

# WESTCOMM BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

DECEMBER 11, 2025, 10:00 A.M.

WESTCOMM

645 SHAWINIGAN DRIVE, CHICOPEE MA 01020

GOOGLE MEET:

[HTTPS://MEET.GOOGLE.COM/QNU-MQNG-UNY](https://meet.google.com/QNU-MQNG-UNY)

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In Attendance:

Penny Ryan, Interim Executive Director, WESTCOMM

Tom Christensen, Town Manager, East Longmeadow

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

Tyler Allen, Goosetown

Mark Cady, LB Comm- LLC

1. Meeting called to order 10:04 A.M. A roll call was done, and present at the meeting were Tom Christensen, Lyn Simmons, Jennifer Wolowicz, and Stuart Beckley. 4 present.
2. **Old Business: FY27 Budget Discussion:** The Board discussed the FY27 budget, noting a placeholder for health insurance while negotiations are ongoing.

**Operational Staffing and New Position:** Penny Ryan noted that the opening for Wendy's former position had been posted on MMA and LinkedIn, attracting several good candidates, and the finance committee is reviewing resumes. The new position was posted for 18 to 19.5 hours per week, up from the previous 12 hours, to avoid hiring a full-time person, although Tom Christensen raised the question of whether a full-time accountant position might be beneficial in the future. It was ultimately concluded that filling a full-time position would be a struggle at this point.

**Finance and Controls:** Jennifer Wolowicz and other board members discussed the staffing hours, agreeing that full-time hours might be difficult to fill currently, especially with the expected "game changer" of increased in-person work

reducing task time. Penny Ryan expressed comfort with the current checks and balances system, noting that Marie Laflamme and the board had discussed this, ensuring no single person has excessive control. Lynn Simmons and Tom Christensen agreed on proceeding with the 18 to 19.5 hours but acknowledged the organization's growth.

**Interview Panel and Health Insurance Negotiations:** Jennifer Wolowicz suggested that a member of the finance committee be on the interview panel for the new position, to which Penny Ryan confirmed that this was already discussed. Regarding health insurance negotiations, Penny Ryan confirmed that they were nearing completion and might be finalized by the January meeting, likely requiring an executive session for official action.

**Information Sharing Procedures:** The Board confirmed that information regarding the negotiations could be forwarded to them ahead of time to allow them to be informed, provided it is marked confidential or "executive session material". Jennifer Wolowicz advised Penny to blind copy (BCC) all board members on such emails to prevent accidental open meeting law violations from "reply to everyone" errors.

**Budget Finalization and Assessments Timeline:** Penny Ryan noted that the FY27 budget allocation will be clearer after negotiations are finalized, and once the assessments meeting takes place, with Sheriff information also affecting assessments. The goal is to have a hard final assessment number by January 20th, ahead of the January 31st state deadline.

**Building Update and Operations:** Penny Ryan reported that only about five items remain on the building punch list, including the persistent issue with the gate. The BDA was commissioned and is awaiting final inspection from the fire department. Lyn Simmons inquired about snow maintenance, which Penny Ryan reported was handled well by the contractor and internal staff.

**Gate Status and Parking:** Jennifer Wolowicz asked about the fluctuating number of cars in the parking lot and the gate status, to which Penny Ryan explained that dispatch and admin staff use different parking areas, with the largest group parking out of sight. Penny Ryan confirmed the gates are supposed to be closed at all times, and that they are following up with the contractors for final gate work.

**District Agreement and Sheriff's Department Update:** Jennifer Wolowicz suggested holding a dedicated meeting for the District Agreement, which Penny Ryan planned for the first meeting after the budget submission. Penny Ryan reported that they were attempting to set up a meeting with the Sheriff's Department, holding off until they had more positive radio updates to share.

**Radio System Update:** Tyler Allen provided a positive radio update, stating that they had resolved the cause of a roaming issue between Site 1 and Site 2, which had been affecting coverage since May or June. The fix allows radios to roam

freely between sites, increasing system coverage and stability. Tyler Allen detailed the ongoing rollout of new code plugs and ID structures to primary agencies.

**Avtec Upgrade and Site Work:** The Avtec console system is being upgraded from hardware-based to software-based to enable firmware updates, which will add features and stability. Tyler Allen mentioned working on power issues at Coffey Hill to turn it up, with mobile installs planned for early January. Prep work at Mount Tom, including swapping racks and grounding equipment for protection, was also reported.

**BDAS and BDAS Tracking:** Tyler Allen requested compiling a list of BDAS (Bi-Directional Amplifiers) for the system, as they require annual PMs to ensure they are not negatively affecting the system, a concern raised by a BDAS having uplink issues discovered the day before. Tom Christensen expressed appreciation for the positive tone of the radio update .

**Radio Audit Presentation:** Mark Cady presented an extensive radio audit report, which he had compiled after being reached out to in August for a "third set of eyes" on the radio system. Mark Cady shared his extensive background in communications and special projects, including building a backup dispatch center and managing large radio projects.

**Vendor Oversight and Procurement:** Mark Cady highlighted a core issue as the lack of oversight of the vendor over time. He stated that using the state contract (PS01) for large purchases like radio systems can become complex and, when costs exceed \$50,000 in construction, necessitates an Invitation for Bid (IFB) process rather than an RFP. Mihaela Miteva supported Mark Cady's point about the state bid list not being all-inclusive.

**Unbuilt Sites and Licensing Issues:** The audit revealed several problems, including sites that are not built out or off the air, and licensing issues. Mark Cady noted that the FCC requires systems to be built out within 365 days of licensing. Specifically, the Coffey Hill site, which is the gateway for the town of Ware, has no power and needs negotiation with Crown Castle and National Grid.

