

CENTRAL MINNESOTA REGIONAL RADIO BOARD (RRB)
Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 30, 2008 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

City of St. Cloud City Hall, St. Cloud, MN

Members/Alternates Present:

1. Don Otte, Designee Stearns County - Chair
2. Jeff Georger – Designee City of St. Cloud
3. Jim McMahon – Designee Benton County
4. Doug Tomschin – Designee Big Stone County
5. Paul Anderson – Designee Douglas County – Vice Chair
6. Ron Woltjer – Designee Grant County
7. Dean Shuck – Designee Kandiyohi County
8. Wally Strand – Designee Meeker County
9. Paul Anderson – Designee Pope County
10. Larry Sayre – Stevens County
11. Doug Anderson – Designee Swift County
12. Gary Kneisl – Designee Todd County
13. Dr. David Naatz – Designee Traverse County
14. Lane Waldahl – Designee Wadena County
15. Karla Heeter – Designee Wright County
16. Paul McIntyre – User Committee

Members/Alternates Absent:

17. Morrison County
18. Otter Tail County
19. Sherburne County
20. Wilkin County
21. RAC

Guests Present:

N/A

Call to Order:

Meeting called to order by Chair Otte at 2:00 p.m.

Introductions:

Introductions were conducted. Chair Otte welcomed everyone and reminded them to sign-in.

Approval of October 31, 2007 Minutes: *Jeff Georger moved, second Paul Anderson, Douglas County to approve minutes of October 31, 2007, upon a vote, motion carried.*

Communications:

Recommendation from RAC to approve request from Mille Lacs County to join the CMNRRB and CMNRAC:

RAC Chair Myers stated Sheriff Lindgen of Mille Lacs County approached the RAC to join the Central MN RRB as a member; although the commissioners have not yet voted to become a member. RAC membership recommendation is to allow Mille Lacs to join upon their county's approval. The RRB would need to change the by-laws to include them therefore there are changes to the RAC's bylaws, RRB bylaws, User Committee bylaws, and the 2008 budget. Micah stated the revised budget reduces each member's budget by approximately \$90.

Micah stated bylaw changes to RAC and User committee must be approved by the RRB and once approved, they will take effect in 30 days. Dean Shuck asked how many other counties may ask to join the RRB, Micah stated all counties at this time are assigned to a region.

Paul Anderson Pope County moved, Dean Shuck seconded to approve Mille Lacs County to join the CMNRRB and the CMNRAC, upon a vote motion carried.

Amend By-Laws and JPA for the RAC and RRB:

RAC Chair Myers presented revised bylaws and Joint Powers Agreement for the RAC and RRB to include Mille Lacs. *Moved Dr. Naatz, second Lane Wahldahl, to approve revised bylaws and JPA, upon a vote motion carried.*

Amend User Committee By-Laws:

Micah Myers stated the User Committee convened January 16, and made some modifications to the bylaws as noted in packet and now needs to be approved. *Jeff Georger moved, Paul Anderson, Douglas County second, upon a vote motion carried.*

Approve Alternate to State Radio Board Interoperability Committee:

Micah stated the State Interoperable Committee is a subcommittee of the State Radio Board and are tasked with the interoperability communication as they build out phase 3 and 456 (A.K.A Phases 4, 5 and 6); and need to decide how to divide up money available. The RAC Chair was proposed to be the representative to Central MN, at the RAC meeting on the 11th they approved Jay Sikkink of Stearns County as the alternate on an interim basis. Dave Pikal of Sherburne County would become the alternate upon becoming a member of the RAC. Therefore the RAC is requesting Jay to be the interim until final membership is approved. *Moved Lane Waldahl, second by Larry Sayre to approve Jay on an interim basis until Dave Pikal is officially approved, upon a vote, motion carried.*

Reports:

SRB – Micah Myers:

Micah stated the State Radio Board met two times since this board convened. At last week's meeting they elected officers to Finance Committee, OTC, State Operable Committee, and made revisions to standards. One standard is 4.1 – assistance maintenance which has been pulled and modified several times.

RAC – Micah Myers:

RAC Chair Myers stated the RAC met on the 11th, had a report from the state regarding proposed phase 3 build out. By the 3rd quarter of 2008 there will be 28-30 towers built out, talked about grant funding, Mille Lacs County was at meeting, elected alternate member on Interop Committee, and made modifications to bylaws.

SRB Interoperability Committee – Micah Myers:

Nothing at this time.

Reports: (Continued)

OTC – John Olson:

John Olson passed around a map from Tim Lee of MnDOT indicating the proposed tower sites, originally had 194 proposed and now is up to 240 towers to meet the needs of the state and emphasized these sites are not set in stone. Jeff Georger asked what type of coverage the proposed towers include, John stated 95% mobile coverage county-by-county, as enhancements are added to the system, we are looking at increasing the coverage.

