

Western Regional Homeland Security Advisory Council
Western Massachusetts Regional Interoperability Committee
Meeting Minutes
November 17, 2015, 12:30 pm
WMEMS, 168 Industrial Drive, Northampton, Ma.

In attendance: Raine Brown (FRCOG), Gretchen Johnson (FRCOG), Gary Cromack (SAIC), Melissa Nazzaro (Spfld Comm), Lindsay Stromgen (AFD/HCFCA), Butch Garrity (MSP SC), Suzanne MacBain (SAIC), Bernard Forgea (CFD/CPD), Dennis Nazzaro (NFD), Robert Garriepy (HPD), Matt Barstow (MSP), Thomas Grady (BCSO), Jason Breault (BCSO), Steve Staffier (EOPSS), Anthony Gentile (WPD), Manny Litos (Motorola), Wendy Snow (MSP SC), Peter Rosamilia (SAIC), Walter Tibbets (FCECS), Jeff Coe (DPD).

The meeting was brought to order by the Chair, Melissa Nazzaro at 12:30 pm. A round of introductions followed.

The committee reviewed the minutes from the October 20, 2015 meeting.

<p>Motion: Butch Garrity moved to approve the minutes of the October 20, 2015 meeting as presented. Tom Grady seconded. Motion passed unanimously.</p>

A round of introductions followed.

Updates from the Chair

Melissa stated that there was no SIEC meeting held in October and the November meeting will be tomorrow.

Project Updates

Great Hill to Borden Microwave Link

Gary Cromack stated that the vendor has removed the equipment from Lenox and it has been sent out for maintenance and reprogramming before it is re-installed at Great Hill. There is no outside installation required but access to the site may be an issue until spring. The funding for this project ends on July 31, 2016.

BCSO Mobile Command Unit Pneumatic Tower

Jason Breault reported that the tower was installed but a Nycoil is needed and was not specifically called out in the bid. The Nycoil and installation will be an additional \$2,700.00. Jason apologized for not including the coil in the original specifications. Raine Brown stated that it is an allowable expense without needing to be re-bid because it is under 25% of the original cost of the project. Raine stated that she will need to check with the vendor that they will honor the quote that the subcontracted vendor gave us. Melissa stated that the expectation is that we as the purchasing party will not know every piece of equipment required and depend on the consultant to include all of the necessary equipment to fulfill the intended project. Discussion ensued.

<p>Motion: Butch Garrity moved to approve up to \$2,700 from FFY14 unallocated funds to purchase the nylon coil and have it installed. Bob Garriepy seconded. Motion passed unanimously.</p>

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FCECS Engineering Study

Walter Tibbets stated that the consultant has completed the field work and extensive testing of the system. There is a meeting scheduled for Thursday to go over the initial report. The FCECS Committee held an emergency meeting last week to discuss some of the field findings. FCECS approved funds to conduct optimization of the system. The consultant found that the equipment is in good condition but there were many timing and audio level issues. Two of the GPS clocks had failed. The system is working much better overall but a few areas communications have gotten worse. Simulcast 1 and 2 had to be shut down in New Salem for awhile yesterday. Steve Staffier asked for the name of the consultant. Raine replied that the consultant is CBDG, a company based out of New Hampshire. Tom Grady stated that this is the second project that Comtronics originally installed that has experienced severe issues. Walter stated that many hands have touched the system since the initial installation but there were antennas and other original design issues. Tom stated that we have an obligation to forward this information on to the State level so that they can be reasonably informed about the past performance of Comtronics. Melissa stated that it was disheartening to find such issues with the system but it was fortunate to have the system so quickly improved.

Interoperability Consultant Report

Gary asked the Subcommittee if they would like to look into purchasing a voter to offer redundancy for the Hampshire Hills area. Matt Barstow stated that there is an MSP two tower project underway that is intended to enhance the existing system. Matt recommended waiting to move forward on the project until the MSP project is completed.

Gary stated that the Franklin County project to enhance communications in northwest Franklin County is on hold as well until the Engineering Study is completed. Gary suggested moving forward with looking for possible tower locations before the snow begins. Gary cautioned that the permitting process for new tower sites can be time consuming. Butch Garrity stated that Trans Canada and Vermont Yankee are both interested in funding projects in this area. Gary stated that he will follow up on that. Butch stated that he will send the contact information to Gary. Tom suggested waiting until the engineering study is completed. Dennis Nazzaro stated that the gap analysis may be inaccurate once the FCECS system is fully optimized. Walter stated that the Town of Ashfield experienced vast improvement. Gary strongly suggested that the consultant document all changes to the system.

