



MINUTES

QCOMM911 BOARD

SPECIAL MEETING

Friday, May 2, 2025
9:00 am

Present

City/Village Administrator: Steve Seiver, Milan
Mark Rothert, East Moline
Bob Vitas, Moline
Jerry Leibovitz, Silvis

Public Safety Representatives: Chief Ramsey, East Moline PD
Chief Johnson, Milan PD
Chief VanKlaveren, Silvis PD (Absent)
Chief Regenwether, Moline FD

QCOMM911 Director: Scott Ryckeghem

Others: Margo Sparbel, QCOMM

1. Meeting called to order - Chairman Bob Vitas called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

2. Roll call of members – Roll call was taken with Steve Seiver, Mark Rothert, Bob Vitas, Jerry Leibovitz, Chief Ramsey, Chief Johnson, and Chief Regenwether present. Absent: Chief VanKlaveren

3. Approval of Minutes from the April 9, 2025 Regular Meeting– Jerry Leibovitz made a motion to approve the regular session minutes from the April 9, 2025 Meeting. Mark Rothert seconded the motion, all in favor, the motion passes.

Approval of Minutes from the April 9, 2025 Executive Session Meeting– Steve Seiver made a motion to table the approval of the executive session minutes for the next meeting. Jerry Leibovitz seconded the motion, all in favor, the motion passes.

4. Purchase of Radio Equipment - Director Ryckeghem shared that when the transition to P25 radios occurred, QCOMM did not purchase any portable units. Historically, these were provided by the Moline Fire Department. QCOMM has since been borrowing two portables from Moline Fire; however, these radios are not programmed to meet QCOMM's operational needs. Specifically, the primary volunteer fire channel and other fire-related channels were missing.

Ryckeghem requested approval to purchase **two new radios**, including programming and setup through RACOM, at a total cost of **\$8,301.50**. He noted that although the radios had not previously been QCOMM assets, they were essential to operations. Funding could come from the **Capital Improvement Fund**, which has an annual \$20,000 allocation. He added that, if necessary, money could be reallocated from other budget lines or taken from reserves.

- **Regenwether** asked if the borrowed radios could be reprogrammed.

- **Ryckeghem** responded they could, but QCOMM avoided doing so in case the radios needed to be returned to Moline Fire.
- **Regenwether** asked if the new radios would replace the borrowed ones.
 - **Ryckeghem** confirmed, stating the borrowed units would return to Moline Fire's inventory.
- **Chief Ramsey** asked if the new radios would be covered under RACOM's maintenance agreement.
 - **Ryckeghem** confirmed.
- **Seiver** mentioned that RACOM includes Wi-Fi, GPS, and LTE in their radios.
- **Leibovitz** asked if the purchase was budgeted.
 - **Ryckeghem** noted that while not specifically budgeted, sufficient funds exist in the Capital Improvement line.
- **Ramsey** inquired whether the \$20,000 allocation was earmarked for something else.
 - **Ryckeghem** explained it is rarely used, typically for radios or furniture, and most assets—such as radio consoles—are long-term and not often replaced.
- **Vitas** asked how much remains in the fund.
 - **Ryckeghem** didn't have the exact number but reiterated that funds could be shifted if necessary.
- **Seiver** asked about fund accounting.
 - **Ryckeghem** confirmed separate ledgers are maintained.

Steve Seiver made a motion to **approve the purchase of radio equipment**, Jerry Leibovitz seconded the motion, all in favor, the motion passes. Motion carried on roll call with the following vote: ayes: Seiver, Rothert, Leibovitz and Vitas; nays: none.

- **Vitas** asked for a timeline on the radio delivery.
 - **Ryckeghem** will coordinate with RACOM and provide an update.
- **Vitas** asked about the status of a generator issue.
 - **Ryckeghem** stated a maintenance agreement has been secured.

5. Other Business

Staffing

Vitas expressed ongoing concerns about staffing, recruitment, and retention. He mentioned a complaint received from a Moline resident, noting that if the public is aware, internal communication is likely a factor. He emphasized the need to address turnover and the burden placed on Ryckeghem and Sparbel.

