

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2020

A special meeting for the Board of Selectmen convened at 7:00 p.m. in the conference room in the Town Office Building at 110 Main Street. In attendance were Edward S. Harrison and Dr. Richard M. Smith. John R. Morrell was absent. Also present were Town Administrator Evan Brassard and the media.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

WESTCOMM Regional Dispatch:

Mr. Harrison described the purpose of this meeting is to discuss moving the dispatch services for the Monson Police Department and the Monson Fire Department to WESTCOMM Regional Dispatch. The Board had packets explaining this, as attached.

Police Chief Stephen Kozloski and Executive Director of WESTCOMM Erin Hastings, approached the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Brassard explained the subject of a regional dispatch has been discussed a number of times, with the project going back to 2010. Mr. Brassard said he and Chief Kozloski visited WESTCOMM recently and met with Ms. Hastings. They were really impressed by the set-up and the services being provided.

Chief Kozloski noted the purpose of the transition is to move dispatch services for the Monson Police and Monson Fire Department into WESTCOMM Regional Dispatch. The Town of Monson currently has one dispatcher on staff that answers 911 and non-emergency calls, provides Emergency Medical dispatch to callers as required which requires us to provide pre-arrival medical instructions on a variety of medical issues, handling all radio traffic to and from the cruisers as well as EMS calls, and must also cover any walk-ins to the station. That dispatcher also does the initial notification to fire and EMS, calls mutual aid, and documents all activity.

Chief Kozloski said the one dispatcher call taker service long pre-dates him coming in as Chief, and goes back to the inception of dispatch in town. It is now becoming pretty complicated to maintain a high-quality level of service that provides all the attention that's demanded of our single call taker dispatcher.

Chief Kozloski said the benefits of a regional dispatch are, now you have several dispatchers working together to accomplish all of these tasks. One dispatcher can remain focused on a 911 call and provide Emergency Medical Dispatch instructions while a second dispatcher notifies police of the call, and a third dispatcher notifies fire and/or EMS. Also, additional grant funding through State 911 is available to regional centers, allowing for infrastructure upgrades including, but not limited to, improving radio networks and data networks. Regionalization reduces the overhead costs of running a single municipality center. Dispatchers in a regional center have increased situational awareness and better interoperability.

Chief Kozloski explained the goal of WESTCOMM is to provide excellent customer service to the public and the first responders that they serve, and to do it at a lower cost than what the municipalities are

currently paying. The dispatchers will be held to a high standard and will be expected to remain focused and attentive to ensure first responder safety. WESTCOMM is designed with the ability to expand and take on other municipalities.

Mr. Harrison asked when Monson would start this.

Mr. Brassard explained, if the Board is inclined to sign the agreement tonight, we would be looking for a July 1, 2020 start date.

Chief Kozloski said the benefit is this is an already established center. Prior to this, we were trying to start from the ground up.

Dr. Smith noted their dispatchers are willing to come here to Monson to train.

Chief Kozloski noted this goes with service and transition.

Dr. Smith asked what happens to our dispatchers in the transition.

Mr. Brassard explained the Chief and he have met with the union and the employees that are still on, and they are currently working on a severance package for them.

Dr. Smith asked if one of them wants to pursue a position there?

Mr. Brassard said they would be afforded an interview, but there's no guarantee of employment.

Mr. Brassard asked Chief Kozloski to address what happens to the station and customer service.

Chief Kozloski explained, they do take the fact they will not have a 24/7 employee posted in the station seriously. It's his intention to seek adequate funding to at least ensure staff to cover office hours. It won't be on a 24/7 basis. They are currently tracking the walk-ins to the lobby right now to see what those trends and reasons are, to try to tailor any requests to the town for adequate staffing to help balance those concerns, so the public will have identified dates and hours when they can come in to transact business. Most of the business at the window is not something that is instantaneous from the dispatcher anyway; it's the report requests or firearms licensing. Those types of transactions are not handled immediately by the dispatcher anyway, and are usually scheduled out. Reports have a time period permitted under the law for the Police Departments to make sure if and when a report is released, it is released with proper redactions, etc.

