

MINUTES
WINNEBAGO COUNTY EMERGENCY TELEPHONE SYSTEM BOARD

Rockford Fire Headquarters, 204 S. 1st Street Rockford, IL 61104

August 30, 2023

I. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 9:06 a. m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Gary Caruana, Michele Pankow, Adam Truman, Joel Hallstrom, EJ Dilonardo, Todd Stockburger, Shawn Connors, Mike McCommond, Carla Redd

Guest: Jen Fey, Elizabeth Russell, John Girone, Adam Eich, Steve Schultz, Rick Ciganek, Todd Hughes, Robyn Gustafson

Absent: Sandy Stansell, Joe Corl, EJ Dilonardo

III. Minutes: N/A

IV. New Business

• 911 ETSB Budget

John Girone reviewed budget items line by line as shown in copies provided. Items commented on: Todd Stockburger suggested a retention incentive for 911 Dispatchers. Gary Caruana asked Todd what the bonus would look like. Michele Pankow asked for clarification, as a sign-on bonus was what was discussed prior and not a retention bonus. Sheriff Caruana asked Todd Stockburger how much he thinks we should offer. Todd Stockburger brought up \$1000 or \$2500 and explained his concerns about personnel staying through receiving the bonus time frame and leaving right after they receive it.

Michele Pankow speaking for the City, explained that regardless of what the ETSB approves in regards to a bonus, the City would still need to be negotiated with the Union as the TC's have a collective bargaining agreement, and go through City human resources department and we may not be able to implement it. Mike McCommond made a side note on the Collective Bargaining agreement that is in place. Carla Redd asked if we are aware of TC's leaving due to pay? Jen Fey said yes at the County level. Carla Redd explained that when looking at recruitment for departments across the country that implement signing bonuses, they have not been able to stick to offering the bonus and unable to retain the employees even with a signing bonus in upwards of \$20K.

Gary Caruana said, correct me if I'm wrong, but we don't have to go through the union to give a bonus. Rick Ciganek responded, to give a stipend or retention bonus we would talk to the union that we are doing it but, we don't have to have a side letter to do that. If we

do some kind of retention of \$2500 a year as Todd Stockburger said, the retention would be paid in 2 installments, half at 6 months and the other at the end of the year. Rick Ciganek explained his feeling on how this could incentivize the personnel to stay.

Michele Pankow explained how we are increased money in the budget trying to get and retain TC's through recruiting, marketing, outreach etc. to get and retain more people in a wholistic way for each center. Sharing concerns on what it looks like for the people that have been employees for a long time.

Elizabeth Russell brought up in the budget under professional services, we have increased the counseling services to \$50K for mental health and supporting the TC's to help them handle the stresses of the job.

Carla Redd added that she sees that it is not the pay, it is the number of hours they are being made to work. They want a more consistent schedule, less hours, more time off. Gary Caruana said he thinks we should approve to put a retention bonus in the budget and City and County will have to do what they need to in regards to the Union. Gary Caruana asked Steve Schultz how much we have in the ETSB account. Steve Schultz said about \$5Million in the account. Gary Caruana said it will not hurt the ETSB if we approve the retention bonus for the County, and then the City can do what they have to do. Gary Caruana explained how the County is bleeding people and we need to do what we have to, regardless if it is a bonus, gym, or retention to keep the people we have.

Carla Redd voted to table it until we are able to do it for both centers.

Michele Pankow said this also is putting the ETSB back to dealing with salaries which is something the ETSB pulled back from, like the County IT Position, the County Training position. Because it gives organizations more flexibility with how those dollars are spent. We have already allocated a large amount of money towards supporting the TC's for the purpose of retention.

Gary Caruana asked to get the opinion of the board to see what they think about this, and thinks we should still do something for the County 911 Center.

Shawn Connors wants to table this and get more clarity on this to move forward.

Michele Pankow said, to be clear we are moving forward with the budget as it is and we can discuss this issue at a later time, come back to this at a later date, and make an amendment if need be.

Gary Caruana asked how we do this legally at a later date.

Shawn Connors explained we can always amend it to add it at a later date.

Gary Caruana

Joel Hallstrom brought up questions on the number of TC's to understand the total cost. Also asked if there is value in each center discussing this with their legal counsel?

