

STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS TASK FORCE

Meeting No. 1 – Meeting Minutes

June 28, 2023, at 11 AM

Via Microsoft Teams

11:03 AM – Call to Order

Co-Chair Barbara Neal brought the meeting to order. Co-Chair Jennifer Morrison conducted roll call for Task Force members. The following were in attendance:

Task Force Members

Barbara Neal, *E911 Director, Co-Chair*

Jennifer Morrison, *Public Safety Commissioner, Co-Chair*

Paul White, *Regional Dispatch Working Group, Vice-Chair*

Ron Kumetz, *VT State Firefighters Association*

James ‘Jim’ Mack, *PSAP Admin, Shelburne PSAP*

Michael Wright, *CEO of Calnex Ambulance*

Mike Doenges, *Rutland City Mayor*

Others Present

Cally Audet

Soni Johnson, *E911 Board Clerk*

Phillip Sisk

Mandy Wooster

Rob Blish

Stephen Whitaker

Woodstock Dispatch

Task Force Member Introductions

Co-Chair Morrison opened the floor to Task Force Members to introduce themselves and share a brief description of their backgrounds. Task Force members introduced themselves and provided brief background histories relevant to the Task Force’s work.

Co-Chair Morrison opened the floor for introductions from Cally Audet, providing the Task Force with administrative support, as well as any other attendees who wished to share.

Guidelines and Expectation for Task Force Meetings/Members

Co-Chair Neal provided an overview on general guidelines and expectations for Task Force meetings and members regarding the following topics:

- Public meeting expectations and requirements
 - Task Force meetings are to be conducted in accordance with Vermont’s Open Meeting Laws.
 - There will be times when the Task Force will move to enter Executive Session.
 - There will be a Task Force website created to house meeting items such as agendas, minutes, and necessary public resources.

- Meeting duration
 - The intended meeting time was to run 90 minutes, with a hard stop at 2-hours.
- Per Diem compensation
 - Language from h. 494 was shared to outline the appropriate financial compensation (\$150/each day spent in the performance of their duties) for members not regularly employed by the State, as well as requirements for expense reimbursement for all members, while away from home or office upon their official duties pursuant to this section.
- Administrative Support
 - Administrative support will be provided by the Department of Public Safety, to include meeting tasks, hosting of the webpage, as well as contractual and financial services support among other relevant duties.
- Public Records Requests
 - Public records requests must be directed to both Task Force Co-Chairs and will then be processed by the Department of Public Safety Administrative staff.
- Confidentiality/Non-Disclosure Agreements
 - Task Force members will be required to enter into a non-disclosure agreement that outlines expectations for the handling of non-public information. This document is still currently under review.

Review of Task Force Mission/Underpinning Legislation and Work to Date

Co-Chair Morrison began discussion of the Task Force Mission by clarifying that while there are State staff from the Department of Public Safety (DPS) providing various supporting roles, the Task Force is not a DPS or 911 Board driven project or discussion, rather a Public Safety Communications Task Force project and discussion. She continued to provide a brief overview of the responsibilities and objectives of the Task Force as a whole.

Co-Chair Neal provided an overview of Task Force mission stated in section c114 of the statute as, “...oversight and management of the transition to a ‘statewide reliable, secure and interoperable public safety communications system, comprising integrate 911 call-taking and regional dispatch systems, and to ensure that system is equitably and sustainably financed and universally accessibly by all persons throughout the state.’”

Further discussion took place regarding future responsibilities of the Task Force as it pertains to the creation and execution of Request for Proposal (RFP) and other procurement processes for acquiring subject matter expertise.

Legislative Mandate H.494 Sec.C114-C116 attached.

Discussion of Next Steps

Co-Chair Morrison began discussion regarding the anticipated challenges of executing deliverable deadlines based on the scope of work required to be completed in said timeline. She shared that that intent during the creation of the aforementioned RFP at this time, is not to include the current deliverable dates, instead to provide language similar to ‘work will be

complete on a timeline as determined by the task force. She requested that the Task Force Members consider proposing a motion to allow for Co-Chairs Morrison and Neal to go back to legislative committees with the Task Force's concerns regarding the defined project dates, and any other concerns the Task Force might have.

Motion: Motion made by Michael Doenges to allow Co-Chair Morrison and Neal to bring Task Force concerns regarding deliverable dates, and the exclusion of said dates in the RFP back to the legislative committees; 2nd by Paul White. There was not further discussion, motion passed unanimously via voice vote.

Co-Chair Morrison opened the discussion to the Task Force members to gather their opinions or vision for next steps. Michael Doenges expressed that it might be difficult to determine next steps until the RFP is in a more concrete state. No further discussion took place on this matter but was left open for discussion at a later date.

