

**MINUTES OF THE  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION DISTRICT  
BOARD OF MANAGERS**

**REGULAR MEETING**

**January 16, 2019**

LOCATION: 9-1-1 Board Room  
150 Hilbig Road, Conroe, Texas

**BOARD ATTENDING**

PRESENT: Paul Virgadamo, President  
Robert Hudson, Vice President  
Ryan Gable, Secretary  
Jack Yates, Treasurer  
John Young, Ex-Officio Member

NOT PRESENT: James Simon, Member

IN ATTENDANCE: Larry Foerster, Legal Counsel  
Chip VanSteenberg, Executive Director  
Jeanne Frey, Operations Manager  
Roberto Gutierrez, Systems Manager  
Andrea Wilson, Community Relations Manager  
Terri Gill, Executive Assistant  
Rick Erickson, The Woodlands Fire Department  
Sarah Cottar, Montgomery County Hospital District  
Shawn Trainor, Montgomery County Hospital District

Mr. Paul Virgadamo, President, called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m., noting Mr. James Simon was unable to attend and Mr. Jack Yates would arrive shortly.

**Public Comments**

No one requested to address the Board.

**Proposal to Develop a Training Program to Serve all Montgomery County PSAPs**

Mr. Virgadamo noted item one of the agenda, consider and take action on a proposal to develop a training program to serve all Montgomery County PSAPs.

Mr. Chip VanSteenberg, Executive Director, stated the district has been working with the supervisory staff at each of the four Montgomery County PSAPs to develop a central training program. The proposal is for MCECD to hire a full-time training coordinator to develop a training calendar, perform classroom instruction, and coordinate on-line and contract training as needed. The benefits of this program are:

- Improve interoperability between the PSAPs by developing and training on common protocols and procedures
- Relieve the PSAPs of the costs, both in dollars and productivity, of providing separate training programs
- Capitalize on MCECD's investments in computer systems and programs by offering classroom instruction

by certified instructors

- Develop opportunities to sponsor trainees prior to hiring to help PSAPs improve their recruitment and hiring process

The state requires TCOLE certification if the Telecommunicators are handling law enforcement calls. This is a very structured program, and is currently being rewritten, changing the required hours from 80 to 120, possibly more. The district is exploring the requirements to be a TCOLE certified academy or working under a certified academy. Constable Ryan Gable noted his agency is certified and would be available to assist, as needed.

The staff would like to begin the new training program in this fiscal year by filling the vacancy created through a retirement planned for June 30, 2019 and using funds in the budget already earmarked for training and education. Ultimately, however, it will increase staffing by one full-time position in the fiscal year that begins October 1, 2019. In other words, the vacancy created by the retirement will ultimately be filled, but not until the new fiscal year begins. The annual estimated cost is approximately \$100,000.

\*\*\*Note: Mr. Jack Yates arrived at 12:06 p.m.

Training programs like this one are fairly common for emergency communication districts. Staff has reviewed the programs offered by Denco 9-1-1, Denton County, and Tarrant County 9-1-1 to help structure this proposal.

Mr. Virgadamo asked if the agencies would pay for the training. Mr. VanSteenberg replied, no, this is a service the district would provide.

Chief Robert Hudson stated he is in favor of the concept but has some concerns. Do we have training facilities so as not to incur outside costs? Mr. VanSteenberg noted between the five agencies there are facilities available. Chief Hudson stated more funds are being made available to the PSAPs, while the district is taking on salary and benefits as well as incurring all the costs, would it be better to require some fiscal participation by the agencies? Mr. VanSteenberg noted the training coordinator would provide most of the training, but a fee based-structure could be in place for outside instructors. Also, available seats would be offered to agencies outside of Montgomery County for a fee.

Mr. Virgadamo asked if one person could provide all the training. Mr. VanSteenberg replied that we would offer as much training as one person could provide, occasionally supplementing with an outside instructor. We are not proposing to take over every hour of training, but a regular routine of providing repeating courses and special needs that all four PSAPs provide. They will still provide some training.

Ms. Andrea Wilson stated there three forms of training required. One is training on the Vesta 9-1-1 equipment and Smart911, two is the Telecommunicator training required by TCOLE, and three is the sponsored training with an outside instructor, for example, Adam Tim with The Healthy Dispatcher. Chief Hudson noted his concern is that the outside instructors are very expensive.

Chief Hudson asked for clarification on the training coordinator's salary and benefits. Mr. VanSteenberg replied \$80 – 90,000. The district has monies budgeted for training and other inter-agency monies that could be merged into this program.

Mr. Jack Yates stated he also supports financial participation from the agencies.

Mr. Virgadamo asked if this originated from a problem or issue. Mr. VanSteenberg replied it originates from a desire to increase interoperability, helping to solve the problem of lag time that turnover causes.

