

MEETING OF THE WESTCOMM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MARCH 24, 11:00 A.M.

WESTCOMM

645 SHAWINIGAN DRIVE, CHICOPEE MA 01020

GOOGLE MEET:

<HTTPS://MEET.GOOGLE.COM/HCK-YUSN-DMJ>

PHONE: 1-731-503-0836 PIN: 400 916 870#

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

John Beaulieu, Chicopee

Mike Meaney, IT Specialist WESTCOMM

Grant Herman, IT Director WESTCOMM

Lisa Ricardo, HR Director, WESTCOMM

Mark Williams, Chief, East Longmeadow PD

John Rigney, Chief, Longmeadow FD

Kim D'Amato, Town Accountant, Ware

Brian Harris, Chief, Monson FD

Kim Collins, Town Accountant, East Longmeadow

Marlyn Velazquez, QA, WESTCOMM

Jim Martinez, Chief, Ware FD

Local 144

1. Meeting called to order 11:06 A.M. A roll call was done, and present at the meeting were Tom Christensen, Lyn Simmons, Jennifer Wolowicz, and Stuart Beckley and Mayor John Vieau. 5 present.
2. **Old Business: Meeting Minutes Approval:** A motion was made by Lyn Simmons and 2nd by Stuart Beckley to approve the minutes as written from meetings held on 11/1/25, 12/11/25, 1/8/26, 1/21/26 and 2/24/26, A roll call was done, 5 yes, motion passed.

Building and Update: An update was provided that all necessary building information had been sent to Carl Ferguson, and a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) is anticipated soon, following the resolution of previous issues. Two remaining items—a heaved pedestrian gate, which is under warranty, and a potentially faulty piece of glass in Penny's office, also under warranty—need to be addressed before the building committee is dissolved. Penny will coordinate with Cecilio regarding the glass repair.

Radio System Update: Michael Meaney reported that the Zetron fire station alerting project is experiencing delays, and they plan to follow up with Jason Smola from Goosetown to get the project back on track. The consoles are pre-wired, and equipment staging is currently underway. Goosetown is also awaiting alias names from Chicopee PD to finish radio reprogramming, which has been complicated by identifier and emergency button activation issues.

Grant Application Status: The deadline for the development grant was pushed to April 15th due to the mission critical partners. The priority for the competitive grant application is a simplex fire ground system to enhance safety by eliminating the need for repeaters at fire scenes and meeting National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards. Other priorities for the development grant include the bond payment, the 25-year five-assessment, Grants salary, followed by the radio projects.

Sheriff's Department Participation Interest: The board received a March 9th letter from the Hampden County Sheriff's Office expressing interest in participating in Westcomm. This initiates the process outlined in the district agreement, which requires input from the Operations Committee and the Finance Committee. The Operations Committee had a Q&A session and continued discussions but has not yet voted on a recommendation, opting to address the matter at their next regular meeting.

Operations Committee Discussion on Sheriff's Department: Discussions revolved around two main areas: how the assessment fee was determined and concerns over the proposal's implication that the Sheriff's Department would receive four dedicated dispatchers. The January letter's wording regarding dedicated dispatchers caused concern among member agencies about potentially receiving a different level of service, though it was conveyed that they are attempting to follow the process and slow it down to vet all questions. This situation highlighted the need to create a transparent process for future agreements with independent agencies like fire or water districts.

Financial Update on Sheriff's Department: John Vieau reported that Sheriff Cocchi is facing budget cuts across the Commonwealth, which may impact their ability to move forward with participation in Westcomm, though they still require dispatch service. The Finance Committee has not yet discussed the Sheriff's Department proposal but is scheduled to meet the following day, and the item may be added to their agenda.

- 3. New Business: Prepared Live and Assistive Call Taking Discussion:** Westcomm is expanding its "Prepared Live" assistive call taking tool to include quality assurance aspects and plans to implement non-emergency business line handling using AI, which is named Willa. This AI is intended to handle non-emergent calls, such as trash pickup or license-to-carry inquiries, to free up dispatchers for 911 calls, with systems in place to automatically transfer calls if an emergency is detected or if a caller is frustrated. The AI is a closed system that uses only information provided by Westcomm for CJUS compliance, and they can set timeframes for information relevant to specific events like fireworks.

Concerns and Testing of the AI System: A board member expressed caution regarding the system, noting prior experiences where similar technology increased staff workload. The system is built with numerous parameters, and any question or recognized frustration automatically defaults the call to a human dispatcher. The system will also bypass all lobby calls to ensure immediate access to a live person for potential police service needs, though one board member felt this might defeat some of the AI's purpose by continuing to take up dispatcher time for non-emergency lobby calls. It was agreed to investigate the possibility of setting up a test environment and providing literature and use videos to the Board and Operations Committee.

Information Technology (IT) Update: Grant provided a public service announcement (PSA) regarding an uptick in sophisticated cyberattacks targeting government agencies due to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. The new website's go-live date is pending the finalization and polishing of the design, which requires a few more meetings.

