

Walworth County Fire/EMS Study Committee
August 6, 2019 Meeting Minutes
Emergency Operations Center
Waukesha County Communications Center
1621 Woodburn Rd., Waukesha, Wisconsin

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Dave Nelson at 2:04 p.m.

Roll call was conducted and the following members were present: Vice Chair Dave Nelson, Denise Pieroni, and Bruce Vander Veen. Chair John Peters, James Weiss, and Lowell Hagen were absent.

Others present: Walworth County Administrator David Bretl; County Board Chair Nancy Russell; Walworth County Sheriff's Office Captain of Communications Jamie Green; Gary Bell, Waukesha County Director of Emergency Preparedness; Sherri Stigler, Training and Operations Manager; Kaye Kumbier, Communications Center Specialist

Bruce Vander Veen made a motion, seconded by Denise Pieroni, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried by voice vote.

Denise Pieroni asked for a correction to the May 29, 2019 meeting minutes to change "Sheriff's Office" to "county" on page 2, line 8. **Denise Pieroni made a motion, seconded by Bruce Vander Veen, to approve the May 29, 2019 meeting minutes as amended. Motion carried by voice vote.**

Public comment – There was none.

New Business

- **Waukesha County Communications Center Tour**
Pieroni asked Gary Bell, Waukesha County Director of Emergency Preparedness, and Sherri Stigler, Training and Operations Manager, to give an overview of the Waukesha County Communications Center (WCC). Stigler said the WCC began operating in 2004, after over a year of planning. Stigler introduced Communications Center Specialist Kaye Kumbier and said she is currently responsible for all technology-related issues. Stigler said the WCC was the culmination of work between the Waukesha County Sheriff's Office and the City of Brookfield and Lakes dispatch centers. The WCC has taken on other departments as operations have progressed. There are currently 50 dispatchers, with typically eight to twelve people working at one time. Employees rotate between working as call takers, law enforcement dispatchers, and fire dispatchers. This allows for Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) to occur while the call is also being dispatched. There are also two supervisors working per shift, with a total of seven on staff, and they assist with issues during shifts. This allows for feedback and assistance immediately. She added that Radio Services is off site, but Emergency Management and Communications services are located within the WCC. Dispatchers work a combination of 8 and 12 hour shifts to total 40 hours per week. They hire groups of 4-8 people twice a year and new employees spend their first six weeks in the training room. During training, they have a basic 40-hour communications course, a week-long geography course, a week learning EMD, a week learning the Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, along with other miscellaneous trainings in customer service, etc. The training is long but interactive and creative. Once they are out of the training room, they get paired with a Communication Training Officer (CTO) and get daily observation reports and work through all the different positions. The hiring process takes about three weeks and there are a lot of applicants from different backgrounds, as they do not require formal dispatch experience. As a consolidated agency, training is much easier to accomplish. Stigler added the biggest challenge in consolidation was getting people involved who supported consolidation. Kumbier added an important step before consolidation was bringing all involved municipal leaders and chiefs together with dispatchers and having them write down exactly what they do, what they will provide, and which services

should stay local in each municipality. Bell added the WCC does not provide miscellaneous County services not related to 911 communications. He said the budget is \$6.9 million and covers the Communications Center and Emergency Management. Radio Services is supported from an enterprise fund off the tax levy. He added that Waukesha County and Milwaukee County have a great relationship to handle emergency situations and communication. He also said there is a potential opportunity for a regional dispatch center and asked members to consider the possibility of the Walworth County Dispatch Center being set in Waukesha County. Bell clarified the WCC is a department of Waukesha County and he reports to the County Executive. Bretl asked how the budget works for the WCC, and Gary said the Dispatch Operations Commission reports to the County Executive. He said there is no annual fee for municipalities to join, but there is a one-time fee that pays for the building. If a municipality wants access to mobile data, they must pay a license fee. There are currently six Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) in Waukesha County and the WCC provides dispatch for 31 communities. The WCC is also the backup for any agency in Waukesha County, along with the Cities of Milwaukee and Waukesha. In turn, Milwaukee County is the backup for the WCC. Russell asked about the dropout rate during training. Stigler said the national average for new hires is a 50% washout; the WCC is currently at 25%. She added there is more vertical growth potential in consolidated centers than in a small municipality. The structure of WCC also helps with stress for the dispatchers to be able to work together and know there is back up in the case of a massive incident. The WCC is the wireless answering point for the area, so they take in all wireless calls in the area and then transfer City of Waukesha calls to their dispatchers. She said there are around 88,000 total 911 phones calls at WCC per year. Dispatchers also do pre-alert calls for departments, which has decreased response times. Vander Veen asked if some calls could be diverted to Milwaukee County in the case of a large incident and Bell said it is not currently possible; either all of the calls or none of them can be diverted with the current system. Bretl asked about the transition for employees from other municipalities when they join. Bell said they get basic training and then work their own channel at first. They eventually work all the channels as they adjust.

The tour of the Waukesha County Communications Center commenced at 3:02 pm and ended at 4:00 pm. Vice Chair Nelson said it was a great tour and commented the dispatchers really seem to enjoy their jobs.

- Topics for next meeting
 - Wrap-up of the committee/finalize recommendations going forward
 - Progress of Sharon/Darien/Walworth cooperation
 - Feedback on the tour

Public comment – There was none.

Next meeting date and time: The next meeting will be held on Thursday September 19, 2019 at 1:00 pm.

Adjournment

On motion by Denise Pieroni, seconded by Bruce Vander Veen, Vice Chair Nelson adjourned the meeting at 4:11 p.m.