

REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Friday, April 21, 2006
12:00 p.m.
Benton County

PRESENT: Tom Hannon, Micah Myers, Debbie Backes (Recorder), Bill Mund, Tom Justin, Dennis Ballantine, and Sue Stawarski, City of St. Cloud; George McClure, Jay Sikkink, and Bruce Bechtold, Stearns County; Bill Swing and Greg Howe, Wright County; Pat Bettenberg and Doug Brinkman, Benton County; Jeff Jelinski and Mike Disher, Morrison County; Gary Peterson, Sherburne; Ron Whitehead and Tom Cherney, Minnesota Department of Public Safety/ARMER; Andy Faith and Mike Kahl, Granite Electronics; Paul Arneson, Geo-Comm; Mike Fink, Motorola.

Call to order at 12:15 p.m.

INTRODUCTIONS:

Introductions conducted.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Bill Swing moved, 2nd Pat to approve minutes, motion carried.

ARMER UPDATE:

Ron Whitehead introduced Interopability Coordinator, Tom Cherney; funding for new position came from state-wide radio board, they determined interop is an ongoing process. Tom has been involved with Homeland Security for years.

Ron stated the State-wide level MNDOT is in the process of building the system, \$20,000,000 in bonding after July 1st for zone controllers and start population of radio sites. Some towers are already in place but do not have radios on them. Jim Mohn is the primary engineer for Phase 3. Central and southeastern region is being worked on quite actively at this time. Ron stated at next meeting he will bring a list of areas they are looking for to put up sites in Stearns County and St. Cloud. Beginning in 2007 they will be building in Dakota County. 6X versus 7X is quite complicated and is a policy issue whether we keep it up to date or lock into a platform for a while.

Steering Committee briefly discussed idea of the Regions and how locked in they are on regions; does the technology lock them into a region? Funding for phase 3 and 4 are already locked in based on legislation funding. In the future there may be more flexibility and regions will be discussed much more. Ron stated it is tough to make counties work within a region if the don't have a common interest.

Ron stated legislation is meeting and it is unclear what the outcome will be whether bonding will be approved or passing laws. Stated building the system is of utmost importance. There are three studies going on i.e. Enhancement Study (by Geo-Com) so the State-Wide Radio Board has a better understanding as to where the funding is most important – right now Wright, Benton, and Sherburne Counties are in this region. Risk Assessment is the other study and it will be another month before this is done. Finally there is a Business Plan by RCC out of Virginia. Their perspective is what we think the operational fees should be for the system and how much funding should be allocated for this.

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ARMER UPDATE: (CONTINUED)

Sue is on the Greater MN Steering Committee and she stated 6X versus 7X is their biggest issue at this time, they had presentation recently and are discussing the options. The other issue they are discussing is the other goals of the system, and should they be changing their focus to include data.

Bill Mund is on the State Radio Board and the Chair of Finance Committee, he stated they solicited an RFT to develop a Business Plan for fees to operate the system in Greater MN, they are also charged with duty to look at whole State-Wide Radio Board, where they are getting future financing to fund the system, recently reviewed the plan to start selling the bonds for phase 3 of the \$45,000,000 bonds. Any questions, feel free to email him.

STANDARDS, PROTOCOLS & PROCEDURES DISCUSSION ON SELECTED POLICIES:

Jay and Micah (subcommittee) brought forward final Permissions Letter which had cosmetic changes from last month, the final is posted on the website.

Second is 1.7 addressing the Region and can say what radios can and can not be on the system. This came from the Metro Area as a template, the issue we have is not all the subcommittees are in place yet so stated Interop Committee will review testing issues for right now until the proper committee is approved to do this. Bill Mund stated that there is a committee on the state level, and perhaps rather than us having a test committee, we suggest the radios be approved by the state committee and their standards. Tom stated we already ran into some issues with the 1500 radios and this group needs to decide what standard we want to use. Mike D. asked if we could use all of the state procedures and just mark them as we review and change them? Tom stated we are using the states policies and only reviewing those that have an immediate impact for us until a Regional Board is in place. Bill stated we are about a year behind the State Radio Board and they adopted the Met Radio Board standards and take a couple each time they meet and review them and adopt removing the Interim procedures as they are reviewed. George stated he doesn't see any reason why we should need to adopt anything different than the State already approved. Therefore Jay suggested we just approve what the state included for radios which can be used on the system. He will rework the policy to make reference to the State's approved list.

Policy is reference to hospitals as there are approximately 16 hospitals who have funding approved and will be adding radios. This policy again is a template from the state and allows the hospitals to come onto the system. George stated again he does not see why we would want to make anything more complicated than the State already approved. Ron stated MNDOT prefers to have entities get approval to come onto the system by the Regional Board or County within their area rather than coming to the State and refer them to the proper entity. Bill moved to adopt this policy on an interim basis until the need arises to make any changes to it. Second by George, motion carried.