Gary stated that the WMLEC system is fully updated with P25. The only remaining issue is that the 3 year warranty with Motorola is about to expire. Manny stated that the warranty was for three years from the original implementation. Dennis stated that the P25 upgrade had been expected to be installed at the beginning of this year and suggested that Motorola extend the warranty in good faith. Manny stated that he will inquire about extending the warranty.

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Western Mass Interoperable Systems Update

Berkshire County – Tom Grady stated that the 800 system is installed and has been tied into the dispatch center. This project was not funded through the Council but it is important that the Council members know Berkshire County has this capability. Tom reported there are a lot of benefits to using the 800 system. Jason Breault stated many schools and towns have been added to the cross agency system.

Franklin County – Walter stated the Franklin County update was discussed earlier in the meeting.

Hampshire County – Bernie Forgea stated the Hampshire System is not experiencing any issues.

WMLEC – Dennis stated the P25 upgrades have been installed.

CMED – Melissa stated that Bob Hassett told her the CMED system is running smoothly.

MSP – Matt stated there have been issues with the WMLEC Butternut link. It seems to be an alignment issue. It is more noticeable during high wind events. This is a critical simulcast link for MSP.

MSP is looking at dispatch COOP Plans. There are six pilot sites. The test system was supposed to begin in February but there have been delays. Discussion followed concerning gathering information from 911 calls that go to fire stations and other non-dispatch sites.

Budget Review

Raine stated \$2,700 of the FFY14 unallocated funds were allotted to purchase the nylon coil. Raine explained this meeting was the committee imposed deadline to decide on the remaining FFY14 unallocated. No proposals have been brought forward. Discussion followed concerning a mobile communications trailer. Melissa stated that if a proposal is not presented at the December meeting then the funding will be spent on the next stage of the 800 System project.

Requests

No requests were presented.

Old Business

No old business was discussed.

New Business

Multi-Band Radios Hampshire Cache

Raine stated that this issue was brought up after the last meeting. The multi-band radios that had been housed in Northampton have been moved to the Pelham Police Department. Raine explained to the Pelham Chief that the radios are a regional asset and should be housed in

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Northampton because that is where they are listed in the Resource Guide. Dennis stated the issue has been resolved and the radios are all back at the Northampton Police Department. Discussion ensued.

IEEE Homeland Security Conference

Melissa stated she was approached by Bob Desourdis concerning a proposal to present the success of the WMRIC communication upgrades at the next IEEE Homeland Security conference on May 16, 2016. He asked if Melissa would co-author the paper. The paper would discuss the communication technology that has been installed as well as the dark areas that still exist in the region. It would also highlight the human collaboration benefits. Melissa read the first draft and as the new chair of the Subcommittee has some reservations about the paper. She stated the project would be better suited for Russ Sienkiewicz, the previous chair. Tom stated Melissa represents this Subcommittee as chair and he would support her decision to politely decline if she has reservations.

Dennis stated Northampton is considering buying digital radios to be able to utilize the new P25 upgrade. If towns are considering buying new radios they should consider the digital option.

Steve stated he wrote a white paper to change to ICS structure to make a Communication Section Chief position. Communications is too large of a role to be lumped in with the Logistics section.

Steve announced there will be another COML and COMT training offered in the spring and the fall. The seats will be divided up per Council and then any extra space will be opened up. Tom stated he feels the COML's and COMT's are underutilized. He would like to see more done for educating first responders on this important resource. Jeff Coe stated there has been confusion about the cost associated with using COMLs or COMTs.

Steve stated DHS will only approve analog or P25 capable radios to insure compatibility statewide. Melissa stated towns can still use general funds to purchase radios but hopes the vendors are aware of this restriction and will steer them toward state approved radio purchases.

There will be a meeting tomorrow to discuss the update of the MIFOG.

The Department of Fire Services is holding a COMU meeting on December 18th at 10 a.m.

Raine stated the Training and Exercise Subcommittee is building on the Anti-Terrorism training. A drill is being planned for May with a full scale exercise likely to be scheduled in October. This is being coordinated with the FBI and Six Flags. One of Six Flags' main concerns is communications. It would be good to have COML and COMT participation in the planning process as well as the drill and exercise.

Business Unforeseen by the Chair

No items unforeseen were discussed.

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Next Steps/Future Meetings

Melissa thanked the Subcommittee for their commitment. She wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 15, 2015 at 12:30 at WMEMS.

There being no further business Tom Grady motioned to adjourn. Bernie Forgea seconded. The motion was voted unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 2:15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by
Gretchen Johnson
Homeland Security Program Assistant
Franklin Regional Council of Governments