



Regional Wireless Cooperative

Board of Directors

MINUTES

June 25, 2010

Phoenix City Council Chambers
200 W. Jefferson Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85003

Board Members Present

Bob Costello	Dan Hughes
Bill Cusson	Alfred Medina
David Fitzhugh	Charlie Meyer
Mike Frazier	Susan Thorpe
Ben Graff	Marc Walker
Jim Haner	Paul Wilson
Brad Hartig	Ed Zuercher
Jim Heger	

Staff and Public Present

Karen Allen	Steve Consad	John Imig	Cy Otusna
Leif Anderson	Jesse Cooper	Lonnie Inskeep	Bill Phillips
Charles Arlak	David Felix	Kevin Kalkbrenner	Mike Rall
Denney Bennett	Katherine Gard	Michele Kern	Larry Rooney
Carol Campbell	John Gardner	Rick Kolker	Dave Scott
Juanita Carver	Joe Gaylord	Steve Kreis	Dale Shaw
Jim Case	Jen Hagen	Mark Mann	Audrey Skidmore
Andy Clark	Dave Heck	Brian Moore	Wayne Smith
Rickard Clore	Jesse Hinds	Doug Mummert	Rob Sweeney
Dave Collett	Dan Hobalah	Franchise Ollarsaba	

* Mr. Zuercher joined the meeting during the discussion of Item 6.

1. Call to Order

Chair Mr. Meyer called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

2. Introduction of New Members and the Regional Wireless Cooperative (RWC) Executive Director

Chair Mr. Meyer introduced Jim Heger as the new member for Sun City West.

Chair Mr. Meyer announced the following Board Member alternates:

- Mr. Cusson for Mr. Brown – City of Goodyear
- Mr. Graff for Ms. Underwood – City of Maricopa
- Mr. Frazier for Mr. Isom – City of El Mirage

Chair Mr. Meyer introduced the Executive Director, David Felix.

3. Approval of the Meeting Minutes from April 23, 2010

Mr. Hughes moved to approve the April 23, 2010 minutes. Ms. Thorpe seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

4. Executive Director Hiring Results

Chair Mr. Meyer introduced Ms. Peters, the City of Phoenix Government Relations Director, who summarized the hiring process for the RWC Executive Director.

Ms. Peters explained that there had been tremendous interest in the position, and hundreds of applications were received. She stated that there had been two initial interview panels, and a final panel, which conducted second interviews. She listed the names of panel members and thanked the committee members who participated. She welcomed Mr. Felix, adding that he has had a distinguished career at the Arizona Department of Public Safety, and is well known in the public safety community.

Mr. Felix stated that he was looking forward to supporting the Board as the Executive Director. He thanked Ms. Peters, Mr. Phillips, and their staffs for their assistance during his first weeks. He stated that he was in the process of hiring staff.

Chair Mr. Meyer welcomed Mr. Felix. He stated that the hiring process was good, and inclusive of the Board and representatives of the RWC. He stated that difficult choices had to be made, but the process was very successful.

5. Update on the RWC Staff Hiring

Mr. Felix explained that three positions were approved to hire: an Accountant III, a Management Assistant I, and an Administrative Aide. He stated that the City of Phoenix Information Technology Services and Finance Departments had been doing the bulk of the administrative work, and that the new staff would begin to assume those responsibilities. He provided the following status on the recruitments:

- Accountant III – background checks being conducted on final candidates. Results should be announced to the Board in the next few weeks.

- Management Assistant I – initial recruitment complete. The pool of applicants is being narrowed to 10 individuals.
- Administrative Aide – recruitment open until June 28, 2010. 112 individuals have applied so far.

Mr. Felix stated that the process is on track to have staff on board in the next 30 to 60 days, and then to begin transitioning from Mr. Phillips and his staff.

6. Recommendations for Executive Committee Appointments

Mr. Zuercher provided a report on the process of selecting the five individuals to be recommended for the Executive Committee. He stated that efforts were made to ensure members were geographically diverse, and from different disciplines. He reviewed the recommended appointments:

- Chief Larry Rooney – Fire Representative - City of Peoria
- Carol Campbell – Police Representative - City of Surprise
- Shannon Tolle – CIO Representative – City of Scottsdale
- David Heck – Municipal Representative – City of Tempe
- Bill Phillips – Network Managing Member – City of Phoenix

Mr. Zuercher moved approval of the five members as the initial Executive Committee. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion.

Chair Mr. Meyer stated that the nominating committee had done a good job. He explained that they had been looking for a municipal representative, and were pleased that Tempe will provide one. He stated that someone will be trained on the municipal side who has not been very involved in the RWC. He explained that Mr. Heck offered to help find someone, and accepted the interim role.

