

CENTRAL MINNESOTA REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RAC)
Meeting Minutes

Friday, March 14, 2008 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Wright County Government Center, Buffalo, 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. Dan Hartog – Designee Kandiyohi County
Stacey “Ace” Bonnema – Alternate Kandiyohi County
7. Jeff Norlin – Alternate Meeker County
8. Brent Lindgren – Designee Mille Lacs County
9. Mark Englund – Designee Otter Tail County
Judy Siggerud – Alternate Otter Tail County
10. John Olson – Designee Sherburne County
Dave Pikal – Alternate Sherburne County
11. Jay Sikkink – Alternate Stearns County
12. Judy Diehl – Designee Stevens County
13. Bob Cuchna – Alternate Todd County
14. Brenda Pederson – Alternate Traverse County
15. Scott McKellep – Designee Wadena County
16. Greg Howell – Alternate Wright County
Bill Swing – Delegate Wright County

Members/Alternates Absent:

17. Morrison County
18. Pope County
19. Swift County
20. Wilkin County

Guests Present:

Tim Lee, Mn/DOT
Tim Heroff, Rochester Police
Dave Thompson, Rochester Police
Rick Freshwater, Olmstead County

Meeting was called to order by Micah Myers at 10:05 a.m.

Chair Myers welcomes members and guests, introductions conducted. 16 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 February 8, 2008. *A motion by Mark Englund, second Judy Diehl, upon a vote motion carries.*

Communications:

Interoperability between ARMER and Non-ARMER Systems:

Tim Lee from MnDOT and Tim Heroff, City of Rochester indicated ARMER set money aside for interop between ARMER and VHF systems; they have hired an Interop Coordinator, have the State Interop Executive Committee in place, and created a few subgroups to work on interop. They are looking for plans and ideas on what needs to be put into place to bridge the ARMER and VHF systems and are looking for Regional Advisory Committees to offer assistance to best utilize funds available.

Tim stated they have at least one county in the Southeast who have decided not to join ARMER and have a narrow band county and they need to come up with a plan to communicate with them. There may be a few more counties staying on the VHF narrow band due to the cost and the funds they have access to for funding.

Jay Sikkink stated in Central MN, the RAC discussed it last month and most entities are looking at going 800 if they have the funding available. Chair Myers stated the money this region has for plans are for 800, if other agencies are looking at going to VHF, the State may have Homeland Security monies available for those studies. Tim Lee stated EMS had funds available to provide VHF studies, he feels counties need to have plans completed to accurately compare apples to apples so the counties and agencies can make accurate decisions.

Chair Myers asked when doing interop to the non-800 systems how many resources would it utilize. Tim Lee explained what they have in place indicating 17 receive and send sites and transmitters, they had the equipment installed, procedures written and put into place. When patches are utilized it takes a channel out of operation. Tim Lee stated from a state's prospective they would like to see the whole state approach interop with non 800 agencies in a similar fashion. Some issues are 800 to 800, 800 to other regions via 800 including state-wide, 800 to the VHF, digital trunk (i.e. South Dakota), scanning issues, and going out of range of your local system. This needs to be looked at from an operational, procedural, training, and funding process. Discussion followed on how the various tactical channels are set up at a state-wide level and how it will coordinate with the regional talk groups. Jay Sikkink stated this region already looked at this and stated there are some naming issues and Central MN borders every region except the southeast. Chair Myers stated Central MN looked at a regional coordinator so entities can go to them when looking at naming talk groups.

Tim Lee asked individuals to provide a list of issues and solutions to Jay and he can pass them on to him. He stated he has technical input and needs input from an operational view. Need to consider limitations such as technical, cost, etc. and come up with the best viable option. Tom Hannon stated he hears the same discussions in the Northern areas as well since they border Wisconsin and Canada. He felt the group should include the other RACS in the state even if they don't have experience as it will affect the long-term solutions we are looking for. *Tim Lee will start the options and ideas and will pass on to Jay Sikkink and Chair Myers and pass on to Tom Johnson and then he can be the keeper of the list and work with other RACs for input.*

Chair Myers stated some agencies will need assistance of local shops to maintain the system. Tom Justin stated on March 25 and 26 he is scheduled to meet with the other Regional Interop Coordinators to discuss what is lacking with items such as this. Chair Myers stated the Stearns County Interop and the Central MN User Group can help with input. *This will be put on the User Committee's April agenda.*

Jay Sikkink explained Stearns County's permanent patch with MNSEF and Sheriff as all agencies are coming onto the system. Tom Hannon stated the interop group needs to explore on a broader scale how the patches will work as it will need to be in all consoles. Jay stated as a caution you do not want to have too many channels in the dispatch consoles as there is audio issues and how will it be monitored.