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**STANDARDS, PROTOCOLS & PROCEDURES DISCUSSION ON SELECTED POLICIES:
(CONTINUED)**

Policy referencing non-governmental use for emergency coordination, i.e. Burlington Northern needed access to the system in case an emergency situation arises. Jay again used the State's policy as a template, Tom stated he would like to amend the section deleting first class and to read County or City – Mike second. Amendment carried. Gary P. moved, Mike seconded to adopt this policy on an interim period. Tom asked if anyone on the committee has a policy preference for Micah and Jay to bring forward next month.

Bill Mund stated the State can send us a list of policies that they have already approved and no longer are interim policies and wants to be sure we don't get ahead of our self and approve something the State hasn't. Ron stated Jay go to the ARMER site for approved policies as it is up-to-date.

DISCUSSION OF REGIONAL RADIO BOARD'S CREATION:

Tom passed out a draft of Powers, Membership, Appointment, and Term dated April 21, 2006.

Tom added the second paragraph under Powers gives local entities the option to contract with the Regional Radio Board to manage, maintain, and operate their local sub-system.

Under Membership, it lists the restriction necessary to allow cities and counties must meet as a minimum to be on the board. Also lists what members are required on board according to Statute, list the length of term, etc. Tom continued to explain the different areas of the agreement. He did not have anything listed under board member duties. He stated the budget date needs to be discussed as the different entities involved may have different fiscal years. The board must meet at least once per year.

Tom only addressed two standard committees: 1. Central MN Regional Advisory Committee and, 2. Central MN Regional Radio Systems User Committee.

Bill suggested the heading be Central MN Regional Radio Board and Committee (word Board being added). Jay stated if Police and Fire are to be represented fairly, do we add a seat for the Fire and Police in the subcommittee? Tom stated his concern is if the group is too large, it is difficult to have meetings and also you have members voting on approval of money yet they do not have resources at stake. Jay stated his concerns are the users he talks to, they feel they are paying to use the system, yet do not have any input. Chief Ballantine stated we should be a little more specific to include more ex-officio members from the first responder groups even though they would not have a vote. Tom asked if the group wanted to have one ex-officio member from each of the following: Police, Fire, and Emergency? Tom asked if it would be appropriate to ask the State Police Chief Association, Fire Chief Association, and Medical would pick a representative from the Five-County region to have a representative. Another solution discussed is to go off of the state model to include Sheriff, Police, Fire, and EMS. Bruce felt the closer we stay with the State model the better off we are.

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DISCUSSION OF REGIONAL RADIO BOARD'S CREATION: (CONTINUED)

Will add ex-officio of representation like State model with selection by the appropriate committee they represented.

George asked if we could have an organization flowchart to represent what is being proposed as it may be easier to see.

Tom asked if committee wanted to add any other changes for voting members and there was none.

Jay asked Tom to explain the second paragraph again under Powers. Tom stated this board can not tell a local unit of government how to run their system except as it impacts regional operability or where the local unit would like them to. Bill M. stated an example would be that this group can not tell an entity what brand of radio to use as long as it was an approved radio on the list.

Bruce asked how many different systems were on the system and Tom stated at this time it is Stearns County and the City; in the future Wright and Sherburne County may be add. Bruce asked about fees and Tom stated we haven't even begun this discussion yet.

Paul asked if Todd, Kandiohi, and Meeker Counties have talked to Tom and he stated no and he still needs to follow up with them once he gets the contacts. Paul will forward these contacts to Tom.

Mike asked about the discussion on vendors present at this meeting and Tom stated this was addressed on a previous by-law approval.

Bill M. stated ex-officio and non-voting members are different. Ex-officio has a voting right unless it is distinguished as an ex-officio non-voting member.

Page One:

No suggested changes.

Page Two:

Officers of the Board: - no additions.

Jay asked if Debbie could continue to take minutes for the board and Tom stated the City has approved for her to be the recorder while we set up the board. Discussion needs to follow as to what the group would like to do with administration responsibilities in greater detail as we go forward.

Tom asked about annual board meeting and if we wanted to select a date. All entities present are on a calendar year and Tom asked if June works for the counties and they indicated yes, therefore the annual meeting will be no later than June 30th of each year.

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Regional Advisory Committee Duties:

Tom asked if we wanted to expand on this area? Tom will add something for the committee to make financial decisions.

Bruce asked if the County and the City run their own systems, what is the Board going to Manage? Tom stated they will oversee regional interoperability standards that affect the region, applying for grants on a regional basis, managing licenses on a regional basis, etc. Ron stated the State Board has in their verbage that the Regional Radio Board has input on Homeland Security issues, etc. and the State would rather work with a Regional Board versus all the different entities within the region.

