

WESTCOMM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

FEBRUARY 2, 2024 11:00 A.M.

GOOGLE MEET INFO: <HTTPS://MEET.GOOGLE.COM/QNU-MQNG-UNY>

PHONE: 1-518-504-7035 PIN: 600 389 272##

In Attendance:

Lyn Simmons, Longmeadow Town Manager
John Beaulieu, Chicopee
Erin Hastings, Executive Director, WESTCOMM
Khristy Lord, Deputy Director, WESTCOMM
JoAnn Kupiec, Admin. Assistant, WESTCOMM
Tom Christensen, Town Administrator, East Longmeadow
Stuart Beckley, Town Administrator, Ware
Jennifer Wolowicz, Town Administrator, Monson
Wendy Graves, Treasurer, WESTCOMM

1. Meeting called to order 11:07 A.M. Present were Lyn Simmons, John Beaulieu and Tom Christensen, Jennifer Wolowicz, and Stuart Beckley. 5 Present.
2. Approval of meeting minutes: A motion was made by John and 2nd by Jennifer to approve the minutes as written from meetings 9/1/23, 10/13/23, 12/4/23 & 1/5/24. A rollcall was done, 5 yes, motion passed.
3. Old Business: Building Project update: General Contractor pushed up a week, request for more information. The information requested was on Minority and Women owned Businesses. Reached out to the State SDO, waiting on a response. We are also waiting on an answer to a question regarding Insurance. The GC was pushed to 2/9/24. The Building Committee will be meeting on 2/15/24 to select a GC. The OPM and Architect felt the delay will not affect the Ground Breaking.

The question was asked, as to who does the GC final Selection? The Building Sub-Committee consists of John Beaulieu, Chief Stamborski, Jamie Farnum, and Chief Kozloski and the OPM. In the event Jamie is absent, Tracy Meehan is the backup. A discussion was had and it was decided that the Building Committee

will choose the GC and being their recommendation to the Board of Directors to be voted on.

John explained that several sub contracts were excluded because they could not qualify. They are currently down to 3 General Contractors, 2 local and 1 from the Eastern part of the State.

It will be figured out before the 2/15/24 Building Committee meeting, as to who is responsible for choosing the GC & who signs the contract. At this meeting bids will be reviewed.

There was a discussion on Change Order approval process. Erin did reach out to the OPM and is waiting on a response. The following was suggested:

Up to \$25,000 – Erin will approve

\$25,000-\$75,000 – Building Committee will approve

\$ 100,000 and above – Board of Directors will approve

It was also decided that the Chair of the Board will be supplied a copy of any change order, regardless of the amount.

Will hold off for now to see what the OPM says and recommends. Will revisit at the meeting being held on March 2, 2024.

Project Website: It's in the process of being built and should go live before the ground breaking. The OPM will be asked to take on material to be posted to the website. Erin will look into their scope of services to see if that is included.

Groundbreaking: The Western Mass Deputy Director will be attending. Frank from State 91, The Governor's office will circle back and let us know if the Governor or Lieutenant Governor will be attending. Save the dates were sent out to our Board of Directors, the Finance and Ops Committees. The Board of Directors were asked to reach out to their contacts and Representatives. The media will be invited as the date of the groundbreaking gets closer.

FY 25 Budget: It was sent to State 911, as of yet Erin has not received any questions from them on the budget.

FY 22 Audit: Wendy completed and sent the fixed assets report to the Auditor, this was the last piece of information requested. Wendy has not heard back with any questions, but will do a follow-up with them.

FY 23 Audit Scope of Services update: Erin sent the scope of services to Wendy who is in the process of updating it. It will then be disbursed for quotes from vendors. It does not have to be posted because it is a professional service. Once the scope of services is complete, it will be shared with the Board of Directors so they can then forward it to their points of contact.

FY 24 Goals: Lyn will update the list of Goals from the set of meeting minutes that was approved at today's meeting.

4. New Business: Finance Committee Update: They have not met since the last Board of Directors Meeting.

Operations update: Went over all policies and made some adjustments.