Paul Anderson, Douglas County asked if the surveys have all been completed, John stated no, the # signs indicate where the best location would be for coverage. Paul Anderson, Pope County asked if funding is available for all of the towers, John stated phase 3 includes St. Cloud and Rochester. State Legislature passed a bill to increase the 911 fee by 10 cents per year for the next three years which will fund MnDOT's completion of the system.

Wally Strand stated Meeker County completed their plan and Geo-Comm stated they will need an additional tower yet and it is not included in the map. John stated some counties will have to add enhancements to the system their self if it is not on the map.

John Olson stated the Operations and Technical Committee addressed that the state radio system currently does not allow a patch between federal and local talk groups; this will impact this fall when the Republican caucus is here, he also addressed helicopter communication. He stated they are still working on channel naming to allow for all talk groups to have a different label for the different regions.

General Discussion and New Business:

AMC Committee:

Chair Otte stated Paul Anderson of Douglas County sits on the AMC - they have an out-county position available to sit on the State Radio Board, if anyone is interested in sitting on the State Radio Board contact Jim Alder. Chair Otte stated he sits on it as chair of this committee.

Regional Governance Issues:

Micah Myers stated some of the things this board will be tasked with is grant funding and will be required to decide how the money from the SRB will be allocated. We will need to come up with requests such as our needs, funds available, etc. Everyone in this room will be able to be utilizing the system by the end of the year with the tower build-out schedule and will need to look at purchasing equipment, training, interoperability issues, etc. Big Stone has interoperable issues as they border another state and this is something this board will need to look at. The number one item at this time is grant money allocating the \$14.2 million so this group needs to start looking at the needs to get radios into their hands, everyone will get a base amount depending upon population and then looking at needs assessment. We may need to create subcommittees, the RAC deals with a lot of these issues as we meet month-to-month.

Micah stated a lot of the counties have not received their studies back yet from Geo-Comm. He stated as the studies come back, the RAC will try and come up with some type of funding mechanism, writing a grant requesting the money, and will need approval from the board.

Doug Tomschin stated he felt the RAC may be the best place to start as they have the best knowledge on the needs, Micah stated since the Metro is already built up and functioning they will not need as many funds as out state would. He stated as the plans come back in, they will provide a better idea of the model needed.

General Discussion and New Business: (Continued)

Regional Governance Issues: (Continued)

Micah stated the state has broken the money down to different areas such as \$5 million for subscriber units, although they don't have a formula yet how they will distribute the money. He explained how the needs will be different from county to county depending on the infrastructure needed, subscriber money, other grants they may have received, etc.

Dean Shuck stated Kandiyohi needed about \$3.2 million for radios and there will be a significant amount of tax money needed.

Jeff Georger asked since Central MN is underway in planning if that will help the funding and how many counties have completed plans. Micah stated all of the funding needs to be expended by 2011 and stated about 9-10 plans are completed (about half) and Geo-Comm anticipate on completing the remaining studies by the end of the 1st quarter with the exception of Mille Lacs who just joined the region..

Paul Anderson, Douglas County stated they authorized the study and was wondering the status, Micah stated Geo-Comm is currently working on the study and it is well underway. Paul asked if a county is not completing their plan on a timely manner if that will affect the other counties receiving funds, Micah stated that is something the region will just move forward as needed.

Chair Otte stated the state's goal is to have all regions up and running by the 1st of the year. Micah stated the next out-state radio board to convene is the Northwest and will be next week, although they have not yet started the planning process.

Grant Funding:

Micah stated the RAC will review a needs assessment once the studies are all in.

Operational Issues:

Micah stated the RAC will look at operation issues such as if individuals are abusing the system and it can't be resolved on a local level this group would then need to address it. There will be volunteer firefighters who will have requests and will need to be pointed to the correct committee to address their needs. How will radios be programmed – i.e. does the region want to employ someone to program radios, etc.

Standards (Equipment and SOP's):

Micah stated the SRB has an equipment list for devices that are approved to operate on the system.

Interoperability:

Micah stated issues will be how to communicate with individuals not coming onto the system. He stated once everyone moves to 800, there will be a lot more capabilities to communicate and will need to address things such as what talk groups are allowed to be programmed into radios. The foregoing items are just items for discussion purposes today.

Wally Strand asked what the possibility would be to receive more than \$14.2 million currently available; Micah stated there are fire grants, radio grants, etc. so other funds are available through different venues.

General Discussion and New Business: (Continued)

Interoperability: (Continued)

Chair Otte stated that once all counties receive their studies back and decide they can't afford the system, what happens next. Micah stated due to FCC mandates they will either need to upgrade their current system or switch to the 800 MHz. He stated the level of communication the City and County have been able to obtain by switching to 800 MHz have been tremendous and it is up to each county what they chose to do.

