

**CENTRAL MINNESOTA REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RAC)**  
**Meeting Minutes**

Friday, February 8, 2008      10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
MNDOT, St. Cloud, MN

**Members/Alternates Present:**

1. Micah Myers – Vice-Chair – Designee of St. Cloud
2. Troy Heck – Alternate Benton County
3. John Haukos – Designee Big Stone County
4. Tom Egan – Designee Douglas County
5. Troy Langlie – Designee Grant County
6. Stacey “Ace” Bonnema – Alternate Kandiyohi County  
Dan Hartog – Designee Kandiyohi County
7. Judy Siggerud – Alternate Otter Tail County  
Mark Englund – Designee Otter Tail County
8. Tom Larson – Designee Pope County
9. Jay Sikkink – Alternate Stearns County
10. Judy Diehl – Designee Stevens County
11. Bob Cuchna – Alternate Todd County  
Peter Mikkelson – Designee Todd County
12. Brenda Pederson – Alternate Traverse County
13. Scott McKellep – Designee Wadena County
14. Dawn Mund – Alternate Wilkin County  
Rick Fiedler – Designee Wilkin County

**Members/Alternates Absent:**

1. Meeker County
2. Mille Lacs County
3. Morrison County
4. Sherburne County
5. Swift County
6. Wright County

**Guests Present:**

None

**Meeting was called to order by Micah Myers at 10:15 a.m.**

Chair Myers welcomes members and guests, introductions conducted. 14 out of the 20 members in attendance with a quorum present.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Chair Myers asks for a motion to approve RAC minutes of January 11, 2008. *A motion by Jay Sikkink, second Troy Heck, upon a vote motion carries.*

**Communications:**

None

**Reports:**

SRB/ARMER Update, MnDPS/MnDOT:

Chair Myers explained the ARMER tower sites, talked about standards 4.02 revisions, and stated they approved standing committee officers.

## **Reports: (Continued)**

### OTC Update:

Jay Sikkink stated the OTC meets next week, a map was handed which included tower coverage adding approximately 45 additional towers. OTC is looking on how they will work with aircraft and life link communication as two main topics. Chair Myers stated the 95% coverage is mobile coverage and county by county.

### CMNRRB Update:

Micah stated the CMNRRB met last week and the RAC was tasked with responsibilities as an outcome of the meeting.

### User-Committee:

January 16<sup>th</sup> was the inaugural User Committee meeting and was well attended, the next meeting is Tuesday, February 12th at Sherburne County at 1:00 p.m. The Committee will alternate with a daytime meeting one month and night the next rotate alphabetically by entity starting with Pope County.

Geo-Comm will provide Trunking 101 presentation at next meeting, Chair Myers is working with State to either have Scott Wiggins or Tom Johnson provide an ARMER update.

### Interop-SubCommittee:

Jay Sikkink stated they had a good meeting last month, they talked about issues that did and did not work the previous month. There was a HAZMAT issue and things didn't work as well as planned and they are working on procedures as it was determined that was more of the issue. Stearns and Benton Counties realized when they went encrypted they had different encryption keys in their radio. Jay stated there was a fugitive two counties away and multiple agencies needed to respond crossing into three different counties working with multiple agencies and the communication went great.

Another item they are working on is moving State wide to 6.8 to 7.2 this did impact Central MN with outages, Central MN is on Zone 2 and in March all entities will be going onto Zone 4. Last year they conducted a test and will be doing this again the end of March or beginning of April to put the system into "FailSoft" so the users can see what happens.

Andy Faith stated MnDOT said once the system is built out, they will not be able to put the system into "FailSoft" as it will have impact on a larger group of users.

Frank Karnauskas questioned the use of LTACS (MNSEF statewide) and Jay stated they are just getting them into the radios at this time.

### Regional RAC Committees:

Chair Myers stated now that all the RACS are forming around the state, we will need to determine how to communicate with the other counties within the other regions and how we resolve operational issues with fellow RACS. The Northwest area had their initial RRB meeting early this week and it went well. The Northwest area thanked this group for our assistance in our planning which made their planning process quicker and easier.

Tom Hannon stated they will be creating a budget and meeting schedule around our model. In Northeastern the RAC has been formed and working on drafting their Joint Powers Agreement with first draft for review in two weeks. They also started a public education campaign utilizing information derived from Central MN by this RAC for presentations we utilized.

