

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

**Date:** November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
Bowers Conference Room  
Room 417, Rembert C. Dennis Building  
10:00 am  
(Members attending via WebEx)

**Subject:** Minutes of the South Carolina 911 Advisory Committee Meeting

**Attendees:** *Committee Members* – Mike Flynn – PSAP Rep. Spartanburg County, Neil Baxley – PSAP Rep. Beaufort County, Mitch Fulmore – PSAP Rep. Florence County, Rick Blackwell – PSAP Rep. Greenville County, Dent Adams – Wireless Rep. FTC, Ben Spearman – Wireline Rep. Comporium, Jack Maguire – Consumer Rep., David Morrison – RFA SC 911 Program Manager, Adam DeMars – GIS Expert/RFA. *Staff* – Paul Athey – RFA Division Director, Michael Ball – RFA SC NG911 Program Manager, Carrie Bundrick – RFA Accounting Manager, Amy Simpson – RFA SC Wireless 911 Program Coordinator.

- I. Chairman Blackwell called the meeting to order at 10:00am.
- II. Chairman Blackwell presented the October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021 meeting minutes and asked if any members had edits or questions. Neil Baxley motioned to approve the minutes. Dent Adams seconded the motion. All members voted aye in favor; Chairman Blackwell declared the minutes approved as written. (*See attached*)
- III. **ESInet Implementation Update**
  - A. Michael Ball presented project updates for the groups slated for implementation through the end of calendar year 2021 and the groups preparing for migration in calendar year 2022.
  - B. Group 1 Project Updates: PSAP migrations are complete. Viper data from ECATs is not being received for Batesburg-Leesville and Barnwell sites. This does not hinder PSAP operations; Comtech is working to resolve this issue.
  - C. Group 1.5 Updates: Abbeville County has been added to group 1.5 due to CPE support concerns. A site visit revealed an old system supported on a monthly contract. Abbeville chose the hosted Solacom CPE solution offered through state contract. This enabled RFA to accommodate an earlier migration date and faster onboarding process. Comtech and Solacom will begin shipping equipment to Pickens and Abbeville County PSAPs at the end of November. Pickens County equipment installation process will begin mid-December. Migration dates for all other PSAPs in group 1.5 remain unchanged with the preferred migration time of 5am – 2pm.
  - D. Group 2 Project Updates: Oconee County's backup PSAP facility will be complete in time to go live with the primary PSAP and has been added back to the group 2 migration schedule. Comtech site visits are complete. Data collection is ongoing, and circuit surveys continue, primarily with Segra. Chairman Blackwell anticipated some

difficulty obtaining diverse paths among certain sites due to the area being remote and only one vendor servicing the area. As a solution, Mr. Ball explained that Comtech requires two separate, diverse paths. If an outside vendor cannot establish a second path in a service area, then the sole vendor that services that area is required to establish a second diverse path. Migration dates for group 2 remain unchanged apart from the Oconee County backup PSAP being added back on the schedule. Anderson County's backup PSAP migration date remains undetermined until their site/equipment is complete.

- E. Next Steps: Continue early coordination with PSAPs preparing for migration in 2022. Mr. Ball presented the list of planned migrations for the calendar year 2022 and asked if there were any questions. David Morrison asked Mr. Ball to summarize group 1 migrations, specifically Bamberg County. Mr. Ball explained that there is a nine-hour scheduled window for each PSAP migration. The first four migrations encountered various issues resulting in the use of the full nine (or more) hours. Bamberg was the last PSAP to migrate. It was a complete change from a Vesta to a Solacom-hosted solution, and migration took only two and a half hours. The reduced time frame was the result of improved and organized coordination efforts between Comtech and the PSAPs. Chairman Blackwell thanked Mr. Ball for his work and continued to the next agenda item.

#### IV. Fiscal Update

- A. Paul Athey, Division Director with RFA, addressed a correction to the fiscal model update presented at the October 911 Advisory committee meeting. The previous year's fiscal model should have indicated an anticipated adjustment of the wireless fee to \$0.64 in 2025, not 2024. The corrected graph was explained to the committee. The correction does not impact the committee's recommendations made at the October meeting.
- B. Mr. Athey also addressed an update made to the fiscal model for 2022 - 2031 projections which shows a fee adjustment of \$0.64 may be necessary for 2023 as opposed to the October recommendation of 2024. This update is necessary due to a change in the statewide ESInet migration schedule made after the October committee meeting. The updated graph reflects the potential increase in 2023. The RFA Board also requested Mr. Athey analyze the potential for raising the operating reserve threshold (currently set at six to nine months fixed costs) to ensure sufficient funds are available for unanticipated anomalies.
- C. Mr. Athey outlined several factors that could impact the fiscal model. These factors include a variation in fund activity for the remainder of 2021 compared to current projections; revisions or additions to reimbursement policies; developments related to the statewide NG911 project (adjustments to the PSAP deployment schedule or level of participation with the hosted call handling solution); and the potential for additional federal grants with substantially higher funding (pending Congressional action).

