

**JOINT MEETING OF THE  
WESTCOMM BOARD OF DIRECTORS, OPERATIONS BOARD  
& FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**NOVEMBER 12, 1:00 P.M.**

**WESTCOMM**

**645 SHAWINIGAN DRIVE, CHICOPEE MA 01020**

GOOGLE MEET:

<HTTPS://MEET.GOOGLE.COM/BNO-ODIG-KKY>

PHONE: 1-484-420-7482 PIN: 935 005 668#

In Attendance:

Penny Ryan, Interim Executive Director, WESTCOMM

Tom Christensen, Town Manager, East Longmeadow

John Beaulieu, Chicopee

Lyn Simmons, Town Manager, Longmeadow

Jennifer Wolowicz, Town Manager, Monson

Stuart Beckley, Town Manager, Ware

JoAnn Kupiec, Admin Assistant, WESTCOMM

Grant Herman, IT Director, WESTCOMM

Mihaela, Miteva, Procurement Officer, WESTCOMM

Anthony Massoia, Dispatch Supervisor, WESTCOMM

Greg Wallace, Dispatch Supervisor, WESTCOMM

Mark Williams, Chief, East Longmeadow PD

Mayor John Vieau, Chicopee

Kimberly Collins, Town Accountant, East Longmeadow

Marie Laflamme, City Treasurer, Chicopee

John Rigney, Chief, Longmeadow FD

Dan Stamborski, Chief, Chicopee FD

Mike Meaney, IT Specialist, WESTCOMM

Patrick Major, Chief, Chicopee PD

Eric Watson, Deputy Chief, Chicopee PD

Ian Coddington, Town Accountant, Longmeadow

Jim Martinez, Chief, Ware PD

Robert Stocks, Chief, Longmeadow PD

Marlyn Velazquez, QA, WESTCOMM

Wendy Graves, Treasurer, WESTCOMM

Kim D'Amato, Town Accountant, Ware

1. Meeting called to order 1:12 P.M. A roll call was done, and present at the meeting were Tom Christensen, Lyn Simmons, Mayor John Vieau, Jennifer Wolowicz, and Stuart Beckley. 5 present.

A roll call was done for the Finance Committee, and present at the meeting were Marie Laflamme, Ian Coddington, Kim D'Amato, and Kim Collins. 4 present.

A roll call was done for the Ops Board, and present at the meeting were Patrick Major, John Rigney, Dan Stamborski, Jim Martinez and Robert Stocks. 5 present.

2. Old Business: Building and Facility Update: Penny reported on the building's punch list, which has been reduced to seven items. Outstanding items include a scratched locker, an issue with the metal exit gate, and waiting for Bearcat to complete installation and testing for the BDA system. For the elevator, they are awaiting Otis, as the card reader and camera installation require their cables. Retainage is being held on Adams Plumbing and the gate people until necessary items are received, and on Griffin until the BDA is operational, with the next meeting scheduled for December 1st, where they hope the punch list will be complete.

Radio System Update: Penny Ryan provided a radio update, noting that a maintenance agreement with Tate has been secured, and Tate has assigned a dedicated technician and project manager for the Westcom overview and fixes. James Martinez inquired about the status of an antenna replacement and the Coffey Hill Tower, and Penny Ryan indicated they are waiting for Tyler to provide an update. James Martinez confirmed receiving a quote for the antenna replacement via email and offered to forward it to Penny Ryan.

FY27 Budget Discussion and Overview: Penny Ryan presented an overview of the FY27 budget, which increased by over \$254,000 primarily due to building upkeep costs such as pest control, HVAC, septic maintenance, and elevator maintenance. A placeholder was included for salary increases ahead of contract negotiations with the Union, which are open to working early, despite the current contract expiring on June 30th of next year. A significant item on the budget is a \$100,000 placeholder for a capital improvement fund to proactively address future replacement costs for computers, servers, and building maintenance.

Budget Transparency and Health Insurance Penny Ryan noted the budget draft was delivered late and acknowledged that health insurance is a major pending item, for which a 20% increase placeholder has been set. Ian Coddington expressed difficulty reviewing the budget without preliminary context and requested past budget actuals, stating that they have not received the budget actuals for the last couple of months. Penny Ryan explained that the budget

emails had not been going out due to a system reset during the new fiscal year but assured that this has been corrected, and monthly budget updates will be provided moving forward.

**Finance Committee Meetings and Coordination:** Ian Coddington addressed the infrequency of finance committee meetings, stating that the current budget discussion is their first for FY26, and expressed willingness to coordinate meetings with Marie. Penny Ryan confirmed a meeting is scheduled for December 2nd and discussed the need to establish clear roles for setting meeting agendas, suggesting a collaborative approach between Westcom staff and the finance committee. Penny Ryan suggested that after Jamie left, there was a need to set clear operational rules for the new director and building.

