

New River Valley Emergency Communications Regional Authority
Special Board Meeting
February 6, 2018 4:00 PM
Montgomery County Public Safety Building – Fourth Floor

Minutes

Attendees:

Members: Sherwood Wilson, Chair, *Vice President for Administration, Virginia Tech*; Marc Verniel, Vice Chair, *Blacksburg Town Manager*; Billy Hanks, *Chief Town of Christiansburg Fire Department*, Craig Meadows, *Montgomery County Administrator*; Alan Fabian, *Joint Member*

Staff: Matt Hobson, *Executive Director* Deborah Stump, *Operations Manager*; Derek Rogers, *Communications Systems Manager*

Guests: Chief Mark Sisson, *Christiansburg Police*

Recorder: Sonia Ramsey, *Executive Assistant*

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:09 PM.

2. Into Work Session

Mr. Meadows made a motion for the New River Valley Emergency Communications Regional Authority Board to enter into Work Session for discussion of the Joint Advisory Committee recommendations in reference to Communications issues. The motion was seconded by Mr. Verniel and all members voted in favor of entering the Work Session.

The Chair addressed the Board with the reminder that 10 years ago the purpose of coming together was two-fold:

1. Consolidate the dispatch centers of independent agencies into one Regional Center.
2. Consolidate the multiple radio systems in use by the independent agencies into one combined system.

Because of needs and funding, the focus was placed on the dispatch portion of the two-fold ideology. With recommendations from the Joint Advisory Committee and the Radio Sub-committee, the time has now come to look at the radio system.

The Chair requested each member of the Board give his perspective of moving forward with the recommendation as presented to the Board by the Joint Advisory Committee that the Board support the funding by the 911 Center of hiring a consultant for the purpose of proposing a technical plan to create a consolidated infrastructure and radio system for all agencies that the 911 Center serves.

- Mr. Wilson advised that he agrees that we in fact need a united radio system; however, he has two main concerns:
 - Who will govern or “own” the system?
 - How will the system be funded?

- Mr. Verniel also agreed that one system is needed. At this point he feels that rather than approaching the technical aspect of the project, the focus should be on the strategic plan such as governance, funding, and phasing in of the project.
- Mr. Meadows reiterated that the implementation of a regional 911 center has been successful, however, he believes that for the short-term the Board should focus on working out the issues that still are arising from this consolidation. While there are not many concerns and issues still in existence from the project, the ones that do exist are significant enough that the focus for approximately the next year should be on getting those resolved. A big concern for the county is the three agencies who are in immediate need of radio systems: Riner Fire Department, Shawsville Rescue Squad, and Elliston Fire Department. His recommendation for governance of the radio system when it does in fact become a reality would be to look at other regions who have done this successfully as role models.
- Mr. Hanks agreed that his concerns are with governance and funding. He advised the Board that the Fire and Rescue Commission was willing to work toward a unified trunk system for the betterment of all. He also agrees that the short-term focus has to be on the 3 agencies going from VHF to UHF very soon.
- Mr. Fabian questioned whether other options had been researched rather than just the only long term fix being a unified trunk system. His concern is that the project, while projected to be a 10-15 year fix will be antiquated quickly. Will the cost be proportional to the life-cycle of the project?

Mr. Hobson advised that the tower sites typically have a life cycle of 25-30 years and also stated that monies for technology should be spent for upgrades, not replacements. There are in existence some of the backbone components of the project such as the microwave technology in Blacksburg and Christiansburg. He also reiterated that the Radio Subcommittee was in 100% agreement that radio issues are significant enough that a long-term goal needed to be researched and put into place sooner rather than later. He would like to move forward in the process at least to the point of obtaining a RFP and finding out what the project would really cost. He also advised that he believes management of the project should occur through one agency, but by using equipment, etc already in place and owned by different agencies, there may be funding issues

Mr. Verniel advised from the response he has heard, there are four (4) pieces of the project that will need to be addressed:

1. Technology
2. Governance
3. Funding
4. Buy-in: The ability to get all agencies on board and willing to cooperate to make the project a success.

Mr. Rogers addressed the issue of towers stating that they will not be a problem in combining radio systems through the use of MOU's (with agencies who own towers), cell towers, radio towers, state entities, water tanks, etc. He presented to the Board two proposals that came out of the Radio Subcommittee meeting held Friday, February 2, 2018:

1. Motion for the Joint Advisory Committee to request from the Board of Supervisors \$300,000 for the migration of Elliston Fire Department, Shawsville Rescue Squad, and Riner Fire Department from VHF to UHF.
2. Motion for the Joint Advisory Committee to request from the Board of Supervisors an additional \$500,000 to be set aside in a capital fund for the purpose of future radio and communications issues.

Mr. Sisson apologized to the Board on behalf of the Joint Advisory Committee for bringing this project to the forefront so quickly. The Radio Subcommittee has worked quickly and diligently to make progress at a much quicker rate than was believed it would be. The JAC does agree that now is the time to start strategically planning for a unified communications system.

