

**Northeast Regional Advisory Committee Meeting
Wednesday, January 21, 2009
10:30 a.m., DECC, Duluth**

Proceedings:

Chair Marcus Bruning began the meeting at approximately 10:41 a.m. Attendees who signed in or who were recognized are as follows:

1. Bill Bernhjelm, DPS/ARMER
2. Brian Belich, Carlton County Sheriff's Office
3. Brian Snyder, DSC Communications
4. Bruce Hegrenes, St. Louis County/Communications
5. Chris Lentz, Motorola
6. Jeff Anderson, Kanabec County Sheriff's Office
7. Jim Fregin, Federal Engineering
8. John Bowen, Crow Wing County Emergency Management
9. Kerry Swenson, Cass County Sheriff's Office
10. Marcus Bruning, St. Louis County Sheriff's Office
11. Mark Falk, Cook County Sheriff's Office
12. Mark Smith, DSC Communications
13. Mike Fink, Motorola
14. Mike Unger, Brimson Area Volunteer Fire Department
15. Nell Hoey, Itasca County Sheriff's Office
16. Pat Coughlin, Minnesota DNR
17. Pat Medure, Itasca County Sheriff's Office
18. Rey Freeman, GeoComm
19. Roy Holmes, Minnesota HSEM
20. Steve Ovick, Pine County Sheriff's Office
21. Steve VanKekerix, Lake County Sheriff's Office
22. Scott Camps, St. Louis County Sheriff's Office
23. Scott Heide, Crow Wing County
24. Tim Thomas, Itasca County Sheriff's Office
25. Tom Hannon, Consultant/State Radio Board
26. Tony Pogorels, Hibbing Fire Department/City of Hibbing

I. INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions are made by those in attendance.

II. MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

A motion is made by Mark Falk to accept the minutes from the last meeting. Tim Thomas seconds the motion. Upon a vote, the motion carries unanimously.

III. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

A. Planning Committee (Dana Waldron)

Dana Waldron is not in attendance. The Planning Committee has not met.

B. Policy Committee (Pat Medure)

Pat reports that so far the only JPA signature page that has not been turned in is from St. Louis County. Marcus Bruning will make sure it gets to Nell. Final copies of the JPA will then go out.

Regarding the NE MN RRB budget, Pat reports that the NE MN RRB adopted Option #8, which he, Tom Hannon, and Bill Bernhjelm worked on, which is: 50% of total shares; 25% based on population; 25% based on radio count. Each entity on the RRB will be billed. All totals will add up to the \$5,100.00 needed. Pat reports that the formula used for the budget will not be used when it comes to allocating the \$514,000.00. Pat states that the figures he, Bill, and Tom worked on were only for running the NE MN RRB.

Pat also reports that he contacted MCIT for an insurance quote to have insurance for the RRB. The insurance is figured in the budget.

C. Technical and Operations Committee (Steve Ovick)

Steve Ovick reports that there is nothing new this month. Steve reports that the Strategic Technology Reserve (statewide committee) will be asking each RAC to appoint a member to sit on this committee. Steve reports that the State of Minnesota had \$1.5 million to spend on being prepared for a catastrophic failure.

D. SRB Operations and Technical (Bruce Hegrenes)

Bruce reports that the committee met on 01-06-09. Items included approval of the Statewide ARMER Frequency Plan; numerous requests for statewide access for state agencies (which means you can take up more of the ARMER trunk groups). Items that will come up for discussion: Metro to out state ARMER links, cleanup of old standards.

E. State Radio Board Interop Standing Committee (Scott Camps)

SRB met yesterday. A couple topics included: the plain language policy for multi-jurisdictional incidents (encouraging agencies to use plain language instead of ten codes); and the 2009 Interop Emergency Communications Grant Program. The application is due this Friday and two projects to be funded are: 1) web-based interop training delivery and 2) interop equipment (allocation to RRBs is about \$350,000 for mobiles and portables). Scott states that the \$350,000 is to be split among all regions.