Chair Mr. Meyer asked for any additional questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a vote. The Board approved the five members as the initial Executive Committee.

7. Report on the Fire Hazard Zone Transition

This item was taken out of order, after item 8.

Mr. Kreis and Mr. Anderson delivered a presentation on the Hazard Zone Transition Study and Recommendations (See Attachment).

In response to a question from Mr. Hartig, Mr. Anderson explained that equipment bought within the last two years is likely narrow banding capable, and would not be affected.

In response to a question from Mr. Hartig, Mr. Anderson replied that Scottsdale's upgrade costs were already accounted for in the Computer Aided Dispatch

(CAD), Automatic Aid Consortium budget.

In response to a question from Mr. Hartig, Mr. Phillips explained that the RWC and CAD budgets would likely remain separate. He stated that the same staff supports each system, but that a work order system exists which keeps the charges separate.

Mr. Wilson stated that continuing to use the very high frequency (VHF) analog system decreases interoperability and requires the expense of supporting two systems. He stated that members currently operate with 800 MHz in hazard zones for interior firefighting without safety issues. He stated that he was not in favor of supporting two systems, since only three percent or less are really interior hazard zone incidents. He added that, from a cost benefit standpoint, it was not good to support the old system, when so much money was spent on the new one.

Mr. Anderson disagreed, stating that it is known that firefighters in small areas require two-way communication and rely on a high level of reliability. He stated that an extensive amount of analysis had been conducted based on science and experience.

Mr. Kreis added the recommendation based on documentation from Federal Emergency Management Administration and the expertise of Buford Goff and Associates was to continue the VHF path for hazard zone. He stated that there will be a point at which the systems will cross and become more efficient, but based on the time frames of the Federal Communications Commission, the recommendation is to move on the VHF path.

In response to a question from Chair Mr. Meyer, Mr. Anderson explained that there will be technology available to allow digital repeaters to translate from one system to another. He stated that it will be a year before there is a manufacturer for the technology.

Mr. Wilson stated that the need for VHF is unique to subterranean basements or high-rises, which do not exist in many parts of the valley. He stated that if Phoenix needs the technology for its central corridor, then Phoenix should support it.

Mr. Anderson disagreed, stating that subtle changes to any location, such as a big box structure built in a residential area, could affect the ability to communicate.

Mr. Zuercher stated that part of the issue of Automatic Aid is that firefighters fight fires in cities besides their own, and can adapt across those boundaries.

Mr. Kreis concurred, stating that there are numerous events in which firefighters serve across city borders. He recommended that firefighters share the same technology.

Chair Mr. Meyer asked Mr. Wilson if his concern was investing in a technology which is not the future technology.

Mr. Wilson stated that his concern is cost. He commented that now when a Phoenix firefighter responds to a call in another city they will use 800 MHz, which means they are using 800 MHz in the hazard zone.

Mr. Anderson stated that Phoenix firefighters in other cities do not use 800 MHz, but rather operate through a patch to VHF radios. He added that an extensive amount of study has shown that analog outperforms digital when a self-contained breathing apparatus is used. He stated that this fact is part of what determined the report's recommendation.

In response to a question from Chair Mr. Meyer, Mr. Anderson explained that the plan is to eventually use digital repeaters and evaluate how it affects the hazard zone. He stated that simplex is necessary, but analog is secondary.

In response to a question from Mr. Hartig about transitioning from VHF radios to 700/800, Mr. Anderson stated that Automatic Aid is currently mishmash. He said that hazard zone will still dispatch on VHF and non-hazard to the RWC system. He explained that eventually digital repeating will allow them to merge.

In response to a question from Mr. Hartig, Mr. Anderson stated that at this time RWC does not support transition of simplex communication, and technology does not allow it without repeaters. Mr. Phillips added that while technology does exist with repeaters, it is very expensive and works with existing XTS radios, which must be replaced. He stated that to invest in digital vehicle repeaters now, and then replace them by the 2017 date, would be too expensive.

Mr. Phillips clarified that simplex is radio-to-radio communication between firefighters, which could continue even if communication was lost to an outside connection. He stated that the issue was an operational one, since the question is whether firefighters can perform if the usually reliable trunk system fails during a fire. He added that it is unknown whether firefighters would even know that they had lost communications, and if they did, they may have to put down gear to look for a new channel.

Mr. Wilson stated that he is in support of firefighter safety, and does not want it compromised. He stated that he can operate with 99.99% reliability, and that if Phoenix needs a unique system, then Phoenix should provide and maintain it. He added that for years they have been hearing that they have to get off of VHF, and now they are being told to keep supporting it.

Chair Mr. Meyer stated that this was a very important issue, but that there may not be any action for the Board to take.