The Chair stated he had previous discussions with the Vice Chair and they had a suggestion to present to the Board that would begin the project, but at a much slower pace than the Radio Subcommittee originally suggested. His proposal is to create a small sub-committee that would be co-chaired by Neal Turner, Emergency Services Coordinator, Montgomery County and Mike Mulhare, Assistant Vice President for Emergency Management, Virginia Tech. The Board would suggest other members to include Billy Hanks and Derek Rogers. The purpose of the sub-committee would be to develop a RFP for a consultant for the purposes of strategic planning only, not technical planning at this point in time. The strategic plan would need to address the issues of funding, governance, and buy-in from all agencies. Mr. Hobson presented a hand-out (Attachment A) that be an example of the RFP the Radio Subcommittee requested and advised the strategic plan was in essence Phase 2 of this example. Mr. Fabian countered that this RFP was for a technical not strategic plan. After further discussion, the Board had no opposition to the proposal of a sub-committee that would be co-chaired and filled with persons stated above. The appointment of the sub-committee will be a Board action at the next Board meeting, in which Neal Turner and Mike Mulhare will be asked to attend as guests.

3. Out of Work Session

Mr. Meadows made a motion to end Work Session. This was seconded and voted in favor as such.

4. Other Business

Mr. Meadows brought up that a Financial Disclosure statement must be submitted by all members of the Board. While these do not need to be posted publicly, they need to be kept and maintained such that they available for public inspection upon request.

5. Board Member Comments

None

6. Adjourn

The Chair adjourned the Special Meeting at 5:33 PM.

Objective of the Request for Bid for Consultant Services

The New River Valley Emergency Communications Regional Authority (herein referred to as the Authority), an agency of the consolidated governments of the Town of Blacksburg, the Town of Christiansburg, the County of Montgomery, VA and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, is seeking statements of qualifications from vendors that provide consulting services for a Regional Public Safety grade Two-way Communications Radio System. This system will include end-user subscriber units, both portable and mobile, 911 center consoles, antenna and tower site backbone infrastructure, the appropriate back-haul connectivity needs, and a scalable frequency management system with a coordinating fleet map.

The Authority is seeking a vendor to provide project management, conduct an operational and technical needs assessment based on best practices, prepare a comprehensive Request for Proposal (RFP), evaluate proposals and recommend a vendor, conduct contract negotiations, and oversee the installation and implementation of a new radio solution.

Scope of Services

The intent of this project is to address the feasibility and efficacy of a region-wide two-way public safety radio system to be utilized by fire, police, EMS and the 911 center. The system should be scalable to include other non-public safety agencies in the future, if desired. The consultant will be able to provide services to the Authority in the areas of project management, needs assessment, Request for Proposal (RFP) development, vendor selection, contract negotiations, and project installation and implementation.

The description of the requested services include, but are not limited to:

Phase 1 - Project Management

- Provide competent leadership with experience in similar projects capable of providing direction through successful project management, a history of successful milestone achievement and through a variety of detailed reports to the customer.
- Direct completion of tasks within estimated time frames and within budget constraints.

Phase 2 - Needs Assessment

- Perform a needs analysis review based on individual and collective department meetings and a review of the communications recommendations from a 2010 report. This will include meetings with staff and departments to determine current business processes and overlapping needs as well as provide operational improvement recommendations based on best practices.
- Evaluate the current radio system infrastructure for a multi-agency, multi-discipline, multi-jurisdictional system.
- Special attention shall be paid to issues of interoperability, geographic coverage, in-building penetration, system security and bandwidth interference.

Phase 3 - Request for Proposal Development

- Based on the Needs Assessment, develop a public safety grade radio communications specifications including establishing expectations as to the level of detail for the

specifications, providing a base set of specifications, and facilitating the process of reviewing and finalizing the base specifications, including appropriate prioritization.

- Identify appropriate options for a public safety grade radio system based on the established needs and vulnerabilities.
- Develop selection criteria and define decision-making process.
- Prepare the Request for Proposal (RFP) document.
- Prepare a listing of prospective vendors to receive RFP.

Phase 4 - Evaluation and Selection of Vendor

- Manage vendor Q&A during pre-proposal due date timeframe, including establishing and facilitating pre-proposal meeting, as well as working with the Authority in preparing any RFP addenda.
- Facilitate proposal opening.
- Analyze and evaluate proposals and prepare proposal analysis document with respect to functionality, the response to specifications, and cost.
- Schedule and conduct vendor demonstrations, site visits, and/or reference checking.
- Assist in the selection of the preferred vendor and presentation of recommendation to the Radio System Sub-committee, the Joint Advisory Committee, and the Board of Directors for the Authority and any other public entity that requests a presentation.

Phase 5 - Contract Negotiation

- Review license and support agreements and assist in contract negotiations.
- Assist in final contract presentation to committee members and to the Board of Directors, Town Councils and/or Board of Supervisors for final approval.

Phase 6 - Installation and Implementation

- Provide project management oversight during the implementation phase, including monitoring project milestones, hardware installation, user acceptance testing, user training, project “go-live” and final system acceptance.

NOTE: The Authority reserves the right to contract with a vendor for the entire scope of services or to only select individual services, or groups of services, from the list above.

A vendor will be selected through an evaluation process based on their responses to each of the phases as well as cost proposals for each of the phases. Experience of the proposed vendor and references will also be evaluated criteria.

A prospective vendor shall certify that they do not have any affiliation with any radio manufacturer.