

Minutes of the "Ad Hoc" Committee on Emergency Communications and Dispatch

The "Ad Hoc" Committee on Emergency Communications and Dispatch of the McLean County Board met on Tuesday, May 06, 2003 at 2:00 p.m. Room 700, Law and Justice Center, 104 West Front Street, Bloomington, Illinois.

Members Present: Chairman Sorensen, Members Renner, Johnson, Selzer and Hoselton

Members Absent: None

Other Members Present: County Board Chairman Sweeney and Member Berglund

Staff Present: Mr. John Zeunik, County Administrator;
Ms. Christine Northcutt, County Administrator's Assistant

Department Heads/
Elected Officials Present: Sheriff Dave Owens, Chief Deputy Derick Love, Lieutenant Mark Bailey, and Deputy Jeff Thompson, Sheriff's Department; Mr. Bill Gamblin, Director, ETSB; Mr. A.C. Cannon, Director, MetCom

Others Present: Mr. David Lander and Mr. Joseph Galvin, Motorola; Mr. Mike Reese, Clear Talk; Mr. Marty Smith, Supreme Communications; Chief Keith Ranney and Kenneth Teutsch, Bloomington Fire Department

Chairman Sorensen called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m.

Chairman Sorensen presented the minutes from the meeting of April 14, 2003. He asked if there were any corrections or additions. Hearing none, the minutes were accepted and placed on file as presented.

Chairman Sorensen stated that there is one item for action on the agenda which is to discuss, and possibly finalize, the Ad Hoc Committee Report and recommendation for an emergency communication radio system for the Sheriff's Department and rural agencies. The Committee has narrowed the field to two potential vendors. Once the Committee decides on a specific vendor, then the Committee will need to draft a final recommendation document to be presented to the full County Board. Chairman Sorensen informed the Committee that, working with the Administrator's Office, he has put together a draft document for the Committee to review.

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Mr. Selzer commented that all of the vendors presented a lot of pertinent and educational information to the Committee. Because of the specific coverage guarantees and the interoperability of the Motorola/StarCom21 system, he is prepared to make a motion to recommend the Motorola StarCom21 System as the vendor of choice.

Motion by Selzer/Johnson to recommend the
StarCom21/Motorola as the vendor of choice
for the Sheriff's Emergency Communications
Radio System to the full County Board.

Mr. Renner stated that he would like to hear Sheriff Owens' opinion.

Sheriff Owens replied that both the Clear Talk and the StarCom21 systems would meet the needs of the Sheriff's Department. Originally, he was looking for an immediate solution, which Clear Talk seemed to offer. Now that time has progressed, either system will be available very shortly. Sheriff Owens commented that he would like to have the opportunity to test the StarCom21 system before the system was officially purchased.

Mr. Renner stated that StarCom21 is the evident choice because they already have a statewide system established in Michigan. StarCom21 also offers interoperability and meets the Homeland Security Act requirements. Mr. Renner stated that StarCom21 offers the definite long-term solution.

Ms. Johnson echoed Mr. Renner's sentiments. She stated that the most important factor was that the Committee recommend a system that could be offered to agencies Countywide and she felt that StarCom21 was that choice.

Mr. Hoselton said that he liked the fact that StarCom21 is a system that will be used throughout the entire state. Because it meets the Homeland Security criteria, the County may be able to receive federal and state funding for the system as well. Mr. Hoselton asked how the testing of the system will work.

Chairman Sorensen stated that Sheriff Owens will be responsible for testing the system out on the road with officers. ETSB and MetCom are welcome to participate in that process.

Mr. Hoselton asked if there would be an additional tower constructed.

Chairman Sorensen stated that was mentioned in Motorola/StarCom21's plan. The County is not going to construct the tower.

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Mr. Hoselton informed the Committee that he is very pleased with the recommendation of StarCom21.

Mr. Selzer stated that every agency (fire and police) within the County will have the option to sign on with the StarCom21 system. It is good for them to have the choice.

Chairman Sorensen asked the Committee if there was any other discussion. Hearing none, Chairman Sorensen called for the vote on the previous motion.

Motion carried.

Chairman Sorensen then addressed the next matter which is how the recommendation will be communicated to the full Board and the public. He referred the Committee to the draft document that was passed out to the Committee at the beginning of the meeting. He asked if there were any comments or discussion about the content of the document.

Ms. Johnson stated that she appreciates what Chairman Sorensen put into the document. It covers all the bases and the draft is well-written.

Mr. Selzer stated that the Committee needs to be sure and communicate to the Board that there may be other areas within the County that may be able to take advantage of the system as well. Other than that fact, the document covers all areas and is acceptable.

Mr. Hoselton called the Committee's attention to page 2 of the document. The second half of the last bullet point states "...*Existing antenna locations will provide coverage in all areas of the County.*" That statement eliminates the addition of another tower and that is unacceptable. We do not want a repeat of what happened with the E.F. Johnson system.

Chairman Sorensen stated that the point is well taken. The intent of that bullet point is that unlike a build and own option, McLean County will not own infrastructure. We will rely on StarCom21 to own and maintain the infrastructure.

Mr. Selzer asked if that portion of the sentence can be eliminated.

Chairman Sorensen stated that is fine. He informed the Committee that this document is not a contract. It is simply a recommendation to the full Board recommending StarCom21 as the vendor of choice.

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Mr. Hoselton stated that he wants to be sure that if an antenna site is needed that Motorola will provide it.

Chairman Sorensen advised the Committee that on page 3, the list at the top lays out a specific list of items that need to be worked out during contract negotiations.

Chairman Sorensen added that the draft recommendation states at the bottom of page 2, that this system has already been bid and contracted to the State of Illinois and those service guarantees are all listed in that contract.

Sheriff Owens stated that the Sheriff's Department should be able to make a determination if they are getting 95% coverage, when given the ability to test the system. There will still be a need for mobile and in-car repeaters, which is the key to coverage in a County of this size.

Chairman Sorensen asked the Committee if there was a motion to approve the draft document with the one omission of the last half of the last bullet point on the bottom of page 2.

Motion by Selzer/Renner to Recommend approval the draft document as amended to be presented to the full County Board.
Motion carried.

Chairman Sorensen stated that he wanted to publicly thank Sheriff Owens, Denny Powell, Chairman of the ETSB, and the members of the Committee for their hard work and commitment to a solution. He mentioned that he agreed with Mr. Selzer that the work on this solution is just beginning.

Mr. Selzer stated that it is unfortunate that the only time that the press reports information on 911-dispatchers is when there is a mistake made. There are many cases where the 911-calls are dispatched correctly and everything is done to specification. He commended Mr. Tony Cannon and his leadership at MetCom.

Sheriff Owens thanked the Committee and said that he hopes that the County is one step closer to a Countywide solution for emergency radio communications.

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County Board Chairman Sweeney stated that Sheriff Owens has attended all of the "Ad Hoc" Meetings, and Sheriff Owens has also spent a lot of time in other meetings and work-sessions to bring this problem to a resolution and his work is much appreciated.

There being nothing further to come before the Committee, Chairman Sorensen adjourned the meeting at 2:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine S. Northcutt
Recording Secretary