

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
ARKANSAS 911 BOARD
February 17, 2022**

A regular monthly meeting of the Arkansas 911 Board was held at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 17, 2022 at the Arkansas Division of Emergency Management with a Zoom link and conference bridge provided.

The following members were in attendance:

Board

A.J. Gary, Chair	Director, Arkansas Division of Emergency Management
Shelby Johnson	Director, Arkansas GIS Office
Skot Covert	Designee, Auditor of State
Rusty McMillon	County Judge, Greene County
Bo Robertson	Director, Garland County Department of Emergency Management
Robert McGowen	Administrator of Public Safety, Benton County
Doug Sprouse	Mayor, City of Springdale
Rodney Wright	Sheriff, Saline County
Danny Baker	Police Chief, City of Fort Smith
Tommy Sizemore	Fire Chief, City of Barling
Jamie Pafford-Gresham	Pafford Emergency Medical Services

Executive Director

C.J. Engel

Asst. Attorney General, Office of Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge

Daniel Faulkner

Chairman Gary called the meeting to order at 1:01 pm and presided over the meeting with a quorum declared.

Upon a motion presented by Robert McGowen and a second by Danny Baker, the minutes of the January 20, 2022 regular monthly meeting were approved unanimously.

Financial Report – Following a motion presented by Robert McGowen and a second by Tommy Sizemore, the financial report was approved unanimously as provided which reflected the total assets and liabilities as of January 31, 2022 to be \$16,912,415.51 in which \$2,046,852.86 is in the State Treasury account and \$14,865,562.65 is in the U.S. Bank account.

Expense Report – Monthly expenses of \$239,340.15 were approved for payment as submitted. Included in the approved expenses were:

- LEC Charges - \$211,886.22
- AT&T Mobility FirstNet - \$41.23
- Arkansas GIS Office - \$16,642.18
- USPS - \$332.00

- NENA - \$400.00
- Executive Director Reimbursement - \$23.52
- Contract Labor - \$10,415.00

15% Allocation Balance by County Report – An updated report of the 15% Allocation Fund was presented reflecting a balance of \$544,421.15 with no new requests for approval.

Old Business

Arkansas 911 Board Annual Report – Legislation requires the Board to submit an Annual Report to the Governor and Legislative Council with information regarding the Board’s activities. A motion to approve and submit the annual report by Doug Sprouse, with a second by Robert McGowen. Approved unanimously.

GIS Data Aggregation for NG911 Service – Shelby Johnson shared the following updates:

- An updated report with a new format will be used beginning with next month’s meeting for easier reading.
- GIS data for Benton County was loaded into NGCS with no errors on Valentine’s Day.
- Pulaski and Washington County GIS data is under preliminary review.
- A potential bottleneck of counties needing to resolve data is created once error reports are returned to the jurisdiction for correction. This data can only be modified at the local level and must be fixed before uploading for the ESInet.

NG911 GIS Data Validation Service – Mr. Johnson shared that they have initiated the procurement specs and have based it around information from other states. Some hang ups have slowed down the procurement process but the RFP is ready.

ESInet & NextGen Core Services – C.J. Engel shared that Operational Readiness Testing has been taking place in Benton County and has been successful. ESInet transition for Benton County CENCOM, Bentonville, Rogers, Siloam Springs, and Bella Vista is still on schedule for the first and second week of March.

New Business

A motion to limit proposals to 20 minutes and discussion/questions to 10 minutes was made by Robert McGowen, with a second by Rusty McMillon. All approve.

Washington County PSAP Funding Proposal – Chairman Gary asked Washington County to come to the table for their proposal. Sheriff Tim Helder, Fayetteville Police Chief Mike Reynolds, and Fayetteville Dispatch Manager Kathy Stocker introduced themselves to the Board. Representatives from Washington County OEM, Central EMS, Fayetteville Fire Department, Springdale Police Department, Springdale Fire Department, Springdale Emergency Communications, and the University of Arkansas Police Department were in attendance or on the Zoom.

Sheriff Helder thanked the Board for the opportunity to present their case for additional PSAPs in Washington County and feels that their proposal is in line with the consolidation efforts and can meet efficiencies set out by the legislation. Chief Reynolds discussed the population increases in Washington County with an increase of 21% and sits as the third

largest county in Arkansas while Fayetteville is the second largest city in the state. He mentioned the University of Arkansas' enrollment numbers near 29,000 students and that combined, Benton and Washington County have grown more than the other 73 counties.