IT Update: No report at this time.

Executive Directors Update: Ethics Disclosure: Erin's son applied for a Supervisor position. Erin reached out to the State Ethics Department on how to handle this situation, and has followed their advice. Erin is being kept out of the hiring process completely. Was advised to fill out the Ethics Disclosure sheet, submit it to the Board of Directors and the Board takes action on what Erin's allowed to still take part in. Currently Erin is involved in Budget Line items involving salaries, Scheduling, Union Negotiations, and Payroll approval.

Two employees received an offer from Priority Dispatch, they will pay for our Employees to attend the annual Navigator Conference in Washington D.C. This was looked into with Ethics Attorneys, and as long as it's been disclosed there should not be an issue.

The Board of Directors set regulation on what Erin can participate in regarding negotiations, salaries, Union, etc.

One Supervisor position was advertised, there were 35 applicants, of which only 3 met the minimum qualifications.

Jennifer's thoughts are that family should never work for family. Tom and Stuart's thoughts are if the Ethics Committee do not have an issue they don't either. John also believes there will not be an issue. Board of Directors will steer Erin clear of Negotiations & Discipline. Lyns thoughts are she never supports family hiring family, and suggested doing another round of advertising for that position, if the family member is still top selection, then go from there. Where it currently sits the Board is not comfortable with that.

A motion was made by Jennifer and 2nd by Tom to re-advertise the position. A rollcall was done 4 yes, 1 no, motion passed.

A special meeting can be scheduled for Mid-March to choose a candidate.

Erin read a report from Chief Harris of the Monson Fire Dept. It said as follows: "I wanted to send an email out to all of you and let you know how proud I am of everyone who participated in the Waid Road call this afternoon. It wasn't that long ago that our department would not have been able to handle a call like this with such expertise and skilled personnel. I witness all providers work seamlessly to give the patient the best possible chance at survival. This call had it all from early notification of 911 who provided CPR instructions to a bystander (who was previously CPR trained) of a witnessed arrest, to Dave Martin an off-duty paramedic who was close by arriving and providing care. Monson Police and Fire Department personnel who as always performed their duties proficiently and without delay. We are fortunate to have co-workers who care so much about the people they serve." - Chief Brian Harris, Monson Fire Department.

An email was sent to Erin from Dispatch Supervisor Anthony Gentile, Wilbraham EWCC, it stated as follows: "I wanted to reach out and thank you and your staff for the help on Saturday. Everyone working did an amazing job in getting us help quickly and working through the incident together. Please thank the staff for me for their help." - Dispatch Supervisor Anthony Gentile, Wilbraham RECC

A message was sent from Chief Dearborn to Erin stating the following: "I just wanted to drop a note to thank your team for their work on the fire we had Saturday night into Sunday. I know they were busy with the Wilbraham incident. They did a great job with the fire dispatch and associated communications." - Chief John Dearborn, Longmeadow Fire

Erin added the following information in the Executive Directors update:

Communication processes in place

We at Westcomm believe that regular communications with our responders is pertinent to our success. We have several processes in place to ensure that is happening. First, Westcomm has had a system in place for two years called Field Feedback Forms. Every police and fire department has access to the forms and fills them out regularly. They are used for questions or concerns about a specific call or to acknowledge performance that goes above and beyond. The forms are regularly investigated by our Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement (QA/QI) Team who then follow up with the dispatcher involved. We recently realized there was a gap in the process in that the responders were not receiving the outcome. We have revised the system to close the gap and the departments receive the outcome in a timely manner.

Secondly, we have the Police Dispatch Review Committee (DRC) and the Fire Dispatch Review Committee (DRC). These Committees are made up of dispatchers, supervisors, and QA/QI analysts from Westcomm and officers, firefighters, sergeants and lieutenants from the departments. They come together to discuss policies, challenges, and after action reports and make recommendations for change to the Operations Committee.

Next we have our Operations Committee. This is made up of the Chiefs from each of the police and fire departments or their designee and the Executive Director and Deputy Director of Westcomm.