Mr. Rick Erickson, with The Woodlands Fire Department, stated he believes when someone makes a call to 9-1-1 in Montgomery County each call should be treated with the same professionalism and the same standard. This will set us on the track headed in that direction, everybody has been trained on Vesta the same way. When a Smart911 call comes in the call-takers have been trained consistently, by someone who is a trainer, on how to process the

Smart911 call, how to handle the facility pop.

Chief Hudson stated he has two concerns. One, the funding should be helped by the PSAPs, and two, one person is not going to be enough, next year you will request a second trainer, doubling the cost. If we are going to do it, we need to plan for bigger numbers.

Ms. Wilson stated each of the district's providing these services only have one trainer on staff. Denco provides free training for the 9-1-1 equipment and the basic telecommunicator but charges a fee for any instructor brought in for continuing education needs.

Mr. VanSteenberg noted that the supervisors are providing most of the training at the Sheriff's Office and at the Police Department. Their budgets are not large, we are not saving them money, we are saving them time by not taking a supervisor away from their duties for training.

Mr. Virgadamo asked that the matter be deferred to the next meeting to allow staff to gather more information.

Action deferred.

### **Executive Director's financial report for the fiscal year that ended September 30, 2018 (unaudited)**

Mr. Virgadamo noted item two of the agenda, Executive Director's financial report for the fiscal year that ended September 30, 2018, unaudited.

Mr. VanSteenberg noted the annual audit is in progress and directed attention to the handout. In fiscal year 2018, the district received \$4,583,784 in revenue, which was \$120,384 over budget. Total operating expenses for the period were \$3,809,707, spending only 87% of what was budgeted. The revenue over operating expenses was \$774,077, significant net cash.

Mr. Virgadamo asked if there were any questions. There were none.

No action taken.

### **Discussion of the PSAP Evaluation Report prepared by Black & Veatch Public Safety Telecommunications for the Montgomery County Hospital District**

Mr. Virgadamo noted item three of the agenda, discussion of the PSAP evaluation report prepared by Black and Veatch Public Safety Telecommunications for the Montgomery County Hospital District.

Mr. VanSteenberg distributed a copy of the slide summary and stated the Montgomery County Hospital District commissioned Black & Veatch Public Safety Telecommunications to evaluate the operation of their PSAP against industry standards and offer recommendations for improvement.

The following recommendations were made by the consultants:

- Short term: Advocate CPE position at CISD to support call integration
- Short term: Engage Primary PSAPs to develop and utilize official mutual call transfer procedures
- Mid-term: Developing a countywide strategic plan to define a path to greater interoperability
- Mid-term: Strengthen system reliability through redundancy and geodiversity
- Mid-term: Develop mutual service level agreements (SLA's) that formalize the informal working relationships developed by current staff to ensure working relationships between agencies and PSAPs continue regardless of an individual's participation
- Long term: For improved long-term success in the ever evolving 9-1-1 environment, the development of a governance model that integrates all 9-1-1 administrative, operational, technical, and support services within the County into a single governing body will facilitate improved service delivery

Mr. VanSteenberg stated he has asked Black & Veatch for an estimate to consider in next year's budget.

No action taken.

### **Executive Director's Report on Items of Community Interest for Which No Action Will Be Taken**

Mr. Virgadamo noted item four of the agenda, executive director's report on items of community interest for which no action will be taken.

Mr. VanSteenberg reported staff are working with the City of Cleveland, who has annexed into Montgomery County.

Ms. Wilson will be attending 9-1-1 Goes to Washington in February. A Montgomery County dispatcher has been nominated for an award, and if selected, I will let the board know if they would like to attend the award ceremony in Washington DC. Ms. Wilson stated the nomination stemmed from a 9-1-1 call this past summer when a dispatcher for the Sheriff's Office received a call from a daughter that her mother was being held against her will. The daughter was able to provide a cell phone number for the mother, the dispatcher texted her through the RAVE application, was able to get her location, get help to her, and capture the bad guy. The dispatcher has received a Smart Save award from RAVE.

Mr. VanSteenberg noted CenturyLink had a 9-1-1 outage that affected a large portion of the country, but Montgomery County was not impacted. The North Central Texas 9-1-1 district was affected with a ten-hour outage. This is becoming a big concern, as a third-party vendor was changing a piece of hardware in CenturyLink's central office. The FCC is investigating. This event provides incentive for transitioning to Next Generation 9-1-1. These systems will be more robust and redundant.

No action was taken.

### **Consent Agenda**

Mr. Virgadamo noted items five through eight of the consent agenda, noting the items may be taken separately or as a whole.

Constable Ryan Gable made a motion to approve the consent agenda in its entirety. Chief Robert Hudson seconded the motion. The motion carried with all in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 1:03 p.m.

*These minutes were approved at regularly scheduled board meeting on March 20, 2019.*

*If needed, an official, signed copy may be obtained at the MCECD office.*