Communications: (Continued)

Interoperability between ARMER and Non-ARMER Systems: (Continued)

Will be required to include a representative from a dispatch center and one from each region in order to identify resources within their region. Tom Justin stated it is important to identify what your agency currently does and what they would like to do i.e. do you need to talk to a different county on a daily basis, weekly basis, etc. They need to identify who they need to talk to today and go out from there like a large circle going out. John Haukos stated he talks to South Dakota every day – even more so than agencies in MN. Tom Justin stated we need to take a look at when we figure out who we need to talk to, be sure that we are not tying up resources in every one of those counties; or could it be done on one talk group. Tim Lee stated the Metro already came up with a chase standard (LTAC 1 is automatically patched to it). Richard Neitz asked with the 800 and VHF patch is it voice activated and will be delayed so it will require how individuals use the equipment. Tim Lee stated they had the same issues but they had to get the right equipment. He warned agencies to not just purchase a “box” from a vendor who claims they have a nice patch – he cautions to check into it more thorough to be sure the “box” will take care of their needs adequately. Jay Sikkink stated to vendors before they sale a patch solution to an entity, the entity would need the approval of this group “before” they are authorized to utilize the patch.

Chair Myers stated counties need to determine who they need to communicate with and get them to the meetings so they can have input and we can work on the interop needs. He stated it will include the other regions; Mark Englund felt this was a task for the User Committee to bring the information to the RAC. In the regions where there are no User Committees, they will work with the RACS.

System Access Request from Paynesville Area Health Care:

Chair Myers stated Paynesville Area Health Care has a system access request and the RRB authorized the RAC to approve such requests. *Jay Sikkink moved to approve Paynesville Area Health Care to utilize the system, second by Bob Cuchna. Motion carries.*

SRB Proposal for Talk Group Access:

This came from Tom Johnson as they are looking at RRBs being able to grant access to agencies. We need to streamline this process some how although it needs to include some operational processes. Tom Hannon stated the original concept was the talk groups would not be allowed without having the permission of the agency owning that talk group; therefore the standard would need to be changed and each agency needs to sign off.

Tim Lee stated if you create local talk groups, they have the permission to grant authorization. He stated in the Metro there is a parameter set if they will allow: like agencies, all agencies, scan only, transmit, etc. that they will authorize in advance. Most agencies have authorized scan and if someone wants to utilize their talk group, they required a letter so they are aware who is utilizing their talk groups. Jay Sikkink stated he would like the document for his programmers to have as a reference. Chair Myers stated the region would have a list they refer to. Tim Lee stated if talk groups were utilized for scanning and they chose to authorize, there is a training process required as well. He stated John Anderson has this sheet and will send to Mark Englund per his request. Tom Hannon stated as private shops start programming, there may be some confusion as to what is authorized and what is not and this is where the training needs to be thorough.

Reports:SRB/ARMER update, MnDPS/MnDOT:

See above.

OTC Update:

Jay Sikkink stated they are trying to get the final plan to the State Radio Board and explained the map handouts including the preliminary tower sites. He stated some of the sites may change due to not all of the land is purchased at this time. The map shows statewide coverage for the whole state, county-by-county coverage, the coverage map is a computer generated and Jay stated Stearns County found out that their actual coverage was better than the computer generated. He also handed out maps with the build-out phases, Tim explained a few sites are missing in Meeker, the brown are the sites being built in current phase, the blue are sites in the next phase which have existing towers with digital microwave and will hang 800 on them. Jay handed out microwave tower paths and Chair Myers asked if there are wind towers that will cause problems, Tim Lee stated the OTC still has not approved it. Chair Myers stated some counties may want to put in windmill ordinances, Jay Sikkink stated Stearns County is working on an ordinance relating to it.

The goal is to have the OTC approve the final plan in April so MnDOT can proceed. He discussed the changes to the ARMER Conceptual Plan as it affects this area. Tim Lee stated he needs SRB approval on plan changes, is working on Phase 4, 5, and 6 as the 911 ten cent fee could start as early as July. The SRB changed the statewide coverage requirement to be 95% coverage county-by-county which went from 185 to 225 sites needed in phases 4, 5 and 6. Tim stated there will need a few additional sites built in phase 3 due to the requirement change.

Jay stated there will be six zone controllers recommended to be approved by the state. He stated the standard naming is confusing and was asked for recommendations for renaming the standard. A committee was drafted suggesting state standards not to have the same naming as regional standards; the regional standards would have the same numbering as other regional standards. Naming should have an identifier whether it is a regional or state numbering. There should be some responsibility for the numbering to determine the consistency and Jay was assigned this task on a temporary basis. Any standards that are in conflict at this time will be renamed for consistency and then going forward.