We will add more for next month and Tom will come back with the changes at May's meeting.

GENERAL DISCUSSION:

Updates from Partners on Current Projects:

Tom asked if the local simulcast is totally accepted and Micah stated not yet although all technical pieces are taken care of and operational regarding the three-channel expansion. Mike asked if this has any stress on the system as additional entities are coming on? Tom stated no and Jay stated after the report comes out this month, we will have a better idea. A lot of radios came on the beginning of March prior to the 3-channels being added.

Hospital Radio Grant Initiative Update:

Jay stated there are 16 hospitals who received grants for radios, and asked if all 16 need approval to come onto the system and Jay stated they only needed one. They will be at the interop meeting next Wednesday and can bring to this board next month.

Tom stated if we do not try to get more agencies at the table, we will have more coming to us and asking to be added to the system because they have radios without any advance notice. Jay stated SCH has a need for two radios, one for medical (hospital to hospital) and one for security. This is for hospital to hospital and not security.

Items of Interest:

Wright and Sherburne Planning Proposal:

Bill stated Sherburne and Wright Counties are working together on a radio plan and asked the group (based on their experience) to what degree do they include their other agencies within their county prior to going to the board? It was the consensus of the group that the county should present it to them a month or so prior to going to the County Board. Jay stated he would suggest they at least notify them they are moving forward so the entities do not make larger purchases and not be aware their plans. Gary stated he started educating his people in January so at least they have a heads up and can plan accordingly. He stated now he has entities who are contacting him and ask when they can go onto the system as they see the benefits of it. It was stated this is a process to get everyone educated who want to be a part of the system and it takes time. Mike stated historically the Fire Departments are a little more eager to come onto the system than the law enforcement entities.

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Items of Interest: (Continued)

Wright and Sherburne Planning Proposal: (Continued)

Mike D. asked if there would be a benefit for him to have a radio in the county? Tom J. stated his experience is the need to control user expectations. Do not mislead them, the system will sell itself to the users; although if you mislead them in expectations, it will not be as successful. Tom J. and Bill M. stated they would be willing to attend a meeting if Wright County would like them to.

GRANT PLANNING FUNDS, PLAN DEVELOPMENT ISSUES, PLANNING ISSUES:

Wright and Sherburne Planning Project Update:

Bill stated they are talking about a Joint Powers Agreement between Wright and Sherburne County via the recommendation of Jeff, they may be putting up a tower in Monticello for their needs. Tom stated this is an example of two counties working jointly to build one system.

Bill M. stated the search for the SCSU student was a great use of our system since we put the system in and it worked well keeping track of everyone.

Development of Regional Plan:

Tom put together a draft utilizing RFP's as a template. Tom stated someone has to front this project and get reimbursed for it. Tom asked George if Stearns would be willing to pay for the professional services and get reimbursed from the grant? Bruce asked if there was an issue of having vendors at this meeting if we put out an RFP and they may have inside information? It was the consensus of the group that this should be addressed in a closed meeting. Paul stated their project with ARMER will be complete by May 31st. Jay stated he agreed with Bruce regarding having vendors present. George asked to close the meeting at this point for further discussion.

Tom stated he envisioned this group put the RFP out and someone from this group receives them back. George will need to check with Marv Klug if Stearns can act as the fiscal agent.

Jay provided an update on the grant planning money to date.

Tom stated the regional plan is to include Morrison and Benton Counties with the plans that Stearns already has and the plan Sherburne and Wright are in the process of implementing. This will allow us to determine the coverage we have and this will allow us to be better prepared for future funding and to use this template as we may add additional counties to the region in the future.

Tom went through the template and explained the different areas. Micah asked if we should include data pieces on a regional level? Tom stated he did not include it in this. Ron stated he did not see any problem with including data in the regional plan if we want to. Ron stated the 6X versus 7X discussion is outside of the regional control. Discussion followed whether we should put in the option of data in the plan. Jay stated he would rather see the concentration be on adding Meeker and Kandiyohi on voice rather than data. It was the consensus of the group to add the data as an option to the plan. Tom stated the state is hearing that as the system goes more out-state, they are not interested in voice; if data is added, then they are interested.

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Development of Regional Plan: (Continued)

Tom stated the grant money expires March 2007, we could include other counties down the road. Discussion followed regarding the inclusion or exclusion of data in the RFP.

Tom will modify the coverage area to include potential future data overlays. Tom stated the original plan was to get Morrison and Benton Counties into our regional plan. Jay stated we should tackle these two counties first and a few months later can look at additional counties if needed. Jay made a correction on page two to include Stearns County to have six channels. Tom will bring this back to the meeting in May prior to sending out for quotes.

UPCOMING MEETING, SET DATE AND LOCATION:

Next meeting will be Thursday, May 18, 2006, at Wright County at noon.

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.