



**MINUTES – February 10, 2022 – 8:00 AM**  
**Benton County Emergency Services Executive Board**  
**Strategic Planning Workshop**  
**Richland Public Library ~ 925 Northgate Drive, Richland, WA 99352**

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**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 8:15 a.m. by Chair Jon Amundson.

**Attendance**

Members

Jerome Delvin	Benton County (2 votes)
Keith Johnson <i>(arrived after roll call)</i>	Franklin County (2 votes)
Marie Mosley	City of Kennewick (2 votes)
Bob Gear	City of Pasco (2 votes)
Jon Amundson	City of Richland (2 votes)
Thomas Grego <i>(in for Brent Gerry)</i>	City of West Richland (1 vote)
Bill Reed	City of Benton City (1 vote)
Ron Duncan <i>(arrived after roll call)</i>	Benton County Fire Districts (1 vote)

**Absent**

Brent Gerry	City of West Richland (1 vote)
Dave Giles	City of Prosser (1 vote)
Duane Szendre	Benton PUD (1 vote, Microwave Only)

**Also Present** Richland Interim Police Chief, Brigit Clary; Richland Police Commander/BCES Manager, Chris Lee; SECOMM Manager, Kim Lettrick; BCEM Manager, Deanna Davis; BCES IS Manager, Doug deGraaf, Administrative Assistant/Board Secretary, Carole Cimrhakl

**Attendees** West Richland Chamber of Commerce IT Systems Administrator, Brad Borton; Benton County Fire Districts, Lonnie Click; Benton County Deputy Administrator, Matt Rasmussen; City of Kennewick (Director of Management Services, Christina Palmer

**Approval of Agenda**

**JEROME DELVIN MOVED AND MARIE MOSLEY SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA. ALL WERE IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED 13-0.**

**Approval of Consent Calendar**

**Director’s Report**

**Items of Business**

Benton County Emergency Services (BCES)

- I. Benton County Emergency Services Director Appointment (ILA II.3.A.2) - Discussion/Vote  
Jon Amundson proposed Interim Chief Clary serve as Director of Benton County Emergency Services.

**MARIE MOSLEY MOVED AND JEROME DELVIN SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPOINT INTERIM CHIEF CLARY AS THE DIRECTOR FOR BENTON COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES. ALL WERE IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED 13-0.**

2. Microwave System Outage - Discussion

The Benton County Emergency Services Microwave System experienced equipment failures in two channel bank devices that provision T1 circuits on Jump Off Joe Butte. Day Wireless and the Richland Radio Shop replaced components in the two channel banks, restoring services. The outage impacted Law and Fire radio communications.

BCES has had numerous component failures in the Microwave System in recent months. All spare parts have been used and the ability to get them are dwindling. Parts found on the internet have a tendency to be rejected by the units, making it very challenging to keep the system up and running. If the system no longer functions, our ability to communicate on the radio system will not work. The health and replacement of the Microwave System must be addressed sooner rather than later as it is a mission critical component. The 800 Astro radio system, the VHF radio system, Public Works for Benton County, Benton PUD and the Department of Transportation all rely on the system.

Replacement for Benton County is estimated at 3 million. We are also looking at Franklin County's system which is the same as Benton County's. Replacement for Franklin County is estimated to be 1.5 million. The current systems are based on T1 circuit technology which is no longer supported. The Microwave replacement will update to Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS) Microwave technology. BCES currently operates on circuit-based technology.

Three vendors have been identified for the Microwave replacement. Nokia is rated as number one. The other two are Aviat and MNI (Microwave Networks Inc.). Funding for the estimated 6-8-million-dollars' worth of projects was discussed. ARPA grant funds and the public safety tax are both eligible. Jerome Delvin will meet with Senators Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray and Representative Newhouse next week to discuss consideration for funding.

3. DeltaWRX Governance Report – Discussion

Consultant Steve Reinke confirmed from the previous DeltaWRX strategic planning meeting that BCES is facing a significant investment in radio infrastructure with desire for a centralized strategic vision for a consolidated radio system and that there was a strong agreement to combine BCES and BiPIN. It was also noted that a stand-alone entity would be in the best interest of the region.

A typical Emergency Communications Center (ECC) has three divisions. Administrative (Human Resources, Finance, Legal, Insurance, Public Disclosure), Operations and Technology. Most Communications Centers hire and outsource with one of their entities or they have a staff member who performs those roles. BCES currently handles operations and technology, leaving the administrative division as a "gap". These gaps all require funding which will help decide what the organizational chart would look like for a new agency.

Mr. Reinke believes BCES could become an independent entity this year by formulating a 2023 budget with an independent director. Establishing a work group and making decisions of who should be on the Board (County Administrators and City Managers were suggested by Reinke

as a starting point). Chiefs from Fire and Law were suggested as the Operations Board who would bring issues to the Administrative Board. Voting structure can be structured in different ways.

4. Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) Update – Discussion

Mr. Reinke has been working on a decision package/contract for Tyler CAD to present to the Board at the March meeting (3/24/2022). He noted that the existing Hexagon system is starting to show signs of failure like the Microwave and radio systems. If the CAD deployment takes 1-2 years as anticipated, the Hexagon system probably will not last that long. It is estimated that an upgrade and hardware refresh to keep the system going for the additional two years is estimated at 1 million. There will be additional costs for Location interfaces and charges to transition to Tyler CAD plus an additional staff member (1 FTE) to lead the CAD project. It is expected the CAD project manager will then transition to CAD Administrator once completed. This will be included in the contract.

5. CompuNet Feasibility Study - Discussion - Approval

CompuNet has proposed a fixed fee assessment to look at moving the BiPIN Tyler infrastructure from the City of Kennewick to BCES. CompuNet will work with staff and industry vendors to identify the requirements needed, including new fiber paths and any physical infrastructure, configuration and networking equipment requirements. The investigation and report would take one week and cost \$8,203.75. It is currently unknown how soon this work could be performed.

**MARIE MOSLEY MOVED AND KEITH JOHNSON SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE COMPUNET CONTRACT WITH THE CAVEAT OF WORKING WITH BIPIN STAFF TO FINALIZE THE SCOPE OF WORK, USING \$8,203.75 FROM SECOMM FUND BALANCE AND AUTHORIZE STAFF TO MAKE THE NECESSARY BUDGET ADJUSTMENTS. ALL WERE IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED 14-0.**

6. Strategic Planning Process - Discussion

Consensus of the BCES Executive Board was in favor of forming an independent agency. Mr. Reinke suggested setting a stretch goal to have this in place by January 1, 2023, and then work toward that end. Mr. Reinke offered to spearhead the project, anticipating no additional expense to be added to his current contract.

He again suggested the two county administrators and the cities of Kennewick, Pasco and Richland could make up the Administrative Board of SECOMM. The Operations Board could be made up of both Law and Fire Chief(s). Law and Fire Chiefs would designate their respective strong users (currently Strategic Advisory Team (SAT) members)) who would make recommendations to the Chiefs and the Chiefs (Customer Agency Group (CAG)) would bring those recommendations forward to the Administrative Board.

Mr. Reinke gave a detailed overview of what a Communications Center does from receiving information, giving it to the correct user agencies and ensuring the service request has been received. He noted the importance doing things systematically and in the same manner for every agency as much as possible, including using the same vendors and products.

Discussion about the number of dispatch staff and statistics for agencies of a similar size and population of the Tri-Cities was shared. Some challenges currently faced by SECOMM are the inability to accomplish required continuing education during normal work hours,

mandatory overtime and a considerably higher workload due to short staffing. This leads to staff burnout and high turnover which further exacerbates the problem.

February 2021 through January 2022, SECOMM staff worked 14,183 of overtime. The average for the last 24 months was 1,182 hours of overtime per month. Last month, SECOMM staff worked 1,490 hours of overtime or 60 hours per person (five 12-hour shifts per person). SECOMM currently has only 25 trained staff to do the work of 44.2 people. Application to employment takes 3.37 months - an improvement from 4.88 months in 2020. Typically, 1 new hire is made for every 25-50 applicants, and it takes 9 weeks to train a call taker. An additional 4-6 months are needed to train a dispatcher.

Pay comparisons were made between SECOMM, Kitsap and TCOMM (Thurston County). SECOMM is significantly under both Kitsap and TCOMM in all levels of positions, the least being 14.2% under and the highest at 26.7% under. Local pay comparisons also show the disparity in pay for the demanding position of dispatcher. Immediate financial incentives to stay and for new hires were suggested, along with paid advertising and additional changes to shorten the hiring process.

Combining Law Enforcement consoles in the middle of the night when radio traffic is at the lowest would immediately lower SECOMM's minimum staffing level and would provide some overtime relief. Other measures to consider were elimination of non-essential radio traffic, requiring mobile data terminal (MDT) use for routine communications and lowering support levels for routine data and phone call requests.

Industry Standards from the National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA), Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) and National Emergency Number Association (NENA) were discussed as were level of service goals for SECOMM for both the public and responders.

Benton County Emergency Management (BCEM)

Southeast Communications Center (SECOMM)

800MHz System

Benton County Microwave System

## **Discussion Items**

## **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:39 a.m.

APPROVED:



Jon Amundson, BCES Executive Board Chair

Date Approved: 2/24/2022

ATTEST:



Carole Cimrhakl, BCES Board Secretary

Date Published: August 4, 2022