solve.

Lance Burnham – Agreed.

Barb Neal – Let me get the Rescue Inc. question resolved. Let me get the freshest set of data and pull the map (PDF or interactive) together.

Paul White – If it was the goal to help DPS shed dispatch responsibilities, I was surprised to see how short the Williston list is. Westminster is clearly the focus. Surprised to see a lot of the agencies that were there when we consolidated Derby in other areas.

Lance Burnham – This is showing the manpower issues. Much of the vacancy rates are in Westminster. Many have left seeing where we were at.



Barb Neal – Wouldn't it be useful to know the call volume for each agency? I don't know that we want to look just at 911. We want to look at how many incidents are generated each year to show the dispatch workload. We are not trying to demonstrate how busy any dispatch is, but there is a big difference in dispatching for Roxbury and Montpelier. It might be a useful piece of information. Might need to go to Valcour to get those numbers.

Mark Anderson– That data is accessible, but only for about 8 months and will not capture FIRE and EMS unless those services were dispatched by a police agency. Prior, we would need to rely on Spillman and other RMS systems. If we are good with 8 months, we could use the Valcour information. We many want to name the goal. Some agencies track fingerprinting, training, etc. Some may not apply.

Paul White – If we decide to go further than January there will be a big difference. Spillman didn't capture everything captured in Valcour.

## 5. Discussion of the work group's charge

Lance Burnham – Spoke to the Sheriff in NH. He gave a run down on some of the centers in NH. NH runs regionalized centers based on counties. Each county has regionalized center (except for two – they join with neighboring counties). Depending on the county, the centers are run out of the Sheriffs' office – EMS, FIRE, and LE. There are bigger PDs that run their own (Portsmouth PD). The funding mechanism, he didn't want to speak for different counties, are charged annually. Grafton County (Dartmouth area) gave an annual estimate of \$600,000 annually. The budget is \$1.2 million. They run at a minimum 3 dispatchers 24/7. Will speak further about the billing structure (calls for service, etc.). Every county has a governance board. Three people are elected by the county to oversee it and they come up with the billing structure. It takes the pressure off the sheriff to say, I get what I get and I need to operate within those means. This was surprising. Don't know how this would work in VT without much local government. Have not heard back from MA yet. Also have a contact in the Lakes Region to explore.

Paul White– The county model, is it mandated by the state?

Lance Burnham – Didn't ask. Interpreted that it involved that way due to proximity. Don't want a dispatch center that is far away. You want it central/local.

Paul White – The elected 3 members...?

Lance Burnham – Elected by the municipalities – the town selectboard would elect.

Barb Neal – Do they have defined levels of service or standards that are in place for how the dispatch functions - such as the level of service you will receive? Is that something that we should consider in a regional dispatch? I, Vermont, 911 sets the standards for how calls will be handled and provides equipment that we pay for with the funding mechanisms. Does there need to be a similar thing for dispatch and does it exist in NH?

Lance Burnham – Don't believe they have a mandated level of service. He was talking about equipment cost coming out of his budget. When you say level of service, do you mean the dispatcher will only handle a certain level?

Barb Neal – Are our dispatch functions are going to be performed in the same manner by standard as set by a governance board? Ex. When you dispatch a fire department, you do it in this way. You get updates in a particular manner. You do your checks a particular interval. If you don't get a response from the check, you do X. Is it set or will it be agency by agency?

Paul White – Is the service you get the same in each county. You mentioned the billing the responder agencies – does that mean they do not get state funding?



Lance Burnham – He is looking into this. Going to call back for a more robust conversation about State funding.

Paul White – Billing municipalities – only source of revenue is property tax. The charge seems to be state-funded. The comment about not wanting a dispatch center 100 miles away – agree. Even with the technology, it doesn't mean it is best practice. With Barb's information, the area with greatest need is Rutland County – not where we have agencies ready to step up and run with a regional dispatch model. We have talked about the goal of transferring the level of dispatch from state to regional but seems like the time to talk about the quality – technology improvements, not just moving where the dispatchers are. Biggest challenge – is how is this group is supposed to accomplish what the legislature is expecting from us.

George Merkel – Is there a subject matter expert that could speak to that? If there is a time to fix/update a system, now would be the time. Is there a technician that could speak to the status of the equipment in the state and what should we consider as we start moving things around?

