

1 **Chittenden County Regional Emergency Management Committee**

2 **Wednesday, April 27, 2022**

3 **9:00 – 10:00**

4 **Meeting Notes**

5
6 **Attendees:**

7 REMC Members

8 Bolton – Amy Grover, Emergency Services Rep

9 Burlington – Chief Steve Lock, EMD; Deputy Chief Derek Libby, Emergency Services Rep

10 Colchester – Assistant Chief Seth Lasker, Emergency Services Rep

11 Essex – Chief Ron Hoague, EMD

12 Huntington – Barbara Elliot, EMD

13 Jericho - John Abbott, EMD Designee

14 Milton – Michaela Foody, EMD

15 Richmond – Chief Kyle Kapitanski, Emergency Services Rep

16 Shelburne – Lee Krohn, Emergency Services Rep

17 Williston – Chief Aaron Collette, EMD

18 Winooski – Chief John Audy, Emergency Services Rep

19 Others

20 Vermont Department of Public Safety -- Commissioner Mike Schirling; Deputy

21 Commissioner Jennifer Morrison

22 Vermont Emergency Management – Emily Harris

23 Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission – Charlie Baker, Executive Director;

24 Regina Mahony, Planning Program Manager; Christine Forde, Senior Transportation Planner

25
26 **Proposed changes to the role of the State Police in local dispatching – Commissioner Mike**
27 **Schirling and Deputy Commissioner Jennifer Morrison, Department of Public Safety**

28 Commissioner Schirling provided an overview of the recent discussion about regional
29 communications infrastructure and an abbreviated history of how we got here. The first study
30 of regionalized safety services in Vermont was conducted in 1969 --- it was done in Chittenden
31 County. The issue has been studied a couple of dozen time since then and all of the studies
32 conclude that regionalized safety services is a good idea for a state the size of Vermont with
33 251 small municipalities.

34 The conversations we are having now focus on how we can transition to regional emergency
35 communications, particularly dispatching. The issues became especially apparent over the
36 summer of 2021 as the two state police emergency communications centers, which are also
37 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP), were not able to catch the volume of 911 calls necessary
38 to make the catchment system work. This was due to increased call volumes and staffing
39 challenges – staffing is down on average about 30 percent. One reason for the high attrition
40 rate is the volume of calls. The centers dispatch for over 110 agencies and it is a very difficult
41 job. When the state police emergency communications centers are unable to answer the calls,
42 they roll over to other call takers in other locations. The target is to answer 90% of calls in a

1 catchment area, but the centers currently answer about 70 – 80% of the calls and it can be as
2 low as the high 60% range.

3 Regionalization has not happened in the past for many reasons one of which is lack of funds to
4 make the transition, which would be several million dollars. There are other reasons too such as
5 agreeing on governance, and resistance to change.

6 Current conversations with stakeholders have revolved around where the regional centers
7 would be located and who would run them. At least five regional operators have been
8 identified, four of which are initiatives already envisioned, and the fifth is a new effort in
9 Rutland County.

10 Paying for the transition is estimated to cost about \$11 million and is focused on funding new
11 regional operators, proving funds to existing regional operators to expand service, and funding
12 for agencies that currently get services from the state police to transition to new operators.
13 Note that municipalities that get services from state police don't pay. Everyone else pays for
14 service.

15 A long-term funding mechanism needs to be identified and the Legislature, as the funding arm
16 of the government, should address this.

17 There is \$11 million is in the current budget, as of the last draft, with \$6.5 million available this
18 year to begin investing in the transition. The remainder of the funding is held in reserve pending
19 a report on how to pay for statewide communications. The funding is in the Senate bill but not
20 in the House bill.

21 Lee Krohn – one of the challenges to the PSAP system is that each system only gets credit for
22 the calls within its own catchment area. Funding model needs to allow each PSAP to get
23 credited for all calls.

24 **Update on the Chittenden County Public Safety Authority – Burlington Fire Chief Steven Locke**

25 Chief Steven Locke provided an overview of the Chittenden County Public Safety Authority
26 (CCPSA). Chittenden County has been studying regionalized safety services for more than 50
27 years. The latest push began in 2016 and was a Town Meeting ballot item for seven
28 communities in 2018. It was passed in six communities, but Milton has since opted out. Five
29 communities make up the CCPSA -- Burlington, Colchester, South Burlington, Williston, and
30 Winooski.

31 CCPSA had developed a governance structure and has agreed on a cost mechanism. \$3 million
32 is needed to get it off the ground – about half of which has been secured from local funds and
33 grants. A final vote will be required from each municipality before launching the authority.

34 The current timeline proposes hiring an executive director this fall. The CCPSA will be located
35 on the second floor of the South Burlington Police Department where unoccupied space is
36 available. The goal is for CCPSA to be operational July 1, 2023.

1 **Discussion on regional collaborating for communication equipment funding – Essex Police**
2 **Chief Ron Hoague will lead this discussion**

3 Police Chief Ron Hoague noted that Essex is coming to the end of life on some communications
4 equipment and has some major purchases looming. Williston and Burlington have similar issues
5 and the communities may be able to work together to get better pricing or piggyback on state
6 contracts.

7 The group discussed whether we should be considering a trunk system? We don't want to build
8 silos but facilitate better communication between communities.

9 Next steps? CCRPC will work with Essex, Williston and Burlington to figure out a game plan and
10 what steps are required to move this conversation forward.

11 **Status of REMC Requirements**

12 Christine noted that we don't have a quorum today, but if municipalities had designated one
13 member as proxy for the second member we would have. She explained that each municipality
14 has two members and quorum is defined as 50% of the members, not the municipalities. One
15 member can be proxy for the other member as long as the proxy is identified before the
16 meeting.

17 The draft Bylaws were emailed. If anyone has comments, please forward them to Christine.

18 Christine noted that we are also still looking for volunteers for Chair, Vice-Chair, and statewide
19 committee appointments - Statewide Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC), Threat and
20 Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA)/Stakeholder Preparedness Review (SPR),
21 Integrated Preparedness Plan Workshop (IPPW).