

**Western Regional Homeland Security Advisory Council
Western Massachusetts Regional Interoperability Committee
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 18, 2025, 12:30pm**

Subcommittee members present: Matt Barstow (MSP), Aaron Budine (Bernardston FD), Robert Garriepy (Huntington PD), Anthony Gentile (Wilbraham Dispatch), Thomas Grady (BCSO/BCECS), Steve Kozloski (Monson PD/ WMLEC), Alan Sirois (Agawam FD), Lindsay Stromgren (Amherst FD)

Non-members present: Raine Brown (FRCOG), Rich Fiske (EOPSS), Alex Rock (EOPSS)

Subcommittee members absent: Nina Barszcz (Westfield Dispatch), Jason Breault (Pittsfield PD), Tyrone Denson (CMED/Springfield FD), Dennis Nazzaro (Northampton FD/Pelham FD), Kurt Seaman (S. Deerfield FD), Robert VanZandt (Belchertown FD)

This meeting was conducted on Zoom. The meeting was recorded.

Anthony Gentile called the meeting to order at 12:30 pm.

Approval of Minutes

The committee reviewed the minutes from the January 21, 2025 meeting.

<p>Motion: Tom Grady moved to approve the minutes of the January 21, 2025 meeting as submitted. Aaron Budine seconded the motion. Anthony Gentile, Lindsay Stromgren, Tom Grady, Aaron Budine, Alan Sirois, Bob Garriepy, voted in favor. Steve Kozloski abstained. The motion was approved.</p>

Introductions followed.

Updates from the Chair – None.

SWIC & SIEC Update – Rich Fiske reported. They are still working on the MIFOG update. Alex Rock had nothing additional to report.

Project Updates

FC40 Comms Upgrade – Raine Brown reported that we are closer to having an installation date. Aaron Budine added that it will likely be sometime next month.

Western Mass Interoperable Systems Update

Berkshire County – Tom Grady reported. State 911 has absorbed the operation of the regional center, including all of the radio operating sites and equipment. They are still waiting on the official naming of the new director, after which we will invite that person to participate in the WMRIC meetings.

Franklin County – No one was present to give an update.

Hampshire County – Lindsay Stromgren had no updates to report.

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WMLEC – Steve Kozloski reported that the WMLEC system is back on the air after repairs to a microwave link between Mt. Tom North and South.

CMED – No one was present to give an update.

MSP – No one was present to give an update.

911/Dispatch – Anthony Gentile reported that the development grant is due March 6, and the other grants should be opening in a month or so.

Air Methods – No one was present to give an update.

Other – None.

Budget Review

Raine Brown reported. WMRIC has \$238,906 available to spend, with about \$130,000 in FFY24, \$107,000 in FFY23, and just under \$1,000 in FFY22.

Requests

WMLEC equipment update request – Steve Kozloski explained that in light of his upcoming retirement and the recent issues with the microwave link at Mt. Tom South, he would like to get WMLEC in better shape. He reviewed some of the history of WMLEC and how it grew under Chief Sienkiewicz from a five site system to ten sites. Police and Fire Chiefs understood that this would be more expensive but were overwhelmingly onboard at the time. Since then, however, smaller towns have had trouble paying their portion of the maintenance costs, and there is no mechanism to penalize them or collect money from towns that don't pay. Steve believes it is important to maintain the system for interoperability, especially as many places are still some time away from switching to 800. He has looked at the current status of the WMLEC equipment. The biggest issues are end of life with the GPS packs, the battery systems, and the network switches. The stockpile of spare parts has been depleted. WMLEC still appears to be the most cost effective way to maintain interoperability, but in order to sustain it, equipment needs to be replaced. The proposal with quotes is in today's meeting packet.

Alex Rock agreed that from the ASWIC perspective, WMLEC will continue to be a crucial part of interoperability until everyone is on CoMIRS. Having all your eggs in one basket with only one radio system in Western Mass is also not a great idea. Steve added that it would be great if the State would take over WMLEC, but he recognizes that it would be a big ask for the State with the current condition of equipment, rental obligations, etc. Following a motion from Tom Grady, seconded by Lindsay Stromgren, discussion ensued. Lindsay agreed that he would like to see WMLEC stay and be strengthened. Amherst has no plans to go to 800 any time soon. Anthony shared a note from Kurt Seaman suggesting that the committee consider putting funds toward radios for dispatch centers for LPS use rather than for supporting WMLEC. Tom asked about future stewardship of WMLEC after Steve retires. Steve replied that he has brought this up

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at the Western Mass Police Chiefs meetings and may have some interest from Chicopee. He also has spoken with Dennis Nazzaro, who told him about some discussion among the Fire Chiefs about alternative ways to sustain the financially. It is a challenge, however, because once some towns stop paying into the system, others follow suit, especially if they are not using WMLEC on a daily basis. Leading WMLEC does not require a lot of technical knowledge, just making sure that monthly rents are paid and knowing who to call if there is an issue.