**Capital Improvement Fund and Budget Comparisons:** Stuart inquired about the ability to carry over the \$100,000 capital fund. Penny Ryan explained they need to find the proper account type for the fund to be able to roll it over, acknowledging this has been a previous discussion point. Ian Coddington requested that the budget documents include a historical comparison of FY25 and FY26 actuals versus budget, alongside the FY27 proposal, to provide historical context for line item needs.

**Accounting Software and Treasurer Resignation:** Lyn Simmons asked about the status of new accounting software, to which Penny Ryan confirmed that both Vader (roughly \$12,000 quote) and QuickBooks are listed in the budget. The intent is to transition to Vader, which is expected to provide better breakdown, but QuickBooks will need to run concurrently during the implementation period, which may take up to a full year. The Board of Directors was informed that Wendy Graves, the Treasurer, submitted a resignation effective December 4th.

**Treasurer Role and Need for Increased Hours:** Penny Ryan discussed the need to determine the future structure of the Treasurer role, suggesting consultation with other regional entities and the finance committee to decide on the appropriate number of hours, noting that the position is currently budgeted for 12 hours a week. Penny Ryan emphasized that the position needs to be in-person. Penny Ryan and Lyn Simmons supported budgeting for more than 12 hours, acknowledging that the current allocation seems insufficient, and Jennifer Wolowicz also agreed to increasing the hours.

**Budget Question Process and Excess Funds:** Penny Ryan and Ian Coddington agreed that budget questions for specific line items should be sent via email for transparency and to allow time for research. Penny Ryan suggested that questions should be funneled through the finance committee chair to centralize communication. Ian Coddington raised a concern that the community agreement states that unspent budget reserve funds roll forward, but Wendy Graves indicated that the auditors told them legally the money cannot be carried forward.

**Budget Reserve Roll-Over and Audit Concerns:** The discussion centered on the discrepancy between the district agreement and the auditor's claim regarding the budget reserve carrying forward, with Mihaela Miteva questioning if the auditor cited a specific law. Jennifer Wolowicz suggested seeking clarification in writing from the auditors and potentially the Department of Revenue. Wendy Graves explained that any unspent funds roll into the unreserved fund balance at the end of the year. Penny Ryan is actively seeking a new auditor due to non-responsiveness from the current firm, and Mihaela Miteva reported that out of 12 firms contacted, only two replied, with one stating a lack of capacity.

**FY23 and FY24 Audits Status:** Ian Coddington asked if CBiz has started the FY24 financial statements or is waiting for the FY23 audit to be finalized. Wendy Graves clarified that CBiz is far along on the FY24 audit, but they have not finalized the FY23 audit to ensure receivables are correct, as the prior period's records were handwritten.

**Budget Finalization Timeline and Document Review:** John Vieau inquired about the timeline for a finalized budget approval, and Penny Ryan responded they aim for January 20th, requiring multiple meetings in December and a final vote in January, in coordination with the finance committee's recommendation vote. Ian Coddington requested that historical grant agreements be included with the historical financial reports to aid in understanding accounting for multi-year grants. Penny Ryan and Ian Coddington agreed to maintain pressure on CBiz to ensure continued momentum on the audits, especially with Wendy Graves' impending departure.

**District Agreement Review and Amendments:** Penny Ryan opened a discussion to review and potentially amend the district agreement, which is a living document. Jennifer Wolowicz noted that the current address needs to be updated and questioned the current name of the district. The current term is through June 30th, 2027, but changes can be voted on at any time. Penny Ryan emphasized the need to review the document to ensure roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, especially in preparation for new communities joining, such as the Sheriff's department. Jennifer Wolowicz suggested creating a working group with representatives from each sub-board to focus solely on the agreement, possibly starting around February.

**Financial Arrangement with Sheriff's Department:** Penny Ryan discussed the proposal for a financial metric for the Sheriff's Department, which is not a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) and is not reimbursable by state 911. The proposal includes the department fully footing the bill for four personnel salaries, a sum of the radio contract, tower rental fees, and 15% of other costs, with a flat fee of 17% of the budget assessment suggested as fair. This proposed 17% of the 25% assessment amounts to an estimated \$340,000 annually, including the cost of four employees, site rentals, and a percentage of maintenance contracts.

**Current Contract and Future Relationship:** The Sheriff's Department's current contract expires on June 30th, and Penny Ryan noted that they are aware Westcom intends to increase the financial burden due to the exponential growth and vagueness of the original contract's scope. The current payment was \$392,000 for three years, which was intended for the buildout of their tower and radio system, meaning Westcom has financially received nothing in theory as the contract's cost exactly matched the buildout. A membership-like status for the department, which would grant them a seat on the board, is being considered.