Marcus Bruning asks if anyone in the group knows a good method to get people to use plain language. Pat Medure suggests contacting schools to make sure they are teaching plain language. Chair Bruning states he will write a letter to the

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schools on behalf of the RAC. Tim Thomas states that we would also be reminding them that they are teaching NIMS and one of the components of that is getting away from ten codes.

F. Fiscal Agent (Scott Camps for Pat Lee)

Scott states there was about \$1,500.00 allocated to the RAC and much was used for the kick-off meeting. (Side note: The recording secretary looked it up in the RRB book when the RAC meeting was over to find that the bill for the RRB convening meeting was exactly \$393.76.)

G. Regional CASM Representative (Scott Camps for Karla White)

Scott believed there was going to be some training. Much of the FE local and regional communication assessment will feed into the CASM.

H. PSIC Allocation Committee (Mark Falk)

At the October meeting they were asked to come up with three options. They kept coming back to Options 1 and 2. Option 1: He states that he talked to Scott and they came up with an equal match for each government unit in the region (11 counties, City of Duluth, and the 4 tribes); splitting the grant out at \$32,136 plus the 20% match, for the total \$40,170.00. Marks states they would have until July 1, 2009, to make a commitment to that funding, and if the money is not used by September 1, 2009, the money would go back into a pool and members of the RAC would determine how to distribute the rest of the funding. It would be split equally between the 16 government units in the region. Option 2: A cache would be distributed to each EOC throughout the region.

After much discussion, a motion is made by Tony Pogorels that the RAC will advise the RRB that the distribution will go to the 15 entities of the RRB, with the understanding that they will work with their reservations and NGOs within their jurisdictions for distribution. Steve Ovick seconds the motion. Upon a vote, the motion carries unanimously.

IV. Old Business

A. GeoComm Regional Radio Survey Update (Rey Freeman)

Rey passes out a handout and updates the group. Most surveys are now in, and Rey states there will be a section for the EMS agencies in the region because of their separate infrastructure. St. Louis County, EMS Agencies, and Koochiching County are in the process of being completed, and they expect to have all reports completed by February 2009.

Update from State on towers (Mark Gieseke). Mark passes out a map entitled NE Region ARMER Status. It is also available on the ARMER website. Itasca County is complete and on air.

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B. Status of Local and Regional Assessment Project - Federal Engineering/Jim Fregin, Project Manager for the Northeast Region

Jim reports that there has been good progress in the distribution of surveys since the last RAC meeting. He reports that Cook, Pine, and St. Louis Counties all had surveys sent to stakeholders. Cook Co. also has completed the technology survey and they are in the process of writing the initial stages report. Kanabec and Carlton are in the process of completing the technology survey as well. Carlton may have turned theirs in. Mark Falk reports that he had trouble sending in the survey on line. Jim Fregin reports that they made a revision to the telephone number section and that took care of the matter. Jim reports that they are on schedule for receiving these studies. Jim states FE needs the reports completed by the middle of August and expects to have them before then. Pat Medure encourages the group to get these surveys done because there are timelines for the money. He encourages those present to make a phone call and encourage those responsible for filling out the report to do so. Jim asks if he can use the e-mail list Nell has to send copies of the report to everyone on the distribution list. Nell agrees.

C. 2008 Grants - Scott Camps

There are a couple different programs. One is the 2008 Homeland Security Emergency Management Region 2. He states they picked some different projects to fund. There was a demonstration at that meeting of video-conferencing. They committed \$200,000 of the \$500,000 to video-conferencing and asked the vendor to come back with the number they are requesting. The surprise was the cost of the maintenance to each agency, which may be a deciding factor as to whether we sign on to it or not (around 12% a year). Another project was a \$140,000 radio IP project. The third project was \$80,000 for mobile command enhancements for Crow Wing and Lake Counties. The remainder was for a radio cache for this Region.