Alan Sirois noted that although he hopes that municipalities and agencies will be aggressive in seeking gateways to join CoMIRS, he knows that the switch to 800 is not going to happen overnight, so we need to keep WMLEC up and running as a gap filler. To let it fall into a state of disrepair is inviting disaster. Aaron Budine echoed this sentiment, noting that right now if anyone from Franklin County comes south to Hampshire or Hampden, there is a good chance that WMLEC will be the only way to communicate initially.

Rich Fiske voiced his support for keeping WMLEC as an interoperable regional resource, but added that there is no appetite or money for the State to take over the system. He brought up the lack of governance for WMLEC. It is a multi-jurisdiction system that depends on volunteers. There are no regular governance meetings or budgetary meetings, so there is no regular stakeholder input. If you put some of that in place, and develop governance on both the police and fire side, it will encourage participation and utilization of a regional resource. You can develop how you'll use the system, not just how you pay for it. Who is responsible for what, who is on the email chain when something goes wrong. He suggested holding a meeting with both Police and Fire Chiefs to develop this, as it will increase interest and might lead to being able to collect more money.

<p>Motion: Tom Grady moved to approve \$103,500 for the WMLEC equipment updates. Lindsay Stromgren seconded the motion. Lindsay Stromgren, Tom Grady, Aaron Budine, Alan Sirois, Bob Garriepy, Anthony Gentile, and Matt Barstow voted in favor. Steve Kozloski abstained. The motion was approved.</p>
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Berkshire Mobile Command Unit mast camera and router antenna – This was tabled, as no one was present to speak to the request.

BCSO radio repeater site – Tom Grady presented the request. He explained that 22 years ago, the Sheriff's Office invested in some equipment and were given a location on a tower at Tanglewood to establish a radio hub for increased communication among mutual aid partners. About ten years ago, MSP also began working at Tanglewood, which created a challenge because no one else was on 800. They have worked with MSP to find creative solutions. Tom would like to upgrade the equipment to get a solid system in place, especially with limited cellular coverage in that area. Several subcommittee members asked clarifying questions about how the system is used and what Tanglewood's role is, which Tom answered. Steve K motion, Lindsay 2nd.

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Motion: Steve Kozloski moved to approve \$60,200 for the Berkshire repeater. Lindsay Stromgren seconded the motion. Lindsay Stromgren, Aaron Budine, Alan Sirois, Steve Kozloski, Bob Garriepy, Anthony Gentile, and Matt Barstow voted in favor. Tom Grady abstained. The motion was approved.

Old Business

Interoperability using the State's P25 system talkgroups LPS9 and LPS10

This remains on the agenda as a placeholder.

WMLEC's future – Discussed above.

New Business

Bob Garriepy asked about the possibility of moving the pod runner from Huntington to Pelham because they use it more on that side of the river. Raine will add this to next month's agenda.

Business Unforeseen by the Chair

Alan Sirois reported that Steve Kozloski reached out to [Longmeadow] Chief Rigney regarding the District 11 contact for the SWIC in the MIFOG. There is no one listed now, and in the original MIFOG Northampton Control was listed as the District 11 contact. Alan clarified with Alex and Rich the role of the contact person and learned that they are looking for someone from District Control, which would be Holyoke. He will reach out to Holyoke Fire to see if someone there can fill the role. If not, Nina Barszcz has offered to be the contact.

Next Steps/Future Meetings

The next meeting will be Tuesday, March 18, 2025, at 12:30 pm, as a virtual meeting.

Motion: Tom Grady moved to adjourn. Alan Sirois seconded the motion. Lindsay Stromgren, Tom Grady, Aaron Budine, Alan Sirois, Steve Kozloski, Bob Garriepy, Anthony Gentile, and Matt Barstow voted in favor. The motion was approved.

The meeting adjourned at 1:31 pm.

List of Documents Reviewed at the Meeting

- WMRIC Meeting Agenda for February 18, 2025
- WMRIC Meeting Minutes from January 21, 2024 (draft)
- WMRIC FFY22 Budget Report through 1/17/25
- WMRIC FFY23 Budget Report through 1/17/25
- WMRIC FFY24 Budget Report through 2/14/25
- Proposal from Steve Kozloski/WMLEC for WMLEC equipment updates
- Proposal from Jason Breault/BCSO for vehicle mount antenna and mast camera
- Proposal from Tom Grady/BCSO for radio system hub at Tanglewood

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Respectfully submitted by:

Rachel Mason, WRHSAC Program Assistant
Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council
Franklin Regional Council of Governments

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