Co-Chair Morrison discussed desired meeting cadence for future meetings. The current recommendation was to have meetings every other week, with the ability to discuss a change at a later date. Paul White agreed with the concept of every other week, as his prior engagement in a different work group had met weekly, at it could become overwhelming; Ron Kumetz agreed.

Discussion took place regarding timing of meetings, with the anticipated timing of future meetings be 90 minutes, with a hard stop time of 2-hours should the Task Force need to enter Executive Session. Ron Kumetz stated he felt it was a reasonable timeline.

Discussion took place regarding desired method of meetings; virtual, in-person, hybrid, etc. A few members shared that they are open to a combination of virtual and in-person meetings but did not prefer hybrid when possible. No definitive decision was made but mention of discussing the required meeting setting in response to the specific needs of each meeting as they come, with the intention of settling into a routine at a later date.

Desired meeting times were discussed. Ron Kumetz shared that Wednesday's work well for him; Paul White agreed. James Mack did not have a preference on a specific day. Michael Doenges agreed that Wednesday work; Michael Wright agreed. A meeting start time of 11:15 AM was established for the next Task Force meeting, with the expectation of determining if that was an agreeable recurring start time for future meetings thereafter.

Election of Task Force Vice-Chair

Co-Chair Neal shared that a required item of the Task Force's initial meeting is to elect a Vice-Chair. She opened the floor for nominations. With no initial response, Co-Chair Morrison later opened it up to members with interest. Michael Wright nominated Paul White, as he had prior experience in a similar role; James Mack agreed with the nomination.

Motion: Motion made by Michael Wright to elect Paul White as Vice-Chair; 2nd by James Mack. Paul White abstained. Motion passed via voice vote.

Determine Next Meeting Date/Time

The next Task Force meeting will take place on Wednesday, July 12, 2023, at 11:15 AM, via

Microsoft Teams.

Public Comment

Co-Chair Neal opened the floor to public comment, with a limit of 10 minutes per person.

Phillip Sisk, representative for Mission Critical Partners shared that he'd like to take the time to introduce himself, as a member of the leading public safety expert service providers in the country and thanked the Task Force for the opportunity to attend virtually.

Stephen Whitaker introduced himself and shared his concerns regarding the expectation of the Task Force members to enter a non-disclosure agreement, Task Force members inability to respond to public records requests on demand, Department of Public Safety legal counsel, use of executive session, and Task Force RFP language. He requested Task Force members to consider looking into the creation of pilot programs to aide in meeting required deliverable deadlines. Further discussion took place regarding public records keeping.

Co-Chair Morrison and Neal shared that they would take all recommendation under advisement

Adjournment

Motion: There being no further business, Paul White made a motion to adjourn; 2nd by Ron Kumetz. There was not further discussion and the motion passed unanimously by voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 11:56 AM.

Respectfully submitted:

Cally Audet

Cally Audet

06/30/2023

Date

Sec. C.114 PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM;

DISPATCH; INVENTORY; DESIGN

(a) The General Assembly finds that protecting public safety and welfare an essential function of State government and it is in the public interest to establish a statewide reliable, secure, and interoperable public safety communications system, comprising integrated 911 call-taking and regional dispatch systems, and to ensure that the system is equitably and sustainably financed and universally accessible by all persons throughout the State.

(b) It is not the intent of the General Assembly to establish a public safety communications system that disrupts or in any way jeopardizes the exceptional dispatch services currently in place or the existing 911 system, but rather to support, enhance, strengthen, and build upon those efforts and initiatives.

(c) The transition to a public safety communications system as specified in subsection (a) of this section shall be overseen and managed by the temporary Public Safety Communications Task Force established in subsection (d) of this section.

(d)(1) There is established a Public Safety Communications Task Force to oversee and manage all phases of the development, design, and implementation of a statewide public safety communications system as required by this section.

(2) The Task Force shall consist of seven members as follows:

(A) the Executive Director of the Enhanced 911 Board, who shall

serve as Co-Chair;

(B) the Commissioner of Public Safety or designee, who shall serve as Co-Chair;

(C) one municipal official appointed by the Executive Director of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns;

(D) one representative from a public safety answering point overseen by a municipal police department appointed by the Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police;

(E) one emergency medical technician or paramedic appointed by the Vermont State Ambulance Association;

(F) one firefighter appointed by the Vermont State Firefighters' Association; and

(G) the Chair of the Regional Dispatch Working Group established by the General Assembly in 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 185.