Finance and Audit Update: The Finance Committee is meeting soon to review and approve the finalized Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 audit and the FY 2024 draft audit, which are required for submission to Hilltop to move forward with the bond anticipation note (BAN) process. The Treasurer, Rod, has been diligent in reconciling accounts, including working with CBiz, and is moving Westcomm toward compliance with the standardized Massachusetts accounting structure. Hilltop is seeking information from four communities (East Longmeadow, Longmeadow, Monson, and Ware).

Financial Policy and Accounting Structure: The current financial situation involves correcting issues like QuickBooks rolling over grant money that did not exist and Lumping payroll into one account. Mihaila is working with Rod to draft strong financial policies to implement checks and balances and guidelines, aiming for implementation by July 1, FY 2027. The Board discussed the need to potentially modify the budget to include 10 to 12 hours per month of professional accounting services as suggested by Rod.

Scheduling the Audit Approval Vote: Given the deadlines for the BAN process, the board needs to approve the audits after the Finance Committee votes on them to submit them to Hilltop. A possible Zoom meeting for the full board to vote on the

audits was tentatively scheduled for 9:00 a.m. Friday morning, requiring a quorum of three people and relying on the Finance Committee's assumed approval the following day. It was noted that bond counsel would provide the specific language needed for any required votes concerning the permanent borrowing.

Financial Discussion and Documentation: The speaker expressed comfort with a full Board discussion for a financial matter of significant magnitude. Anthony sent a document, which was clarified to be a litigation statement, and they also planned to send the financing schedule and the list of accounts shortly after.

Operations Committee Update: Rehab 78 Presentation: The Operations Committee received a presentation from Rehab 78, a volunteer organization that provides on-scene support to firefighters and fire victims, which is funded entirely by donations. This resource is noteworthy because Rehab 78 provides immediate, on-scene assistance, unlike other agencies that typically help after the fire.

Operations Committee Update: District Agreement Review Task Force: The Operations Committee formed a district agreement review task force, consisting of Chief William, Chief Harris, Chief Martinez, Deputy Fire Chief Sanford, and Captain Lambert. The task force's first meeting reviewed the Westcomm district agreement, comparing it to other agreements and noting that Westcomm's structure is very similar to others and the model district agreement. The primary differences were in how assessments are calculated, and the task force aims to generate recommendations for clarification in the next version of the Westcomm agreement, with their next meeting set for April 9th.

Operations Committee Reorganization Elections: Reorganization elections were held, resulting in Chief Harris concluding their term as chair, having elected not to continue. Chief Williams moved up from Vice Chair, and Chief Rigney from Longmeadow is serving as the new Vice Chair.

Executive Director's Update: New Hires and Training: Westcomm welcomed four new hires who are brand new and lack dispatch experience, and they are expected to be fully operational in about six months. The organization also recently hosted a three-day Communication Training Officer program in collaboration with State 911, and they now have approximately 14 or 15 staff members who are certified Communication Training Officers.

Executive Director's Update: Polar Plunge and Employee Anniversaries: Penny, Anthony, and Greg Wallace participated in the polar plunge event over the weekend and intend to bring costumes next year to improve participation. Furthermore, two dispatchers, Matt Clark and Anna, celebrated their six-year anniversaries with the organization.

Executive Director's Update: Community Collaboration and Training: Westcomm attended the Smith Vocational Career Fair and is actively collaborating with National Ambulance to allow dispatchers to participate in ride-alongs on ambulances for hands-on experience, which is a new addition to their training

process. Community engagement is a focus for April, which is 911 awareness month, and the organization is seeking opportunities to be involved with schools and senior centers.

Executive Director's Update: Ongoing Projects and First Responder Community Involvement: The Hexagon project is still progressing, requiring significant time and energy from Greg, Tony, and Mike. Westcomm has been included in after-action calls with the first responder community, which is viewed as very important for their team's closure and sense of belonging.

Executive Director's Update: Medical Control and Upcoming Trainings: The organization met with their medical control doctor, Dr. Kelly, who is highly involved and intuitive, and they are now approved to utilize poison control resources for callers. Westcomm is also offering several upcoming trainings to agencies across the state, including a CJIS training for dispatchers and police officers.

Executive Director's Update: National Public Safety Telecommunicator Week: National Public Safety Telecommunicator Week will be celebrated from April 12th to April 18th, with plans for a carnival theme for the staff. They will be reaching out to communities during that week to request shoutouts for their dispatchers.

Regionalization Study Score: At the State 911 Commission meeting, draft scores were shared from Mission Critical Partners' regionalization study, which was a contracted assessment. Westcomm's draft score was an 8.43 out of 10, which is well above the state average of 7.65 out of 10. The main report is scheduled for release in June or July.

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

5. **Adjournment:** A motion was made by Lyn Simmons and 2nd by Stuart Beckley to adjourn the meeting. A roll call was done, 4 yes, meeting adjourned 12:21 P.M.