Chief Kozloski said they are also addressing the "dark station" which is a common term for departments that do regionalize. They are trying to address the dark station technologically that would involve a direct intercom from our lobby to the dispatch center at WESTCOMM so anyone coming here after office hours, will still have the ability to pick up a phone and speak to a dispatcher, which would then be almost as they are doing now, where dispatch would contact a cruiser to have an officer come speak with them at the station. Chief Kozloski noted this will not affect the Fire Department who will still have

staff at the fire station, but having an intercom system there was discussed as well just in the case no one is at the station, just so they will also have the ability to speak with someone live at WESTCOMM as well.

Dr. Smith wondered if we would still have the safe room ability remotely, where someone could be buzzed in.

Chief Kozloski said yes, we would. They currently have the technology and ability to do that inhouse, we are now working with WESTCOMM and some local vendors to essentially make that switch remotely accessible off-site.

Mr. Brassard clarified, you would walk into the vestibule, pick up the phone while on camera speaking with the dispatcher at WESTCOMM, and if you have a problem that requires you to be let in, they will be able to buzz in you to wait in the lobby for an officer to arrive.

Dr. Smith asked about the dispatch center we have now since we put all that money into it on thoughts and uses.

Chief Kozloski said his initial intention is to leave the dispatch center as it is to staff it as necessary, and to possibly run it in parallel (without the 911) as needed to respond to events such as Summerfest, the Food Truck Festival, fireworks, severe storms, etc. to alleviate some of the traffic remotely in anticipation of people coming in due to the event going on.

Dr. Smith asked about the budget end of things.

Mr. Brassard responded, Monson due to its population and call volume calls at the minimum contribution level with the four proposed towns, we would have to pay a \$100,000 annual assessment. This represents a savings to the Town of Monson of roughly \$250,000 annually.

Chief Kozloski said there is a dedicated funding stream currently in place on everyone's cell phone that is underwriting the funds for this program that assist with the State 911 reimbursement of 75% that will cover a lot of this 75% in the long run.

Dr. Smith asked if WESTCOMM was capping it at these four towns.

Ms. Hastings said yes, in the current location in Chicopee, and noted they are looking to move anyway as they have outgrown where they presently are, so they are looking to expand.

Dr. Smith asked how many cities and/or towns would they be considering.

Ms. Hastings said she believes it was capped at twenty-three.

Mr. Harrison read part of the letter as follows, "On behalf of the Town of Monson, the Board of Selectmen hereby adopt Sections 18O-18V inclusive of Chapter 6A of the General Laws providing for the

establishment of a Regional 911 Emergency Communications District. The Town of Monson joins previously established WESTCOMM District together with the Town of Longmeadow and the City of Chicopee in the construction or citing administration, operation and maintenance of a regional 911 Emergency Communication Center by the district under the provisions of the district agreement”.

Dr. Smith noted his concerns right along have always been customer service to our residents and then the budget. Dr. Smith said it sounds like the budget is coming in a lot less. Mr. Brassard and Chief Kozloski have toured the facility and feel comfortable that the customer service to the residents is not going to get worse and if anything would improve.

Mr. Brassard noted they have gone to a lot of meetings and have met with Chiefs from Longmeadow and Chicopee and have found it to be a very solid system that’s working well. They have also received honest feedback from Director Hastings on what happens and how it works. Mr. Brassard feels the growth in services we will receive from signing on far outweigh any of the potential hiccups that may come along the way.

Dr. Smith made a motion to adopt it as Mr. Harrison read. Mr. Harrison seconded, and it was so VOTED.

The Board of Selectmen, Mr. Brassard, and Chief Kozloski signed the agreement.

At 7:30 p.m., Dr. Smith made a motion to adjourn from open session. Mr. Harrison seconded, and it was so VOTED.

Dr. Richard M. Smith, Clerk