

JONES COUNTY 911 SERVICE BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

December 2, 2021

SERVICE BOARD MEMBERS

Bold lettering indicates those in attendance at this meeting.

Voting Membership

Denny Coon	Oxford Junction	Jeff Swisher	Board of Supervisors
Mike O'Connor	Morley	Roxanne Tapken	Martelle
Kevin Rohwedder	Olin Fire District	John Machart	Anamosa
Rex Andrews	CJ Rural Fire Brd.	Britt Smith	Monticello
Jacob Koch	Mechanicsville	Brenda Leonard	Jones County EMA
Bert Kraai	Cascade	Greg Graver	Jones County Sheriff
Jean McPherson	Olin (Ambulance)	Brandon Siggins	Lisbon

Non-Voting Membership

Sheila Frink	Anamosa Area Amb.	Jake Lindauer	Lisbon/MtVernon Amb.
John Vacek	Wyoming Fire Co.	Russ Benke	Midland Ambulance

VISITORS in Attendance:

Terry Harris – Radio Communications, Joe Bayne – Monticello Fire Chief

911 Coordinator

Gary Schwab - Jones County 911 Coordinator

Chairman Coon called the meeting of the 911 Service Board to order at 7:18 PM.

Motioned by Benke, 2nd by Kraai to approve the agenda. All Aye. Motion carried.

Past Minutes of October 7, 2021

Motioned by Leonard, 2nd by Kraai to approve the minutes. All Aye. Motion carried.

Budget Report

Schwab reported financials for the year through November: Fund balance stands at \$300,772.37 Revenue stood at \$132,911.49, Expenses stood at \$240,246.45. Schwab presented the November month expenditures had an additional chart that projects. Monthly actual expenses plus projected expense through the remainder of the fiscal year against the approved budget.

Motioned by Benke, 2nd by Tapken to approve the budget report as presented. All Aye. Motion carried.

Emergency Radio Fund

Schwab reported that after combing through old minutes he could not find any reference to where a fund had been set up or any money set aside for this purpose. Considering that current prices are much higher than when this fund was first proposed. Discussion centered on abandoning the fund. Smith asked if there was any interest in repurposing the fund? Instead of having it as a replacement for a catastrophic failure make it a more general radio purchase fund? Coon stated at the last meeting there was some discussion about looking into that type of fund during the next fiscal year budget process. Terry Harris offered that Benton County has done that in the past setting 42k to \$4k aside as a radio purchasing fund. Leonard stated yes, we have discussed it, at the same time we have other major purchases that will have to be pursued. It was also mentioned that in other counties radios have been purchased because there was money targeted for that purpose creating an over abundance of radios.

Motioned by Benke, 2nd by Graver to delete the Emergency Rdio Replacement Category. All Aye. Motion carried.

Discussion regarding Analog/Digital Paging

Terry Harris gave an in-depth explanation of the differences between VHF analog versus P25 digital versus digital paging.

Note that Jones County operates in the VHF (150 – 174Mhz) Frequency Band. Presently in analog mode, migration plan to P25 Digital mode, but will still operate in VHF (150 – 174MHz).

VHF Analog Paging

Jones County has been utilizing VHF analog tone and voice for the last several years. And can continue to do so. The system works by sending a one second alert tone A, followed by a 3 second alert tone B, to alert specific departments of impending voice instructions. In the case of emergency sirens, specific tones are used to trigger the emergency sirens.

P25 Digital Paging

Today there are two varieties of P25 digital pagers single band and dual band. Single band can receive either analog or VHF P25 digital tones and voice. Thus, the county can stay with the VHF analog paging system and departments can purchase a P25 digital pager. If at some point the decision is made to switch to P25 digital paging there may have to be some reprogramming of the tones used but that is it. As far as dispatch is concerned there is no difference in their procedure/process. One other point to make is that if a department chooses to stay VHF analog paging and another chooses P25 digital paging the VHF analog department will not hear the P25 digital traffic if they have analog only pagers/radios.

Terry presented a sample of a P25 digital pager that Monticello Fire is getting, these are dual band. Meaning they have both VHF analog & P25 digital and 700/800Mhz analog & P25 digital capability. This means the pager can operate in the VHF analog & P25 digital band OR in the 700/800 band (used by SARA and ISICS). This style of pager, in the P25 band, operates as does the single band pager. In the 700/800 band the pager can receive pages from SARA/ISICS depending on the system in use. Keep in mind that the pager, like multiband radios do not scan between the two bands. If you have it set for VHF P25 digital band you will NOT get pages from the 700/800 band. Likewise, if you are operating in the 700/800 band you will not get VHF P25 digital pages (Jones County). If you wanted to be sure to get pages from either band you would have to carry two pagers.