Mr. Kreis stated that the Automatic Aid system has a venue to discuss the issue in the Life Safety Council. He offered to put it on that agenda.

Mr. Zuercher agreed that it was more of an Automatic Aid than an RWC discussion. He asked if it would be appropriate to have the Executive Director attend the Life Safety Council.

Chair Mr. Meyer agreed, stating that the RWC should not divorce itself from the issue completely.

Mr. Kreis stated that it would be possible for the Executive Director to attend.

Mr. Felix stated that he would attend.

8. Report on the TOPAZ Regional Wireless Cooperative's (TRWC) Request for Operational Talkgroups

This item was taken out of order, after item 6.

Mr. Felix stated that Dale Shaw of the TRWC had requested establishing two talk groups in the west valley for Mesa detectives. He stated that they have some coverage off of the White Tanks, but that it is spotty. He stated that he had intended this to be one of the first items of the Executive Committee, since it would not be a clear policy. He explained that, shortly after meeting with Mr. Shaw, there was a power disruption at the White Tanks site, which left detectives without coverage. He stated that, although the disruption was fixed, it made the discussion more immediate. He stated that because the Executive Director can authorize an additional participant to be approved later, he had authorized two talk groups, 15 and 16, for the TRWC's use. He asked to have the Board approve the decision and have the Executive Committee evaluate it.

Mr. Shaw addressed the Board, explaining that this was one of many opportunities for the two entities to work cooperatively. He stated that he and Mr. Felix had discussed creating an ongoing arrangement for increased cooperation, which was very encouraging.

Ms. Thorpe asked what timeframe was being proposed. She stated that a length of time would need to be identified for the Executive Committee to propose the full policy.

Mr. Felix suggested that the Executive Committee could bring something to the Board within 60 days of its first establishing a meeting.

Ms. Thorpe stated that the power issue at the White Tanks had been resolved. She asked what the impetus was for the temporary request.

Mr. Shaw responded that there are ongoing issues with the White Tanks site. He stated that they do not feel comfortable that it is reliable in the short-term. He added that crime does not stop at the border, and he wanted to establish talk groups in the event of a disruption to the White Tanks site.

In a response to a question from Mr. Zuercher, Mr. Felix stated that there was not a similar arrangement on the east side. He stated that Mr. Shaw had offered to do a reciprocal arrangement in the east valley, but that he had not heard of any agencies needing it.

In response to a question from Mr. Zuercher, Mr. Felix stated that he understood from the technical group that build out from Tempe and Chandler does go east, so there has not been a need for a similar talk group arrangement for Phoenix and other west valley cities when they go into Mesa.

Mr. Shaw added that if the issue came up, they would reciprocate with the east side.

Ms. Thorpe clarified that the proposal was that additional service would be discontinued after 60 days.

Mr. Felix agreed, adding that if within the 60 days the Executive Committee decides to extend the period, or finds another solution, they would bring that decision to the Board.

Mr. Hughes recommended having the issue brought to the August Board meeting, which would be approximately 60 days. Mr. Felix agreed.

In response to a question from Mr. Zuercher, Mr. Felix stated that he was not sure how to handle the cost for establishing the talk groups. He stated that this could be determined within the 60-day timeframe.

Mr. Shaw stated that they were prepared to pay what was needed.

Chair Mr. Meyer stated that he had spoken with Mr. Felix and Mr. Phillips about the issue, and based his response on the principles of interoperability. He stated that even though there are two groups in the valley, interoperability is more important than the specific needs of any one of the cooperatives. He added the caveat that if one body is incurring costs, inconvenience, or limitations, then the issue would require further discussion and evaluation. He added that he believed that they should be one cooperative, not two, and that they should conduct themselves to make that viable in the future.

Ms. Thorpe moved approval of the decision to authorize two talk groups to the TRWC, with the understanding that the time period is approximately 60 days, and the issue would be brought back to the Board at the August meeting. Mr. Hughes seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Mr. Shaw stated that the TRWC Board is meeting in September and has a topic to discuss the ongoing relationship with the RWC. He stated that it is a great opportunity to work together Board-to-Board. He stated that he would work closely with Mr. Felix on packaging a move forward, and hoped the RWC Board would consider a similar package.

Chair Mr. Meyer stated that the Board would like to move forward towards a higher level of cooperation.

9. Update on Buckeye's and Goodyear's Plans to Expand the RWC Network

This item was continued to the next meeting.

10. Next Meeting

The Board discussed options for changing the day of meetings, as a result of some members' moving to a four-day work week. The Board decided to change the meeting days to the fourth Thursday of each month, and have staff find alternative locations for days on which there is a conflict.

11. Adjournment

Chair Mr. Meyer adjourned the meeting at 11:37 a.m.