

**Cedar County Joint 911 Service Board**  
**1410 Cedar Street**  
**Tipton, IA 52772**  
**(563) 886-3355**

The April 11, 2019 regular quarterly meeting of the Cedar County Joint 911 Service Board was held at the Cedar County EMA Administrative Offices at 1410 Cedar Street, Tipton. Those attending included Warren Wethington, Chair, Cedar County Sheriff; Jon Bell, Cedar County Board of Supervisors; Greg Wagner, Mayor of Stanwood; David Furry, Mayor of Mechanicsville; Jeric Armstrong, Mayor of Clarence; Ashley Hansen, Mayor of Lowden; Brian Carney, Mayor of Tipton; Brenda Johnson, Cedar County Sheriff's Office; Bill Klawiter, Stanwood Fire Chief; Kevin Stoolman, West Branch Fire Chief; Mike Kusick, West Branch Fire Department; Tanya Havlik-Smith, West Branch Fire Department; Brad Ratliff, Tipton Ambulance Service; Sue Hall, Press; Tim Malott, Director Cedar County EMA/911; Jodi Freet, Cedar County EMA/911.

Chair Wethington called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

Mayor Wagner/Stamwood made a motion to approve the agenda; motion seconded by Mayor Hansen/Lowden. Motion carried.

Mayor Wagner/Stamwood made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2019 regular meeting and the January 29, 2019 budget meeting; motion seconded by Bell/Board of Supervisors. Motion carried.

Chair Wethington yielded the floor to EMA Director Malott to discuss expenditures of the previous quarter. There were no questions regarding the expenditures. Mayor Hansen/Lowden made the motion to approve the expenditures as presented; motion seconded by Mayor Wagner/Stamwood. Motion carried.

Chair Wethington yielded the floor to EMA Director Malott to discuss old business. Malott reported on the following old business:

- a. He has done the first site survey for the tower at I-80 and Hwy 38. Now that the weather has improved, the concrete pad will need to be poured and Josh Crist will be doing the electric work for the tower. The agreement with the State of Iowa has been approved and the current goal is to have the tower operational by the end of May.
- b. The tower at Cedar Bluff is now under the control of the Clarence Telephone Company, so efforts will be changed to work with the General Manager of that operation. Once

the agreement is completed, an RFP will be completed. Malott advised that he may want to ask for some special circumstances regarding that tower when we reach that point.

- c. A lengthy discussion was held regarding issues with the digital conversion. Malott advised that there are multiple issues being found, and a considerable amount of testing is being done. It has been discovered that there are a couple of issues having a significant negative impact on the operation of the system, including the use of a 'mix-mode' on the pagers. Malott explained that when using the mix-mode, responders' radios are set to 'listen' to both analog and digital signals. The pagers are receiving pages on the analog network and, depending on the programming of the pager, a response is being sent back in analog, which does not allow for the digital signal to transmit. This causes a person on digital to either hear static or to be 'knocked-out' of the communication. Malott advised that we need to stay on analog for the pager tones, and he is looking into some options for this issue. He also advised that it has been discovered that some communities are activating outdoor warning systems via the county fire frequency, and are attempting to activate the analog signal via the fire digital network. Malott advised that there are other issues out there, and these are being found and corrected through a process of elimination. He stated that there are coverage issues, such as the known issues in West Branch due to its location. Malott advised that both Kevin Stoolman and Kevin Graybill did spend a good part of the day testing the system in that area. Malott asked Chief Stoolman if he wanted to discuss any of the testing that was completed prior to this meeting. Chief Stoolman advised that Graybill is aware of issues, but does not know what is causing these. Malott advised that a ticket has been opened with Racom to see if this is an equipment issue, and Stoolman stated that there are several brands of radios having problems. Malott advised that Graybill has changed settings regarding delay and it is unknown if this change will correct the garbled voices. Chief Stoolman also noted that there is a repeat, and it is unknown what is causing this issue. Stoolman advised that this has been going on for months, and it has not been solved. Malott explained that the delay setting that has been changed to attempt to resolve the repeat.

