

Western Regional Homeland Security Advisory Council  
Western Massachusetts Regional Interoperability Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
March 15, 2016, 12:30 pm  
WMEMS, 168 Industrial Drive, Northampton, Ma.

**In attendance:** Raine Brown (FRCOG), Brenda Codella (FRCOG), Gary Cromack (SAIC), Melissa Nazzaro (Spfld Comm), Suzanne MacBain (SAIC), Dennis Nazzaro (NFD), Bernard Forgea (CFD/CPD), Thomas Grady (BCSO), Lindsay Stromgren (AFD/HSFCA), Peter Cowles (WEMA), Jeff Coe (DPD/WMCOPA), Butch Garrity (MSP SC), Steve Kozloski (WMLEC), Walter Tibbets (FCECS), Robert Garriepy (HPD)

The meeting was brought to order by the Chair, Melissa Nazzaro at 12:32 pm. A round of introductions followed.

The committee reviewed the minutes from the February 16, 2016 meeting.

<p><b>Motion:</b> Butch Garrity moved to approve the minutes of the February 16, 2016 meeting as presented. Peter Cowles seconded. Motion passed unanimously.</p>
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A round of introductions followed.

#### **Updates from the Chair**

Melissa Nazzaro stated that changes to the FFY17 state development grant requirements were voted on at the last 911 Commission meeting and that report will be released in May. The grants will no longer be funding new construction. Funding will be for upgrades and remodels to existing structures only. Applications will be released in May.

The Next Generation 911 started the final phase of testing for the product on March 9<sup>th</sup>. They appear to have resolved most of the issues brought to the vendor with the exception of auto call distributor. Calls are being distributed to individuals but not to groups. They will continue to work on this issue. Melissa reported they are still hoping to have a pilot program for NexGen911 out this year with a regular roll out in Spring 2017.

The Verizon contract is being bought out by Motorola. Melissa stated that the contract for statewide consultant has been awarded to Xact. They were hired to develop road map for the Commonwealth's maps. Melissa will be meeting with the group to discuss Berkshire County (BC) and others as a stakeholder. They will be meeting with a few holders at a time. Melissa is the point of contact for Western MA and will draw others in over the course of the month.

#### **Project Updates**

##### *Great Hill to Borden Microwave Link*

Gary Cromack announced that the microwave installation is complete. Gary reported that in the process of running up the system they discovered low spots and path alignment issues.

Gary stated that the link from Shelburne to Borden goes over the top of a mountain. It has never had a full strength signal. However, he found a few areas that have less signal strength than would be expected. The microwave on the Shelburne tower was re-aligned by Comtronics 10

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years ago. At the time the cable broke and the microwave had to be lowered by 10 feet. Gary suggested checking the alignments if money available. It would likely cost about \$5,000. Peter Cowles suggested replacing the shorter cable and raising the microwave back to the original height on the tower. Gary suggested checking the line of sight before making that decision.

Melissa asked if it was discussed in this Subcommittee at the time of the change in the microwave height. She asked if Comtronics was told to fix the broken cable. Raine stated that she considers this issue a FCECS issue. Dennis Nazzaro suggested that this issue may be included in the FCECS Engineering Study Report. Gary stated that he will follow up with FCECS.

***BCSO Mobile Command Unit Pneumatic Tower***

Tom Grady stated that Jason Breault is picking up the unit today and a test drill would be run at the Active Shooter Symposium in Deerfield tomorrow.

***FCECS Engineering Study***

Butch Garrity stated that he has a meeting Thursday morning and is hopeful the final draft will be available. There was a new option added to the list. Raine stated that she is not sure where FCECS is with the changes at this point. Raine's sense from some members is that they are waiting to see what happens with the state study and may eventually progress over to the 800 system. Melissa asked if Butch would ask the committee on Thursday if they would be agreeable to release the most recent draft in advance of the meeting? It would be helpful for the consultant to see what has been done thus far. It includes a 3 years plan, 5 year plan and farther out.

***WMLEC Tactical Command Trailer***

Raine state that the trailer is out to bid. The bids are due back March 28<sup>th</sup>. The group may be making a decision at the next subcommittee meeting. I-cat has been replaced for the discontinued Raytheon mechanism that allows communication. If the bid comes in over due to the increased cost of the replacement part, we will need to come in for an additional funds request. Melissa stated that there may be a higher cost to the equipment because they will be using an upgraded part.

***Interoperability Consultant Report***

Gary Cromack stated that SAIC has a task item, Task 2, which is the Northwest regional coverage area of FCECS. This task has been on hold since last July waiting for the FCECS study to be complete. Gary is on the agenda to go this Thursday to the FCECS meeting to discuss what to do. Gary asked the subcommittee for their suggestions as to what they would like to ask them to do. Gary stated we have hardware money budgeted. The FC system is back to normal and fixed. Walter Tibbets stated that Simulcast 2 is the only place with issues. All other areas are working well.

Gary stated we have a working system with no dead spots. To that end, Gary stated he needs technical data from their consultant. We don't want to reduce coverage. The question to the

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FCECS is do you still want to put money into that system? Gary stated he wouldn't call it quits. It would be three to five years before there would be a replacement. Let's fix the issues we have. Melissa asked if the written consultants report mentions the coverage issues and how to address them in the three year plan? Walter stated the report has a few suggestions on how to address coverage gaps. The Deerfield River area up through Monroe needs to be studied. Butch stated the final report is due out on Thursday, then he will have to go back to the police and fire departments before coming back to the table which may be 5 to 6 months to get approval.

