
FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

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IOWA 911 COMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL MEETING — SEPTEMBER 2020

Meeting. The Iowa 911 Communications Council met virtually on September 10, 2020.

911 Program Financial Reports and Program Update. Blake DeRouche, 911 Program Manager and State Administrator at the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEMD), provided the Council with the following updates on the 911 Program and its current financial standing.

Wireline Migration Update. As of September 10, 2020, 15 Iowa Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) have successfully completed the wireline migration process that merges the existing wireline 911 network with the Next Generation 911 (NG911) network to produce a single 911 system. The merging process was implemented by 2018 Iowa Acts, House File 2254 (911 Emergency Telephone Act), which required elimination of the wireline network and the creation of a shared service environment that the HSEMD would operate and maintain, with the benefit of automatic call rerouting in the case of an outage or maintenance. Specifically, the Act required the HSEMD to establish a virtual consolidation plan that would merge legacy wireline 911 network with the NG911 network to allow Iowa PSAPs to share emergency communication services. The network merging commenced in the spring of 2020.

At the September 2020 meeting, Mr. DeRouche shared that some issues had arisen during the process. A small percentage of wireline calls were coming in with no Automatic Location Identification (ALI) information. This problem stems from some local telcos not provisioning their data accurately in the new statewide ALI database. When this happens, the call will default route to the Department of Public Safety in Johnston rather than the local PSAP. Mr. DeRouche noted that due to these concerns, the wireline migration effort is currently in a temporary holding pattern. Additionally, the original intent of the migration process was to decrease costs and charges to individual PSAPs. Through the early migrations, it was discovered that local telcos have been charging PSAPs special access tariffs for 911 call delivery and for ALI record changes. These costs were not known and not factored into the overall project cost and associated contracts. The Program has reached out to various source experts, including the Federal Communication Commission, the Iowa Attorney General, and the Iowa Utilities Board for guidance on how to proceed with the current expense complications. There are local PSAP costs that are still able to be removed through the migration, but these particular costs will need additional clarification and determination.

GIS Grants Update. In the first funding period of FY 2021 (July 2020 to January 2021), 19 counties have received Geographic Information System (GIS) funding for a total of \$120,000. In August 2020, nine counties were granted funding for a total of \$60,000. Funding is contingent on verification that the applicant possesses 98.0% match rates with GIS and 98.0% match rates with ALI.

911 Council Travel, Public Education, and Training Fund. Mr. DeRouche stated that as of September 10, 2020, the Council has approved a total of \$8,000 to be distributed from the 911 Council Travel, Public Education, and Training Fund. Approximately \$100,000 is allocated toward the Fund annually. The remaining Fund balance totals \$91,000. Approximately \$40,000 in already-granted training funds were returned to the Council due to the cancellations of numerous trainings as a result of the implications of COVID-19.

At the September 2020 meeting, the Council unanimously approved one training fund request from the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy. The request totals approximately \$4,000 and is for a training module titled “Cultural Diversity — Ripped from the Headlines.”

Zetron Mission Critical Communications Solutions Contract Update. Cody Brink, Zetron Area Sales Manager, discussed Zetron’s work in updating the 113 existing PSAPs in delivering the NG911 solution to enhance public safety services across the State. The HSEMD awarded Zetron an NG911 contract in December 2017 for shared 911 call handling equipment. Zetron also provides a call-taking system that offers computer-aided design (CAD), 911 mapping, and emergency medical dispatch software in implementing NG911 protocols and systems. Mr. Brink stated that since August 2020, an additional five PSAPs migrated to the Comtech statewide ALI and wireline services. The Jones County Emergency Medical Dispatch Department successfully deployed software in August 2020, and migration for Fayette County as well as the Oelwein Medical Dispatch deployments is currently in process.

Statewide Interoperable Communications System (SWIC) Board Update. Chris Maiers, SWIC Coordinator, provided an update on the Board’s activities, stating that the Board is continuing to work with counties across the State to update existing PSAP equipment to improve emergency communication technology despite the challenges of the recent derecho weather disaster. Mr. Maiers stated that although some communications systems faced 130- to 140-mile-per-hour winds, all systems were successfully backed up and worked as designed. Training continues to be offered on a one-on-one basis and virtually.

Cybersecurity Update. Jim Lundsted, U.S. Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency Regional Coordinator, provided an update on recent cybersecurity issues, specifically those becoming more prevalent during COVID-19. Mr. Lundsted emphasized that cybersecurity has increasingly become threatened due to COVID-19, specifically through the use of scam calls and phishing attempts. Mr. Lundsted recommended that individuals proceed with caution in providing any personal information to Internet sites that are unfamiliar and that passwords be created uniquely and updated often.

Next Meeting. The next Council meeting will be held on October 8, 2020, at 9:00 a.m. It remains to be determined whether the meeting will be held telephonically or in person.

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