

MEETING OF THE WESTCOMM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

FEBRUARY 24, 11:00 A.M.

WESTCOMM

645 SHAWINIGAN DRIVE, CHICOPEE MA 01020

GOOGLE MEET:

<HTTPS://MEET.GOOGLE.COM/MOI-BCTC-VHI>

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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

Mayor John Vieau, Chicopee

JoAnn Kupiec, Admin Assistant, WESTCOMM

Mihaela, Miteva, Procurement Officer, WESTCOMM

Anthony Massoia, Dispatch Supervisor, WESTCOMM

Tyler Allen, Goosetown

John Beaulieu, Chicopee

Mike Meaney, IT Specialist WESTCOMM

Grant Herman, IT Director WESTCOMM

Lisa Ricardo, HR Director, WESTCOMM

Greg Wallace, Operations Manager, WESTCOMM

Mark Williams, Chief, East Longmeadow PD

1. Meeting called to order 11:01 A.M. A roll call was done, and present at the meeting were Tom Christensen, Lyn Simmons, Jennifer Wolowicz, and Stuart Beckley. 4 present.

Mayor John Vieau joined the meeting at 11:03 A.M.

2. **Old Business: Radio Update:** It was decided to skip the building update temporarily and began with the radio update from Tyler Allen.

Code Plug and Controller Updates: Tyler Allen reported that most of the code plug enhancements have been completed for the primary and secondary departments. The controller has been largely cleaned up, making it easier to manage, and most aliases are complete.

OTAP and Network Monitoring Stability: Tyler Allen confirmed that the Over-the-Air Programming (OTAP) system has been stable for the last 30 days, preventing the need for field visits by allowing quicker remote deployment. The PRTG network monitoring is now set up across the entire radio system for all IP-capable devices, providing good visibility for uptimes, and is configured to alert and display on monitors.

FSA and Network Switch Deployment: The team is preparing to work on a piece of the Zetron FSA, with plans to install the new Public Address System (PAS) this week and begin racking the new switches, which will replace older equipment. The majority of the equipment has arrived, is being staged, and the network layout is being prepared for quick deployment in the coming weeks.

FCC Licensing and Shared Frequencies: Tyler Allen provided a brief update on the FCC licensing, noting that most licensing appears fine, but they must resolve shared frequencies with the previous vendor. This issue was recently identified, requiring a separate call to find the best resolution.

Westcom Portal Implementation: The team finished a 30-day trial of a new, basic portal, the same platform used by the state police—which will be rolled out specifically for Westcomm. This portal will allow users to track radio issues, programming updates, and other concerns, creating transparency for end-users and Westcomm staff. Tyler Allen is signing up for the full version, which will be covered under the current maintenance contract, and expects it to be available on the website within the next day or two.

Portal Functionality and Use as a Ticketing System: Lyn Simmons inquired whether the new portal functions as a ticketing system specifically for radios and related issues. Tyler Allen confirmed it is a ticketing system currently focused on the radio, FSA, and BDAS sides of the system, and is designed to be customizable for potential expansion. The portal aims to streamline issue reporting by providing a simple, standardized way for departments to submit issues with specific, pertinent details like radio ID and location, replacing the current "telephone game" reporting method.

Fire Incident Radio Communication Review: Tyler Allen addressed a recent radio issue during a fatal fire, which was determined to be caused primarily by a third-party cross-patching into the fire talk group, connecting multiple conventional, analog systems. Once a common channel was established, the issue resolved, and the cause was identified as a training/communication deficiency. Tyler Allen plans to formally write up the findings to distribute to the Chiefs for discussion on best practices and communication regarding patching.

Building Update: Building Closure Update and Committee Dissolution: John Beaulieu reported that the building is nearing final completion, pending a final CFO, with electrical and HVAC documents currently being finalized. Once Dave signs off, Carl will conduct the final walk, and the building closeout will be

complete. The preference is to wait to dissolve the building committee until all warranties have expired to address any potential post-closure issues.

District Agreement: Discussion on District Agreement Renewal: The district agreement expires on June 30, 2027, and the current document requires them to start the renewal process within six months of the expiration date. Tom Christensen suggested that the board members read the current agreement as homework, and they considered whether to involve Operations and Finance in separate or mutual meetings. Lyn Simmons recalled that the original agreement was established with a working group that included John Beaulieu, which later made recommendations for updates.