Kathy Stocker stated their efforts are taken seriously to meet and/or exceed national standards such as NENA call taking standards, or minimum training requirements. The PSAPs strive to maintain 100% personnel trained over the 60% minimum. All Washington County PSAPs are NCMEC partners. Ms. Stocker pointed out that both Springdale and Central EMS handle medical calls and are EMD trained, while all of the PSAPs have APCO certified training programs with minimum 6 months of training. She agreed that one of the big issues of topic is call transfers and that they can reduce the number of transfers taking place. Large investments have been made in infrastructure and facilities such as CAD and AWIN that have been supported by taxpayers and administrators.

Sheriff Helder closed by thanking the Board again for the case by case consideration. The floor was opened to the Board to ask questions and have discussion with Washington County. Jamie Pafford-Gresham thanked Washington County for bringing their proposal to the Board and attending. She stated that she does not believe anyone takes this decision making process lightly and agrees that not every situation should be cookie cutter.

Shelby Johnson asked about the current setup of PSAPs and Dispatch Centers and how the calls were handled. Kathy Stocker answered that Fayetteville answers all wireless and wireline calls in the city but transfers medical calls to EMS. University of Arkansas landline calls are answered by the UA Police Department, but wireless calls on campus go to Fayetteville and then are transferred to UA Police Department. Springdale answers all wireless and wireline calls in the city and handles medical calls in house. Central EMS answers all wireless calls outside of the municipalities but transfers law enforcement calls to Washington County Sheriff's Office, and Washington County Sheriff's Office answers wireline calls in unincorporated areas and transfers medical calls to Central EMS. Mr. Johnson asked if any funds go to the UA. Ms. Stocker answered that the county does provide 911 equipment through landline money but no wireless money goes to them.

Sheriff Helder clarified that the proposal includes Springdale remaining as its own PSAP, Washington County SO and Central EMS consolidating, and Fayetteville taking on more of UA calls.

Jamie Pafford-Gresham asked why Central EMS gets wireless calls vs. Washington County Sheriff's Office getting wireline calls. It is believed that it had something to do with the original agreement when landline funding was a larger portion of fees collected.

Shelby Johnson asked how many of the total calls provided are transferred and if there was a report with the those numbers that could be shared with the Board. Kathy provided the following transfer counts:

- Springdale to Fayetteville – 594
- Springdale to Central EMS – 530
- Springdale to Washington Co – 634
- Central EMS to Fayetteville – 1,782
- Central EMS to Springdale - 2,008
- Central EMS to Washington Co - 3,938 (5,194 between these two entities)
- Fayetteville to Central EMS - 8,483
- Fayetteville to Springdale – 567
- Fayetteville to Washington Co - 711
- Total Number of transfers between all was approximately 22,000

Kathy stated they believe that with their proposal they would see a reduction in nearly 56% of transfers.

Doug Sprouse asked if the population numbers presented including the 10,000-12,000 residents of Springdale in Benton County that Springdale dispatches? Chief Reynolds

answered that those numbers would not be factored in as they would be considered in Benton County's population.

Jamie Pafford-Gresham pointed out that over \$3 million was distributed to Washington County PSAPs and hopes that helped with the investments that were made and not just all local funding. She congratulated the PSAP on ACE accreditation through IAED. Kathy talked about understanding the expectations on standards.

Danny Baker wanted to confirm that out of the nearly 122,000 911 calls, approximately 22,000 of those are transfers or duplicated in some way. Kathy answered there is duplication because of transfers but isn't sure the exact number of duplications though there is a number of them that are. Jamie wanted to remind everyone that the intent of the legislation is to increase the service and cost efficiencies in 911 and feels that Washington County has the service and high standards met and will continue to do so, but we need to be mindful of the duplications in this case.

Bo Robertson asked what the plan would be to migrate the Sheriff's Office and Central EMS if they are a private entity. Sheriff stated that they haven't gone too far down that road yet but that both are entities of Washington County and Central EMS is quasi-governmental. Agreements are already in place for several aspects and that those agreements may just need to evolve.

