

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

A regular monthly meeting of the Arkansas 911 Board was held at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, March 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 - Zoom	Designee, Auditor of State
Rusty McMillon	County Judge, Greene County
Brian Presley	911 Coordinator, Independence 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 - Zoom	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 10:02 a.m. and presided over the meeting with a quorum declared.

Upon a motion presented by Rusty McMillon and a second by Robert McGowen, the minutes of the February 17, 2022 regular monthly meeting were approved unanimously.

Financial Report – Following a motion presented by Robert McGowen and a second by Rodney Wright, the financial report was approved unanimously as provided which reflected the total assets and liabilities as of February 28, 2022 to be \$21,865,076.94 in which \$2,047,126.03 is in the State Treasury account and \$19,817,950.91 is in the U.S. Bank account.

Expense Report – Monthly expenses of \$10,976,889.13 were approved for payment as submitted. Included in the approved expenses were:

- LEC Charges - \$225,802.18
- AT&T Mobility FirstNet - \$41.23
- Arkansas GIS Office - \$16,277.68

- Office Depot - \$146.98
- Executive Director Reimbursement - \$368.58
- Contract Labor - \$10,415.00
- 4Q21 PSAP Distributions - \$10,723,837.48

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

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

- Hard copies of the newly formatted GIS monthly report were provided and covered details on how to read and understand the document
- GIS Office is still finalizing emergency service and PSAP boundaries
- A few emergency service boundaries have not been signed off on and returned
- Team is working with counties and cities on ensuring data is prepared for upload to ESInet best they can

NG911 GIS Data Validation Service Procurement – Mr. Johnson shared that some bureaucratic issues have slowed the process but most of the hurdles have been crossed now. The Department of Public Safety will execute the initial data creation and entry for procurement process, while the Office of State Procurement will lead the process. The Arkansas GIS Office and Arkansas 911 Board will support. Once the procurement has been initiated, a solicitation will need to be completed and looking at potential legislative review in July.

ESInet & NextGen Core Services – C.J. Engel shared that Benton County, Bentonville, Rogers, Siloam Springs, and Bella Vista are live on ESInet. Johnson County is on the schedule next to be transitioned by the end of March.

New Business

A motion to limit proposals to 20 minutes and discussion/questions to 20 minutes was made by Robert McGowen, with a second by Jamie Pafford-Gresham. Doug Sprouse asked if the 20 minutes allotted for presentation was not fully utilized, whether it would be carried into additional discussion. It was confirmed that it would. All approve.

Benton County PSAP Funding Proposal – Chairman Gary asked Benton County to come to the table for their proposal. Benton County Attorney George Spence introduced himself, Mayor Stephanie Orman of Bentonville, Captain John Hubbard of Bentonville, Police Chief Alan Gilbert of Siloam Springs, City Administrator Phillip Patterson of Siloam Springs, County Judge Barry Moehring, Jennifer Persons of Benton County CENCOM, Mayor Greg Hines of Rogers, and Fire Chief Tom Jenkins of Rogers.

Mr. Spence would like to emphasize a shorter presentation to allow for plenty of time for questions or discussion. The Benton County proposal is to allow funding of the four current PSAPs to remain in place as is. It is felt that the legislation and reasons for consolidation do not apply and that Benton County already meets high levels of standards. It is believed that no money will be saved, and that there is not an issue with service and safety currently. Benton County has had a 28.6% increase in population over the past 10 years. At

the current 2.4% growth rate per year, this would project Benton County to 360,435 by 2030. These numbers do not include daily influx of visitors or workers commuting in. It is estimated a 40% increase of population of Bentonville during the day with Rogers being in a similar situation. Siloam Springs shares a border with Oklahoma bringing in a population increase during the day. A PSAP location map provided shows Siloam Springs approximately 23 miles from the other PSAPs. They provide police, fire, and EMS dispatch for 14 square miles including across the state line in OK. CENCOM dispatches for 36 agencies including law, fire, and EMS. Bentonville and Rogers opened new centers in 2019 & 2021 respectively. In 2021 the PSAPs received the following call volumes:

- CENCOM – 44,127 911 calls, 212,756 calls for service (CFS) dispatched, and 168,629 non-emergency calls (11% or 8,823 transferred 911 calls – 4,171 to Bella Vista)
- Bentonville – 19,669 911 calls, 57,924 CFS, and 101,088 non-emergency calls (6% or 1,274 transferred 911 calls)
- Rogers – 30,708 911 calls, 61,528 CFS, and 59,087 non-emergency calls (5% or 1,688 transferred 911 calls)
- Siloam Springs – 8,103 911 calls, 15,993 CFS, and 24,337 non-emergency calls (2% or 201 transferred 911 calls)

7.6% of total 911 calls are transferred in Benton County which also includes transfers to other counties where calls are misrouted. Mr. Spence also shared that \$10,000,000 and \$8,000,000 of funding for the Bentonville and Rogers facilities were approved with bonds through vote. The group stated their appreciation to the Board for their time and attention.