Malott also advised that there are some issues that have been found at Dispatch. He explained that there is an issue when the dispatcher is talking on the radio, and attempting to dispatch another call, that the two calls are 'walking over' one another. As there is one frequency, this can be likened to two vehicles trying to share one roadway at the same spot, at the same time. Chief Stoolman advised also that if a dispatcher is trying to send a page, and someone/anyone in the county keys their microphone, the analog page is lost. Mayor Wagner/Stanwood asked if law enforcement was

experiencing difficulties. Chair Wethington responded that the biggest complaint is that deputies are sometimes unable to get out on their portable radios. Chair Wethington asked if any good has come from vendors working together in the past; Chief Stoolman advised that this is the first time that Kevin Graybill has been in West Branch to work on the issue. He further stated that Randy/Racom and Kevin Graybill worked together last fall prior to the digital launch and that the radios were working well for a bit, but then sometime after that, the radios ceased to work. Chief Klawiter/Stamwood stated that his radios are on 'mix-mode', and none of his department's pagers are set on analog, so his pages are coming in on a digital channel. Chief Stoolman advised that he has been told that if someone keys their microphone prior to the entire page being received, the outbound communication will be sent on analog, whether or not the radio is set on analog or digital. Additional discussion ensued regarding pages on digital channels, and it was established that pages are only being sent out on analog channels. A responder may believe that a tone is being sent on digital, but it is truly on analog. Chief Klawiter also advised that on the scene of a mutual-aid fire, neither he nor Chief Koch/Mechanicsville were able to communicate within the structure. He stated that a message was sent from the truck to switch to a ground channel, but neither heard this information. Mayor Laughlin/West Branch asked if these difficulties were unique to Cedar County, or if other areas had similar issues. Malott advised that there are several issues being addressed, and the exact same radio set-up is in Burlington. Chair Wethington asked why Johnson County radios worked, and Chief Stoolman stated that it is because they are operating on 800 frequency, which is a completely different system. Chair Wethington then asked why the 911 Service Board selected the system that they did; no one could provide an answer. Chair Wethington asked whether or not Jones County was working, and Ratliff/Tipton Ambulance stated that Jones County is planning to join the ISICS. Malott corrected Ratliff and advised that Jones has considered joining the regional SARA system, not the statewide network. At this point, Chair Wethington ended the general discussion and advised that the radio system needs to be resolved. He took a brief poll, and Mayor Armstrong/Clarence advised that he can hear most traffic on his radios; he hears static on pagers. Chief Stoolman advised that their pagers were different as the signal is sent to a repeater on the West Branch water tower, and then onto their pagers. Malott advised that this set-up is due to the location and geographical features in and around West Branch. Mayor Armstrong advised that due to the static, the department is actually using complementary systems to ensure receipt of pages.

Chief Stoolman then asked who actually is 'in charge' of the Cedar County radio system; Chair Wethington advised that it is the 911 Joint Service Board that owns the