(3) At its initial organizational meeting the Task Force shall elect from among its members a vice chair. Meetings may be held at the call of a Co-Chair or at the request of two members. A majority of sitting members shall constitute a quorum, and action taken by the Task Force may be authorized by a majority of the members present and voting. Except for those members regularly employed by the State, members are entitled to a per diem in the amount of \$150 for each day spent in the performance of their duties. All members, including members otherwise regularly employed by the State, shall receive their actual and necessary expenses when away from home or office upon their official duties pursuant to this section. A vacancy shall be filled by

the respective appointing authority. If the Chair of the Regional Dispatch Working Group declines to participate as a member of the Task Force, the Task Force shall appoint one member who shall have expertise relevant to the purposes of this section.

(4) The Task Force is authorized to retain a project manager and one or more additional consultants with relevant expertise in public safety communications technology, design, and financing to assist with the requirements of this section.

(5) The Department of Public Safety shall provide the Task Force with administrative services and support.

(6)(A) The Task Force, in consultation with the Secretary of Administration, shall develop procedures and best practices for State agency cooperation and coordination on matters of overlapping jurisdiction. The primary purpose of this subdivision is to ensure the Task Force has access to expertise and data related to its mission, including expertise within and data maintained by the Department of Public Service, the Agency of Digital Services, the Division of Emergency Preparedness, Response and Injury within the Department of Health, the Department of Taxes, the Agency of Transportation, the Enhanced 911 Board, and the Department of Public Safety.

(B) Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to waive any privilege or protection otherwise afforded information by law due solely to the fact that the information is shared with the Task Force pursuant to this subdivision.

(7) All meetings of the Task Force shall be open to the public and

conducted in accordance with the Vermont Open Meeting Law. All records of the Task Force are subject to the Vermont Public Records Act.

(8) The Task Force shall cease to exist when a State entity authorized by legislative enactment to permanently oversee and manage the public safety communications system becomes operational.

(e) The establishment of a statewide public safety communications system shall occur in essentially three phases, which include data collection and analysis, design, and implementation. Certain aspects of each phase may occur simultaneously as deemed appropriate by the Task Force.

(1) Data collection and analysis. On or before September 15, 2024, the Task Force shall conduct a complete inventory and assessment of all aspects of dispatch service currently provided in Vermont and, to the extent possible, dispatch service currently provided outside Vermont for response agencies located in Vermont, which shall include:

(A) an inventory of all existing dispatch infrastructure and equipment, including facilities, hardware, software, applications, and land mobile radio systems, referring to and incorporating any existing relevant data collected by a State or municipal entity;

(B) the number of full-time and part-time personnel currently performing dispatch service, taking into account personnel who have other responsibilities in addition to providing dispatch service;

(C) the current total spending on dispatch service in Vermont that includes and itemizes for each municipality and dispatch center all federal,

State, and municipal appropriations and fees, every contract for dispatch or first responder service, and projected budgets;

(D) identification of the communications dead zones in the State, meaning those areas that lack the infrastructure to support public safety land-mobile-radio communications or cellular voice and data service, or both, and taking into consideration all cell towers, including those that are part of the FirstNet statewide public safety radio access network; cellular mapping efforts conducted by the Department of Public Service; and any existing, relevant mapping data collected by a dispatch center or other entity;

(E) with the assistance of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, a needs assessment to determine where and to what extent there are gaps in dispatch service or significant challenges to the delivery of dispatch service and to identify those municipalities that are likely to be most affected by either the curtailment of dispatch service from the two State-run public safety answering points or from a new financing mechanism for the continuation of such service;

(F) an assessment of the service provided by each dispatch center and identification of particular challenges or vulnerabilities, if any, including with regard to workforce, failover procedures, communications technology, costs, and governance; and

(G) collection and assessment of any other information the Task Force deems relevant.

(2) Design. On or before January 15, 2024, the Task Force shall develop findings and recommendations related to draft elements of a preliminary design for a public safety communications system, including identification of a proposed implementation timeline and any additional data and resources needed to develop a final design on or before December 15, 2024. The final design shall include:

(A) technical and operational standards and protocols that ensure an interoperable and resilient system that incorporates computer-aided dispatch systems and land mobile radios;

(B) technology life-cycle standards to ensure system and database upgrades are timely, sufficiently financed, and properly managed;

(C) system and database security and cybersecurity standards;

(D) continuity of operations standards and best practices that encompass failover procedures and other system redundancies to ensure the continuous performance of mission-critical operations;

(E) workforce training standards and other staffing best practices that support the retention and well-being of dispatch personnel;

(F) a resource allocation plan that ensures dispatch service is available in all regions of the State, including the establishment of new dispatch centers or expanded capacity and capability of existing dispatch centers, if deemed appropriate by the Task Force;

(G) a process for annually reviewing the budgets of dispatch centers;

(H) a recommended governance model to ensure effective State and regional oversight, management, and continuous improvement of the system, including identification of staffing or operational needs to support such oversight and management of the system;

(I) cost estimates for implementing the system in Vermont, including operational and capital costs;

(J) options for sustainably and equitably structuring the financing of the public safety communications system, taking into consideration:

(i) existing budgets for regional and local dispatch;

(ii) the population, grand list, and call volume of each municipality;

(iii) existing and potential State funding streams;

(iv) available federal funding opportunities for public safety agencies and emergency communications systems, including equipment, network infrastructure, and services;

(v) financing models adopted in other jurisdictions for public safety communications systems; and

(vi) any other standards or procedures deemed necessary or appropriate by the Task Force.