Rodney Wright asked what time frame Siloam Springs made their investments in the PSAP. Phillip Patterson stated that they have made several of their larger purchases over the past few years. Doug Sprouse asked if the facilities built in Bentonville and Rogers included other entities and whether 911 was included in the ballot questions. Mayor Hines answered that Rogers ballot did include 911 and their facility is stand-alone. Bentonville does include other agencies in the facility including the Police Department. Bo Robertson asked how calls were routed for each PSAP. Bentonville receives calls for within city limits and transfers from Walmart Corporate Security. Rogers and Siloam Springs receive all of their wireless and wireline calls for their respective cities. Benton County receives all wireless and wireline calls for the remainder of the county and transfers calls within Bella Vista to its dispatch center. Jamie Pafford-Gresham asked if discussion of consolidation was considered when building new facilities. Captain Hubbard stated expansion and surveys for facility were done prior to Blue Ribbon Committee. Bo Robertson asked if AWIN is being utilized in Benton County. At this time all of Benton County except for Bentonville is moving or has moved to AWIN. Shelby Johnson asked if CENCOM handles calls for other small communities. Jennifer Persons answered yes, except for Lowell Police Department. Mr. Johnson stated he feels CENCOM provides a good example of how consolidation does work. He also asked if 911 funding was used in the bond securing process and if they were aware of how their House and Senate members voted on Act 660. 911 funding was not used to secure debt. Judge Moehring stated he feels that the problems the legislation aims to correct have already been solved and does not want to see consolidation for the sake of consolidation. A.J. Gary asked if Benton County remained as is with four funded PSAPs could they state that they would be good with the amount of money received as it would be expected that if changes aren't made, asking for increasing funding would not happen. Mayor Hines stated that they have never lobbied for additional funding and do not plan to.

Garland County PSAP Funding Proposal – Chairman Gary invited Garland County to come up for their proposal. In attendance for the proposal are County Attorney John Howard, County Judge Daryl Mahoney, Garland County 911 Director Corky Martin, Hot Springs Police Chief Chris Chapmond, and Hot Springs City Manager Bill Burrough.

Corky Martin talked about Garland County's PSAP. He informed the Board that they moved into a newly renovated facility 5 years ago. There are 17 allotted staffing positions, with 13 currently filled. Garland County dispatches 20 agencies including law and fire. The county transitioned to AWIN in 2015 spending over \$12 million. The facility was built out for 10 stations. 5 are fully built out with 2 having only call handling equipment in place. Space still exists for an additional 3 seats to be added. Hot Springs was named a top emerging travel destination in the US with an approximate 31% increase for daily population increase of visitors and commuters. Hot Springs National Park brought in approximately 2.3 million visitors in 2021 and an estimated 250,000 visitors a week come to Garland County. They see several challenges if forced to consolidate and do not feel that it improves public safety in Garland County. Cost decreases do not appear to be a result. Computer Aided Dispatch is different for both the city and the county. The CAD for Garland County contains 18 years of data. Training would have to be performed for all employees when changing systems. An additional impact on HR and payroll would have to be considered. A necessary conversion of pay and benefits would be a tough challenge.

Chief Chapmond addressed the Hot Springs PSAP. He feels many of the issues that relate to Benton County would relate to Garland County. AWIN investments made by taxpayers in 2015-2016. Hot Springs and Garland County have a uniqueness in holding 200+ events a year with high National Park visitor numbers. He believes call volume justifies having two PSAPs. Their PSAP exceeds standards pointed out by report. He doesn't feel costs have figured into any discussions and that enough conversation took place with them on the front end. Does not see the benefit for counties with this size to consolidate.

Doug Sprouse asked Hot Springs about their staffing levels. Chief Chapmond answered that they have 17 slotted positions with 2 open. He also wanted to address the fact that the consultant that completed the consolidation report for the Board is the same company that told them to build a new PSAP at the same time. Jamie Pafford-Gresham asked how much discussion has taken place as it seems there are good relationships between the entities. Mr. Burrough stated that there are very few things that the entities do not partner in and work together with. An investment has been made into purchasing an interface that connects the CAD software for Garland County to Hot Springs to see where everyone is to provide backup to each other. Ms. Pafford-Gresham asked if it would not be most beneficial for all 911 calls and information to come into one central location and also how many other dispatch centers are in Garland County. Arkansas State Police, Hot Springs Village, and LifeNet provide their own dispatch services. Mr. Martin stated there are roughly 15 transfers per day between the 2 PSAPs. Mr. Burrough was surprised to see consolidation recommended in Garland County when the same consultant was giving them information to spend \$6 million on their dispatch center. Judge Mahoney stated that if they felt like there was any way to improve service or cost efficiencies they would already be doing so but because they spent so much on their PSAPs early on it doesn't seem much is there to gain. Chief stated the group is open minded and if they felt it was beneficial to them they wouldn't be at the table. He believes consolidation benefits a lot of areas of the state but believes Garland County is operating to the highest standards and the costs they would have to overcome to consolidate would be detrimental to the community. Robert McGowen wanted clarification on a statement that was made about the 15 transfers a day taking 38 seconds. Corky Martin explained that from transfer to ring time at the other PSAP, was a combined 38 seconds a day with 15 transfers, not including the time it takes to readdress questions and input information. Mr. McGowen asked how you come to the 250,000

