

VERMILION VALLEY
REGIONAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS
JOINT AUTHORITY
VERMILION VALLEY REGIONAL E.T.S.B.
MINUTES OF VERMILION VALLEY REGIONAL EMERGENCY
COMMUNICATIONS JOINT AUTHORITY / ETS BOARD
MEETING OF NOVEMBER 17, 2021

Chairman Woolford called the meeting to order at 11:15 a.m.

Roll call showed the following present, Jim Woolford, William Flott, Jim Hargitt, Jacob Campbell and Jeff Hamilton filling in for Sheriff Childress. Absent was Paul Johnson, Gary Bird, Tony Childress and Robert Turner. Also present were Diane Schwahn, Financial Director Livingston County Board; Dave Landers, Supreme Radio; Candi Bradshaw and Randy Wittenberg.

Woolford led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Woolford stated the Board Minutes for October 20th for regular meeting were in their packets. He asked if there were no comments or changes needed he would entertain a motion to approve. Woolford stated from Flott that he understood a part of a sentence needs to be removed concerning as to when the next early retirement program may happen again. A motion was made to approve the October 20th Regular Minutes with this correction by Flott with a second by Hargitt. A voice vote of was unanimous with all ayes. Motion carried.

Woolford stated financial reports & bills for October were in their packets and if no discussion he asked for a motion to approve the bills and financial reports for October. A motion to approve was made by Hargitt with a second by Campbell. A roll call vote was unanimous with all ayes. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

Vote on Moving Forward with the Radio Project – Wittenberg reported they need to decide if they are going to move forward with Star Com or move forward with the

UHF side of the project. He stated if they would look at the packets he handed out and look at the last couple pages it is a comparison cost of the two projects with the total 10 year cost for Star Com is a little over \$4 million dollars with an initial investment is \$2.5 million dollars. He stated the 10 year finance cost of the UHF is \$1.7 million dollars and tower fees come to almost \$400,000 which makes it about \$2.1 million dollars. He stated that doesn't include any additional maintenance that may have to happen or anything else to do with towers. He also stated they have been given notice of some pretty good increases on tower fees going forward. He reported that over the last 2 weeks they have spent over 40 man hours with down radios and towers. He asked the board to give him direction on which way to go and he will move forward with their decision. Hargitt stated the 10 year cost stated for Star Com and asked what the projected 10 year cost is for UHF. Wittenberg stated right now it is almost \$2.2 million dollars. Hargitt stated then you would have maintenance costs that you would not have with Star Com. Wittenberg stated they would have maintenance free for 5 years. Hargitt stating you could probably then purchase a contract after that. A discussion was held on that. Hargitt asked what the upfront cost of UHF with Wittenberg stating basically the \$2 million dollars so it is almost a wash with Star Com. Wittenberg stated the difference would be is the on-going maintenance fees with Star Com. Hargitt asked if the \$4 million dollars include the tower in Saunemin being added with Wittenberg stating it does. Hargitt also asked if it included a tower in the southeast part of the county with Wittenberg replying it does not. He stated that is his first big issue because he is representing the Chatsworth Fire, SELCAS, Forrest-Strawn-Wing Fire, Fairbury Fire areas and they know there are problems down there. He stated he is not sure where the Saunemin tower will go, will it take care of the problem area he is representing. Wittenberg stated the indication from Motorola is that it will not improve significantly in-building coverage. Hargitt stated he didn't think you can look at this until you add another tower site in that portion of the county. Wittenberg stated no matter which system they choose, the tower in Saunemin needs to be built. A lengthy discussion was held with Wittenberg adding information about using the water tower in Fairbury just like they did in Dwight. He also stated that should take care of the issues in Fairbury and Forrest but they will probably still have issues with in-building coverage in Chatsworth no matter what they do. A discussion was held on this along with a discussion on grant money and what it could be used for. It was also discussed about how much they could possibly get from a grant and how much that would leave for them to come up with. Wittenberg stated there is zero guarantee that UHF will continue to function as it does going forward for many reasons. It was also discussed that on the flip side they would be married to Motorola for life and what could possibly happen with raising fees, etc. Hargitt also discussed about how all the agencies are going to have to come up with money to afford whichever system is decided to go with. He also stated before he can make a vote one way or another he will need to go to