Southeastern MN has 11 counties, still working on getting their agreement done, approved draft and working on final approval, developed a speaker group to go to the various county boards.

## **Reports: (Continued)**

### Regional RAC Committees: (Continued)

Southcentral has 10 counties forming their RAC, had grant money which needed to be spent and working on the RFP process to complete their planning, still working on getting a Joint Powers Agreement in place for review next week.

Southwestern is the last group to form, they have an interim chairperson, are designating their RAC members and alternates, will be electing officers, approving bylaws next week, and working on Joint Powers agreement process.

Tom stated everywhere he attends meetings, they thank Central MN for their assistance and work to make their job easier and the leadership this group provided is tremendous. He stated the Northeastern group had a staff member from congress attend their RAC meetings which will assist in obtaining funding.

Chair Myers thanked Commissioner Anderson for attending the meeting today as the commissioners are the decision makers from this region.

### Standards, Protocols and Procedures:

Chair Myers stated standard 4.10 has been brought up; continues to be revised and will be going back to OTC for revision. He stated for the CMN region, there will be changes to the standard which will include additional parameters for Ngo's working on the system. Stearns County and the City have staff to provide programming, although the smaller counties may not. The region may need to allow approved vendors provide programming; however the vendors will not be allowed to design the templates. SOP's will be developed to ensure that the programming information does not fall into the wrong hands. Standards, Protocols and Procedures indicate talk groups will be designed by local system administrator, background checks will be authorized, and data encryption will need to be standardized. Currently there are four different encryptions, data protection must be ensured, reference is made to audits similar to BCA compliance, and cost management will be required for standard pricing.

Tom Larson asked how the data is inputted into the laptops for programming and is the information in the laptop and could a vendor check out that laptop for programming. Chair Myers stated we would have to come up with a vendor contract and a standard protocol or procedure would need to be in place i.e. each agency would own the laptop and are responsible for that laptop and the security of it.

Jay Sikkink stated one of his concerns is the encryption and if a vendor has access to those encryption keys they can't even be in a dispatch console and what if those keys are put into the wrong hands; perhaps vendors are not allowed to program encryption keys and someone would need to bring those radios requiring encryption into the county for programming. Chair Myers stated the same standards are set in place for vendors would also be required of the county staff. He stated the City put one of their technical and programmer staff through the training and worked with Stearns County; Jay stated they also utilized IT staff and it worked well. He stated IT staff is a good place to go and we can work together to assist counties in training. Chair Myers stated perhaps the region could put a person in place to provide programming for the region and the budget makes reference to this.

John Haukos asked if it would be feasible for some of their smaller vendors to purchase the equipment for the programming. Chair Myers stated it would consist of software, computer, cabling, the cost would be a laptop, and the computer can not touch any network (internal/external or internet). The main cost would be to drive to the location to program radios. Jay stated a small shop would also have training costs. Mike Kahl stated some of the smaller shops may already have access to the software and training and questioned what the BCA standard is and what is required. Chair Myers stated the audit is something this group and the BCA would need to meet and define.

## **Reports: (Continued)**

### Standards, Protocols and Procedures: (Continued)

Frank Karnauskas stated these are radios so the radio shops will still need to check the radios and set them up. Jay stated the City and County did that their selves. Chair Myers stated another issue is the servicing of the radios, do they get sent back to Motorola and some issues in the past is they put the latest firmware into the radios so entities may have issues when the radio returns. He stated another issue is what if a shop thinks it is a coding problem and how do we address this.

Dan Hartog asked if the \$20 per year includes the firmware, Jay stated it pays for the software but not the actual labor cost. Chair Myers stated the cost would be around \$100 per radio, currently when a radio comes back from Motorola, it needs to be rechecked. Jay stated Stearns County has picked up all of the programming costs of the radios and as Cities, Public Works, Hospitals, ambulances, schools, etc. come on, do they continue to provide programming and servicing of the radios. They have also been paying the \$20 fee per radio to Motorola and again, do they continue to pay this fee.