equipment, the Sheriff's department is in charge of the employees/dispatch. Chief Stoolman asked who he needs to contact with their issues; Chair Wethington stated that Tim Malott should be contacted for equipment issues and either himself or Brenda Johnson for personnel issues. Chief Stoolman stated that Malott advised that he was not in charge of radios; Malott clarified this statement and said that he is not in charge of individual department radios, but the overall network. Mayor Wagner stated that he believes that the problem is with the network, and he believes that an expert needs to be brought into the County to look at the Countywide system to see if we actually need more towers. He would like someone, whether a communications consultant or an engineering firm, needs to examine the network. Chief Klawiter stated that he would like a list of standards developed for base radio models, programming and other information. Mayor Wagner reiterated that an unbiased, non-sales-based company needs to be found to provide information as requested. Chair Wethington asked for information on companies that might provide this service and Chief Stoolman advised that West Branch retained the services of Ellert and Associates in 2014, and stated that the report from that company said that the current system wouldn't work. Chief Stoolman further stated that a simulcast option was recommended, but "no, you rammed it through, real fast, and this is what we got." Malott advised that Chief Stoolman was correct, in that a simulcast was recommended, but due to financial constraints, this was not a possibility for the county. He shared that at a law enforcement-specific meeting, an individual stated that he would go to the City of West Branch to try to obtain additional funds (approximately \$149,000) to establish the simulcast for the location. This option was not enacted. At this point, Mayor Furry stated that we just need to move forward, and find someone who can send us in the right direction for this project. Discussion was made regarding potential vendors available to provide a consulting service, and what services have been used in the past to recommend and establish a system needed for the County. Additional discussion ensued regarding past studies and experiences. At this point, Mayor Furry/Mechanicsville made the motion to have Tim Malott to contact a firm to get a quote for the initial overview of the system to provide future direction for the emergency communications network. This was seconded by Mayor Wagner/Stamwood. Motion carried. Chair Wethington asked whether or not we needed to wait for further direction after an initial cost estimate is provided. Mayor Wagner/Stamwood stated that we can't wait. Bell/Supervisors advised that the issue still isn't fixed; hiring a consultant will allow for future corrections, but it doesn't fix things now. Mayor Furry/Mechanicsville stated that an outside consulting firm will provide good guidance. Bell/Supervisors stated that he understood that, however, the problems of today still aren't being addressed. Mayor Wagner/Stamwood asked if we can go back to analog. Malott advised that if we revert to analog, then the

digital system can't be tested and the issues cannot be resolved. Discussion was held regarding this question. Chief Stoolman stated that he would like to allow the vendors the chance to resolve the issue as he doesn't believe that the vendors had the entire story as to what was happening with the system. He further stated that Kevin Graybill had made some adjustments, which may fix some of the issues; he also believes that the radios that are programmed incorrectly need to be corrected. Bell/Supervisors stated that we need a list of problems that need to be resolved. Malott advised that mix mode needs to be removed from the radios; once this is completed, then the analog communication will stop. Malott also advised that some additional training will need to happen at Dispatch, and he and Brenda Johnson/Sheriff's Office have discussed this information. Malott also stated that he is working on the paging issue, and he has discussed paging on a separate frequency, which will help to stop the issue of communicating on analog channels when the responder should be on a digital channel. He is waiting for an answer from the vendors to see if this will be an issue. Malott stated that he has no idea what is causing the repeating issue, but Graybill and Racom are working on this. He also advised that if a responder is scanning frequencies on a pager, once the tones go out, distortion will be heard on digital. He advised that staying on one frequency will help resolve this issue.

After additional length discussion, it was suggested that a timeframe needs to be set to work out the issues that the departments are having, otherwise the County's communication network would need to be reverted to digital. A consensus among attendees was established to provide a deadline of May 1<sup>st</sup>. Malott advised that he does need to contact all vendors to ensure that they are aware of our May 1<sup>st</sup> deadline for fixing current problems. Chair Wethington stated that he wants to see this fixed in two weeks or have the vendors provide good reasons as to why it will take longer, otherwise the county should switch back to analog. Chief Klawiter asked if the Cedar County system is capable of what the Johnson County system can do; it was clarified that the current technology is not capable of 800 MHz.

- d. Malott advised that the percentage for compliance on the MSAG is increasing. As a result, if any city still has "1/2" addresses, this can affect 911 funding. Additionally, if addresses are assigned within a community, and if 911 is not made aware of the new assignment, there is a potential for further funding loss. Ratliff/Tipton Ambulance Service asked if simply changing the available range for specific roads will solve the problem; Malott advised that we are far past this metric and he explained many of the different metrics that the county is being 'graded' upon. He further explained that the dynamics of two of our jurisdictions (West Branch and Durant) being situated in

multiple counties has been causing issue. He advised that he and Freet are working to resolve the difficulties. Freet also advised that she is continuing to work through errors and we have seen a decrease in the number of prior year errors.

Chair Wethington then turned to new business to be presented to the board.

