



South Worcester County Communications Center

357 Main Street • Webster, MA 01570 • 508-943-1212
Serving the Towns of Webster and Dudley, Massachusetts



Gregory Lynskey, Communications Center Director

SWCCC Board of Directors & Operations Board – Joint Meeting Meeting Minutes for February 11, 2021 – Regular Session

Board of Directors Members Present: Jonathan Ruda, Doug Willardson, Randy Becker
Board of Directors Members Absent: John Marsi
Operations Board Members Present: Dean Kochanowski, Michael Shaw, Steven Wojnar,
Brian Hickey, Gary Milliard (See Notes)
Others Present: Gregory Lynskey
Meeting Location: WPD Community Room

- Joint Meeting called to order by Chairman Ruda at 10:03am.
- Chairman Ruda led the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Chairman Ruda stated he wished to discuss a potential future plan for developing regional radio channels versus individual town channels. He stated that the Community Compact has radio infrastructure funding available for regional radio channels, particularly for fire operations. He stated the use of aging copper technology in Dudley is becoming a concern with upgrades needed. Chief Hickey noted he has concerns that if there is an incident ongoing and both towns were operating on the same channel that there would be available airtime issues. Director Lynskey explained that the typical model involves a joint dispatch and primary operations channel for day to day responses with operations channels that can be assigned in the event of a larger incident. He stated it is becoming clear that the state doesn't intend to provide funding for radio infrastructure on the local end as we have applied several times for it through State 911 and have been told each time that we need to consider a regional model. Now Community Compact is going the same route. He noted that all grant funding for radio equipment has to go through the Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee for approval which is where the agenda is being driven. Chief Milliard arrived at this time. Chief Kochanowski noted that to replace the copper lines in Dudley would take fiber at a cost of several hundred thousands of dollars based upon a study he had done. It was determined that Microwave wouldn't work in Dudley due to the terrain. Director Lynskey concurred that when he had a study done for State 911 several years back, the cost to do microwave was over \$1million due to the terrain and the number of hops that would be needed. Chief Shaw stated he would be concerned about volume on a single police channel as Webster already uses a lot of air time on their own channel and adding Dudley in would raise concern of available airtime when a critical transmission is needed. Director Lynskey noted that eventually we are going to hit a safety concern on the dispatch end as everyone keeps getting busier yet we continue to expect 2 dispatchers to simultaneously monitor 5 radio channels which isn't practical long term. He stated it is inevitable that transmissions are going to be missed as we know some already are. Chief Milliard asked if the intent would be to have EMS on the regional fire channel. Director Lynskey stated that is the typical model but that if Dudley was willing to move their EMS operations to a separate channel we

Board of Directors:

Jonathan Ruda - Chairman
Doug Willardson - Vice Chairman
Randy Becker - Member
John Marsi - Member

Operations Board:

Dean Kochanowski - Chairman
Michael Shaw - Vice Chairman
Steven Wojnar - Member
Brian Hickey - Member
Gary Milliard - Member

could see if we could get approval for a regional EMS channel. Chief Shaw asked if the existing channels would be lost. Director Lynskey said they would remain licensed and potentially could be the incident operations channels. Chief Hickey asked what happens if a 3rd town is brought on, do they go onto the same channel with Webster and Dudley. Director Lynskey stated typically that would be the case and noted that Rutland Regional who has about the same volume of calls has 5 towns per channel. He noted that if more than 3 towns were brought on there is the possibility to look at sub regional channels. Chief Wojnar suggested possibly developing a user level workgroup who could look at the issue and come up with a recommendation. Director Lynskey stated he had concerns with that as he does not see it being productive since far smaller issues seem to have conflict in discussion amongst user level. Chief Shaw stated he believed it could in fact be productive if the right people were chosen to be a part of it. Mr. Becker asked what the call volume split is amongst Police/Fire/EMS. Director Lynskey stated in 2020 the split was approximately 70% Police, 22% EMS, and 8 % Fire. Mr. Ruda suggested potentially having some subject matter experts such as dispatch directors and chiefs from other regional centers who operate on regional channels meet with the Operations Board to discuss how it works and the pros and cons and then the Operations Board can report back to the Board of Directors. Director Lynskey said he will work to set that up.

- Mr. Becker made a motion to approve the January 14, 2021 and the January 28, 2021 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes. Second by Mr. Willardson. Unanimous vote.
- Chief Wojnar made a motion to approve the November 10, 2020 Operations Board Meeting Minutes. Second by Chief Shaw. Unanimous vote.
- Mr. Willardson stated the Charlton Town Administrator is on board with considering joining. The Charlton Police Chief is also interested. The Charlton Fire Chief has concerns about being on an island with Webster and Dudley and suggested having Sturbridge involved as well. Mr. Willardson stated the Sturbridge Town Administrator was interested in learning more. He stated there is a March timeframe Community Compact opportunity for funding that could be used to conduct a study. Director Lynskey noted this study wouldn't be feasibility but would instead need the towns to be seriously interested and would develop a plan for integration of operations and technology which would then be used to seek funding from State 911. Mr. Becker asked if we would be able to support both communities. Director Lynskey stated it would almost definitely require utilizing all four positions which provides a concern of not having a spare position in the event of an equipment failure. He stated there is a chance that another position could be added but it would be very tight. He noted that State 911 is no longer providing funding for new buildings and is instead only providing funding to renovate existing facilities that a center may have access to occupy.
- Director Lynskey informed the Boards that about 70% of dispatchers had already received the vaccine and that it looked like we would be getting to close to 80% which is far better than he anticipated it would be.