Scott states there are some 2008 Homeland Funds going right to the RRB. One of the funds is \$282,000 for VHF interop infrastructure. He reports that the State is contracting for a VHF Interoperability Comprehensive Plan. Scott states that they expect to be done by June 30, 2009, and will give guidance on what to do with that funding for infrastructure. He reports that there is \$102,000 for mobiles and portable radios for cross-spectrum interoperability. There is no matching requirement for this money. This would be to acquire cross-spectrum radios so VHF users could acquire ARMER radios or ARMER users could acquire VHF radios. Scott suggests we direct the RRB to go with the \$102,000. Scott suggests that because Itasca County is 800 MHz at this time and there are jurisdictions around Itasca County (St. Louis, Koochiching, Aitkin, Cass) that operate in that area, they could benefit from 800 MHz radios. Scott makes the point that the RRB values the opinion of the RAC. Pat Medure states that he has a list of all the agencies bordering Itasca County that can be looked at for allocation and will bring it to the next meeting.

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D. RRB Budget Adoption - Pat Medure

Already discussed.

V. New Business

A. COML Training, March 17-19 - Scott Camps

Communications Unit Leader Training Class in St. Cloud. Two spots for each Region are reserved. See handout for details; there are prerequisites. PSIC grant training funds are available to cover cost of mileage and meals. Duane Johnson, Administrative Supervisor for Homeland Security (St. Louis Co.) is interested in attending. Deadline for registration is February 27, 2009. Scott suggests people should e-mail Marcus or Nell to indicate if they are interested.

Another training is on the Tactical Interop Communications Plan. Two Regions in the state have received federal assistance to help write their plans. There are a couple spots open for others in the Region to attend this training on how to write the TICP (part of the 2007 funding for this Region and for the northern border). Scott Camps is willing to go to Thief River Falls next Tuesday for this training and offered to take Dewey Johnson to learn how to write the plan for the Region. Pat Medure motions in agreement. Seconded by Tim Thomas.

Lastly, there is a northern border workshop. Scott states that they are looking for the top 3-4 issues regarding U.S./Canada border interoperability and asks the border sheriffs present to get those to him, so he can forward them. Scott is unsure if they intend people to go to Niagara Falls to meet with the Canadians in May, but there is a joint workshop there from May 13-15, 2009, in Niagara Falls, NY. Scott is unsure if PSIC funds will be available for this workshop.

Scott states that we need to discuss the PSIC training funds (\$2,000.00). He states that we need a mechanism to recommend to the RRB on how to tap into the funds and spend them so it isn't just anyone on a whim deciding to do so. He asks for suggestions. Pat Medure states that the RAC should decide if it is beneficial training and then make a recommendation to the RRB. He states that it would be good to discuss it at the RAC first so there is less for the RRR to do. Marcus Bruning, Mark Falk, and Tim Thomas will be on a committee and make up a policy for the RRB to approve which would allow the small committee of the three to approve worthwhile training. Once that policy is implemented, the small committee of Tim, Mark, and Marcus can decide which training is beneficial. Tim Thomas suggests that training requests should be e-mailed to him, Marcus or Mark.

B. Itasca County Interop Frequencies - Pat Medure

Pat states that Itasca County knew interoperability would be an issue for them with neighboring counties, so Itasca built interop frequencies to communicate

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with our dispatch and our dispatch does a patch to the guys in the street. Pat states Itasca is looking at possibly developing a third VHF interop. Rey Freeman explains the technical side of this matter: VHF 1 and VHF 2 are specific dedicated Itasca Co. interop repeaters. VHF 2 is the old existing south repeater (north of Grand Rapids). Because the I.C. Highway Dept. has not moved off of their old system, there will be a wait before transitioning to them. Rey states that new base stations were put in for MINSEF, statewide fire and statewide EMS. Rey states that if you are coming into Itasca County on VHF, one of those resources--in the near future--would be your best to use to get ahold of Itasca Co. dispatch. Because no one knows how much interop we will need in Itasca Co. on VHF (DNR, Forestry, people coming into the county--ambulance services, etc.), there is a possibility the north repeater will be used as VHF 3. Bottom line: Pat will send out a notice as to when the VHF 1 and VHF 2 are ready to be used.