Suzanne MacBain stated that the work needs to be completed by the end of July. Raine remarked that the study work needs to be completed by the end of July, not the actual work.

Suzanne questioned what does the committee want to see next month? Melissa stated we would like to see what the coverage issues of the corridor are and what the options are with the infrastructure and limitations we have now. We need to have the discussion and made decisions based on the most current data to work from. Melissa asked if Gary could have the options available for discussion by the April meeting? Gary stated it would depend on what they get for feedback at Thursdays meeting. Butch suggested we could talk with Yankee/Rowe and Bear Swamp and see what they have done to improve or solve issues.

#### **Western Mass Interoperable Systems Update**

Berkshire County – Tom stated that discussions have continued to bring the Town of Adams into the County PSAP system. The Chief is not happy and wants to improve communications and interoperability for the County. Other BC projects are moving along well.

Franklin County – Walter Tibbets stated that high winds knocked the microwave between Shelburne and Rowe out of alignment. They weren't able to get a crew out to repair because of the wind right away. The wave guide was originally run along the top of the ice bridge, across the building leaving it unsheltered from the ice. It was also noted that some cards in the shelter seemed loose, but have been repaired.

On the same night, simulcasts 1 & 2 were keyed up on Mt. Grace lighting up the channel bank. The technician had to clean and maintain the bank which is working well now. The only issue now is the sound quality in Shutesbury and New Salem is very poor in a very small area. Gary stated this issue may not be solvable because of its location in such a high spot. Simulcast 2 is the issue. Ashfield and Plainfield towers have been working well. Tom Grady asked if there was a plan to repair the wave guide now that they know it is damaged. Gary stated they are going to get a cost and look into what the repair would consist of. Walter stated it was an installation error. Gary states the towers were put up by the second previous vendor. The link from Shelburne to Borden that was put in in January is a WMLEC property.

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Lindsay Stromgren asked if simulcast 1 is in any way different than simulcast 2 or are they configured the same? If simulcast 1 is working correctly does it give us an idea on how to repair simulcast 2? Walter replied that yes, it does give us an idea on how to proceed.

Hampshire County – No issues were reported.

WMLEC – Steve Kozloski stated he received a call from Ken Short during the last week of February reporting that after some diagnosis and tower work, the Lenox to Butternut Link is experiencing similar aiming issues to FC due to high winds. He asked Gary if the link is still under warranty stating the current issues seem to be the recent vendors work and not a past vendor. They are finding significant issues with bracketing and other work while still under warranty. Steve asked if there were building specs available and what their options were to have warranty work covered. Steve stated that they may find the same issues with other sights. He isn't sure if the issue is poor workmanship. Gary stated that it is the only other micro link. Best practice is to install a stabilizing bar so when the wind blows it stops the unit from twisting. FC had a stabilizing arms, but they acted like sails and are not suitable in all situations. His opinion is stabilizing bars should be put on the microwave. Motorola completed the project. We are out of warranty in October or November of this year. Steve asked who he should contact first. Gary stated Manny should be the contact.

Melissa asked if an R56 audit report was done by an independent contractor on the project. Tom questioned who signed off on the project? Melissa stated we need to check with Motorola to see if the audit was complete so we can hold them responsible for the work. Gary stated the warranty that was purchased was an all inclusive warranty covering power plugs to antennas. Melissa stated we only have six months left to get warranty work done. We need to get on top of this and follow through. Steve will follow-up with Manny to start a conversation.

CMED – No issues were reported.

MSP – No issues were reported.

### **Budget Review**

Raine stated that there are still funds left unallocated in FFY15. Raine stated there is only one project we are waiting on. The Hampshire Hills project needs to be moved on by October or November.

### **Requests**

No requests were presented.

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**Old Business**

*Helicopter Communications*

Melissa stated that the MIFOG is not yet released and have asked the region to wait to communicate with helicopter operators until the MIFOG is finalized and channels are published. Dennis Nazzaro stated communicating with helicopters continues to be an issue. The helicopter pilot stated he didn't know what sim 2 meant. National Guard pilot reported he was told to go to the National TAC channel, they didn't tell him exactly which channel, like VTAC.

**New Business**

Tom Grady stated to the committee that with the new funding process, the Councils will remain intact, but there will be a portion of funds available through a competitive process. The Council should be thinking ahead about if there is a project that this committee would like to have funded through this process if it is finalized. Tom will be attending a meeting on March 29<sup>th</sup> in Secretary Bennet's office with the all the Council chairs to get a more definitive answer on how the Council will operate. Steve questions if the Council will be fully funded less a percent to fund the competitive process or fully funded with an addition percent to the competitive fund? Tom stated he brought Council concerns to EEOPS and they were receptive. Raine asked if they were looking to start the process for FFY16? Tom stated the process will likely not be instituted until FFY 17.

Raine stated that Brenda Codella from the FRCOG has stepped in for Gretchen Johnson and will be performing administrative work for the Council.

**Business Unforeseen by the Chair**

No business unforeseen was brought forward.

**Next Steps/Future Meetings**

The next meeting is scheduled for April 19, 2016 at 12:30 at WMEMS.

There being no further business Butch Garrity motioned to adjourn. Walter Tibbets seconded. The motion was voted unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 1:40 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by  
Brenda Codella  
Administrative Services Assistant  
Franklin Regional Council of Governments