

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

**REGULAR MEETING**

**March 20, 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  
James Simon, Member

NOT PRESENT: John Young, Ex-Officio Member

IN ATTENDANCE: Larry Foerster, Legal Counsel  
Chip VanSteenberg, Executive Director  
Roberto Gutierrez, Systems Manager  
Andrea Wilson, Community Relations Manager  
Terri Gill, Executive Assistant  
Deputy Chief Doug Adams, The Woodlands Fire Department  
Deputy Chief Jerry Bittner, The Woodlands Fire Department  
Rick Erickson, The Woodlands Fire Department  
Denise Jimenez, Montgomery County Sheriff's Office  
Heather Silvio, Conroe Police Department  
Chief William Harness, Conroe ISD Police Department  
Capt. Matt Blalock, Conroe ISD Police Department  
Amanda Mistic, Conroe ISD Police Department

Mr. Paul Virgadamo, President, called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m., noting Mr. John Young was unable to attend.

**Public Comments**

No one requested to address the Board.

**The Woodlands Fire Department's request under the PSAP Improvement Program for a dispatch console with associated equipment and additional lightning protection**

Mr. Virgadamo noted item one of the agenda, consider and take action on approving The Woodlands Fire Departments request under the PSAP improvement program for a dispatch console with associated equipment and additional lightning protection.

Mr. Chip VanSteenberg, Executive Director, noted the PSAP Improvement Participation Program was established to help MCECD's partner agencies make upgrades to their 9-1-1 call centers. The program provides funds for equipment, furniture, services, etc. for improvements in a PSAP. Each agency can request funding up to \$125,000

in the current fiscal year and is required to make a 10% match.

The Woodlands Fire Department is making a two-part request with a total estimated budget of \$129,430. The funding will be split 90% from the grant (\$116,487) and 10% from WFD (\$12,943).

The first part of the request is for an additional console at the WFD PSAP. The new console will provide additional capacity for large-scale events as well as resiliency for the 9-1-1 system county-wide. Due to remote log-in capabilities, a call-taker from any agency can report to any PSAP and work virtually at her/his home agency. The console will be outfitted with a radio unit that can communicate with all county responders. It will also include additional communication tools such as a HAM radio and a satellite phone for resilient communication options. The total for the part of the project is \$81,430.

The second part of the request is \$48,000 to improve the lightning protection on the monopole at The Woodlands Central Fire Station, the site of a secondary PSAP. MCECD uses the pole for its microwave radio ring. The monopole has taken at least five lightning strikes in the last few years and the current grounding design has proven to be inadequate. MCECD, WFD, and MCHD have experienced damage to computer and electrical components on multiple occasions. A new design will include re-routing all cabling, heavier gage grounding wire, adjustments on the pole, adjustments in the equipment room, and better routes for power dissipation.

The staff seeks a waiver on the program rules to allow the lightning protection portion of the request to be direct-funded as opposed to a reimbursement. The IT and radio professionals from all three agencies believe the improvements should be made as soon as possible to avoid more damage during the spring thunderstorm season. If approved, MCECD staff will work with The Woodlands Fire Department to fast track the project via the best method – either reimbursement or direct-funded.

Mr. Virgadamo asked if there were questions, and being none, requested a motion. Mr. James Simon made the motion to approve the PSAP improvement project for The Woodlands Fire Department. Chief Robert Hudson seconded the motion.

The motion carried with all in favor.

**The Montgomery County Sheriff's Office request under the PSAP Improvement Program for the expansion of and improvements to the back-up center at the Montgomery County Emergency Operations Center**

Mr. Virgadamo noted item two of the agenda, consider and take action approving the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office request under the PSAP improvement program for the expansion of and improvements to the back-up center at the Montgomery County Emergency Operations Center.

Mr. VanSteenberg stated the PSAP Improvement Participation Program was established to help MCECD's partner agencies make upgrades to their 9-1-1 call centers. The program provides funds for equipment, furniture, services, etc. for improvements in a PSAP. Each agency can request funding up to \$125,000 in the current fiscal year and is required to make a 10% match.

The Montgomery County Sheriff's Office has worked with the MCECD staff to jointly develop a project to expand and improve the MCECD back-up dispatch center. The back-up center is located at the Montgomery County Emergency Operations Center (EOC). EOC personnel have authorized the MCSO to expand into an adjacent office and make some additional improvements to improve the space. The cost is estimated to be under \$50,000.

In order to expedite construction, staff is requesting authorization to fund this project directly as opposed to reimbursing the county after construction is complete. MCSO is working on a grant request for the remainder of the funds and the total match requirement will be applied toward that request.

Mr. Virgadamo asked if there were any questions, being none, requested a motion. Constable Ryan Gable made the motion to approve the PSAP improvement project for the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office. Mr. Simon

seconded the motion.

The motion carried with all in favor.

**Resolution defining VoIP services for the purpose of imposing 9-1-1 emergency service fees and rescinding a 2006 resolution creating a separate classification for “nomadic” VoIP services**

Mr. Virgadamo noted item three of the agenda, consider and take action on a resolution defining VoIP services for the purpose of imposing 9-1-1 emergency service fees and rescinding a 2006 resolution creating a separate classification for “nomadic” VoIP services.