Digital Paging

This is where departments must be very cautious. Digital paging IS NOT the same as P25 digital paging. Typically, digital paging is more characteristic to display pagers (no voice). These systems are referred to as: Alphanumeric paging

Display paging

POCSAG paging (Post Office Code Standardization Advisory Group)

To go with this system some type of master controller would be required along with complete new infrastructure with a price tag around \$500,000.

Ultimately our current paging system/process does not impact any decision regarding the switch to P25 radio Communications and should not be a deciding factor. Graver stated that switching to P25 digital communications has been a huge improvement, akin to going back to the quality of service seen prior to narrow banding. Smith was in agreement, he did add that users do have to switch towers.

There was continued discussion that Martelle and Monticello have applied for AFG grants to purchase P25 radios and pagers but have been denied. There may be some money coming from a Public Health grant. At this point there is no guarantee and if it does go through would provide about \$6,000 per department. In Monticello's case Fire Chief Joe Bayne stated he needs funding to the tune of \$48K to outfit his department.

They do not have the funding and see no way to be compliant by January 2023 as dictated by the service board back in September of this year.

Another topic that was discussed was Frequency nomenclature. As an example, Mutual Aid has more than one alias. The county has discussed this many times. There needs to be a standardized set of nomenclatures for all frequencies used by Jones County.

No specific actions were taken.

Discussion/action Regarding Law Ops Radio Reception, Wyoming

Graver started the discussion by stating recently he was on a call in Wyoming specifically at Midland School. When using the radio (portable, Law Ops) he could contact dispatch but could not hear anything back. The only way he could get a response was if someone called him on his cell phone. As it turns out the Wyoming tower Law Ops radio is a receive only radio, the Olin Tower is set up the same way. To change this scenario will require changing the radios to a transmit and receive repeater operation. Terry Harris has been working with the radio supplier to determine what exactly has to be done. Can the radio(s) be converted, or do they have to be replaced? At the time of the meeting, Terry Harris did not have a definitive answer and could only give a worst-case estimate of \$20,472.20 for the Wyoming Tower site. Discussion ensued that until we have a definitive answer on the actual cost this issue should be tabled. With definitive information the board can decide to do one or both towers.

Other Items of Interest

Leonard asked Tapken if everything had been resolved regarding the FEMA grant for the Martelle water tower grant. As the request had been returned with a request for more information. The deadline was very short Leonard wanted to make sure that the city of Martelle was getting the information requested to FEMA.

Smith asked if this board had any desire to assist, monetarily, services that have insufficient funding to purchase P25 digital capability by the deadline or extending the January 2023 deadline. Is there interest in going to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) looking for financial assistance for services in purchasing these radios? Keep in mind where the 911 Service Board is the front line the BOS would direct services back to the 911 Service Board. So, some statement from this board stating we either do or do not have the ability in our current budget or in the budget we will be working on in the near future, to provide funds for services to purchase radios so that we could in some way get financial assistance from the BOS. Coon stated that the 911 Service board has in the past provided some assistance principally as in the era of adding towers. At that time the 911 service board received loan(s) from the BOS to make the purchases. Basically, Smith asked for a unified front coming from the 911 service board going to the BOS to explain the situation as to where the 911 service board funding is going and why we are coming to the BOS. Schwab asked what is realistic for those departments here, if there is no help from the BOS how long would it take for departments to get compliance? Joe Bayne said 5-years. Smith asked if each department got aggressive in their budgeting couldn't that be reduced to maybe 2-years. And maybe extending the deadline by a year. These are questions that each department needs to work aggressively to plan out. Coon asked if it would be possible to delay or stage out the dispatch radio update? Schwab stated no, all dispatch radio and equipment have to be done at the same time. Even at that we are talking about a multiple year payment plan.

Smith said can we put out an inquiry to every entity stating this is your one chance to state your case. Then we could go to the BOS with a business case stating our county services need this number of radios to reach a minimally effective operational level, the total cost to reach this level is X, we have this amount of money over the current and next budgets to spend on P25 equipment, with help from the BOS for the difference in some increment will get the services compliant.

Smith also asked if we go this route should we also go back to the services and specify what brand/model of radios could be purchased?

Leonard and Schwab will start gathering data; what do you have, what have you spent, how many more do you need, how much funding do you need, to build the business case for information to present at the next 911 Service Board meeting.

Motioned by Britt, 2nd by Leonard to adjourn the meeting at 8:58 PM. All Aye. Motion carried.

Next Meeting – January 6, 2022

Recorded by:

Gary Schwab, Jones County 911 Coordinator