



South Worcester County Communications Center

357 Main Street • Webster, MA 01570 • 508-943-1212
Serving the Towns of Webster and Dudley, Massachusetts



Gregory Lynskey, Communications Center Director

SWCCC Board of Directors

Meeting Minutes for April 24, 2020 – Regular Session

Board Members Present: Chairman Doug Willardson, Jonathan Ruda, Randy Becker, John Marsi

Board Members Absent: None

Others Present: Gregory Lynskey, Dean Kochanowski

Meeting Location: Remote Meeting utilizing Google Meet. No members of the public requested meeting access.

- Meeting called to order by Chairman Willardson at 10:05am.
- Chairman Willardson elected to forego the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Mr. Becker made a motion to approve the minutes from November 7, 2019 and January 16, 2020. Second by Mr. Ruda. Vote: Mr. Becker – yes, Mr. Marsi - yes, Mr. Ruda – yes, Mr. Willardson – yes. Motion approved unanimously.
- Director Lynskey stated the only update he had on other towns was related to the State 911 Development Grant which has new incentives for FY2021. Director Lynskey listed out some of those incentives which provide some significant savings to towns choosing to join an existing regional center. The incentives are in place for up to five years. Director Lynskey noted that an IMA must be in place to be eligible for the incentives and that the deadline for FY2021's application is May 4th. Mr. Willardson requested that information be sent to him and he would forward off to the Oxford Town Manager and possibly the new Town Administrator in Charlton. Mr. Becker asked if we think it would be possible to take both Charlton and Oxford or if it is one or the other? Director Lynskey stated we would need to evaluate our capacity to handle one of them as a fourth after taking one on as a third. He stated that a smaller community like a Douglas should be easy as a 4th but with staffing options being spaced limited capacity could become an issue with two additional larger towns.
- Director Lynskey asked Mr. Ruda if he was aware of whether or not the funding came in for the backup radio console equipment. Mr. Ruda stated he believed the funding was in but would need to double check. Director Lynskey stated at this point the funding will almost definitely need to be encumbered as it is unlikely the equipment could be ordered and installed before June 30. Mr. Willardson stated it is important to find out if the funding will be lost if not used by June 30 as that sometimes happens with earmarks. Director Lynskey stated the word Chief Wojnar had received was it was simply provided as an add-on to Dudley's state aid.
- Director Lynskey informed the board that with the assistance of a State 911 data analyst that he was able to obtain 2019 911 call volume per community which is the first time this data has been available since 2016. He noted that there is a significant difference (8%) in the split by community from 2016 to 2019 and that this is likely due to the new 911 system being able to track the

Board of Directors:

Doug Willardson - Chairman
Jonathan Ruda - Vice Chairman
Randy Becker - Member
John Marsi - Member

Operations Board:

Dean Kochanowski - Chairman
Michael Shaw - Vice Chairman
Steven Wojnar - Member
Brian Hickey - Member
Gary Milliard - Member

location of the call made vs. just the tower that a cell call hit. State 911 reported that the split in the 2016 data and prior is probably inaccurate due to this and that they believe the new data is far more accurate. Director Lynskey noted that the 8% swing in calls causes a 4% swing in assessment. Director Lynskey noted that the Board has already approved a budget and provided it to both towns to prep for town meeting. He stated the question becomes do we adjust the assessments at this point, hold off and make a decision to adjust the assessments at a later point, or just wait until next year. Mr. Ruda noted that with the outlook on local aid and the slower than expected local revenue that he would suggest waiting until closer to the October town meeting to make any adjustments. Mr. Willardson asked if going forward does it make sense to use a rolling rate over several years rather than an annual adjustment. Mr. Becker noted that the call volume numbers have always been suspect and believes we should use the most accurate numbers but is concerned about if it will require data mining each year. Director Lynskey noted that there is supposed to be an automated reporting system coming that would provide this data to us, however we have been hearing for well over a year that it was coming. Director Lynskey noted that the previous data showed an 80/20 911 split while calls for service were more of a 67/33 split and that the new 911 data seems to be more aligned with that which makes more sense. He also noted that he believed Mr. Willardson's suggested change would take an IMA modification. Mr. Willardson stated it is a little hard to tell right now how the numbers are going to play out so waiting might make sense. Mr. Ruda stated we should probably wait until at least late summer to review again. The decision was made to hold as is for now and review in September.