Ryckeghem shared that national studies show a **30% turnover rate** for 911 telecommunicators. Training is difficult due to technology, inter-agency differences, and internal dynamics. Negative behavior among staff is contributing to the problem.

Seiver commented that some staff just aren't catching on during probationary periods.

Ryckeghem said he does exit interviews, but only one has been returned. That feedback noted negativity in the training room.

Ramsey asked about the nature of the negativity.

- **Ryckeghem** said it's a culture of "eat your own" and that one employee has previously been addressed but the issues are recurring.

Seiver suggested hiring an outside consultant to address organizational culture.

- **Sparbel** noted a counselor in Davenport has been reaching out to local 911 centers.

- **Ryckeghem** added that they focus on first responder wellness.

Ramsey asked if department-wide meetings or one-on-ones had occurred.

- **Sparbel** said shift meetings happen, but overtime makes scheduling difficult.
- **Ryckeghem** noted informal exit interviews confirm cultural concerns.

Vitas suggested the issues appear consistent across feedback.

- **Ryckeghem** mentioned an employee raised concerns about how another employee speaks to departments. This will be addressed through disciplinary procedures.

Vitas advised personnel matters should move to **executive session**. He then steered the discussion toward improving recruitment processes.

Sparbel described the hiring process, which includes ETSB testing.

- **Ryckeghem** added that many applicants don't pass initial screening. They're also facing challenges with **FMLA and ADA accommodations**—8 employees are currently on restrictions and not part of the overtime pool.

Regenwether noted some use medical/emotional claims to restrict hours.

Ryckeghem consulted legal counsel John Kelly, who confirmed these are case-by-case issues. Morale and staffing struggles do not justify denying an accommodation.

Regenwether shared that **overstaffing** helped the Moline Fire Department morale by reducing forced overtime.

Ryckeghem said they reduced forced OT by adjusting staffing levels (e.g., 5 to 4 staff). While QCOMM can operate with 4, it's not ideal. Management—not the union—sets minimum staffing.

Seiver added that staffing minimums are not included in the contract for this purpose.

- **Ryckeghem** noted that changes in minimum staffing create internal tensions that affect trainees.

He compared staffing with nearby agencies:

- Rock Island County and Scott County never reach full staff.
- Turnover and training challenges are widespread.

Vitas suggested overhiring, knowing not all positions will be filled at once.

- **Ryckeghem** agreed. They've recently hired 2 candidates and plan to onboard 2 more, aiming to build a buffer.

Seiver asked if onboarding capacity is a bottleneck.

- **Ryckeghem** confirmed. Usually only 3 trainees can be supported at a time, though they will attempt 4. More trainers may not help due to shift complexity.

Seiver asked if other dispatch centers could assist with training.

- **Ryckeghem** said QCOMM operations differ too much, particularly in how they use CAD.

Seiver noted that unless trainees are retained, overhiring won't solve staffing issues. The **FMLA/ADA restrictions** are a critical obstacle.

Vitas requested a **demographic staffing report**, including tenure and age.

Ramsey asked about a second opinion on ADA/FMLA cases.

- **Ryckeghem** will follow up with John Kelly.
- **Sparbel** said a "fit for duty" option exists, though those already working may not qualify.
- **Ramsey** shared that the City contract allows second opinions.
- **Ryckeghem** noted QCOMM has honored FMLA despite not being required (under 50 employees) and would not want to remove it from those who truly need it.

Executive Session Minutes

Vitas asked Macy McManus to gather all previous executive session minutes. He doesn't recall approving the release of any minutes and noted they are to be reviewed every six months and by legal counsel.

Ramsey recalled one review in the past, though not recently.

Ryckeghem mentioned a union steward inquired about increasing the comp time limit beyond the current 80-hour cap for one employee.

- The board declined, stating it should have been addressed during negotiations.

6. Public Comment – None

7. Executive Session - None

8. Action from Executive Session – None

9. Adjournment

With no further business, Steve Seiver **moved to adjourn**, seconded by Jerry Leibovitz. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 10:03 a.m.