

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

Subcommittee members present: Nina Barszcz (Westfield Dispatch), Jason Breault (Pittsfield PD), Aaron Budine (Bernardston FD), Matt Barstow (MSP), Robert Garriepy (Huntington PD), Thomas Grady (BCSO/BCECS), Dennis Nazzaro (Northampton FD/Pelham FD), Alan Sirois (Agawam FD), Lindsay Stromgren (Amherst FD)

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

Subcommittee members absent: Tyrone Denson (CMED/Springfield FD), Anthony Gentile (Wilbraham Dispatch), Steve Kozloski (Monson PD/ WMLEC), Kurt Seaman (S. Deerfield FD), Robert VanZandt (Belchertown FD)

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

Tom Grady called the meeting to order at 12:30 pm.

Approval of Minutes

The committee reviewed the minutes from the February 18, 2025 meeting.

<p>Motion: Dennis Nazzaro moved to approve the minutes of the February 18, 2025 meeting as submitted. Aaron Budine seconded the motion. Lindsay Stromgren, Nina Barszcz, Dennis Nazzaro, Bob Garriepy, Aaron Budine, Tom Grady, Jason Breault voted in favor. The motion was approved.</p>

Introductions followed.

Updates from the Chair – None.

SWIC & SIEC Update – Rich Fiske reported that they approved one project at the last meeting, and the MIFOG is finished and sent to DHS to be published on the app store, but it will be another month or two before it will be downloadable. Rich is also looking for funding to get printed copies, as there have been requests for that. FirstNet announced at the meeting that they are going to have some stakeholder input meetings regarding coverage. If there are areas of concern in your jurisdictions, we need to assemble that and bring it to the meetings. This is a great opportunity to have FirstNet invest money where we think it should go.

Project Updates

FC40 Comms Upgrade – Raine Brown reported that installations are ongoing. The vendor reached out about a power supply that is needed that will cost extra; Raine pushed the request to John Taylor to see if Tri-State would be willing to cover it. Aaron Budine added that everything is now in and working except that one item.

WMLEC Equipment Replacement – Following approval at this morning’s Council meeting, Raine submitted the project justification and ICP to EOPSS and the SWIC for review.

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BCSO Radio Repeater Site – Following approval at this morning’s Council meeting, Raine submitted the project justification and ICP to EOPSS and the SWIC for review.

Western Mass Interoperable Systems Update

Berkshire County – Tom Grady reminded everyone that State 911 is now the systems owner for Berkshire County. Tom and Jason are trying to get Don Tryon connected with Pittsfield Communications so that he can get a better handle on what he has for assets, resources, locations, etc. Also, they had a meeting with Verizon, AT&T, and T-Mobile regarding cell coverage at Tanglewood. They are trying to develop a permanent solution, but in the meantime, Verizon is committed to providing a COW for the season.

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

Hampshire County – Dennis Nazzaro reported on the state of the Hampshire County Fire VHF system, which has simulcast sites in Goshen and Plainfield, an independent site at Mt. Lincoln in Pelham, and a repeater on Skinner. Over the years they have looked at trying to make them all into one simulcast system, but there was no way to get a signal up to the top of Mt. Lincoln. Last year, Amherst ran fiber up there for their radio system, so they have started talks with MSP to see if they can leverage that to get the signal to Northampton Control to improve the system. There has also been talk about the future of the system and whether to switch to 800.

WMLEC – No one was present to give an update.

CMED – No one was present to give an update.

MSP – Matt Barstow reported that they are starting to do more construction on some of the western sites. MSP will be supporting the Holyoke St. Patrick’s Day parade. There have been a few issues, including a deaf site in Franklin County that they took care of.

911/Dispatch – Nina Barszcz reported. Westfield Police has decided that they are going to encrypt their police main channel. Nina will make sure that information gets out to all other law enforcement agencies. The State TERT team currently has a full membership and is no longer accepting applications at this time.

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

Other – Rich Fiske addressed the issue of Westfield intending to encrypt their police channel. There are a couple of agencies throughout the State that were talking about doing this. From the SWIC perspective, it creates an interop problem and an information sharing problem by design. They need to understand the challenges that this creates for mutual aid partners in surrounding towns, including State Police and Environmental Police. There have been interoperability challenges that came up during the Lawrence explosions and air wing operations on the North

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Shore. Nina explained that she voiced all of those concerns and passed on all of the information she could to them, but this was their final decision.