Interop:

Nothing at this time.

CMNRRB:

No update at this time due to no meeting since January.

Regional RAC Committees:

Tom Hannon stated as other RACS are being developed, they look at the Central MN for guidance. NW is having meetings, NE working on 3rd draft, SE all but one county approved Joint Powers Agreement and April 16th will be 1st meeting, South Central working on 2nd draft of Joint Powers, Southwestern which is the last group to form is working on 1st draft of Joint Powers Agreement. Jeff Nelson and Andy Terry have been obtained to complete the state assessments of the local enhancement studies. Looking at possible grants to defray the costs of the RRB possibly in an amount not to exceed \$1,000 per agency in the Joint Powers Agreement; it will help for expenses, would not pay for conferences but would cover insurance, cost of providing minutes, maintaining websites, etc. Potentially money may be available for RACS – initial plan was for RRB and RACS where there is there was no RRB in place; now it is changed to include both RRB's and RACS. There should be additional information for this grant available soon. He stated there is also Fire, Medical and School grant opportunities.

Reports: (Continued)

User-Committee:

User Committee Chair Paul McIntyre stated they had their 3rd meeting this month, will be meeting daytime one month, nighttime the next month and rotating alphabetically by agency. Two months ago had ARMER and Trunking overview, Tuesday did a radio 101 demonstrating various radio models and what they could do, worked on an acronym list. At next month's meeting they will be doing a programming 101 for talk groups, i.e. Law Enforcement, Fire, EMS, expand on acronym list, and work on the Interoperability between ARMER and non-ARMER per the request today.

Jay stated the state is changing the LETACS, previous standards would not allow a patch, now they are allowed to have an encrypted FBI TAC to the LETAC in the console. There will be a statewide TACTICAL encrypted for the technical staff so they can maintain a system confidentially i.e. if they need to bring down a system, not everyone is aware of it. Additional concerns are the locations of towers, he stated this would include vendors working on the system as well and would need encrypted radios.

Interop Sub-Committee:

Included in above discussion.

Talk Group Sub-Committee:

Determined someone needs to be responsible to coordinate the resources for the region, Chair Myers stated they met and needed to change the naming standards and explained the handout on naming.

BCA Background Checks:

Mark Englund stated the BCA does not have a problem of doing background checks which we are in need of. Would need to have vendor or radio employee sign a consent form to authorize check, need to have a code to run background check, and follow up with a fingerprint card. Issues we will have is a user agreement will be required, currently it is attorneys and law enforcement agencies authorized to run checks, RAC will need to develop a standard to determine what criteria would disqualify a candidate to program radios, when actual data is returned it can only be viewed by criminal justice agencies, i.e. RAC can not look at the data. Therefore, we will need to determine who will be responsible for analyzing the data, law enforcement, prosecution or probation are authorized to view, will this be completed annually (he suggested this at a minimum), and include if any information is changed they are responsible to contact that person, who will be responsible to maintain the authorized data base list; currently the State does not want to be responsible for it. Once the list is maintained, will need to determine how the list is shared with other RACS, i.e. should this be a regional or state-wide data base. Mark stated currently there are only a few vendors qualified to program radios although in the future it could double.

Chair Myers stated radio shops will have employees come and go and will need to let us know, he feels this is something we would be able to set up and need to develop a standard procedure. *Mark Englund will chair and the subcommittee is Scott McKellep, and Bob Cuchna.* He feels someone who has a user agreement should be on the subcommittee, Chair Myers stated once their process is complete, it will be written into a standard. Tom Hannon suggested the group consider the opportunities of the Central MN Radio Board contract with the State Radio Board and have them fund the maintenance of the list. Mark clarified this would include programmers as they would have access to encryption key codes and would pertain to all individuals currently programming as well.

Regional Radio Board:

See above.

Updates from Partners on Current Projects:

Wright and Sherburne Counties Planning Project Update:

Mike Mazzitello stated they are moving forward with Wright and Sherburne project, Wright has proposals from Motorola. Sherburne has infrastructure update and consoles, will be signing their agreement with Motorola for consoles and infrastructure next week. Have a couple orders out for radios and are on track. Mike stated the Enfield and Zimmerman towers will be up first and the one in Buffalo following that which fits into the timeframe. They will be utilizing Great River Energy's two towers to assist in coverage. Palmer is a tower site and a partnership with them as well as being a main backbone for the State site. They are investigating fiber optics between a few sites.

Wright County will be coming on later, working with the City on a fiber ring to avoid putting up a tower. Bill Swing stated they are meeting next week and are hoping to move forward April or May. Working on furniture also as it affects building the new dispatch center and technology. Tom Hannon stated the SRB approved the plan with a few contingencies and have they been removed or does it need to come back to the RAC for approval. Chair Myers clarified it will need to be approved by this committee and Mike will have them on the next agenda and then to the OTC next. Mike stated the State's plan does not include the additional tower sites at Great River Energy and will be implemented.