- Director Lynskey stated there was no real significant update to provide related to COVID. He noted that there is one part time dispatcher who has tested positive and is out but that it is not impacting the schedule. He noted that he has significantly reduced the use of part-time on the schedule as a precaution to prevent unnecessary cross exposure from other places of employment. He noted that the part time employee had a known exposure at her full time job and that she had not worked since that known exposure. He also noted that she had remained symptom free and he noted that he was aware of 3 other dispatchers who had been tested by their own choice and had tested negative. We have restricted access to the dispatch room to necessary access only. He noted that Gary Milliard and Webster EMS had donated covering the cost of a full disinfecting of the center by a local company and that he has contracted with that company at a small cost to continue once per week disinfecting at least through June. The cost is \$50 per week and is well worth the cost to ensure the center is clean and healthy. He noted that all calls are being screened for COVID concerns so as to ensure notification to responders responding of any precautions needed. Mr. Willardson asked about the worst case scenario of someone coming to work infected for several days before knowing and having exposed several other employees, do they simply quarantine or do we test them as soon as possible? Director Lynskey stated

that he would send any exposures to be tested ASAP and noted that while he doesn't necessarily agree with it, the most recent guidance from the CDC is that people who have been exposed should continue to work unless they have symptoms but wear a mask at all times. He expressed concerns with the confined area of the room that said suggestion sounds risky. He noted that in general the risk in the center isn't extremely high as the dispatch desks are about 10 feet apart from each other and with their backs to each other, however there is obviously some face to face interaction throughout the day. It was noted that testing is basically same day result so an exposure shouldn't keep people out for more than a couple days. He explained that the worst case plan if an entire shift is lost is to have the other shifts work 12 hour days to cover the schedule. The last resort situation involves having to close the center due to widespread infection and that would require the use of Oxford as the emergency alternate to handle calls for Webster and Dudley as best as possible. He noted that there have been some discussions with Oxford regarding this and that the same would be extended to them if they had to evacuate their center. He noted though that in either of those scenarios it would be very very challenging. He noted that so far, no PSAP in the state has had to close for more than an hour and the only ones that have closed for any period was a deep cleaning. Mr. Marsi asked if the union contract accounts for changing the shift schedules? Director Lynskey stated the contract does not call out scheduling, a policy does but with the disclaimer than it can be modified at any time due to an emergency. He further noted that there would obviously be some cost in overtime but that other than personnel costs our only COVID related costs are really just cleaning related anyway. Mr. Willardson noted that the SEIU rep has been very good any time he has called her for COVID related matters in the other unions. Mr. Ruda asked if it makes sense to consider utilizing the ability to overspend expense accounts due to COVID to use that to purchase the backup center radio equipment and seek federal reimbursement for it since it sounds like it is important to have a backup facility up and running in the event of an exposure. Director Lynskey stated he didn't think the issue at this point was as much the availability of the funding as it is the ability to get equipment ordered, delivered, and installed. He noted that the original schedule said a 4-8 week delivery. Mr. Ruda asked to confirm the cost of the project. Director Lynskey stated it was approximately \$80,000-\$100,000. Mr. Ruda asked if it makes sense to place the order. Director Lynskey stated he is completely ok with that but hasn't taken that step yet because it is Dudley money and not dispatch money. Mr. Ruda stated he would look into it further as it might be a good opportunity if we can get 75% of it back through reimbursement as part of the overspending authorization. Chief Kochanowski added that any COVID related overtime can be submitted for reimbursement and Director Lynskey noted that he did have a separate account created for any that may occur. Mr. Becker noted that he believes Harrington Hospital has a rapid testing facility that might be available through assistance from Webster EMS if needed. He also asked about call volume being down. Director Lynskey