Strategy for Document Revision and Legal Counsel Engagement: Jennifer Wolowicz emphasized the importance of engaging the current law firm, Clifford and Kenny, early in the process to set parameters and avoid past issues, preferring to start with a fresh document. However, there was concern about the agency being over budget with the legal firm. Lyn Simmons and Stuart Beckley advocated for the committees to identify pain points and draft internal revisions first, then engage legal counsel for review in the next fiscal year.

District Agreement Working Group Proposal: Given the budget concerns with legal fees, it was suggested that a working group comprised of Ops, IT, and Finance subcommittees meet monthly from March through June or July 1st to compile identified issues. The working group would present a document back to the full Board in July, followed by legal review. The board set a deadline of May 31st for all subcommittees to submit suggestions for amendments, additions, or deletions to the district agreement.

Sheriff's Department Onboarding Timeline and Status: The current contract with the Sheriff's Department expires on June 30th, and they have articulated a desire to become a full member with a seat on the Board. The Sheriff's Department was given a calculated 15% assessment from the FY27 member agency shared portion, which they agreed to. Since the current district agreement contains procedures for onboarding new government agencies, the Board agreed that the Sheriff's Department must follow that established process.

Assessment Numbers and Contingency Planning: Penny will send out assessment numbers to the communities, showing the current rate and a second number reflecting the anticipated change if the Sheriff's Department officially joins. Lyn Simmons noted that the current Sheriff's agreement could be extended for six months to avoid rushing the onboarding process. It was confirmed that the Sheriff's Department would not receive free years since they do not bring in 911 PSAP funds, which provide assessment incentives.

- 3. New Business: IT Update and Website Development:** Grant Herman provided an IT update, including a screen share of an early iteration of the new website. The website is being developed in-house to save costs over external vendors like Civic

Plus. The team is finalizing compliance with new ADA rules, though full compliance may not be mandatory until 2027.

Longmeadow Circuit Validation and Hexagon Update: The new circuit to Longmeadow was successfully validated last week and is confirmed working, with a move to the new circuit finalizing. Mike Meaney provided a brief update on the Hexagon project, noting that work is progressing and travel to workshops has been ongoing.

Finance and Treasurer Update: The new Treasurer is working Monday, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and has made significant progress despite uncovering several concerns. A Finance meeting is tentatively planned for the following week, with a full report expected at the next board meeting. The next meeting is tentatively set for the fourth Tuesday of the month.

FY23, 24, and 25 Audits and CBIS: Penny Ryan reported significant progress on the CBIZ audits for FY23, 24, and 25, with timelines now set for submission, though a specific deadline of March 12th was noted. The team received necessary spreadsheets from State 911, and the audit is reportedly moving forward with confirmation that timelines can be met. Penny noted that they will distribute new financial information to the participants soon, likely before the next scheduled meeting.

Op's Committee update: District Agreement and Sheriff's Department: The revival of the district agreement, specifically concerning the sheriff's department, was discussed, a topic that has been on the agenda for some time. Chief Williams confirmed that they will need to appoint people to work on the agreement, particularly addressing the sheriff's department's effect on operations and their involvement in the committee. They also plan to examine other regional district agreements to assess how chiefs of agencies are involved in leadership and determine if current practices can be improved.

Annual Evaluation and Chiefs' Meeting Scheduling: The team is behind on the annual evaluation of Westcomm's Operations, a task Chief Williams is committed to reviving with Chief Harris. The Op's Committee meeting schedule was confirmed as the fourth Tuesday at 9:00 AM, a time that Chief Williams will "really push" to maintain to encourage chiefs to be involved in the main meeting. It was noted the importance of Chief involvement for attracting new membership and ensuring their voices are heard at the dispatch center.

Upcoming Chiefs' Leadership Reorganization: The Op's Committee will undergo reorganization in March, potentially resulting in a new chair and/or vice chair. Chief Williams, currently the vice chair, noted that Chief Harris is the current chair, and new leadership has been sought. They thanked the current Chiefs for their critical input, which is essential for the future success and growth of the Regional Advisory Committee (RAC).