Kandiyohi, Meeker and Todd Planning Project Update:

Ace stated Fire Departments have radios from the Fire grant and are waiting to get them programmed. Chair Myers stated Kandiyohi has a deadline on radios and Dan indicated it is October and also on the Fire grant there is extra money and are hoping to use it for the dispatch console and looking for land on the south part of the county for a tower. Geo-Comm will be updating Meeker and Todd's information for the regional plan to provide more accurate information for Motorola to propose a solution and hope with the state's new plan some tower sites can be removed from original plan.

Swift and Big Stone Counties Additions to Kandiyohi:

Mike reported within the next two weeks Rey Freeman will be providing plan to Swift. Big Stone's report will be available next week.

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

Geo-Comm will be uploading final report documents for Douglas and Grant. Mike stated by the end of the month Otter Tail, Wadena, Wilkin, Stevens, and Pope will be in process and still will be out at the end of the month and on schedule to be submitted at the end of the month to the counties.

Regional Plan Update:

Mike Mazzitello stated it has been reformatted due to new changes from MnDOT. Benton County will have excellent coverage being between three different tower sites. Early April Geo-Comm will be talking to Benton County as to what it will take to join the ARMER. Chair Myers stated there will be a lot of plans on the RACS agenda next month as they are being finished, we will then need to tentatively start a needs assessment in May. Hopefully these plans will be presented to the RRB in April, then the OTC and finally the State.

Updates from Partners on Current Projects: (Continued)

District 742 Planning Efforts:

Mike Mazzitello and Jamie Nixon completed some tests, will be doing some additional testing and should be complete soon.

Mike Kahl asked if there is any direction for schools to be allowed onto the 800 system in the future. Mike Mazzitello stated there will be some recommendations although does not have an answer at this time, perhaps a control station in the main office may be an option and it may be a little early for schools to purchase yet due to the uncertainty. He suggested the schools start budgeting although not make purchases yet. Mike Mazzitello stated it may be possible that some of the schools will be better served as an 800 interop project and that the discussions have begun.

Grant Money for Studies:

Chair Myers stated he needs to make sure everyone's books are in sync and asked all counties who have received reimbursement to let him know so he can assure the grant deadlines are met.

Tom Hannon asked for Mille Lacs County's funding status, Chair Myers stated currently they have one half of the funding available and working trying to obtain the remaining funding.

Items of Interest:

Nothing at this time.

General Discussion and New Business:

I-35 W Incident Command Video:

Video was not provided, most individuals in attendance who had an interest in it already saw it. DVD's are available for all entities to have two sets each.

800 MHz Radio Acronyms List:

Chair Myers explained the handout included some of the more common acronyms, if there are acronyms not included and would be useful, please send them to Debbie Backes for updating. Suggestion is to add fleet maps, LTACS, ETACS, PTACS, and additional definitions.

Standard 4.10 Follow-up Discussion:

Chair Myers stated there was additional language added and suggested the subcommittee continue with the list and some items can be combined as they pertain to securing data and will report back next month. Jay Sikkink stated under 4.2 the state level struck it out due to language included that was not clear as to what it covered. *Jay Sikkink will set up a conference call with a proposal.* Will remove BCA audit for a separate item, will address data access, protection, encryption, transfer of information, and the laptops for next meeting.

Other Items of Interest:

Richard Neitz asked about radio loggers if it has been or should be explored on a regional level to save costs, Jay Sikkink suggested checking with Dave Klema, Mark Englund felt it would be a good idea to use as a control tool. Bill Swing stated they just discussed this and will be looking at a common logger and will check with Geo-Comm next week and report back.

John Haukos stated discussion came up with them moving to new towers and the FCC will not be licensing their wideband, and they need to narrowband and their pagers were not narrow banded so for entities thinking the year 2012 is the deadline, it may be sooner and do not anticipate on the date to be pushed back.

General Discussion and New Business: (Continued)

Other Items of Interest: (Continued)

Jay Sikkink stated in April they are switching over to zone 4 controller in Stearns County and St. Cloud and Metro has a package to track the usage on the controller and we will have the reporting functionality.

Upcoming Meeting, Set Date, and Location:

Next meeting will be Friday, April 11th at 10:00 a.m. in Wilkin County in Breckenridge.

May meeting will be May 16th tentatively in Todd County in Browerville Community Center or possibly Wadena County.

Bill Swing moved, second Jay Sikkink to adjourn at 2:00 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Debbie Backes, Recording Secretary.