stated call volume is definitely down although dealing with quite a few nuisance phone calls such as children playing in parks and other COVID restriction related issues. Mr. Ruda asked how it is going with the flow chart for reporting and notification of cases. Chief Kochanowski stated he still believes that the Health Agent should be notifying Director Lynskey directly to eliminate extra steps. Director Lynskey noted that is the process being used in Webster in accordance with the DPH advisory. Mr. Ruda said he is open to whatever process Chief Kochanowski wants so long as Director Lynskey is getting the information timely. Director Lynskey stated he is confident he is getting the information as soon as Chief Kochanowski gets it but that it seems like it comes in batches from Dudley once or twice per week vs. multiple times per day in Webster. Mr. Ruda stated he hopes that the delay will be rectified now as they have signed a new IMA which gets them access to additional public health nurses. Director Lynskey also noted several occurrences where addresses entered into MAVEN were incorrect, so information available is only as good as what is being put in on the state end.

- Director Lynskey provided a budget update through the end of March. He stated his concerns about overtime expenses that he expressed at the January meeting seem to no longer be as much of a concern as sick calls that were high in late fall seem to have leveled out. He stated he does not have any significant budget concerns for the remainder of the year at this point. He stated he will likely have some procedural budget transfers for the board in early June. Mr. Willardson asked if Director Lynskey needed approval from the Board to overspend accounts such as overtime if needed in an emergency. Director Lynskey stated as long as he has funding he can move around within the personnel subtotal to cover an overtime overage.
- Director Lynskey informed the Board that the Town of Webster accounting audit management review letter had an item related to SWCCC. The IMA states that the employees are employees of SWCCC but that Webster handles the finances. Webster Town Accountant Tim Bell indicated he did not see this as a big deal. The recommendation was that the SWCCC either needed to obtain its own taxpayer ID or that the IMA needs to be adjusted to state employees are employees of Webster and that in the event that Dudley was to ever take over the financials by modification of the IMA that the IMA would also have to be changed to indicate that the employees are employees of Dudley. Mr. Becker stated he believed it was fairly easy administratively to fix by just changing the IMA. Director Lynskey agreed. Director Lynskey stated that for all intents and purposes the employees are employed by Webster right now anyway and there would be multiple changes including benefits and retirement if Dudley ever took over the financials anyway. Mr. Willardson and Mr. Ruda both indicated they see no issue with make the change. Director Lynskey stated he would draft a change for the next meeting. Mr. Becker asked where the employees sit for retirement now? Director Lynskey stated that currently the employees are in the Webster Retirement System and that if Dudley took over the financials, Dudley is in Worcester County. Mr. Becker asked how it would work if the employees

were actually employed by SWCCC. Director Lynskey stated it would take special legislation to join a retirement system. He added there are multiple implications if SWCCC was to have its own taxpayer ID. Director Lynskey noted that if we were to grow large enough, it would be the route to go, but in a 2-3 town environment, the cost and time it would require wouldn't make sense. Mr. Becker asked if the costs of retirement and OPEB are shared between the towns and Director Lynskey stated they are in fact part of the indirect assessments that are shared.