Executive Director's Update: Visit from Holyoke Officials and Community

Outreach: Holyoke officials, including Mayor Garcia and their Police Chief, toured the facility to gather information about the dispatch center. Penny Ryan emphasized that the Board's involvement and the input from Chiefs, Operations, and Finance set the center apart and serve as a key selling point for new partners. The visit was described as a promising initial step, with the professional tour addressing technical questions and showcasing the facility's tremendous potential for public safety, cost savings, and improved response times.

Timeline for Future Partnerships: While Holyoke officials did not set a firm timeline, they asked what the potential schedule could be, suggesting a slow process due to the city's size and complexity. The facility offered an open-door opportunity for Holyoke to send anyone interested in decision-making, such as Chiefs and the Sergeant who oversees their dispatch. The tour also included a visit to the recently opened Real Time Information Center (RTIC) in Chicopee, which impressed the visitors and is offered as a resource to all communities.

Public Safety Technology Initiatives: The investment in RTIC was highlighted as a major success, with crime analysts solving cases rapidly and enhancing community safety. Furthermore, Mayor Vieau shared that the community is adopting the bus citation technology from Bus Patrol, installing cameras on school buses to catch license plates of violators, with fines tied to vehicle registration renewal.

Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) Protocol Review and CPR Metrics: A meeting was scheduled to review EMD and other protocols with Dr. Seth Kelly, the medical control doctor from Baystate. The Quality Assurance coordinator, Marlyn, highlighted the team's strong performance in cardiac calls, noting that the time from recognition of a cardiac event to hands-on CPR is 99 seconds, significantly better than the area minimum of 120 seconds.

Team Roll Calls and Setting Expectations: Four "roll call" meetings were conducted last week, meeting with all teams in person to disseminate important information and set expectations for staff. Penny Ryan described the meetings as beneficial for communication and engagement, noting the importance of ensuring the staff is fully informed after five months in the new building.

Staffing Levels and Hiring Efforts: The center is actively hiring, with the goal of onboarding five new dispatchers, aiming to reach the full budgeted staff of 30 dispatchers for the first time in Westcomm history. New staff requires a six-month training process before working on the floor, making the team's investment significant, but they were shown a "vision board" detailing the benefits of being fully staffed. The center has successfully recruited five experienced dispatchers, a significant change compared to previous attempts, though even experienced staff must complete a four-to-four-and-a-half-month protocol.

Upcoming State 911 Commission Meeting: Tony and Penny are scheduled to attend the 911 commission meeting to hear preliminary guidelines for the FY27 Grants firsthand. A significant point of interest is the state's new requirement for agencies seeking to form a new regional center to articulate strong documentation explaining why they cannot join an existing one. The state is not moving forward with a regional center feasibility study involving Hadley, Granby, Amherst, and Northampton, requiring those communities to look elsewhere.

South Hadley's Dispatch Decision and Future Strategy: South Hadley ultimately chose Westfield for their dispatch services, which came in under the budget presented by the center. Penny Ryan suggested they may need to discuss different numbering or financial arrangements to attract smaller communities in the future.

World Cup Staffing Collaboration and Poker Run Fundraiser: The center was approached by Foxboro, which is hosting the World Cup, to provide certified staff for police, fire, and EMD dispatching, offering to pay overtime for their services. Additionally, a proposal was presented to host a yearly "poker run" motorcycle ride starting at Westcomm, passing through the five represented communities, to raise money for On-Site, a mental health resource for first responders. The organizers are planning the event, which will not involve on-site alcohol or alcohol prizes, and will seek approval through an insurance vendor and participant waivers.

Support for Monson Police Department: Jennifer Wolowicz thanked Penny for allowing Monson to use the facility on Thursday to host a Lieutenants assessment center for their police department. Monson is also scheduled to host their department head meeting at the facility in March.

4. **New Business not reasonably anticipated within 24 hours:** None at this time
5. **Adjourn:** A motion was made by Tom Christensent and 2nd by Mayor Vieau to adjourn the meeting. A rollcall was done 5 yes, meeting adjourned at 12:28 P.M.