Tom Hannon stated this group is at the stage where the rest of the state has had discussions, some of the things they added are the potential of the RRB with the recommendation of the RAC to select a vendor from their region to provide this service as a lot of the smaller counties can not provide it feasibly. Chair Myers stated currently the City and Stearns have someone in place to manage the talk groups and believes we need to have someone appointed regionally to be responsible for this so there is a standard operating procedure and he is looking for a recommendation for someone tasked with this responsibility for the region. Tom Larson asked if shops can provide some bench stuff or do all radios need to go back to Motorola. Chair Myers stated yes there are things they can do. Mark Englund asked if entities will need a radio vendor to work on their local tower sites, Chair Myers stated the City and Stearns contract with Granite to provide that and it may make sense to contract tower sites although the programming of radios could go either way depending on what resources the county has available. Mark asked if selecting only one vendor if the counties that are out a way from the selected vendor could they also have a vendor in their area approved as they can't wait for service several hours. He stated their local vendor is a Kenwood not Motorola and if they used Kenwood equipment, would it provide problems. Jay stated there is infrastructure and radios and they could be two separate vendors. Jay stated Benton County utilizes the City for programming resources. Chair Myers stated he feels a regional piece needs to be in place to ensure all code plugs, layouts, etc. are comparable. Jay stated counties may have an option to contract with MnDOT for tower servicing. Tom Hannon stated counties who are on the board of another region can share resources across to other regions to pool their resources to come up with the best solution at the least cost possible. Chair Myers stated this is not an issue that will be resolved in one meeting although this needs to be addressed

Tom Hannon stated background checks not addressed are how often do they need to be checked, what type of background check is required, who will keep the records, how many background checks are required from the vendors, etc. Mark Englund asked if this is something we need to check with the State Radio Board on and Tom stated yes as there is a legislative committee that may need to address it, perhaps this is something we need to work with the BCA on. Mark Englund stated he will contact BCA and try and get some information and coordinate with Scott Wiggins and report back. Jay stated there are issues such as when doing background checks how far back do they go and what do they all check for. Chair Myers stated we need to put a plan together and provide it to the BCA so we can move forward. Mark stated he isn't even allowed to provide a background check on his IT people and would hope the BCA would allow entities to at least provide background checks on their own staff.

## **Reports: (Continued)**

### Standards, Protocols and Procedures: (Continued)

Andy Faith asked what type of hardware is in reference to the 4.10 standard and Chair Myers clarified it is the laptop to ensure that security is not compromised. Dan Hartog asked how the talk groups were derived, Chair Myers stated it involved a lot of time, decisions and hopefully the remaining region could take Central MN template and utilize it. Jay stated with rebanding, they are looking at what worked well and what didn't for the template.

Dan Hartog asked if this is something the region should come up with and Chair Myers stated if something large happened and the region all needed to communicate, how could they utilize TACTICALS so all entities can communicate without having to have every entity's talk group in their radios. Jay stated they are trying to have police and fire all have similar talk groups, and now are working with public works and ambulance. Dan Hartog asked if the region should have a committee set up now to look at the templates so they can be in place already when needed. Chair Myers stated he would like to get involvement from all members for input and so everyone's needs are met and have input on what would work best for the region.

Tom Hannon stated Northeast MN has a situation working with North Dakota, South Dakota, Canada and their interoperability situation is much more complex than this region, they are looking at coming up with a standard of naming their resources for consistency in all agencies within the region to identify them. He stated one of their concerns is how to interface with Central MN and their other boarding states. Chair Myers stated the State will be looking for feedback as to how the region comes up with an outcome of interop.

Discussion followed regarding creating a regional subcommittee to decide on talk groups, Mark Englund asked if it should consist of the RAC or the users as well or a combination, Chair Myers stated it is a valid point and the user committee should have input and report back to the RAC. Tom Larson asked if there would be enough time for the users to provide input as they may not be knowledgeable of the system yet since they are just starting up. Chair Myers stated he would like involvement from all members and include a cross section of users. Committee will consist of: Mark Englund, Ace, Tom Larson, Jay will provide someone from Stearns County Sheriff's Department, Chair Myers will get someone from Fire and Police from St. Cloud, Rick Fiedler, Mike Kahl, Dave Sissser, Frank Karnauskas, Neale Cafilisch, Dave Klema from the State to get their input, Tom Hannon suggested Mark Letexier from the Northern area.

Tom Hannon suggested inviting someone from the vendor community as a technical advisor on capabilities and concerns. Chair Myers stated we have three different radio shops present today as well as Frank as a trainer, he will send out notification of the proposed meeting. He stated items such as securing programming equipment, audits, hardware access, etc. will be discussed on next agenda and will put a group together to work on that, Mark will report back from BCA and Micah will look at audit procedures.