- Mr. Becker made a motion to set the per-diem pay rates for July 1, 2021 at \$18.62 for first year employees, \$20.15 during the second year, and \$21.42 thereafter, as presented in Director Lynskey's budget proposal. Second by Mr. Willardson. Unanimous vote.
- Mr. Willardson made a motion to set the Director's Salary at a 4% increase (\$88,000) for July 1, 2021 as per the salary study as part of the budget proposal. Second by Mr. Becker. Mr. Willardson noted that he would work with Director Lynskey to determine funding via use of some COVID Cares Funds given his responsibility for tracking of COVID addresses. Unanimous Vote.
- Director Lynskey stated that the reserve fund balance is about \$269,000 which is \$30,000 more than he had calculated due to a payment from a State 911 Grant several years back. Mr. Willardson stated that a good rule of thumb is to have 20% of the annual budget in reserve. Director Lynskey noted we are just about exactly at that amount and noted that the IMA allows a reserve up to \$500,000. Director Lynskey suggested the Board consider utilizing \$50,000 from reserve to offset the FY22 budget due to the current financial situation caused by the pandemic. He informed the Board there is likely to be a sizeable surplus from FY21 due to the 5 month vacancy and that it is likely the net change will be very minimal even using the \$50,000. He stated the \$50,000 would effectively keep the town assessments level from FY21 to FY22 even though the budget increased and State 911 grants did not. He noted that all State 911 Grants for FY22 are level funded at the FY21 amounts. Mr. Becker made a motion to approve the use of \$50,000 from the reserve toward the FY22 Operating Budget. Second by Mr. Willardson. Unanimous vote.
- Director Lynskey stated we could table the use of reserve funds to replace a server as Webster's IT Manager had found a way to use COVID funds to cover the cost. Mr. Ruda asked if SWCCC receives its own COVID funds or if these are Webster's funds. Mr. Willardson stated they are Webster's funds.
- Director Lynskey stated that the Dispatchers Union has officially filed to leave SEIU in favor of MASSCop. He stated that he had received formal notification and after speaking with Mr. Willardson responded without opposition. He stated SEIU typically covers clerical type workers and was really not the best fit for a 24/7 public safety group. Chief Shaw and Mr. Willardson expressed their agreement with that. Director Lynskey states this means the SEIU contract will be allowed to expire in June and it is likely that negotiations for a successor contract will not begin until after that time.
- Director Lynskey informed the Board that Full Time Dispatcher Elizabeth Fish had submitted her resignation effective February 20, 2021. He stated she had been with us just shy of a year and was leaving for a dispatch position in Connecticut. He noted that the pay rates and benefits she would be receiving there were at a level that we could not even come close to competing with. Mr. Becker made a motion to accept. Second by Mr. Willardson. Unanimous vote.
- Director Lynskey stated that Fish was looking to remain in a per-diem capacity. He stated he has spoken with her supervisor on the overnight shift who felt she

would be a valuable per-diem employee. Mr. Willardson made a motion to appoint Elizabeth Fish as a per-diem employee effective February 21, 2021. Second by Mr. Becker. Unanimous vote.

- Director Lynskey stated the Operations Board conducted interviews to replace Fish and had selected Nicole Albright for the full-time position. He stated after speaking with Albright to offer her the position, he is recommending her appointment date to be February 28, 2021. Motion to appoint by Mr. Becker, second by Mr. Willardson. Unanimous vote.
- Director Lynskey stated as a result of the interview, the Operations Board had a second candidate he is recommending to be appointed to a per-diem position with the expectation there is likely to be a full-time spot available in the foreseeable future. He stated that candidate is Mariusz Karlowicz and that he would like the board to approve his appointment at a date to be determined as Director Lynskey has not yet been able to reach him to confirm his availability. Motion by Mr. Willardson, Second by Mr. Becker. Unanimous vote.
- Director Lynskey stated he was seeking the Board to take a formal vote to reclassify the title of three dispatchers currently appointed as part-time to have their title changed to per-diem. He stated that for all practical purposes, they have always functionally been per-diem employees as they work based upon their availability as opposed to part-time who work a regularly scheduled less than 40 hour position. He stated all others are already appointed as per-diem however these three go back some time before that term began being used. He stated the three employees are Scott Baldracchi, Steven Chenard, and Brittany Morgan. Mr. Becker made a motion to reclassify their titles effective February 11, 2021. Second by Mr. Willardson. Unanimous vote.
- Director Lynskey presented the Board with a proposed MOA that would allow dispatchers to carry up to 40 hours of vacation time from FY21 to FY22 and have up to 40 hours bought out. He stated this is usually an or option but given the pandemic multiple dispatchers still have a large amount of vacation time on the books. He stated this would be paid in June payroll due to the fact that funds will be available and he has confirmed that this is OK with the Webster Town Accountant. He has already reviewed with the union president who believes this will be acceptable to the union. He noted it would become effective once the union votes to approve it. Motion by Mr. Becker to approve the MOA. Second by Mr. Willardson. Unanimous vote.
- The Board of Directors set the next meeting date as May 6 @ 10am at the Dudley Fire Department Training Room.
- Mr. Becker made a motion to adjourn the Board of Directors meeting at 11:06am, second by Mr. Willardson. Unanimous vote.
- Chief Milliard made a motion to adjourn the Operations Board meeting at 11:06 am. Second by Chief Shaw. Unanimous vote.