Finally, the Executive Director and the Deputy Director are always available to meet with a single department to discuss challenges of regionalization.

Hiring

We at Westcomm recognize that hiring post-pandemic has been a challenge for several industries but even more so for public safety. We would like our community partners to recognize the challenges we had to overcome when the District expanded from two municipalities to five during the pandemic. Think about the challenges that you have had trying to fill a couple of positions in your police or fire departments and imagine the difficulties if you had to start from nothing.

WESTCOMM Training Program

Due to some of the challenges with hiring and expanding, we wanted to make sure our training program was efficient. We at Westcomm pride ourselves in the training program we have developed and will argue that it is one of the best in the Commonwealth. Our emergency communications specialists (ECS) attend a six for an additional 12 to 16 weeks. However, no matter how much training a new hire receives, experience is the best qualification we can provide. Therefore, we work tirelessly towards retention.

Emergency Police/Fire/Medical Dispatch

Westcomm is the only agency in Massachusetts that is certified in all three disciplines: Emergency Police Dispatch, Emergency Medical Dispatch, and Emergency Fire Dispatch. This is a protocol system that provides the ECS with a script to ensure they get the proper information in a timely manner, provide lifesaving instructions, and know the correct resources to send. Gone are the days of a dispatcher just asking what and where the emergency is. One thing we noticed with these protocols in place is that the public doesn't understand why we ask so many questions and think it delays a response. We ask our partner and it has been proven to provide the best outcome for the caller.

Radios

The main concept of regionalization is to share resources. Those resources can be personnel, computer aided dispatch programs, and radio systems. Westcomm has invested millions of dollars into a new radio system to replace the end of life systems that existed in the member communities. As a result, departments have to share channels with other departments that they may or may not do routine calls with. Westcomm asks for the members' support in getting behind this idea. With budget restraints affecting every municipality, the more resources we can share, the more cost effective it becomes. With that being said, the more units we can put on one channel, the less dispatchers we have to hire. Requiring a dispatcher to monitor more than one primary channel becomes a responder safety issue. Imagine trying to listen to an officer calling out a location of a motor vehicle stop when another officer starts screaming they are in a foot pursuit over a different channel. With a shared channel, the higher priority call allows an officer to use their emergency button and take priority of a channel, whereas in the situation of two channels going off at once, neither is heard correctly. Also, when a dispatcher transmits, it is necessary for the transmit button to mute the other channels on their screen, otherwise all traffic would go over the radio.

Basically, if another unit calls in on a different channel, the dispatcher will not hear it when they are transmitting. We all need to work together towards radio sharing and radio discipline to make this work. Westcomm could literally put all five communities on one channel and the channel would not be saturated. For example, Springfield handles roughly 400,000 calls per year and run them all on one channel, compared to our 150,000 calls on three channels.

Stuart would like to hear from the Op's Group regarding radio channel sharing. Have Op's review Erin's report and have the Op's Group attend a meeting to discuss with the opinion. Currently Ware is on their own channel, Chicopee is on their own channel and Longmeadow, East Longmeadow and Monson share a channel.

When WESTCOMM was formed it was understood there would be shared channels. It was suggested the Op's Group talk about this before attending a Board of Directors Meeting.

WESTCOMM Needs the Board of Directors support and speak with their Chiefs regarding channel sharing, support needs to start from the top.

This will be revisited at the March meeting.

There are feedback forms that go the Supervisor of choice & Chief, then to Erin, then back to the Supervisor & Chief and then to the Officer.

It was discussed using the cable access channels in each Community to describe how 911 works and the steps that are taken to complete the call. It was suggested that a meeting be held again at the Senior Center for this particular reason.

The goal is to have the Out Reach Committee keep attending these Community meetings to explain and answer questions.

5. Adjourn: A motion was made John Beaulieu and 2nd by Jennifer Wolowicz to adjourn the meeting. Rollcall was done, 5 yes, meeting adjourned at 12:31 P.M.