Michele Pankow said this is potentially a step raise and a negotiated piece. We have a collective bargaining agreement and we would have to talk to the Legal Department and the Union. The County also has a collective bargaining agreement and is unaware how the county is able to do this without having to go through that process or if the county has money in their budget they can do an incentive to the county center.

Gary Caruana asked why the ETSB board couldn't approve the money now and each center do what they want with the funds through collective bargaining etc.

Shawn Connors asked that we table this and get back to handling the agenda business as this was not on the current agenda. We can add this to the agenda for a future agenda to discuss.

Tabled decision on a bonus for TC's for future meeting.

Motion: Shawn Connors made a motion to approve Budget. Joel Hallstrom seconded the motion. All in-favor. Motion carried and financials were approved.

- **911 Surcharge Budget: No Discussion**

RockCom – Secondary Answering Point (two attachments)

Michele Pankow explained the current situation we are in regarding the State of Illinois Compliance letter. We have currently been given a 3rd extension as it pertains to RockCom as a secondary answering point. As of August 21, 2023, the letter says at the end of the 60 days, if we are not complaint we can no longer take 911 calls, and that does not pertain to just the City, it also pertains to the County. Michele Pankow explained that she talked to the Sheriff when we received the letter and felt it needed to be on the agenda immediately so everyone is up to speed on what is going on.

We also have received the agreement from RockCom. To give more information on the timeline of that. We sent an agreement to RockCom in mid to late June and they responded to us within the last few weeks. The piece we are struggling with is the substantial amount of time from the time that passed from when we were notified, to the point that we actually got an agreement together and sent to RockCom. We are working through the agreement. The issue is that even if we have the agreement is signed tomorrow, the odds that we will have equipment installed to accommodate the secondary answering point are pretty slim. So as a board we need to figure out how we are going to move forward. I am not comfortable not being able to take 911 calls. If that happens, the 911 calls would spill over to District 15 ISP. That is how the calls would come in. Sharing this to make sure everyone is aware of the sense of urgency.

Michele Pankow reached out to Cindy with the State. Cindy is willing to guide us, talk etc. but they are not seeing enough progress.

Joel Hallstrom asked about the contract if Attorney Kelly looked at it since Mercy sent it back? Gary Caruana asked the Legal counsel to look at it during the last meeting.

Shawn Connors referred to the language in the contract about reimbursement costs discussed and voted to not give funds in prior meeting.

Gary Caruana said we need legal council to go over the contract before the next meeting. Not willing to go into a 15-year agreement before the attorneys review the agreement.

Michele Pankow is not willing to risk not being able to take 911 calls.

The original letter was received October 2022 laying out the timeline. We need decide at the next meeting. Rick Ciganek asked if it was RockCom or us that were dragging their feet. It was both, as it took until the 2nd extension before they (RockCom) received the agreement in June and then a few weeks to respond.

Michele Pankow added that up until now, all communications have been going to the ETSB Chair and now this letter went to the 911 System Administrator – Elizabeth Russell. Reached out to Cindy to ask why and she explained that moving forward the communications will be coming to the City 911 Administrator and we will message them out to the Board.

Shawn Connors referred to the contract and wording that is in it about terminating the contract and we need to have the same ability. Why have our attorneys not looked at the contract? 1%-1/2% pay in a timely manner, after 30 days they can give 180 days' notice they can get out.

Elizabeth Russell said that Attorney Kelly did comment on the contract. His concerns are the length of time of the contract.

Gary Caruana is not comfortable with the 15-year contract. Wants to look at all our options, maybe going year by year or other ways of taking calls, secondary answering point, etc.

Joel Hallstrom at some point as an ETSB it is our requirement to pay for the infrastructure to pay for the service. If we have a \$4.6Million budget and we are arguing over a \$5K month cost at \$60K a year we are getting petty. We need to get to the point we are protecting us and that Mercy doesn't walk away and we give them the comfort we don't walk away in 6 months also.

Gary Caruana asked why this happened and Michele Pankow explained that there was a legislation change, and it was also discussed at a previous meeting that the Loves Park Attorney brought up the change and that we weren't in compliance with Rockcom not in our system.

Gary Caruana and Michele Pankow will have a conference call with the Attorney's to discuss moving forward.

Tabling the decision for the time being and adding to the agenda the September 12, 2023 meeting.

Adjournment: Michele Pankow made a motion to adjourn and Carla Redd seconded the motion. Motion Carried. [Next Meeting Tuesday September 12, 2023 at 9:00 a.m.](#)