

Law Enforcement and Public Safety Committee

Special Meeting Minutes

DATE & TIME: February 24, 2014, 6:30 PM

LOCATION: Legislative Chambers, 6th Floor, COB, Kingston, NY

PRESIDING OFFICER: Chair Thomas J. Briggs

LEGISLATIVE STAFF: Krista J. Barringer, Deputy Clerk

PRESENT: Legislators Donald Gregorius, and Kenneth Ronk

EXCUSED: Legislators Peter Loughran and Mary Beth Maio

QUORUM PRESENT: Yes

OTHER ATTENDEES: Legislators Manna Jo Greene, Craig Lopez, James Maloney, Hector Rodriguez, Kenneth Wishnick and Mary Wawro; Fire Advisory Board Members Bill Ecker, Arthur Lapp, Peggy Lapp, Terry Valk, Scott Sammons, Otto Scherrieble, Ed Wilhelm, and Kevin Keller; Ulster County 911 Representative Mike Davis; Ulster Hose District #5 Representative Tom Davis; Ulster County Sheriff Representative Eric Benjamin; EFJ representative Brandon Yardrough; Ulster Fire District #1 Representative Jared Mance; Ulster Publishing Columnist Hugh Reynolds; and Daily Freeman Reporter Patricia Doxsey

Chair Briggs called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

Presentation: Radio Communications

Chairman Briggs introduced Mr. Acker from the Ulster County Fire Advisory Board for a presentation on the Emergency Radio Communication System. He thanked Legislator Ronk for setting up the presentation.

Mr. Acker provided his presentation. It is attached to the minutes.

Mr. Acker discussed an emergency radio system survey that was conducted and provided a handout detailing the responses. It is attached to the minutes.

Legislator Wishnick asked for the details regarding Mr. Acker's comment that there could be access to high bands. Mr. Acker replied there were 12-15 channels that were reserved for trunking and were not available. He noted there were several that were in use in the County . He stated they only needed one frequency which could be simulcast

to all towers. He stated trunking was a glorified cellphone network and would need multi-channels.

Legislator Wishnick felt the presentation was very clear and noted there were Homeland Security grants after 9/11 for communication systems. Mr. Acker stated the grants were received for the 911 Centers and that there would be another round which would need to be applied for. He noted the use of prior funding for an interoperable tower, #6, located at the north end of the County which established interoperability with other Counties. He indicated money was returned to the State in the first round of grants. He stated he did not know if money was available but felt the County needed to be proactive.

Legislator Ronk clarified there were two proposals presented, one for high band that would be used for dispatch and the other an 800 mhz band for talking.

First Sergeant Benjamin noted the Ulster County Sheriff utilizes a VHF frequency and an 800 edacs system that has no interoperability. He noted the low band is terrible and not supported. He stated the Police Chiefs turned down the Blue Wing proposal as it did not include the equipment for the municipalities and was viewed as an unfunded mandate. He stated if the County moved forward without the municipalities, it would still be an inoperable system. He spoke of the low band crisis and the fact that there was no interoperability without the 911 relay. He stated they have their own frequency with other police agencies that costs \$4,000 per year in radios and a dedicated police channel.

Mr. Acker noted the State Police had migrated to local systems in other areas.

Legislator Gregorius asked if the estimated \$21 million proposal included the takeover of municipal costs. Mr. Acker stated he did not know until the bids went out. Legislator Ronk felt the \$21 million included the municipal costs.

Mr. Acker felt the County had complete a high level review/study and needed to bring this down to the specifics.

Legislator Gregorius asked if the tower sites were approved and noted zoning laws as well as imminent domain might come into the discussion. Mr. Acker replied the towers exist but might need to be expanded over the tree line. He discussed a situation of when imminent domain was used in the Adirondack Park.

Legislator Gregorius asked if these towers could be used for cell and/or cable access. Mr. Acker noted the Saratoga system spoke of redundant pads and the ability to market the sites in the future. He noted a microwave system would need to be in the line of site but it could be engineered to go around hills, etc.

First Sergeant Benjamin stated the County leased it's towers and did not own their own. He suggested the County commission a study to determine what is being used in our own frequencies. He also noted the County's Department of Public Works has it's own VHF system. He spoke of issues/concerns when law enforcement cannot speak with first responders on the same scene.

Legislator Greene noted it appeared there was money available but that the County did not have a plan to apply. She noted this would be a missed opportunity if not taken off the shelf and wondered if there was a willingness to take it off. She felt it made sense to get a clear picture. She felt the plan should also think out that energy that would be used. She stated she met with Emergency Management Services Director Art Snyder and Deputy County Executive Bob Sudlow and noted the first responders could utilize a daily solar regeneration system. Mr. Acker stated the equipment was in the equipment closets and the battery storage systems were available to utilize the solar energy opportunity.

Legislator Rodriguez qualified the list of departments were interested with the understanding that there may be cost and/or expenditures for equipment if the County purchased it on their behalf. Mr. Acker replied the departments were expressing interest in exploring the plan. Legislator Maloney asked if the new survey numbers were shared with Director Snyder as the "on the shelf" comment was based on the numbers from the first survey responses. Mr. Acker stated he just received the data and it had not yet been shared with Director Snyder.

Legislator Ronk noted the proposed system would maintain the interoperability with the existing police and non-fire related EMS agencies. Mr. Acker stated the islands could be bridged into a hybrid system.

Legislator Gregorius and Mr. Acker discussed units committing to the estimated cost without knowing what the cost would be. Mr. Lapp noted the Fire Districts were advised to set aside funds five or six years ago but did not know how many units had done this.

Legislator Ronk confirmed Chairman Briggs assertion that units can estimate their costs based on their existing equipment. He noted if the system breaks down and doesn't work, there is no point in having fire trucks if you cannot send them in the right direction. He indicated at some point, the cost would be secondary decision to the public safety.

Chairman Briggs indicated this needs to be off the shelf and would make a couple of phone calls tomorrow.

Adjournment

Motion Made By: Legislator Ronk

Motion Seconded By: Legislator Gregorius

No. of Votes in Favor: 3

No. of Votes Against: 0

TIME: 8:04 PM

Dated the 4th day of March, 2014

Krista Barringer, Deputy Clerk

Minutes Approved: March 12, 2014