those departments/boards he is representing and say this is what it is going to cost. Wittenberg gave names of all the counties that are going or have gone to all Star Com. A discussion was held on what if they don't get the grant and how/if they would be able to fund either one. Wittenberg stated the grant window would not open up until late December or early January. More discussion was held on the grant window time frame. Woolford stated if there is a round 2 of a grant with the county they are in a position to apply for that as well. Woolford gave his reasons for wanting to continue with Star Com and working on funding that choice. He also stated he could vote for continuing to patchwork our UHF system until they can get there and continue funding but his opinion is their focus needs to moving forward with Star Com. Wittenberg stated he feels the direction he is getting from the board is to figure out the complete funding mechanism by department so everybody has an idea of what their costs are going to be. Hargitt stated that would be helpful and if he is planning on going to Fairbury Fire, Forrest-Strawn-Wing Fire, and Chatsworth Fire meetings he would go with Wittenberg. Wittenberg also stated he would get the numbers on what it would take to put up a tower and whether putting a Star Com on the Fairbury water tower would solve that problem or not, or if they need to put it in Forrest. Hargitt feels getting that problem solved would help sell the project. Wittenberg stated he had all the towers around our county turned on to us so we could access those if possible. A discussion was held on how that would help other entities/counties if we put up 2 towers and if they would absorb any of the costs. Landers gave his opinion on what you need to be successful with the grant is to have a design of the solution pretty much laid out and committed to what you are going to accomplish by getting these mobiles and portables for interoperability being compatible with Star Com for your stand-alone UHF or whatever direction you want to go. He stated from what he is hearing this group talk about he would suggest you put to a vote if you want to pursue Star Com contingent upon Wittenberg getting the information they need and coming back to the board saying this is how we laid it out and what you can expect and then you can get this knocked out so you don't miss out on the grant money. A discussion was held on if Johnson would be able to get this grant request done in time with Wittenberg stating he would have to talk to him. Woolford stated his suggestion for the direction to take would be to focus on the Star Com aspect with the tower in the Saunemin and Fairbury area and however many fire departments he was able get rather than miss out because he couldn't get them all. More discussion was held on the number portables and mobiles needed. Campbell asked how the rest of the project would be funded other than the grant with Wittenberg explaining about having leasing options available to them as well as the ETSB and/or other departments (he said they have been upfront with the departments that they would be on the hook for 20%). He also stated there was a match with the grant. A discussion was held on this subject. Hargitt asked if what he is hearing is the grant will have a better chance if a statement is made by the

board that they would like to pursue the Star Com direction; not necessarily voting that we are going to do it but leaning in that direction. Landers stated in general interoperability has to be P25 is going to play a better probability perspective than just a stand-alone isolated system where you are not achieving any interoperability. He stated FEMA is going to be looking for the narrative that spells all of that out, so Star Com is the better narrative. Wittenberg stated he didn't know if they solve the narrative because we can't claim interoperability with the police departments because we don't achieve that with a UHF Radio System. So it was stated if they write the grant from the Star Com perspective they will have that but not from a UHF perspective. More discussion was held. Woolford stated he thought if the consensus is for the Director to get with Mr. Johnson on the Star Com priority for getting funding. More discussion was held. Wittenberg stated if they do not get funding then they would have to sit down with all the departments to figure out a different way to go about it. More discussion was had on different counties getting grants or how they went about getting the money. Another lengthy discussion was held with board members and Landers about other counties. Wittenberg stated he would move forward with looking at funding and what each individual departments needs/costs are going to be and look at it from there. He also stated he would probably call a finance meeting maybe next week. More discussion was had on which departments have radios and those that don't along with a discussion on putting up the new towers in Saunemin and Forrest/Chatsworth area and concerning the county. It was also discussed trying to find an existing tower to use in those areas.