Shelby Johnson asked whether 911 services were specifically included in the language of tax increases and bonds approved in improvements made by Fayetteville and Springdale. Chief Reynolds stated that 911 facility costs were not included in the \$226 million bond, it was not but was through Capital Improvement Project fund. This \$1.25 million was recently approved by City Council for 911 facility and infrastructure. Mayor Sprouse stated that he believes a ballot question did include a dispatch center within City Hall and Police Department. Shelby wanted to clarify on whether when the bond was being written was any of that work done with the use of 911 funds being included. It is not thought to have been included.

White County PSAP Funding Proposal – Chairman Gary invited White County to come up for their proposal. County Judge Michael Lincoln and Sgt. Jason McGlawn, Searcy Police dispatch supervisor introduced themselves to the Board. Searcy Police Chief Steve Hernandez was also in attendance.

Judge Lincoln stated that White County has had supervisors serve as trainers across the state and tries to have 100% of dispatchers trained. He says that approximately \$10,000 are invested per dispatcher in training and believes that they are the lifeline to our citizens and field responders. White County has invested greatly in 911 including a new facility and equipment for improvements. White County is Class 6 with 16 municipalities with a total population just over 76,000 and the second largest land mass in Arkansas. They would like to keep two PSAPs. Based on the map he feels very few counties are impacted by consolidation and expects the ones being reduced are going to present to the Board. He would like the good relationship between Searcy Police Department and White County to continue as is.

One of the main concerns is who would be the back up for White County if there were not two PSAPs. Currently when one goes down the other provides back up services. Judge Lincoln commends what has been done and agrees that consolidation makes sense but not for White County. Would prefer other smaller counties combine rather than White County.

Harding University sits within White County which increases total population by 3,000-4,000.

Jamie Pafford-Gresham asked Judge Lincoln what his goals were when working with the Blue Ribbon Committee. His four suggestions were consistent training, funding not

given to entities not meeting training standards, uniform equipment, and consolidation. He knew that there were some counties with too many PSAPs.

Danny Baker asked if there were any dispatch centers or Secondary PSAPs. Judge Lincoln answered that up until recently he thought White County was the Primary and Searcy was the Secondary but now understands that both are Primary PSAPs. Beebe and Bald Knob do have dispatch centers that calls are transferred to. White County currently dispatches for Bald Knob from 6:00 pm – 6:00 am.

Jamie asked why White County feels consolidation would jeopardize standards. Jason McGlawn answered that Computer Aided Dispatch and Call Handling Equipment are different vendors, contract issues would have to be worked through and it would be difficult to combine technology and equipment.

Rodney Wright asked why Faulkner County or someone similar could not be a backup as many other PSAPs use other counties as backup. Judge Lincoln stated that they would possibly be overwhelmed in that situation.

Judge Lincoln mentioned that he does not feel this is best for White County. He stated that a consolidation with Woodruff County might make sense. The two current PSAPs in White County have worked side by side to take care of the citizens of White County and would like to continue to do that the same way.

A.J. Gary talked about Faulkner County sharing space but not systems, and asked if there were any other concerns from Searcy. Sgt. McGlawn mentioned cost and equipment are the biggest issues. He also discussed personnel not wanting to go through the process of change and does not believe telecommunicators are willing to make the change. Judge Lincoln believes an increase in funding would be needed to make these changes happen and doubts that will come from the state. Jason McGlawn talked about how many times storms come through Faulkner County first then White County. Also, that the Fire Department has an ISO 1 rating and believes this change could impact this. All medical calls in White County are transferred to NorthStar EMS while staying on the line.

From the Floor

The Board discussed scheduling the March meeting for 10:00 am if there are several proposals lined up. Mr. Engel informed the Board, that only two have been officially requested but there is the potential for two or three more still. The Board agreed to plan the meeting for 10:00 am tentatively with the ability to adjust a week before if needed.

A.J. Gary opened to questions or comments from guests. Hearing none.

The next regular meeting has been scheduled for 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 17, 2022 at ADEM with a virtual option. Information for all Arkansas 911 Board meetings will continue to be posted on the Arkansas Public Meetings calendar as well as the Arkansas 911 Board website.

There being no further business to come before the Board, a motion by Doug Sprouse to adjourn and second by Robert McGowen. The motion carried.



Chairman