

Clark County Communications Sub-Committee

Unapproved Meeting Minutes

April 16, 2013

6:30 PM

Greenwood Area Fire and Ambulance

Members Present: Dale Mitte, (Clark County LE/EM Committee), Mark Renderman (Clark County Board of Supervisors/Chief, O-W-C FD & EMS), Greg Herrick (Clark County Sheriff), John Ross (Clark County Emergency Management), Tom Abel (Fire Chief Greenwood FD & EMS), Bob Mitchell (Fire Chief Humbird FD), Danielle Boushon (Granton 1st Responders/Clark County Dispatch), Rick Rinehart (Fire Chief Dorchester FD), Scott Strzok (Deputy Clark County Sheriff's Department), Jeff Gurney (Dispatcher Clark County Sheriff's Department), Gary Leichtman (OIC Dorchester PD/ Clark County Board of Supervisors),

Members Absent: Jason Foth (Fire Chief Spencer FD/ Clark County ESA President), Matt Meyer (Fire Chief Neillsville FD), Ron Gosse (Police Chief Colby-Abbotsford PD), Leon Newswanger (Dorchester FD Assistant Chief), David Martin (Dorchester FD Lieutenant 1), Jim Backus (Chief Deputy Clark County Sheriff's Department),

New members and Invited Guests: Gordon Haselow, (Clark County LE/EM Committee), Rodger Ashbeck, (Clark County Board Finance Committee), Mike Ruff, (Clark Electric Cooperative), Sheila Nyberg, (Clark County Economic Development Corp.), Travis Nixdorf, (Abbotsford EMS)

1. **Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order at 6:33 PM by Chairman Dale Mitte. Introductions of members of the committee took place.
2. **Approval of March 12, 2013 meeting minutes:** Motion made by Danielle Boushon and second by Jeff Gurney to approve minutes. Motion carried.
3. **Discussion and possible approval of new members:** Dale Mitte appointed new member Travis Nixdorf to the group. He also invited guests present to participate in this and future meetings.
4. **Discussion regarding efforts to find funding:** Dale Mitte discussed the Economic Development Committee meeting held in Loyal on April 9, 2013. John (JD) Milburn discussed possible funding options which may be available as well as technology Columbia County is using related to wireless data sharing. Sheila Nyberg discussed need for public/private partnerships to be explored as well as need for broadband serviced in Clark County. Mark Renderman provided background information regarding Finance Committee work being done to plan for budgetary needs within the county over the next several years. Rodger Ashbeck talked to the group about the county General Fund and obligations associated with that fund balance. Rodger went on to discuss strategies for Clark County to borrow money and how needs of all county operations impact that borrowing. Mike Ruff discussed USDA loans that Clark Electric may be able to access but not sure if this

project would tie into those programs or not. Additional discussion took place regarding having vendors speak to the group in efforts to educate membership as to how various types of radio systems work. The possibility of requesting funding for expanding the Elert & Associates report or having a different consultant provide a second opinion and expand the study were also discussed.

5. **Discussion of any issues/concerns regarding current system:** Dale Mitte asked for each department represented to bring forward any comments both positive and negative regarding performance and use of current system. Comments are shown below:

Dorchester FD: Biggest problem is paging since narrowbanding took place

Radio coverage is diminishing

Paging- sometimes get tones, sometimes only get end of voice

Portable radio is a problem

Mobiles seem better than portables

Gary Leichtman advised he has unique situation as he scans three counties on his radios and when he is out of vehicle on portable he has to shut scanning off. This limits him to use of Owen Sheriff repeater and he has difficulties receiving and transmitting on that channel at times. Dispatch will often contact him by cell phone if needed and cannot reach him on radio.