**Sheriff's Office Project and Site Conditions:** The audit reviewed the project for the Hampton County Sheriff's Office, noting that the quote from November 2022 was for VHF equipment, but the installed equipment found was UHF, causing a discrepancy. The Hamden site is running a trunking system on a privately owned tower that is structurally unsound and at risk of collapse.

**Lack of Documentation and Inventory:** Mark Cady stressed the significant absence of documentation, including no shipping papers or serial numbers on invoices, making it impossible to guarantee that all equipment has been delivered and installed. He noted that there is no database tracking serial numbers, firmware, or warranty dates for the 12 to 15 sites.

**Maintenance Budget and Vendor Obligations:** Mark Cady emphasized the need for a substantial maintenance budget to protect the multi-million dollar investment in the radio system. He also clarified that since not all goods and services under the PS01 contract have been delivered, installed, or accepted, there is no obligation to pay outstanding invoices to the original vendor.

**Next Steps for Westcomm and Vendor:** Mark Cady proposed a course of action for Westcomm, including putting the vendor on notice about missing and uninstalled equipment, which would provide negotiating power. He also suggested internal actions for Westcomm, such as defining street-level outdoor coverage and managing the impact of the mass building code requirements for emergency responder communication enhancement systems (BDAS).

**BDA Management and Schools:** Mark Cady suggested using a cloud-based inventory program that includes a BDA module to track and manage BDAs and trigger annual PM reminders to building owners, ensuring BDAs do not interfere with the system. He also raised concerns about how individual communities handle communications with schools as mandated by Mass General Law and DC, and whether Westcomm is informed of these plans.

**Need for Project Management and Prioritization:** Lyn Simmons thanked Mark Cady for validating their concerns and asked about prioritizing the necessary work, particularly the risk of the Hamden site collapsing. Mark Cady explained that without coverage maps, the impact of losing the Hampden site is hard to determine but emphasized that the Sheriff's Office would likely experience a major coverage loss. Lyn Simmons strongly encouraged the board to hire a dedicated project manager to oversee the system moving forward, a gap identified in how the system reached its current state.

**Timeline for Future Decisions:** Mark Cady agreed that information gathering and prioritization should be the next steps, with a prioritization list and dollar figures potentially available by January. This timeline is critical because the FY28 development grant application window opens around March 1st, requiring the board to prioritize projects for state funding.

**Audit Report and Next Steps:** Tom Christensen thanked attendees and stated the audit report will remain on the agenda for January, asking for it to be forwarded to the ops committee for their input. Tom Christensen emphasized the need to keep the process moving, noting the two months of January and February will move quickly and Tyler will need time to compile numbers regarding any gaps identified. Tom Christensen asked the board for their trajectory and desired next steps, offering to "put more teeth" on the draft report if needed.

3. **New Business: Finance Committee Update:** Penny Ryan noted that the finance committee is meeting next week, which they plan to attend.

**Operations Update:** Jennifer Wolowicz offered congratulations to Chief Williams for becoming the president of the Western Mass Chiefs Association.

**IT Update:** Grant Herman reported success in making first contact with the website data owner and retrieving all source files, which now allows for redesign and feedback on the new website's structure. Jennifer Wolowicz and Lyn Simmons expressed confusion about the previous issue, which Grant Herman explained was due to the agency not paying the international traveling entrepreneur who hosted the website for \$10 a month, making them difficult to contact and preventing large overhauls. Grant Herman confirmed the agency owns the URL and discussed options for the website, including running it in-house or using a vendor like Civic Plus, to ensure ADA compliance by spring.

**Executive Director and Development Grant Updates:** Penny Ryan provided an update on contract negotiations, noting they went well over three meetings and are near completion with just drafting the remaining wording. Penny mentioned working with Tyler and Tony to address requests for documentation from State 911 and efforts to rectify past issues with outstanding development grant funding for radios, fire station alerting, and radio consoles. The focus is on efficiently allocating previous grant funds and prioritizing needs ahead of a March 1st date.

**Regional Notification System Discussion:** Penny addressed a question about Westcomm's capacity to issue town-wide calls, like Code Red, mentioning that access is currently only available for Chicopee's system. It was suggested perhaps discussing a potential regional solution for a Westcomm notification system, noting that Longmeadow and Monson use systems like Rave or Code Red, though the latter currently suffers from low signup rates. Lyn Simmons recommended Everbridge, noting their satisfaction with the system and its lower annual cost compared to their previous Code Red service.

**Community Outreach Initiatives:** Anthony Massoia shared a finished public service announcement video for when people call 911, which Jennifer Wolowicz called "absolutely wonderful". Anthony also announced a community outreach effort called "Westcom tracks Santa" on Christmas Eve, where employees will volunteer to staff a phone number for children to call. Additionally, Penny shared plans to cook breakfast for the staff on the 21st and 23rd of December, inviting board members, as part of ongoing efforts to boost morale, which also included a Friendsgiving event and upcoming cookie exchange .

**Approval of Prior Year Bill:** The board addressed an email concerning training invoices from FY25, which were prior year bills totaling less than a thousand dollars.

Lyn Simmons made a motion to approve the prior year bill, seconded by Jennifer Wolowicz. A roll call was done 4 yes, motion passed.

4. **Adjourn:** A motion was made by Lyn Simmons and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jennifer Wolowicz to adjourn the meeting. A roll call was done, 4 yes, meeting adjourned 11:24 A.M.