- Mr. Willardson stated he would entertain a motion to accept the resignation of full-time dispatcher Charles McGowan. Mr. Becker made the motion with regret, second by Mr. Ruda. Vote: Mr. Becker – yes, Mr. Marsi - yes, Mr. Ruda – yes, Mr. Willardson – yes. Motion approved unanimously.
- Director Lynskey stated that Dispatcher McGowan left to take a full-time fire position with the town of Uxbridge but will be remaining as a per-diem employee which is the next request for a vote to confirm the appointment at the rate that accounts for his time served as a full-time employee. Motion by Mr. Becker, second by Mr. Marsi. Vote: Mr. Becker – yes, Mr. Marsi - yes, Mr. Ruda – yes, Mr. Willardson – yes. Motion approved unanimously.
- Director Lynskey stated he had a part-time employee Elizabeth Fish who had started training part-time and has been selected to replace McGowan in a full-time capacity. She is in her 4th week of training and should hopefully be completing training in the next couple weeks. He stated she came to us with prior knowledge of our software system and handling the public. Mr. Becker made a motion to confirm the appointment. Second by Mr. Ruda. Vote: Mr. Becker – yes, Mr. Marsi - yes, Mr. Ruda – yes, Mr. Willardson – yes. Motion approved unanimously.
- Director Lynskey stated that last week was the typical National Telecommunicator Week however he had made the decision the week prior and informed the dispatchers that he did not want to cut corners on recognizing them and not being able to have our normal event. I told them as soon as we can have a normal night with their families to recognize them we will do so.
- Director Lynskey stated he plans to apply for funding through the FY21 State 911 Regional Development Grant for a piece of radio equipment. He does not expect to receive the funding but is making an attempt. He stated he is wording it that COVID preparation has identified that we need to be more mobile with our dispatch radio console equipment and that he was seeking funding for a laptop based radio console that would tie in with the existing console. It would allow for radio dispatching from another location in the building without having to relocate radio infrastructure. It is about \$77,000 and it not something we would be looking to do financially if we don't receive the grant funding. This would give us an interim solution while we were standing up a backup location and would give us an option if we had to temporarily leave the room without vacating the building. Mr. Ruda asked if it will have the capability to be used in other facilities such as an EOC if needed. Director Lynskey stated the system is being quoted with the intention of the ability for it to work outside the building

but as to what technology would be needed on the far end of use he wasn't yet certain. Mr. Ruda stated that he believed all that would be needed is internet connection. Director Lynskey added that he believed that was correct but noted that it is not part of the State Core. Mr. Willardson asked if a vote was needed. Director Lynskey stated he would leave that up to the board but he did not believe so. Mr. Willardson stated he did not believe we needed one.

- Mr. Willardson stated that Director Lynskey had developed an MOA that would allow everyone to carryover an extra week of vacation time due to COVID to avoid a large quantity of last minute absences. Mr. Becker made a motion to approve, second by Mr. Marsi. Director Lynskey added that the Union has reviewed the MOA and approved it. Vote: Mr. Becker – yes, Mr. Marsi - yes, Mr. Ruda – yes, Mr. Willardson – yes. Motion approved unanimously. Director Lynskey stated he will sign it on behalf of the Board noting that he is signing due to COVID and documenting their vote.
- Director Lynskey stated he was requesting the Board to also approve him to carryover up to 80 hours of vacation time. He does not anticipate having that much time however he has timed planned for a family wedding in late June that may be changing. Motion by Mr. Becker, second by Mr. Marsi. Vote: Mr. Becker – yes, Mr. Marsi - yes, Mr. Ruda – yes, Mr. Willardson – yes. Motion approved unanimously.
- Mr. Ruda asked if Dispatchers fall into the exemptions of the family first that Dudley was recently asked to adopt for Fire and Police that does not allow them to take additional time off due to children not having school or daycare? Director Lynskey stated he had not seen the act yet and had only recently become aware of it. Director Lynskey stated being a federal act he would be surprised if it counted dispatchers as able to be exempt under public safety since the federal government still does not consider dispatchers to be public safety. Mr. Ruda stated they use the term emergency workers as opposed to public safety so it may be able to include dispatch. Mr. Ruda said he would hate to see any dispatchers unnecessarily take advantage of the act and thereby cause a financial issue. Director Lynskey asked if he had a copy of the act he could send him. Mr. Ruda stated he would send it over. Mr. Ruda added that his wife's daycare center is one of the essential centers and is operational so if there are any dispatchers who have child care issues to reach out to him to make arrangements.
- Director Lynskey reported he would be looking to likely have another meeting sometime in June to review some policy revisions and handle year end items. The Board set June 11, 2020 at 10am and will determine closer to that time if it's in person or teleconference again.
- Mr. Becker made a motion to adjourn at 1057am, second by Mr. Marsi. Vote: Mr. Becker – yes, Mr. Marsi - yes, Mr. Ruda – yes, Mr. Willardson – yes. Motion approved unanimously.