Owen-Withee-Curtiss FD: Problems in areas around Curtiss as well as North and West of Withee

Difficulty receiving pages

Portable coverage is really bad

Issues are new since narrowbanding

Mobiles have been pretty good

Weather does seem to make a difference

New Owen FD repeater installed helps on their department frequency

Sheriff Herrick asked if departments were receiving tones on pages and not voice or if tones were not coming through either. Sheriff Herrick expressed concern that microphones in Dispatch may not be being used correctly and staff may not be talking into them loudly enough.

Dispatch: Issues with radio traffic with Neillsville and Loyal at times

Portables are hit or miss

Discussed possibility of equipment issues in Dispatch as times when Squad Room radios are working fine and Dispatch not receiving radio traffic as well

Abbotsford EMS: Coverage is decent

Crackly at times, concerned about something being wrong with the equipment

Advantage is that Colby LG Repeater is very close

Coverage is less since narrowbanding

Police Department Officers have limited use of Sheriff Channel on portable radios in town

Thorp FD: Using phone bar for calls, not pagers for most part

LG is pretty good although there are times when they cannot get out on LG

Neillsville FD: Portables are an issue

Mobiles good except on west end and ATV trails

Pagers seem to be ok

Greenwood: Biggest trouble is to the West of Greenwood

Mobiles can usually hit Greenwood Tower

Portables have lost a lot

Paging- have had to make some changes including amplifier at one firefighter's residence

Rock Dam area may get tones but not always voice

Dispatch advises Greenwood and Loyal PD's seem to be good

Scott Strzok mentioned "dead spots" in Sherwood area. He also relayed difficulties talking to Dispatch today from crash scene on US Highway 10 at County Rd Y near Chili. Also noted an EMS call in Chili area where some difficulties were experienced

Colby-Abby PD: Sheriff Herrick advised he had spoken with Chief Gosse who was unable to attend this meeting. Sheriff Herrick reported Chief Gosse states things are ok for them. He did report on an incident approximately 2 weeks prior where it was thought a Colby-Abby Officer had called for help but had not been heard. Sheriff Herrick relayed that the Officer had not called for help but had advised any other responding units could cancel on coming to assist when he was heard on the radio.

Granton: Pagers are working well

Vita Plus employees having difficulty getting pages inside buildings at work may involve issues with building construction causing the problems.

Danielle Boushon reported having her pager with her in Marshfield today and it worked fine. She then played the recording on the pager which was clear.

Cloudy days better than sunny days

Some issues may be attributed to operator error by people carrying pagers

Portable have problems in Sherwood and Washburn areas

FG Blue not working as well since narrowbanding

Mobiles- not a lot of complaints, sometimes trouble in Sherwood and Washburn

Humbird FD: Narrowbanding was worst thing

Can talk to Jackson County but not to Clark

Better pages come from Jackson County

Worse since narrowbanding

Coverage on Clark County frequencies more miss than hit

Discussion took place regarding the After Action review conducted on the traffic crash on Highway 10 in February. It was noted that radio communications was identified and was a common concern among those involved. Radio coverage and ability to talk to Dispatch in both Clark and Jackson County was a concern which was brought up.

6. **Discussion regarding possible options to address any concerns/issues identified:** Discussion took place regarding options to expand on the Elert & Associates report as well as possibility of working with a different consultant to re-evaluate the issues. Committee would need to identify additional questions to have looked at. It was suggested to invite Northway Communications or other vendor

in to speak to the group regarding how different systems work. Also to contact Portage County to discuss how they addressed issues. Danielle Boushon will work on arranging these presentations.

7. **Discussion on items to be added to the next agenda:** Dale Mitte asked for any items the committee would like to see on the next agenda. Items identified included:

Discussion regarding possible options to address any concerns/issues identified:

Northway Presentation

Portage County Information

8. **Public Comment:** There was no Public Comment.
9. **Set next meeting date & time:** next meeting will be Wednesday May 15th at 6:30 PM in Greenwood. Dale Mitte thanked Chief Abel for hosting the meetings and allowing use of the building.
10. **Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned at 9:18 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

John M. Ross
Recording Secretary