- a. Chair Wethington reminded the board of discussion held approximately one year ago stating that it is time to put someone else in charge of dispatch. He advised that Brenda Johnson is currently overseeing dispatch, but her other job duties are taking more of her time. He reminded the board that they just spent a considerable amount of time discussing radio problems, and that it is a full-time job running the dispatch center. He stated that there are very few Sheriffs that still run a dispatch, and he stated that since the last budget year came and went, he believes that this is a move that needs to be taken in the future to assist with moving forward in dispatch. Mayor Wagner/Stamwood stated that he didn't understand the Executive Committee proposal; Malott advised that many counties have formed Executive Committees under a 28E agreement in which the 911 Joint Service Board does not go away, but focuses on policies/procedures and technology. The Executive Committee would be responsible for dispatch and a dispatch/911 supervisor. Malott advised that the Sheriff is not required to be responsible for dispatch, and that he could cease supervision and operation of dispatch at any time. Each community within the county would be responsible for dispatch. The Executive Committee would be responsible for radio issues, spending, personnel etc. and would have their own budget. Mayor Laughlin/West Branch asked if this would be a county department; Malott advised that the Sheriff's dispatchers are county employees, but 911 does not receive funding from Cedar County. Ratliff/Tipton Ambulance Service asked how this would be funded, as he believes that paying for dispatch would be a council decision. He further asked if the funding for this department would be taken from the general fund for each of the communities, or whether or not dispatch would fall under EMA as many other counties have done. Bell/Supervisor corrected Ratliff and stated that this would not be a decision as to whether or not a city council would pay for dispatch; the Sheriff could make a decision that he is no longer funding dispatch and the municipalities would need to fund the service. Chair Wethington concurred and stated that there is no mandate within the state code that he is required to run dispatch. Mayor Laughlin/West Branch asked who would pay for dispatch for rural residents; this would be paid for by the county. Mayor Armstrong/Clarence asked if this would be a per-capita charge or on a call-per service charge? Malott provided a handout to the Mayors to show the potential cost on a per capita basis. Sheriff Wethington advised that he doesn't want communities to think that he will stop providing dispatch, but he believes that if dispatch was under its own department, there would be a staff member

who would be actively dealing with the radio and network issues. Malott discussed the figures presented in the handout, and detailed the various resources and tools that need to be paid as part of running the dispatch. He explained that based on a per capita basis, the cost to run dispatch is \$34.63 based on 2010 census. Malott reiterated that as the budget year has already been set, this information is for the next budget year. Mayor Wagner/Stamwood added that there are a lot of unknowns, and Malott explained that the Executive Committee would hire someone to oversee the day to day operations of 911. He further explained that this would be a full-time role, who would work out of the dispatch center. Mayor Armstrong/Clarence asked how this is being funded as of now, and Chair Wethington advised that this is funded out of the county's general fund. Further discussion was held as to the funding. Chief Stoolman requested that another county, potentially Johnson County, come into the meeting to discuss how they are funding their dispatch. Mayor Carney/Tipton asked to also have another county, comparable in size to Cedar County, come in to discuss the funding and operation of their dispatch. Mayor Furry/Mechanicsville clarified that Cedar County is funding over \$640k into the Sheriff's budget for dispatch, and he asked if Cedar County would still be funding that amount should the Sheriff no longer operate dispatch. Bell/Supervisors advised that Cedar County would only fund the per capita amount, based on the number of county residents. Additional discussion was held. It was decided that Malott would invite Johnson County and another comparable size county to speak to the Joint Service Board regarding their funding and operations.

- b. Malott discussed the possibility of the 911 Service Board paying for the Who is Responding app for departments within Cedar County. He stated that he has talked to several departments currently using the system, and has made contact with both Who is Responding and I Am Responding. He stated that departments wouldn't be required to migrate if they are happy with their current system, or locked into a long-term contract. He stated that the purpose of this activity was to financially assist local departments, who are using these systems as a compliment to the paging system. If this system could be moved into the PSAP, then the 911 Service Board could pay for this charge and save local departments money. Mayor Wagner/Stamwood stated that he doesn't want to do this and he will stay local. Mayor Furry/Mechanicsville asked what benefit there would be to the County for all to be on the same system, and asked for the advantages. Malott advised one fewer system within the CAD system. Chief Stoolman/West Branch advised they are not switching systems. It was stated that this would save local departments money; Mayor Wagner/Stamwood stated it would save money until it started working like the radio system. Malott stated that if the board determined that it wasn't a good

idea, it wasn't something that has been definitely agreed to. Upon consensus of the Mayors, the idea died for lack of support.