population average. Mr. Martin answered that is adding in the true population of the county including all of the visitors to the National Park, Oaklawn, or lakes. The 100,000 population plus the 150,000 visitors a week. Judge Mahoney mentioned the regional hospitals being full during the COVID pandemic as they bring in patients from out of town and out of state. Shelby Johnson brought up the regional workshops hosted regarding consolidation in 2020 and asked if Garland County and Hot Springs were represented. Both answered yes. C.J. Engel asked if one of the current facilities could be rearranged to host a consolidated PSAP. Chief Chapmond says Hot Springs was built based on the Federal Engineering recommendation for PSAP and radio system for Hot Springs at the time and had no idea that this would be a discussion. Mr. Martin stated that Garland County built for the future and does have plenty of space to expand if needed, though some additional work would need to be completed. Mr. Engel asked if it is not felt that consolidation is not beneficial to Garland County, why are investments being made to try and connect CAD and responder location information. Mr. Burrough wants to have the ability to share information but continue to operate individual CAD because millions have been invested in those. Chief Chapmond mentioned that it also gives them regional capabilities.

Miller County PSAP Funding Proposal – County Attorney Jason Owens, County Judge Cathy Harrison, OEM Director Joe Bennett, Chief Deputy Mark Lewis are introduced representing Miller County. Mr. Owens talked about how the proposal for Miller County to join the Bi-State Communications Center is not attainable solution for the county. They currently spend a little over \$250,000 of general funds in addition to the \$200,000 received from the Board to operate its PSAP. After contacting Bi-State, the county has been quoted nearly \$1 million annually to be a part of its PSAP. Miller County is the second largest Class 4 county in Arkansas with one of the lowest revenues of Class 4 due to their location adjoining Texas. Having annual revenues of \$8 million, an additional \$500,000 per year just wouldn't work fiscally. Mr. Owens stated that Miller County operates the only PSAP in Miller County as Texarkana is partnered with Bi-State. Another problem, statute 12-10-323 says that revenues generated through 911 funds shall be used for reasonably necessary costs to enhance, operate, and maintain 911 service in the State of Arkansas under the direction of the 911 Board. One of the county's concerns is expending funds from the Board outside Arkansas. The county has obligations that other Class 4 counties do not have such as the size of the jail and a juvenile detention center. Judge Harrison has approached adjacent counties but there has been no interest from their end. Mr. Owens stated the county is faced with either moving operations to Texas, leading to potential bankruptcy, and potentially spending funds illegally or staying the course losing funds they've relied upon for years and are asking for relief from that by either providing more funding or another solution. Asking the Board to accept proposal to fund 2 PSAPs. Joe Bennett says that Miller County maintains a fully functional and integrated CAD and RMS, in 2020 911 call handling infrastructure and radio consoles were upgraded to dispatch 15 agencies. The Bi-State Communication budget currently is \$3.4 million and project that to be \$3.7 million with Miller County joining. The Intergovernmental Committee require those costs to be share equally. The CAD and RMS would not be compatible in combining. Employees service and benefits would not transfer. Mr. Bennett stated while consolidation efforts make sense in other parts of Arkansas, it does not appear to benefit Miller County. Chief Deputy Lewis discussed several upgrades that had been made in the PSAP. The telecommunicators are not in records or jailers. He provided statistics regarding the jail size and population. A.J. Gary asked why it would cost over \$900,000 for Miller County to join Bi-State when it only covers approximately 14,000 people. Doug Avery with Bi-State answered that it goes back to the interlocal agreement in place since 1985. Miller County was included in the Bi-State until withdrawing in the early 1990's. Robert McGowen asked why has Texarkana not been involved in this proposal and