- D. President Biden signed the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill into law November 15, 2021. Preliminary research into the bill by Mr. Athey indicates the original amount proposed for NG911 has decreased from \$10 billion to \$470 million; this has not been confirmed. If the criteria for this legislation is the same as the last federal grant and South Carolina were able to obtain the same percentage (2.14%) of the total funding of \$470 million as it obtained in the previous grant, those funds would equate to approximately \$10 million which would have a significant impact on the fiscal model. Mr. Athey indicated he would continue to research the legislation and update the committee as new information is obtained. He concluded his presentation by asking if the committee members had any questions.
  - E. Jack Maguire asked if any SC Legislators were involved in the NG911 federal grant appropriations. Mr. Athey responded that since the legislation was signed, any information contained in the bill is now final. He anticipates the same agency that managed the last grant program (National Transportation & Safety Board) will manage this one as well, and the application process should be similar. Chairman Blackwell stated that his understanding was that the National Telecommunications and Information Administration will be the agency responsible for overseeing this federal grant program, but he could not confirm the information. Mr. Athey agreed and added that both agencies would likely oversee the grant program.
  - F. Chairman Blackwell asked Mr. Athey about the RFA Board's request to analyze the potential for raising the operating reserve threshold and if he had any data that indicated whether that would be necessary or not. Mr. Athey explained that the current threshold is based upon six to nine months of fixed costs, or overhead, and the length of time that overhead should be maintained. Extending the timeframe to nine to twelve months would be one consideration for potentially increasing the operating reserve threshold. Mr. Athey stated he had started the analysis and offered to share results with the committee at the end of the meeting.
- V. York County Request for Reimbursement Consideration for EPD and EFD
- A. Prior to the meeting, Mr. Morrison provided the committee with a letter from Allen Brandon, York County, requesting the committee reconsider reimbursing EPD and EFD. In 2013, Pickens County asked the committee to consider adding all three disciplines EMD (Medical), EPD (Police), and EFD (Fire) to the list of eligible items for reimbursement. At the time, the committee was concerned with how this would affect the 911 fund balance and subsequently voted to only reimburse EMD since not all PSAPs use all three disciplines. Several years later, Saluda County asked the committee to reconsider adding EPD and EFD to the list of items eligible for reimbursement. However, the committee again voted against it.
  - B. Mr. Brandon thanked the committee for the opportunity to address this topic once again. He explained that in reviewing the SC Code of Laws and Regulations regarding

Class 4 TCOs in section 23-47-20, the intent is for RFA to be responsible for creating a 9-1-1 system that answers “police, fire, and medical calls.” In section 23-47-40 (system funding), it states that the funding can be used for initial and in-service training. However, PSAPs have only been reimbursed for basic TCO and EMD certification which falls short of the standard. The basic functions of any PSAP depend on the TCO’s ability to effectively and efficiently dispatch police, fire, and medical to serve its citizens as callers face life and death situations. Not all agencies train in these areas due to lack of funding, and it is not mandated for their initial certification(s) by the SCCJA. Mr. Brandon asked the committee to recommend that RFA reconsider funding all three disciplines of basic training or other pertinent advanced training/recertifications. He believes it would be a game-changer if all TCOs were trained at the same level across the state.

- C. Chairman Blackwell asked if the committee had any questions for Mr. Brandon. Neil Baxley asked for clarification of “other pertinent advanced training or recertification” in Mr. Brandon’s letter. Mr. Brandon explained that he had reached out to several agencies and many of them do not have CTOs (Certified Training Officers). Their TCOs train online which costs \$500 per class. In comparison, the cost to designate and train someone within their agency as a CTO is \$500, with each additional discipline/certification costing around \$160. Having a CTO within an agency would result in substantial cost savings as well as benefit all South Carolinians by ensuring every agency throughout the state is trained at the same level. Adam DeMars suggested that if the committee were to consider approving Mr. Brandon’s request, they should consider requiring the TCO commit to a minimum period of continued employment in order to be eligible for reimbursement considering the high rate of turnover for these positions. In response to Mike Flynn’s comments, Mr. Brandon clarified that he was only asking for the training for EPD/EFD, not the software. Mr. Brandon asked that question of RFA E911 Coordinator, Amy Simpson, and was advised that reimbursement requests for software that included all three disciplines were reduced to include only the EMD portion of the software. Mike Flynn stated his opinion was that PSAPs should be reimbursed for training for all three disciplines as TCOs are required to be trained to answer all 9-1-1 calls regardless of the need for police, fire, or medical.
- D. Chairman Blackwell asked if there was a motion from the committee to vote on Mr. Brandon’s request. Mr. Morrison stated that RFA would need more financial data to forecast the effect on the fund balance prior to entertaining a motion to vote on this issue. Jack Maguire added that the amount of funding spent on South Carolina transitioning to NG911 adds to the importance of having TCOs who are adequately trained in all aspects of answering 9-1-1 calls to include EPD and EFD.
- F. Chairman Blackwell asked Mr. Morrison to explain the history behind the previous committee approving only the EMD portion for reimbursement. Mr. Morrison explained that the concern was the effect it would have on the fund balance given the timing of transitioning to NG911. RFA currently reimburses for EMD software and