Mr. VanSteenberg stated Voice over internet protocol (VoIP) is a growing method of delivering telephone service. The 9-1-1 service fees from VoIP service were 21% of all revenue in the last fiscal year, up from 10% just five years earlier. When VoIP was emerging, it was classified as either “nomadic” or “static” with differing rate structures for each. Nomadic service was charged at \$.50 per account per month. Static service was defined as equivalent to a local exchange access line (landline telephone service) and the landline rates apply. Over the years, the distinction between the two types of service has blurred and the industry has moved to treating all VoIP carriers like landlines for the purposed of 9-1-1 service fees.

About 55 individual VoIP carriers submit 9-1-1 service fess to MCECD. The large majority of those report as static VoIP and pay accordingly. The four largest providers – Comcast, Suddenlink, CCI, and AT&T, pay about 80% of the 9-1-1 service fees for VoIP and they all treat it as static. Per the recommendation of Richard Muscat, an attorney for the Texas 9-1-1 Alliance, the staff is submitting a resolution to remove the distinction between static and nomadic VoIP so that all customers will be treated equally.

Mr. Virgadamo asked if there were any questions, being none, requested a motion. Mr. Simon made the motion to approve the resolution defining VoIP services for the purpose of imposing 9-1-1 emergency service fees and rescinding the 2006 resolution. Constable Gable seconded the motion.

The motion carried with all in favor.

**Proposal for Investment Advisory Services Provided by Valley View Consulting**

Mr. Virgadamo noted item four of the agenda, consider and take action on a proposal for investment advisory services provided by Valley View Consulting.

Mr. VanSteenberg noted Valley View Consulting, L.L.C. is an investment advisory firm which provides independent advice and financial services to public entities. MCECD used their services to select a depository bank. They also compile the district’s quarterly investment report. Staff sought a proposal from them to offer additional investment services to the district. If approved, Valley View will provide the following services:

- Strategic portfolio advice to achieve the District investment objectives
- Investment policy and bond covenant review
- Development of a historical cash flow model
- Complete analysis of authorized investment types
- Thorough communication, reporting, and training
- Effective investment provider management
- Long range portfolio strategy development
- Primary Depository Bank RFP selection assistance (additional fees will apply)

Valley View proposes to provide this service for fee based on the size of the district’s portfolio; specifically, .08% which would be about \$5,000 per quarter. This fee would include the quarterly investment report which is currently invoiced at \$750 per month.

Staff believes the services offered by Valley View will benefit the district by adding financial controls and increasing the yield achieved while increasing the security of the portfolio.

Mr. Virgadamo asked if there were any questions, being none, requested a motion. Mr. Jack Yates made the motion to approve the proposal for investment advisory services provided by Valley View Consulting. Chief Hudson seconded the motion.

The motion carried with all in favor.

### **Proposal to Develop a Training Program to Serve All Montgomery County PSAPs**

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

Mr. VanSteenberg noted the training program was initially presented at the January meeting, where staff were asked to provide additional information. The staff has been working with supervisory staff at all 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 as follows:

- 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 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.

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.

The following are in response to the request for more information:

Question: How much are the PSAP agencies spending annually on training now?

Answer: MCSO - \$4,417  
MCHD - \$6,600  
WFD - \$14,206  
CPD – Dispatch is part of patrol for budget purposes and expenses are not separated.

Question: Could the district include agencies outside of Montgomery County and how would fees be structured.

Answer: Yes, space would be made available to Montgomery County agencies first. Seats would be made available to outside agencies as available. Other districts typically charge \$25 for a short course. Fees would vary by length of course, cost of other alternatives, and by type of training. Higher fees would apply for special courses with a contract instructor.

Mr. Virgadamo asked if there were any questions, being none, requested a motion. Mr. Simon made the motion to approve the development of a training program to serve all Montgomery County PSAPs. Mr. Yates seconded the motion.

The motion carried with all in favor.

### **Discussion of Conroe ISD's Inquiry on Access to MCECD's 9-1-1 System**

Mr. Virgadamo noted item six of the agenda, discussion of Conroe ISD's inquiry on access to MCECD's 9-1-1 system.

Mr. VanSteenberg reported the CISD police department is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest law enforcement agency in the county and mans a dispatch center on a 24/7 basis. The staff updated the board on discussions with CISD concerning the opportunities for improving 9-1-1 call service and dispatching for their campuses. One potential solution is to request an existing PSAP to sponsor CISD as an auxiliary site and assign a 9-1-1 answering station to their dispatch center. The district is preparing for an equipment upgrade later in 2019 which includes an option purchase equipment for this type of application at a cost significantly less than a traditional answering station.

Discussion only, no action was taken.

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

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

Mr. VanSteenberg reported on the following items:

- Texas Legislature is in session
- NG9-1-1 by 2023

Discussion only, no action was taken.

### **Closed Executive Session**

Mr. Virgadamo noted item eight of the agenda, the board may meet in closed executive session as authorized per the Texas Open Meetings Act, to consider personnel matters pursuant to Texas Government Code, Section 551.074.

Mr. Virgadamo adjourned to closed executive session at 12:53 p.m.

### **Reconvene into Open Meeting**

Mr. Virgadamo reconvened the open meeting at 1:08 p.m. and requested a motion.

Mr. James Simon made the motion to increase the Executive Director's pay by 3.5%, effective April 1, 2019. Chief Robert Hudson seconded the motion.

The motion carried with all in favor.

### **Consent Agenda**

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

Mr. Simon made a motion to approve the consent agenda in its entirety. Chief Hudson seconded the motion. The

motion carried with all in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 1:12 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.*