Paul White – Look at this group's disciplines – don't know that any of us are telecommunication experts or experts on the technology that makes this work. It should be our goal for equity – level of the service you get from each dispatch center. How do we ensure that? Don't know what the greatest technology needs are.

Barb Neal – Could Terry LaVallee contribute to this conversation?

Lance Burnham – He retired but we hired him back. He is available. Perhaps we bring him in to identify the DPS dead spots. He will only know the DPS areas. There are areas where we cannot reach. Terry would know where the infrastructure will reach. Have been asked if the money can be used for infrastructure – people are looking for that. Will reach out to Terry.

Paul White – If he is working for the department he should be included in these conversations.

Barb Neal – Our IT manager could be made available to talk about how the 911 system is built, but better to focus on dispatch radio holes for now.

Lance Burnham – Even Brian could speak to Montpelier's challenges...

Brian Peete – We are focused on LMR and other areas. We are hoping to get infrastructure with VSP equipment as a backup and continuity.

Lance Burnham – Will reach out to Terry and invite him to the next meeting.

Mark Anderson – Fire and EMS capabilities in Windham County – does not believe that Westminster dispatches for them.

Drew Hazelton – Call notification vs. dispatch services. Now is the time, including data integration out of CAD. In many centers in VT that data cannot get out to EMS (appropriate triage). We need to focus on dispatching not just call notification.

Paul White – Level of service, when dispatching for Warren Fire you would send out tones and as soon as someone arrived, the communication stopped. Not the same level of service.

Mark Anderson – When started in LE was also a dispatcher, had the ability to ask questions that assisted the service level – would there be capacity or interest in EMS for EMTs to rotate through and provide depth of knowledge in the dispatch centers?



Drew Hazelton – Yes, there is a Medicare program works on EMS delivery – need to have appropriate triage for emergency calls. We do not triage. Many do not require an EMS response. In a modern system, we should be looking at having a clinical person help with triage. Recently was staged at a homicide and didn't get staging information without calling on a cell phone. The system is so fractured that we were staged in a location near where the perpetrator was. We should not be so fractured that it puts us at risk, and we shouldn't be relying on cell phones for info.

Barb Neal – There are a lot of issues that Drew mentioned, in the 911 system we use board approved call taking protocols – it gives questions and prearrival information for many incident types. All 911 call takers are certified through APCO. The purpose is to take the guesswork out of what should be asked and to provide a standard level of service. That is invaluable. We don't do the next level of triage and prioritizing a medical call to determine what level of medical response is needed. There are systems that allow for that, but it would need to be software that makes those decisions, and we work from paper manuals. The value of those protocols can't be overstated.

Paul White – Those protocols do not exist at the dispatch level?

Barb Neal – That is correct, even within a PSAP they could be using those protocols and then transfer to the dispatcher that doesn't use the protocols. Dispatchers are not required to use those protocols.

Paul White – The service may be different depending on the number dialed (911 v. a local number).

Mark Anderson – Does E-911 want to oversee dispatching?

Barb Neal – That would need to be addressed by the board chair. There are lessons that could be learned for the statewide systems – pros and cons to be given to the dispatch side.

Mark Anderson – The boards position is no. The natural progression would be the VCJTC but since they are not EMS and Fire there is not really an entity.

Paul White – Just because the 911 board doesn't want it, doesn't mean it isn't best.

Mark Anderson – Maybe we need to state what is reasonable and add it to the report. A standard statewide delivery system seems reasonable. Maybe it does tie into the scope.

Paul White – Like the 3 person NH board, but there needs to be state level oversight to ensure the boards are functioning. Is each sheriff responsible for repeaters, etc.? Do they have the ability to roll over for a failure?

Lance Burnham – Believe they are responsible.

Barb Neal - Emergency Communication Advisory Council – DPS group/board that grew out of the Public Safety broadband. Perhaps Terry would know more. When FirstNet questions were resolved the committee was changed and hasn't been active. Need to know that status.

Paul White– Why did the legislature see fit to create this group?

Barb Neal – Not sure if the Council is operational.

Paul White – is VCOM still a thing?

Barb Neal – That is a question for Terry.