training, whereas Mr. Brandon's request is asking that only the training portion of EPD/EFD be eligible for reimbursement, not the software. Mr. Athey added that RFA's policy states that both EMD software and training are eligible for reimbursement and encouraged the committee to consider the same for this request. He expressed a cost analysis would be beneficial before moving forward with any final decisions on the matter as it will likely be costly. Chairman Blackwell agreed that both software and training should be taken into consideration and a cost analysis is necessary before the committee takes further action on Mr. Brandon's request. Chairman Blackwell asked if the remaining committee members had any further comments. They all concurred, and the discussion was tabled.

#### VI. PSAP Outage Notification Update

- A. David Morrison and Mike Flynn reached out to several vendors and received quotes from each that vary in features and price range. Feedback from the committee is needed to determine how to proceed with vendor product demonstrations.
- B. Jack Maguire asked what the products are designed to do. Mr. Morrison explained that the initial request was that RFA purchase software that would alert any PSAP of an outage that occurred throughout the state and that the outage notification would come from RFA. In the June 2021 meeting, Jim Lake discussed Charleston's Rapid Deploy radius mapping package which allowed them to see 911 calls and obtain Apple/Google information. Using that information, the PSAP was able to generate an SMS text message to the callers stating the 911 system was down and instructing them to call the 10-digit number provided or reply to the text message with their emergency. Mr. Morrison asked the committee if they wanted any official outage notification to come from RFA and if they wanted both the outage notification system and a software package such as the one Jim Lake discussed in June. He added that the ESInet project will provide RFA with the capability to see an outage once the majority of PSAPs have migrated.
- C. Adam DeMars questioned if RFA is equipped to handle or should be responsible for outage notification since it would require 24/7 - 365 operations. Dent Adams questioned the liability impact it would have on the agency if tasked with that responsibility. Chairman Blackwell expressed that, from his perspective, if the state is taking on the ESInet project, there are certain functions that the state should be responsible for and suggested that the state E911 Coordinator be the designated contact person for such outage notifications.
- D. Jack Maguire made a motion that Mr. Morrison and Mr. Flynn prepare a presentation outlining the options, how well the options meet the standards, and if notifications are automated with the 911 community and the public. Neil Baxley seconded the motion. Chairman Blackwell asked about any discussion on the motion. Mike Flynn asked the committee to clarify that they are asking he and Mr. Morrison to come back with information on an automated notification system for 911 outages. Mr. Flynn also asked

if this solution should include PSAP notifications if a specific WSP cannot dial 911 in a given county. Mr. Morrison suggested that if the committee is asking for both solutions, there should be two separate motions rather than one combined motion. Chairman Blackwell agreed and asked if there was any further discussion from the committee on Mr. Maguire's motion. Hearing none, he declared the motion passed.

#### VII. Other Items and Questions

- A. Dent Adams informed the committee that he is retiring after 35 years with Farmers Telephone and will be resigning from the committee. He added that Farmers Telephone Coop values the importance of the 911 Advisory Committee, and it is their desire that his replacement should be a quality individual with sound judgement. Mr. Adams recommended Melanie Burgess of Farmers Telephone Coop as his replacement and stated that it was his great pleasure to serve on the committee. Chairman Blackwell thanked Mr. Adams for his honorable service and extended his appreciation on behalf of the committee, the 911 community, and the citizens of South Carolina.
- B. Paul Athey presented the fiscal graph showing the current reserve threshold at the six to nine-month range. The bottom of the reserve threshold shows a fund balance of approximately \$13.8 million, the top of the threshold is \$20.6 million, and the mid-range is \$17.2 million. If the threshold were extended to six to twelve months, the bottom of the reserve threshold would be approximately \$20 million, the top range is \$26.8 million, and the mid-range is \$23.4 million. The graph represents a \$6 million-dollar shift. Chairman Blackwell thanked him for the additional information and asked if any committee members had any questions for Mr. Athey. Hearing none, he asked if there was a motion to adjourn.

#### VIII. Adjournment

- A. Jack Maguire made the motion to adjourn. Mike Flynn seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:12 am.

Attachments: Agenda, Meeting Materials

Public Notice of this meeting was posted at: <http://rfa.sc.gov/e911>

These minutes were approved on

Amy Simpson

*Jan 19, 2022*  