**Call Volume and Assessment Discussion:** Penny Ryan clarified that the proposed 17% fee was not based on call volume, as the department is not a true PSAP, but rather an estimate compared to how other communities are assessed, which would otherwise lead to a payment of almost \$700,000 using the current formula. Lyn Simmons suggested including language in any multi-year agreement that allows for additional reviews throughout the contract term, particularly if call volume increases above the current recorded level, to avoid Westcom bearing unexpected costs. Penny Ryan agreed to this.

**Horizon Contract and Financial Audit:** Lyn Simmons questioned if Horizon had already been paid for the \$392,000 invoice for work they have not completed due to a cease to assist order. Penny Ryan clarified that the money is sitting with Westcom, paid by the Sheriff's Department, and Westcom has not paid the invoice because it is currently undergoing a forensic audit.

**Operational and Recruitment Concerns:** Regarding Sheriff's Department Robert Stocks expressed concern about the Sheriff's Department joining Westcomm from an operational standpoint, particularly regarding the allocation of radio channels. Penny Ryan noted that the Sheriff's Department getting their own radio channel due to paying for four personnel is a major concern, given the existing issue of shared thin resources among police agencies.

**Budget and District Agreement Considerations:** Penny Ryan and the board agreed that the conversation with the Sheriff's Department should be expedited, preferably before the budget submission, as the outcome will severely impact the budget and provide essential information for the board. Penny Ryan suggested that as Westcomm grows and more communities join, a proportional voting system might need to be considered in the district agreement, given that some members contribute significantly more financially but still only have one vote.

Stuart Beckley left the meeting at 2:32 P.M.

3. **New Business: Reaffirmation of Executive Director's Appointment:** Lyn Simmons made a motion to ratify the Westcom Board of Directors' prior vote to offer a permanent contract to Penny Ryan as Executive Director, which John Vieau seconded. A roll call was done, 4 yes, motion passed.

**Executive Director's Update on Operations and Staffing** Penny Ryan publicly apologized to the finance committee for delays and thanked their team, including

Tony, Mihaela, Wendy, Grant, Lisa, and JoAnn, for their work on the budget and deep-diving into financial documentation. Penny Ryan reported that Mission Critical Partners completed the last of the state 911 study, which involved extensive documentation. The center also hosted tours for Chicopee Fire Department personnel, which Penny Ryan found to be a positive experience.

**Staff Achievements and Community Engagement:** Penny Ryan shared several positive updates, including Supervisor Tristan Stafford earning a stork pin for helping with a baby delivery, and dispatcher Bill Murray receiving a CPR save award. Stephanie O'Connor, the Training and Community Engagement Manager, has been active, arranging for Chicopee TV to film a segment on the dispatch center and organizing staff participation in an Angel Tree donation program and a food drive.

**Training and Staff Development:** Penny Ryan reported that there are currently eight dispatchers in training, with full rotation expected by Christmas, and plans to post for at least four more positions soon. Stephanie O'Connor and Marlyn are implementing internal monthly quick trainings, and the center will host a three-day Communication Training Officer (CTO) class in December, aiming to eventually put all staff through the State 911 free training. Five staff members, including Penny Ryan, will attend the APCO Atlantic conference, which is seen as important for growth and networking.

**Administrative and Compliance Updates:** The center has begun setting dates for union negotiations, with the goal of completing them early to assist with budget deadlines. A surprise CJIS audit is scheduled for the following week, requiring Mike to spearhead the effort. Penny Ryan also shared that the dispatch union survey indicated staff are overwhelmingly happy with the 12-hour shifts and do not wish to revert to eight-hour shifts.

**Engagement with Partner Agencies and Future Growth:** Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School's public safety program is looking to set up an internship program with Westcomm. South Hadley Chief Gunderson is scheduled for a second meeting with both police and fire chiefs to discuss Westcomm membership. Palmer's town manager and police chief have also expressed interest in setting up a meeting.

**Station Alerting System and Operational Consistency:** The board discussed the alerted station alerting system, confirming that site walks were completed to assess the existing infrastructure. James Martinez emphasized the need for a simple, consistent, and uniform system across the platform with the potential for expansion. Penny Ryan affirmed they are working on quotes for a package that includes basic station alerting, with additional features like automated garage doors being offered a-la-carte.

4. New Business not reasonably anticipated within 24 hours: None at this time

5. Adjourn: A motion was made by John Vieau and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Lyn Simmons to adjourn the meeting, a roll call was done, 4 yes, meeting adjourned at 3:00 P.M.