Paul White – Seems like there are a lot of working groups in overlapping areas.



Mark Anderson – Question for NH – existing infrastructure currently have Statewide, First Net, regional/local radio systems – how do NH intersect with statewide initiatives for this statewide model and any experience with a transition of models? Could we align cellular with broadband? We are talking funds for infrastructure, yet Drew cannot communicate to VSP on the radio. How do we align the gaps?

## 6. Next steps

Paul White – Mandy is unable to attend the next meeting. Brian Peete willing to assist with next week's notetaking. The State is supposed to provide the working group with administrative and technical assistance.

Mandy Wooster – Once the need for additional resources are identified we can request resources.

Lance Burnham – The Commissioner proposed a project manager to oversee this however State Government takes time. Someone from the group can assist for next week – once we identify the need and Mandy and I will meet with the Commission to address.

Paul White – For next week...

Lance Burnham – Will speak with Terry LaVallee and invite him to next meeting. He can help identify where infrastructure in the State is lacking/strong. Will also speak with the NH Sheriff to get more information.

Paul White – The Emergency Communications Advisory Council – according to the website it still exists. <https://rts.vermont.gov/advisory-council>. Having read that do not know why legislature created this group.

Mark Anderson – Guessing because it didn't involve the towns.

Paul White - Next week to come up with tasks to work on going forward. In reference to recording the meetings, have no strong opposition. Now that we have a resource page on the website they could reside there. No opposition expressed by the group, we will start recording the meetings next week and we will post them.

## 7. Solicit for public comment

Stephen Whitaker – Provided text of comments via email

“So again -- I was unable to tune in for the first 15 minutes, so I again, request recordings and I've spoken to others who are of the opinion that the law requires recordings in effect because you've got a specific charge from the legislature you are the equivalent of a legislative body and that therefore as it is in Virtual only meetings, you must make recordings under the temporary provisions.

I can speak to the Emergency Communications Advisory Council. That executive order was issued over three years ago and yet, not a single person has ever been appointed to it. Its emphasis is primarily following on the Public Safety Broadband Network Commission.



The emphasis of that, as Barb just relayed, is really primarily the LTE Broadband capabilities. The there is no group -- and VCOM -- somebody asked about VCOM. VCOMM was the ad hoc group that distributed the homeland security monies. That name has since been redeployed to define the UHF statewide network that was prior called Lifeline. That's now being called VCOM by the Department, as I learned that from Terry (LaValley) and from the DPS website -- the department's website.

So currently there is no statewide body focused on LMR integration and gaps, and how regional (radio) systems could and should grow up and failover to statewide resources.

What kind of preparedness do we need to be thinking about for anticipating ice storms, and hurricanes, and long extended power outages, which are going to deplete the fuel supplies in, you know, snow stranded sites? We're not prepared to helicopter fuel up to some generators.

So, you're pointing out the real gap, and they truly -- the governor's, - It's the Department of Public Service not having written a 10-year telecommunications plan, Ten Year Telecommunications Plan which would have included LMR and LTE chapters.

But I want to distinguish that when are we talking about LTE, there are the private vendors, AT&T , T-Mobile, Verizon who have significant market share. But we also did an experiment with 2G neutral host where the public -- where it's not economical for these carriers to deploy LTE Broadband, a contractor hired by the state can put small cells in at about \$20 grand apiece and fill these gaps that are necessary to.

In effect, this body, I believe is going to need to persuade the public safety community that integration of LTE and LMR is essential and timely.

So I'm encouraged by the discussion today that you're heading in that direction. But with -- without a plan.

I think what you ought to do is come up with a report that asks for more time and funding. Use some of the (\$6.5M) six and a half million that Joint Fiscal is at liberty to release as early as September and hire the expertise to implement some of what Terry (LaValley) will tell you, which is how do these systems currently perform? Where are they lacking? Where do they need upgrades? How are they going to integrate with each other for failover? And how are they going to integrate with State resources for failover?

And this is the type of planning that should have been done a decade ago. And that's my only reluctance to using Terry because Terry's already got one foot out the door. I think you should hire, you know, some expertise who's going to stick with us in the in the design engineering and implementation phase.

So that's, that's Enough for now, again, I ask you to restart recording the meetings.”