- c. Malott advised that Dispatch 3 and 4 will be updated soon. Dispatch 3 will be activated at the Law Center, and Dispatch 4 will be brought to the EMA building. This will begin on or about April 17<sup>th</sup> with Cade Curtis from Mainstay Systems. There will be no additional cost to move Shieldware as we already have the license.
- d. Malott reported that the VFW will begin to place address markers at the cemeteries throughout the county.
- e. Malott advised that he has applied for a free State Radio and is waiting for the equipment to arrive. Once the equipment arrives, Cedar County will have 63 days to install the equipment. This will assist with interop channels, and create a Haz-Mat bank.
- f. Mayor Wagner/Stamwood and Chief Klawiter/Stamwood are present to represent the Stamwood Ambulance. The Stamwood Ambulance has obtained their transport license and want to be dually paged with Mechanicsville. This will not change any ESNs. Chief Klawiter advised that this is being done to split shifts with Mechanicsville and to assist with some of their call volume and scheduling. Chief Klawiter again advised that there will be no changes to taxation or ESNs. Malott advised that he did not receive any previous correspondence sent, and advised that he had been told that Stamwood would be re-establishing their prior coverage area. Chief Klawiter again advised that there are no changes to the ESNs. Mayor Furry/Mechanicsville advised there is an agreement between Mechanicsville and Stamwood and no 28E would be needed.

Chair Wethington asked if there were any issues for dispatch from Emergency Responders. Chief Stoolman stated that dispatchers are telling fire departments to switch to VFIRE21 while they are still enroute to a call, and he wished to reiterate that VFIRE21 is a ground channel and has limited transmission ability. Johnson/Dispatch advised that she and Malott had already discussed this issue, and she would be talking to the dispatchers regarding this. It was also stated that this can also fall under departmental training.

Chair Wethington asked if there were any issues from the public. Malott brought a situation to the Service Board's attention where a land-locked property is being sold, and the property owners would like the parcel to have a 911 address. When examining the access for the property, it has been determined that the parcel is only accessible through the use of Clinton County roads, and then through an easement granted by another property owner. There is no



road, no lane or any other access to this property. Malott has found that there are three homes in this area, which cannot be addressed based on Cedar County addressing standards. Malott is looking to the Joint Service Board for a recommendation for an address. He has been told that the easement cannot be used as a private lane. Mayor Wagner/Stamwood suggested that Malott refer to the State of Iowa regarding this issue. Malott advised that there is no one at the state that handles addressing, as this is a county issue. Wagner asked why this issue was on the agenda; Malott advised that this is something that the Executive Committee would typically deal with. Mayor Furry/Mechanicsville asked where the mailbox is. Freet explained that the property is currently a seasonally used cabin so there is no mailbox, however, the new buyer intends to live there year-round. After further discussion, no action was taken.

Chair Wethington then yielded the floor to Malott for information regarding training.

- a. Malott advised that there is a state-wide certification for dispatchers coming. Ratliff/Tipton Ambulance Service stated that he was at a conference where Medicare is considering reimbursement to Dispatch Centers due to their use of EMD. He stated that this is not coming in the immediate future, but he stated that as the board was discussing funding, he thought it should be mentioned.
- b. Malott proposed the possibility of a basic radio training course. Discussion ensued and it was decided that this should be handled by individual departments.

Chair Wethington announced that the next regular meeting will be held July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at 6:30pm at 1410 Cedar Street, Tipton.

Motion made by Mayor Hansen/Lowden to adjourn; motion seconded by Mayor Carney/Tipton. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:47pm

Minutes Approved July 11, 2019