C. 2009 HSEM Investment Proposals - Scott Camps

One project is to link the seven border counties with the microwave communication system. Scott states that part of it is to get a link into the State system from each PSAP. The next step was microwave linking to each PSAP. As Region 2, Scott states they looked at what project would benefit the entire region and the thought was to follow along the same steps: ask for funding for a microwaving linking to the State system from each PSAP of the remaining seven counties, then as other funds become available, link those PSAPs together. The proposal for the 2009 Homeland Security funding would be about \$937,000 for microwave linking from the remaining seven PSAPs (not including management/administrative monies).

Scott states that the State is requiring fire agencies to report calls on a program they have developed and that they proposed getting interface from whatever CAD system is being used in the counties into the State fire reporting system. Calls would be started for them and they would just add extra details. Scott states this would save dispatch time. This mandated fire reporting system will be used for anyone getting federal grants for fire agencies. EMS may be included in this figuring as well if it is cost-effective, according to Scott.

D. Strategies for User Committee and Owners and Operators Committee

NE MN RRB has asked the RAC for assistance in deciding who should be appointed to these two committees. Tom Hannon once again explains that the Users Committee consists of five individuals from each party to the JPA; they are administrative appointments (however an agency does it). JPA urges everyone to spread appointments around; i.e., one law enforcement, one fire, one EMS, public works, highway, hospitals, etc. Owners and Operators Committee has one person from each agency with a background in managing existing communications system; i.e., dispatch/communications supervisor--someone with a policy/management perspective. Tom states that between the RAC with its policy and technical perspective; the User Committee, with the user perspective; and the Owners and Operators Committee, with the functional piece, there will be a well-

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rounded perspective. Tom adds that these people do not have to be county or city employees and you do not have to have five for the Users Committee. Tom states that the process of convening is simple and once the appointments are made for the majority of agencies represented, the RAC gives consent to the RRB to set up a meeting date. The group comes together, a facilitator is appointed, the facilitator would manage the beginning meeting for each group, assist in electing chair, vice-chair, recording secretary, adopting bylaws and the meeting is turned over to them, etc. Tom states that all regions are struggling with this issue. Marcus ask for thoughts on how to do this.

Tom Hannon states that he understands the RRB requested the RAC to develop a plan for the creation of the two committees. Tom states that it would be appropriate for the RAC to decide the process for doing so. Tom suggests if there was a reluctance to move ahead with both, perhaps moving ahead with one (maybe the User Committee) would be appropriate. Tom states that you begin that process by asking each member of the RAC to go back to their parent agencies and come up with 1-5 people for the User Committee for submittal to the Chair of the RAC prior to the next meeting. *Pat Medure makes a motion to do so. The motion is seconded by Mark Falk. Upon a vote, the motion passes unanimously. The group will work on the Users Committee.*

E. RAC Meetings to Coincide with RRB Meetings

The consensus of the group is that it would not be beneficial to meet the same day as the RRB, for a variety of reasons--at least for now. Pat Medure suggests a two week spread between the RAC and the RRB meetings.

Mark Falk asks if the Planning Committee is needed. He states that they have never met. Mark asks if there is a need for it. The decision is to suspend it for now, but it will be there in case it is needed in the future.

VII: Next Meetings

- February 25, 2009; 10:00 a.m.; Brainerd
- March 18, 2009; 10:00 a.m.; Pine County Law Enforcement Center

VIII: Adjourn

Mark Falk makes a motion to adjourn. Scott Camps seconds the motion. Upon a vote, the motion passes unanimously. The meeting adjourns at 12:25 p.m.