(f)(1) If the Task Force determines that sufficient minimum technical and operational standards have been developed to warrant the funding of one or more pilot projects, the Task Force may submit for approval a pilot project plan to the Joint Fiscal Committee in calendar year 2023.

(2) Pilot projects eligible for funding under this subsection may include new regional dispatch centers or expanded capacity at existing regional dispatch centers, provided the Task Force determines the pilot demonstrates project readiness and is otherwise consistent with the standards and purposes of this section.

(3) In evaluating proposed pilot projects, the Task Force shall give a high priority to projects in geographical areas of the State that presently face significant challenges with respect to reliably providing dispatch service.

(4) The pilot project plan shall include a description of each proposed project, the resources needed, and an explanation of how the project will align with, inform, and further the development of a statewide public safety communications system and ensure transparency and accountability particularly with respect to the expenditure of State funds pursuant to this subsection.

(5) The Joint Fiscal Committee is authorized to approve up to \$4,500,000.00 in total for pilot projects authorized by this subsection.

(g) On or before January 15, 2024, the Task Force shall submit a progress report on the data collection and analysis required by subdivision (e)(1) of this section, the findings and recommendations required by subdivision (e)(2) of this section, and a description and status report of any pilot projects funded pursuant to subsection (f) of this section in a written report to the Senate Committees on Government Operations and on Finance and the House Committees on Government Operations and Military Affairs, on Ways and Means, and on Environment and Energy. On or before December 15, 2024, the Task Force shall submit to the same legislative committees a written report containing its final design plan as required by subdivision (e)(2) of this section.

Sec. C.115 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 185, Sec. B.1100 is amended to read:

Sec. B.1100 FISCAL YEAR 2023 ONE-TIME GENERAL FUND

APPROPRIATIONS

* * *

(b) \$11,000,000 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Public Safety for regional dispatch funding. The funds are subject to the following conditions:

(1) ~~\$4,500,000 shall be held in reserve until the report required by Sec. E.209.1 of this act is submitted and further approval to expend the funds is granted by the General Assembly~~ Up to \$1,000,000 shall be available for

the retention of technical experts to assist the Task Force with the analysis and planning required by Sec. C.112 of this act and to fund the administrative expenses incurred by the Public Safety Communications Task Force. If the Task Force determines in calendar year 2023 that additional funding is necessary to achieve its purposes, it may submit a request to the Joint Fiscal Committee. The Joint Fiscal Committee is authorized to approve up to an additional \$1,000,000.

~~(2) \$6,500,000 to provide grants to regional dispatch facilities upon approval of the Joint Fiscal Committee subsequent to review of a Regional Dispatch Facility grant plan submitted by the Commissioner of Public Safety. The plan shall include the extent to which federal funding sources may be available for regional dispatch. Up to \$4,500,000 shall be available to provide funding for pilot projects pursuant to Sec. C.112(f), of this act.~~

(3) Any remaining amounts not obligated pursuant to subdivisions (1) and (2) of this subsection (b) shall be held in reserve until approval to expend the funds is authorized by further enactment of the General Assembly.

(4) It is the intent of the General Assembly that the Department of Public Safety seek to draw and deploy the \$9,000,000 in Congressionally Directed Spending to support Vermont's transition to a modernized, regional communications network in a manner that coordinates with and advances the goals of a statewide public safety communications system. The Commissioner

of Public Safety shall consult with the Public Safety Communications Task Force as the federal parameters for expending the funds become available and as the Commissioner develops a plan to expend such funds. In addition, the Commissioner shall update the Joint Fiscal Committee on planned expenditures.

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**Sec. C.116 VERMONT UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND; JOINT FISCAL
OFFICE STUDY**

On or before January 15, 2024, the Joint Fiscal Office shall analyze options for changing the financing mechanism for the Vermont Universal Service Fund to ensure the long-term sustainability of the programs funded through the Vermont Universal Service Fund, including the Enhanced 911 system. The Joint Fiscal Office may consider and further refine the analysis and recommendations included in the Secretary of Administration's report related to the funding of Enhanced 911 operations, dated January 15, 2022, and required by 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 74, Sec. E.235.