Jeff Georger stated the City has an IT Department and staff to work with radios, etc. and is not sure all other counties have this ability; how can they get the funding for these staff and where can they look for help – has it been discussed at the RAC? Micah stated portions of the RAC meeting discusses grants that are received and are posted on the website for other agencies to utilize. There are some grants available to schools and the RAC has put that information on the web as well.

Doug Anderson stated Swift asked for clarification of towers on the map and asked if the state was paying for these and Micah stated yes. He asked if these towers create any extra expenses to the counties because it is located there or is it an advantage to them, Micah stated it is an advantage because some counties will not need infrastructure and may only need subscriber units, and dispatch console.

Chair Otte asked who is guaranteeing the 95% coverage if it is the state or county, Micah clarified the state. Micah stated the City of St. Cloud added two towers to get better in-building coverage, what Kandiyohi is proposing provides them more in-building and overlapping coverage.

Jeff Georger asked if the new towers in this area are because this region is further ahead and Micah stated it is because this region is a part of the original phase 3 build-out. He stated Big Stone County partnered with the state on land acquisitions so they are able to partner and build three towers. If the State is experiencing difficulties in acquiring for proposed sites, counties can help the state obtain land and speed up the process. Mark Gieseke or Mohn are contacts if counties can help with land acquisitions.

Chair Otte asked if the plan will indicate where a tower should be located, Micah stated if a tower is moved by a few degrees, it will then affect a tower in the next area. Wally Strand asked if the tower handout is what the state will put up and pay for, Micah stated these are planned state sites which are subject to changes and that state is paying for these sites.

Northwest RRB Inaugural Meeting (February 6, 2008, Thief River Falls):

Micah provided the location for anyone who was interested in attending the Northwest Regional Radio Board meeting, the NW region will be having their inaugural meeting, February 6, 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. located at the Ralph Ingerstad Arena in the Imperial Room in Thief River Falls.

Wally asked if this would be part of Wadena's northern county and Micah stated yes and on the website there is a map that will indicate where the regional radio boards are formed and located. Micah stated currently Chair Otte is on the SRB because we were the only out-state RRB although as the other outstate radio boards are set up, this will change in the future.

Access to NIIX Website:

Micah stated the access to the NIIX website is a national website dealing with radio communications, everyone is allowed access and he will be sending instructions out on the listserv as to how to sign up. Tom Johnson at the state stated once a user account is created it will allow access to Canada, Wisconsin, Iowa, etc. Micah stated the state has put the SCIP plan on their website.

General Discussion and New Business: (Continued)

Membership Changes:

Micah asked how the board would like agencies to notify the board when they have a change to their committee, representation, etc. Chair Otte stated currently the bylaws indicate it should go to the chair, Jeff Georger stated with the City the chair is responsible for the appointments of the various committees due to re-election, etc. Micah clarified we are looking for a process such as if an appointment to a committee was changed we need a process for notification and recordkeeping.

Paul Anderson, Douglas County stated they just made a change and sent it to Debbie and it worked well. Micah stated we need to put a process in place, if changes will be sent to Debbie, then we need to amend the bylaws. Chair Otte stated perhaps something on letterhead, Micah stated it will be something that is kept on file and stated the RAC could provide a recommendation for the next RRB meeting.

Jeff Georger asked how this region compares nationally and if other states are ahead of us and Micah stated no that Minnesota is way ahead of most states as state-wide level and is by far the leader compared to the rest of the country.

Tower Site Land Acquisition:

See above.

Micah will make copies of the proposed \$14.2 million distribution.

EMC Update:

Jay stated the RCC have been working the last three months, Stearns had police and fire on the system and have been working hard on getting ambulance onto the system. One of the things that came out of it is a Regional Control Center and is from a concept in the Metro – they have an east and west, a hospital is the control center for the area and helps with the communications. Every hospital has a talk group as it would be difficult for all of the different ambulances to have each hospital's talk group into their radios. The concept is they get a hold of the regional control center and the regional control center will then get them in touch with the hospital they need to. He stated the St. Cloud Hospital (SCH) has offered to be the regional control center and explained how the concept would work – the cost is approximately hundreds of thousand dollars.

Doug Tomschin asked if it would be a dispatcher in the hospital center and Jay stated yes, the SCH already has it staffed 24 hours, currently it is a concept and it will need approval, basically it would be a dispatch center for the EMS.