Budget Review

Raine Brown reported. With the WMLEC project and BCSO project approved today, that will leave \$3,707.48 in FFY23 and \$70,760 in FFY24. Including the small amount left in FFY22, WMRIC now has a total balance of \$75,206.20.

Requests

Berkshire Mobile Command Unit Mast Camera and Router Antenna – Jason Breault presented the request to upgrade the camera and router antenna on the mobile command center. Raine noted that this will be the second camera we have purchased for this purpose. Jason explained that this is an upgrade that also has thermal capabilities.

Motion: Jason Breault moved to approve \$41,400 for the Berkshire Mobile Command Unit equipment. Dennis Nazzaro seconded the motion. Lindsay Stromgren, Nina Barszcz, Dennis Nazzaro, and Bob Garriepy voted in favor. Aaron Budine, Jason Breault, and Alan Sirois abstained. The motion was approved.

Hampshire County Fire Chiefs Roip Gateway – Dennis Nazzaro presented the request to install a Gateway on Mt. Lincoln that will be tied into Hampshire County Fire and Police channels. It will give them the ability to listen and respond to responders in the field through cellular apps and FirstNet. This is just the infrastructure; the app itself and any associated fees would be up to the end user. The town of Amherst has a similar system for internal use that has proven to work well. This would leverage the Amherst fiber previously mentioned. Alan Sirois asked who will have governance over the Gateway and the access to the app. Dennis responded that Pelham Fire will be the lead agency, with either Pelham Police or Huntington Police on the police side. There will also be some sort of backup through the Hampshire County Fire Chiefs. The Roip itself will be in a locked shelter on Mt. Lincoln that is controlled by Amherst Fire, Pelham Fire, Pelham Police, and Hampshire County Fire.

Motion: Dennis Nazzaro moved to approve up to \$7,000 for the Roip Gateway. Jason Breault seconded the motion. Lindsay Stromgren, Nina Barszcz, Bob Garriepy, Tom Grady, Aaron Budine, Jason Breault, and Alan Sirois voted in favor. Dennis Nazzaro 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.

New Business

Pod Runner possible relocation – Bob Garriepy explained that with the change in management coming soon, he would like to send the pod runner over to Pelham. Huntington now has the CoMIRS system up and running, so they will be less reliant on the pod runner,

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and it would still be available if they need it. He believes that it would be of greater value in the Amherst/Pelham area. It will also need some system updates that are beyond Bob's skill level. Dennis added that when we bought this along with the trailer tower in Monson, it was a two part project. Dennis was instrumental in building it when he was in Huntington, and it stayed there after he left, but with Bob's upcoming retirement, there is no champion there to keep running and maintaining it. Dennis is more than happy to take it over and use it. He also noted that with Steve Kozloski's upcoming retirement, the tower trailer may need to be relocated as well. He heard some talk about it being moved to Wilbraham regional. There were no objections. Raine asked Dennis to send them the information about where it will be so that they can update the resource guide.

Business Unforeseen by the Chair: None.

Next Steps/Future Meetings

The next meeting will be Tuesday, April 15, 2025, at 12:30 pm, as a virtual meeting. Raine explained that the virtual meeting allowance extension passed the House and is expected to pass in the Senate as well, extending it through June, 2027. There is also legislation in the works to make this a permanent change. Tom added that there was some discussion at the Council meeting about going back to having at least two meetings a year in person. He suggested that subcommittee members think about whether that is something we would like to do. There is a sense from many people that we are losing something by never meeting in person.

<p>Motion: Jason Breault moved to adjourn. Aaron Budine seconded the motion. Lindsay Stromgren, Nina Barszcz, Dennis Nazzaro, Bob Garriepy, Tom Grady, Aaron Budine, Jason Breault, Matt Barstow, and Alan Sirois voted in favor. The motion was approved.</p>

The meeting adjourned at 12:57 pm.

List of Documents Reviewed at the Meeting

- WMRIC Meeting Agenda for March 18, 2025
- WMRIC Meeting Minutes from February 18, 2025 (draft)
- WMRIC FFY22 Budget Report through 3/13/25
- WMRIC FFY23 Budget Report through 3/13/25
- WMRIC FFY24 Budget Report through 3/13/25
- Request from Jason Breault/BCSO for mast camera and router antenna, 2/14/25
- Request from Dennis Nazzaro/HCFRC for Hampshire County Roip gateway, 3/11/25

Respectfully submitted by:

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