an option considered for Texarkana and Miller County to consolidate. Shelby Johnson asked if Texarkana was represented at the meeting. The city manager EJ Ellington is present. Chief Deputy Lewis states that the report recommends that Miller County join the Bi-State not any other option. Mr. Engel clarified that in all discussions had with the PSAPs and in the report, that there has been no requirement of the Board or has it been stated that the only option for consolidation is for Miller County to join Bi-State. The requirement is for Miller County and Texarkana to reduce to one funded PSAP from two, and the how they do that is left up to the local jurisdictions. Those jurisdictions are required to submit their plan to the 911 Board by January 1, 2023. Mr. Bennett stated that they were led to believe differently and the City of Texarkana has no motivation to leave the Bi-State. They were told that if they couldn't come to an agreement that the funding would be sent to the jurisdiction with the largest population and is why they are here at the table. Mr. Engel stated that if a plan is not developed and presented to the 911 Board by the January 1, 2023 deadline, the Board will have to decide to which entity the funding goes but that decision will not be made until the deadline has passed and no plan has been submitted as no criteria has been set. Robert McGowen feels that if Texarkana is not willing to work with Miller County, that their funding could be pulled and sent to Miller County. Without the cost of records personnel, the Bi-State budget for 911 is \$2.7 million. Further discussion took place between Rodney Wright and Chief Deputy Lewis regarding handling warrant records through the Sheriff's Office and not the PSAP. Doug Sprouse feels more questions than answers have come from this proposal. Potentially more opportunities or options need to be considered for consolidation without Texarkana being part of the proposal. Mayor Sprouse asked if additional time or discussion be allowed. Robert McGowen stated his opinion that they should not be allotted more time as C.J. Engel and A.J. Gary have had multiple conversations with them. Judge Harrison stated that the City of Texarkana has voiced that they are unwilling to withdraw from the Bi-State leaving Miller County's only option to join the Bi-State or lose funding.

City of Bryant (Saline County) PSAP Funding Proposal – Assistant Police Chief JW Plouch and 911 supervisor Gail McCarty introduced themselves to the Board and stated their appreciation to present their proposal. In 2007, the city built a new facility that included police, fire, and the dispatch center. In the early 2010's the city decided to host a PSAP and reached out for 911 funds. They have recently upgraded call handling equipment with AT&T and also additional investments in their radio consoles and CAD. Upgrades have been made including \$1,000,000 for a new AWIN tower. These 911 funds have been used to help make these improvements in the PSAP. They do not use the funds to pay salaries. There have been several incidents over the past few years where the county PSAP was down and transferred their calls to Bryant. EMS calls are transferred from Bryant to Saline County. It is felt that Bryant has needs to keep dispatch center and several employees have come to work for them from other PSAPs including Saline County.

Bo Robertson asked what their total call volume is. Ms. McCarty answered approximately 9,000. Bo asked how many of those were transferred. Gail did not have that in front of her but would provide to the Board. Robert McGowen asked why the Board should consider their proposal after missing submission deadline. Ms. McCarty stated that it was a misunderstanding with the deadline showing April 1, 2022, they weren't aware of the date to get on the agenda. Jamie Pafford-Gresham noticed that many of the investments were made recently and asked why if they knew consolidation was coming. Ms. McCarty answered that their contract was up and had several improvements that were needed regardless of consolidation. Mr. Engel asked if Bryant could not hire record clerks rather than utilizing dispatch. Chief Plouch discussed how employees had no desire to go to work at Saline County. Jamie Pafford-Gresham asked about APCO's study on Saline County and their recommendation to consolidate. Bryant had mistrust in the process in not receiving

documentation. Felt like options mentioned weren't truly considered. Bo asked how much 911 wireless revenue was sent to Bryant. Mr. Engel stated approximately \$250,000. Jamie Pafford-Gresham asked if the county is looking at AWIN. Saline County is already an AWIN user. Bryant asked for help in paying for new tower but the county and Benton were unwilling to assist. A.J. Gary stated his appreciation to Bryant for coming and that they will send any additional questions to them. Ms. McCarty thanked the Board for hearing their proposal and willingness to have them.

From the Floor

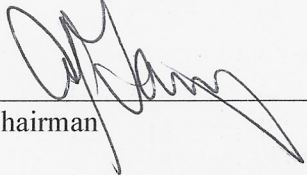
Danny Baker asked what was meant by extension to Miller County. Doug Sprouse mentioned having trouble getting enough information from the City of Texarkana. Doesn't have specific questions yet, but feels may need more input to make decision. Jamie Pafford-Gresham felt they misunderstood that their only option was to consolidate into Bi-State and additional options haven't been discussed. A.J. Gary feels the Board needs to think over information presented and come back and discuss at a Special Meeting or next Regular Meeting.

Robert McGowen made a motion to schedule next meeting for April 19, 2022 at 10:00 am to discuss proposals and vote, and a second by Rodney Wright. All approve.

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

The next regular meeting has been scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, April 19, 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 Robert McGowen to adjourn and second by Rodney Wright. The motion carried.



Chairman