Radio Programming:

Jay met with Sheriff Sanders and Chair Otte of Stearns County; they are struggling as they have 1,500 radios in Stearns County and would need to be have their firmware upgraded, reprogram all of the radios which is labor intensive and would need to send out a programmer to physically program each radio. Question was raised as to how the costs are handled, should the county pick up the cost, fire pick up the cost, etc. He stated there is a request from other counties asking Stearns to program their radios (such as neighboring counties). Chair Otte stated it would cost about \$100 per radio to be programmed once a year.

Dean Shuck stated in Kandiyohi when they got their grant, the fire departments agreed to pay the county the \$100 per radio for there expenses. Jay stated in the Metro there is no charge to about \$500 per year that they are charging entities for this. Chair Otte stated this is being brought up as a forewarning.

General Discussion and New Business: (Continued)

Radio Programming: (Continued)

Sheriff Sanners stated this is a big issue as there is a full-time staff person who works on the programming, radios, etc. and wanted to present this to the board so hopefully all counties can deal with this in a similar fashion.

Doug Tomschin asked for a breakdown – Jay stated there is a \$20 state fee sent directly to Motorola, the \$80 would help IT cover the cost of programming the radios. Stearns County just finished rebanding and code plugs (layout of radios) takes about 2-1/2 hours per radio 7 hours for portables and .9 hours if programming mobiles, would have administration cost, programming into the system, etc. Jay stated Meeker County has some radios at this time they want Stearns to program, what happens as the other counties get radios and want them to do the same. He stated they are willing to help each other as counties come on board, the radio layouts will be much easier to decide because of the work the RAC came up with. For instance the ambulance and hospitals spent four months coming up with a layout for EMS.

Dean Shuck stated even with the old system there was an expense, Chair Otte stated it would be cost prohibitive for Stearns to travel all the way to Big Stone, perhaps there may be someone who has an IT department in that area that could help. Jay stated the RAC hasn't discussed this much but it will become an issue as more counties get radios.

Jay stated programming consistency so important including security. The City and County have worked together to program all of the radios the same i.e. all fire, police, etc. Micah stated as radios are being deployed, this is something the region needs to look at how they want to address this and should this be included in the annual budget? Jay stated another issue is encryption - there are now four talk groups state-wide and are super-secret such as drug task force.

Paul Anderson, Douglas County stated he felt the county may pick up a larger portion due to law enforcement, although cities and school districts will put it into their budgets and when it is all done, it may not be too expensive for any one entity.

Doug Tomschin asked if going to narrow band and VHF an option for smaller counties than switching to 800. Jay stated he is not for sure, he heard the 700 radios are comparable to the 800, not sure on the cost of infrastructure or maintenance issues. He stated with 700 they will not get the interoperability and gave an example of when there was a fugitive two counties away – it was the first time in history they were able to communicate with each other.

Paul Anderson of Pope County asked if private entities would be allowed to program these radios, Jay stated there is the encryption and task force issues so this area chose to not allow private entities to program; Micah stated there is the security issue for programming involved. One agency would need authorization of the other agency prior to their talk group being allowed to be programmed into their radios.

General Discussion - Other:

Jim McMahan stated perhaps the RAC should come up to a standard procedure or policy that everyone will utilize for a consistent standard for programming that is required to adhere to. He stated annual bylaws indicate this group needs to meet June of each year and will elect new officers.

Paul Anderson, Douglas County stated the User Committee for Big Stone could use a few more members and that Swift and Mille Lacs Counties still do not have anyone appointed. Scott Mattison, Swift County stated the reason why they don't have appointees for the User Committee yet is that they are in the process of studying their needs at this time, and it is getting more complex each day.

General Discussion and New Business: (Continued)

Video Conferencing:

Micah explained the video conferencing we are testing to see if we can hold the connection and would like to explore it further. The screen up for the demo was in Big Stone, he stated we need to identify the sites and Big Stone would be one of them. If we need to do multiple configurations, he stated additional work would be needed and this group can pick a central point and bring in other areas as video conferencing.

Paul Anderson, Douglas County stated the AMC did the video conferencing and he stated all of the action that was taken was from the group in St. Paul as the other individuals at the other sites didn't have an opportunity for input, although this may work here. Micah stated he would like to explore it further, Doug Tomschin stated for a special meeting it would be fine but he would like to see the large group meet in one place.

Dr. Naatz stated he has been involved in this and it works well, your voice will activate the camera so unless you are speaking you will not be shown, they put it in six to seven spots in the state and it works well. Micah asked if someone from Big Stone possibly a RAC representative could sit in on the next meeting to test it.

Upcoming Meetings:

Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 30th, 2 p.m. at St. Cloud City Hall Chambers, St. Cloud, MN.

Adjournment:

Paul Anderson, Douglas County moved, Jeff Georger seconded to adjourn at 3:30 p.m. Motion carried.

Minutes recorded by Debbie Backes, Recording Secretary.