## **Regional Radio Board:**

### Grant Funding:

Chair Myers explained handout on investment justification for PISC Grant and discussed how the \$14.26 million the state will be receiving is to be distributed by area. They are working on a funding mechanism taking into consideration needs assessments and will be closely tied to the regional studies as they are completed. Once the studies are complete, we will need to put together a committee to review the funding recommendations. Tom Larson asked if the grant needs to be completed as a region, Chair Myers stated the State indicated the regions are responsible for the request and they will then look at the distribution, 2011 is when the money has to be expended.

## **Regional Radio Board: (Continued)**

### System Access:

Chair Myers stated another item the RRB discussed when an agency such as ambulance wanting to come onto system, does it need to be brought back each time.

### Operational Issues:

Chair Myers stated something we need to start formulating is how do we handle conflict resolution as a region for someone who abuses the system. They discussed the current MNSEF Advisory Board and if it is still needed now that they have the State Radio Board. He stated we would hopefully these issues can be handled locally, if not how will the next level will address it. Another issue will be how entities communicate with their neighbors, perhaps we set up an interop committee as a subgroup similar to what Stearns County does. Jay stated there is a State-wide interoperability committee formed and broke up to two separate committees, yesterday they met on interoperability workgroup and one of the things they discussed is the VHF/UHF and MnDOT will conduct additional studies to see if some of the frequencies can be utilized for interoperability. They are looking for operational users to be a part of it. Jay stated Tom Justin is the Interoperability Coordinator for this region and would be a good person to be on the committee and stated John Haukos would be another good candidate. Jay stated there is some money available to spend on interoperability for this area. He stated St. Cloud and Stearns County had patches in place while everyone is switching over to 800, he didn't know if this is something this group may need to discuss as it will take a few years to get everyone onto the system. Another item is a console dispatch and PSAPS as a suggestion. Bob Cuchna asked if a patch is always in place and Jay stated Stearns County had three permanent patches while individuals were switching over to 800. Chair Myers stated this patch was utilized when Stearns was on a high-speed chase and needed to communicate with Mille Lacs County. Jay stated there is plain language and state-wide standardization naming issues.

### Tower Site Acquisition:

Chair Myers stated Big Stone County worked with the State on land acquisitions as the plan is being deployed, some of the towers may need to be moved a little one way or another and the tower map is on the Central MN Radio website.

### Interop with other RRB's and RAC's:

Chair Myers stated we need to communicate with other regions as the system does not stop at our borders. He stated right now our Regional Radio Board has a representative on the State Board and as other RRB's are set up, they will need to decide how the RRB's are represented at the State level.

### Notification of Membership Changes:

Chair Myers stated the bylaws indicate the chair of the RRB is who we are to report changes in membership, in the past we had changes to the RAC and now the User Committee, what is being proposed is if there is a change from your agency, an email is sent to the recording secretary (currently Debbie Backes) and follow up on letterhead from your agency. The Chair of the RRB requested this change for continuity in members, contact information, etc. The discipline from the User Committee needs to be added to the procedure handed out; Tom Hannon suggested the Owners and Operators be added to the list of bylaws. Chair Myers stated for the Owner's and Operators we could start looking at getting that group together and would include owners of other systems as well.

## **Updates from Partners on Current Projects:**

### Wright and Sherburne Counties Planning Project Update:

Chair Myers stated Wright County is through their planning process, they received their console and proposal from Motorola and will be having a meeting with Sherburne next Friday. Tom Hannon stated Sherburne and Kandiyohi have been successful to secure Fire grant to purchase mobiles and portables within their counties. Kandiyohi received almost a million dollars and Sherburne received \$600,000, the amount of local match varies - Kandiyohi received a 10% match and the county picked up that match.

### Kandiyohi, Meeker and Todd Planning Project Update:

Todd Pieper stated Meeker County took the plan to their board and unsure where it is at this time. Dan Hartog stated on January 23<sup>rd</sup> they had an informational meeting for their board and provided an educational Powerpoint on ARMER. Rey Freeman provided a presentation on Kandiyohi's study, the cost of going to ARMER, and the cost of going to narrow band. It will cost them \$3.8 million to go to the ARMER system which included subscriber units (not including Fire Departments). Todd stated if Kandiyohi approves the plan, it will then come to this board for approval.