NEW BUSINESS:

Vote on 2022 Final Budget – A motion to approve the 2022 budget was made by Campbell with a second by Hargitt. Wittenberg stated the budget remains the same as it was with the only change perhaps be a plus due to retirement. Roll call vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

Proposed 2022 VV ETSB Meeting Schedule – Wittenberg stated it is his anticipation since they will be working through this project they will most likely have board meetings every month. A motion to approve the proposed meeting schedule was made by Flott with a second by Campbell. A voice vote was unanimous with all ayes. Motion carried.

As brought up on the floor – Woolford stated in preparations for our financial meetings and re-discussing and revamping our fee structures he would like to make the whole thing a comprehensive package and evaluate our whole system of what we are doing so the finance committee has a little more information to base their decisions on. He asked Directors and staff to go through their job descriptions so they can get a clear picture of what their days are like. He stated also in getting

their new EAVs and updating census numbers and making any adjustments they are going to need to make at the next finance committee meeting. A discussion was held on the census and EAVs.

Coordinator's Report – Bradshaw reported there was nothing other than what was in her written report.

Director's Report – Wittenberg reported they had lost Rick Ragan due to Covid. He wanted to recognize to the board that Rick was integral around here. He stated he was always the tech that came over and worked with us. He had personal relationships with a lot of the dispatchers upstairs. He stated it was pretty tough on all of us and he was just a good guy. He was a fun loving guy and gave us a hard time about being Cubs fans. He stated hopefully everyone will keep Neal and his family in their prayers.

He reported that Kelly has indicated that he will be retiring stating that he will sign the agreement confirming. He asked if Woolford and Wittenberg could get together with him to sign the agreement.

Flott inquired about the overtime for last month being sky high again. Wittenberg stated they don't have a part-timer and October is a big vacation month for them so that is probably what drove that would be his guess. A discussion was held on this. He reported they actually have a trainee that either has to become available for us to work or he's going to have to do what he has to do. Woolford asked about notes in his report about a teleconference with Rich Bruno (union rep). Wittenberg stated one of the things they talked about was one of the issues they have in the dispatch center is they have gone to senior dispatchers in charge/one with the most seniority in charge. He said the problem on their night shift is that all the dispatchers have only been here less than 2 years. So he reported a couple of times they have ended up with someone in charge who shouldn't be because they don't have the capability to be in charge. He stated they used to have a system where they had a named supervisor at shift and they are looking at going back to that next year because then they can put someone in charge that they know can do the job and the union rep is on board with that. Wittenberg stated the cost of that is not going to be any more than what they are currently paying now with a senior dispatcher in charge. He also explained it is not a problem during the day but it is at night and how it is at night with Power Phone and not staying on the call long enough with EMS calls. Flott asked if the Intrado system has been replaced with Wittenberg stating they have started looking at new phone systems and one of the grants the State 911 Board has so we can look at replacing it. He stated the Intrado System is NG911 capable but the customer service is horrible. He explained how they were down with a console for about 4 weeks and they couldn't even get a part for it. He explained a little about that problem.

Campbell asked if the tornado sirens were part of that package with Wittenberg stating it is not. He explained why it is not. He also stated Motorola is trying to help identify if there is a grant they can get for the tornado sirens. A discussion was held on this topic.

Closing comments from public – None.

There was no need to go into executive session for (5ILCS 120/2)(c)(1) Personnel Matters.

Closing comments from Chairman and board members – None.

There being no further business a motion to adjourn was made by Flott with a second by Hargitt. Voice vote was unanimous with all ayes. Meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Candi Bradshaw

Candi Bradshaw