Bob Cuchna stated next Tuesday Geo-Comm will meet with Todd County's commissioners in a planning session; because of the User Committee someone will work with them to write a grant and try and secure money. Chair Myers stated we have 19 counties and the city and the RAC's have a powerful lobbyist group to approach the State and the need of funding to build out the system and the additional features the 800 provides.

Tom Larson asked if Kandiyohi County was the fiscal agent for their grant and Dan stated the City of Willmar was and they will reimburse the City.

Chair Myers clarified once the County board approves their plan it then comes to the RAC for approval, then the RRB, then the OTC and finally the State Regional Radio Board in that order. He will come up with a flow chart to demonstrate the approval process.

### Swift and Big Stone Counties Additions to Kandiyohi:

Todd stated he has hard copies available to provide to Big Stone and Swift County. He stated Geo-Comm needs another meeting with Big Stone County and will be delivering the two reports in March.

### Douglas, Grant, Morrison, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Wadena and Wilkin:

Todd Pieper stated they will be delivering the draft plans for Douglas on the 18<sup>th</sup> and Grant County on the 19<sup>th</sup>. He stated for Morrison County Mike will be meeting with them, no date set yet; for Wadena, Pope, Stevens and Otter Tail Counties Geo-Comm will be making site visits for data collection, working on reports, Morrison County is not scheduled at this time. Looking to deliver reports for all of these counties in March and tie into the regional plan.

### Regional Plan Update:

Geo-Comm is working on the formatting of the regional plan and coming up with an estimate for the region and the costs needed. Todd stated the original plan consisted of eight counties and now it is up to 19 counties and the City.

Traverse County – Micah stated Geo-Comm can now move forward on that. He stated at this point all members except Mille Lacs have plans underway.

## **Updates from Partners on Current Projects:**

### District 742 Planning Efforts:

Chair Myers stated the last phase is they are utilizing the school liaison officers for the study since they are using the radios and the plan is moving forward. Todd stated the process of the test plan is still underway.

### Grant Money for Studies:

Chair Myers stated for all of the grants that are commissioned, the funds are all covered and he is working with the State to cover the cost of Mille Lacs County.

### Items of Interest:

#### ARMER Assessments:

Tom Hannon stated in the State ARMER assessments – the original grant funding was a 50% matching grant and stated only four counties in Central MN and 11 Metro counties qualified for the \$9.5 million to offset local enhancements. The SRB needed to provide an assessment to see what it would cost to provide the same funding to the rest of the state which was provided to the Metro area. He stated the State is looking at putting out an RFP which will authorize planning for the completion of the ARMER system and the VHF studies and use a combination of funding i.e. PSAPS, ARMER, etc. He suggested for the RAC study the enhancements provided in the studies be extracted and provided to ARMER and includes the numbers for a complete study in the state's assessment. Mike Kahl asked if it included the sales tax exemption and Tom Hannon stated he was unsure and the State Legislation Committee is working on that in the next session.

## **General Discussion and New Business:**

### PSAP/ARMER/911 Issues:

Chair Myers stated this is a standing issue, there are issues from the ARMER to the 911 and are looking at merging these two entities.

### ListServ Demo: (Jay Sikkink)

Jay Sikkink explained the listserv and stated we utilize it as a tool to get information to everyone. He provided two handouts – one is the actual subscriber list, currently there are 213 users on the list, the other handout is the topics for the ListServ. Topics are RRB and RRBMembers, RAC, RACMembers, CMUsers, CMUsersmembers, Cmems, Interop, Other and explained the various topics. He explained anyone can use the ListServ to communicate with other individuals and explained how to utilize it using the various subject lines stating in the subject line you need to insert the topic followed by a colon and then whatever the subject is. If you have any changes in your information or topics you would or would not like to receive, contact Debbie Backes.

### Other Items of Interest:

N/A

## **Upcoming Meeting, Set Date, and Location:**

Next meeting will be Friday, March 14<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. in Wright County at the Wright County Government Center in Buffalo.

April meeting will be April 11<sup>th</sup> in Wilkin County in Breckenridge.

*Mark Englund moved, second Judy Diehl to adjourn at 1:15 p.m.*

Minutes recorded by Debbie Backes, Recording Secretary.