

M.O.R.E.
Regional Entities Subcommittee
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, April 16, 2015

Those Present:

Sen. Paul Formica, Brian Anderson, Rep. Theresa Conroy, Rep. Mike Demicco, John Filchak, Betsy Gara, Scott Gaul, Deb Hinchey Robert Labanara, Sheila McKay, Steve McKeever, Jeff Otto, Leo Paul, Bonnie Reemsnyder, Rep. Susan Johnson, Donald Stein, Daniel Steward, Steve Vavrek, Lyle Wray

Those Absent:

Rep. Peggy Sayers, Carl Amento, Susan Bransfield, Jeff Bridges, Rep. Aundre Bumgardner, Sen. Steve Cassano, John Elsesser, Carl Fortuna, William Fritz, Rep. Bob Godfrey, Sam Gold, Rep. John Hampton, Richard Ives, Matthew Knickerbocker, Rep. Gail Lavielle, Pat Llodra, Robert Namnoum, Lisa Pellegrini, Lena Rodriguez, Rep. Jason Rojas, Rep. Christopher Rosario, Christine Ruman, Melissa Schlag, Joyce Stille, Jim Vigue, Stephen Woods, Rep. Tami Zawistowski, Jeremy Zeedyk

Meeting was called to order at 11:11am by Rep. Mike Demicco who served as the committee chair in Rep. Peggy Sayers' absence.

Dan Soule presented about the successes of Litchfield County Dispatch and the future prospects for regionalized emergency dispatch centers in Connecticut.

Don Stein stated that it is in the interest of small towns to regionalize.

Leo Paul discussed the prospect of using the LCD as a model for further regionalization.

Dan Soule responded by addressing the difficulties associated with forcing boundaries when regionalizing and offered as a possible alternative the use of the COGs regarding the establishment of outlines.

Leo Paul inquired as to how the call takers and dispatchers interacted in the LCD.

Dan Soule responded by stating that all of the call takers in the LCD are also the dispatchers.

Steve Vavrek asked why Winsted isn't included in the LCD.

Dan Soule responded by saying that it isn't one of the towns current priorities, but it might join.

Sen. Paul Formica inquired into how LCD employees were hired.

Dan Soule responded by stating that the LCD is a non-profit and uses the 501c3 structure. He further stated that LCD does have a hiring process for all of their dispatchers and other staff.

Sen. Formica asked about what name would appear on the paychecks of the employees.

Dan Soule responded by saying that LCD would appear on the paychecks because it is a private non-profit.

Sen. Formica asked about who the governing body of the LCD is.

Dan Soule stated that it is the volunteer board of 27 directors.

Sen. Formica asked if they were serving 8 towns.

Dan Soule responded by saying that LCD serves 20 towns.

Sen. Formica inquired into the use of the per capita charge.

Dan Soule stated that the LCD does use a per capita charge.

Sen. Formica asked about the call volume that LCD handles and the price that LCD charges.

Dan Soule responded by saying that LCD charges the same fee to all towns regardless of size.

Sen. Formica thanked Dan Soule for the answers because many of these questions are hurdles for East Lyme's attempt at regionalization with other towns.

Bonnie Reemsnyder asked Dan Soule if he could describe the volume of calls LCD handles.

Dan Soule replied by stating that the center receives 30,000 911 calls and 80,000 administrative calls a year.

Bonnie Reemsnyder asked for clarification regarding the members of the COG involved in the LCD.

Dan Soule stated that they were all first selectman and mayors of their towns.

Deb Hinchey asked why each town had to have its own computer system.

Dan Soule clarified that was only for Police Departments for the purpose of tracking criminal records. He then further elaborated on the difficulty it would create when LCD takes on additional police department.

Deb Hinchey asked if that problem would cause delays.

Dan Soule responded by saying that issue hasn't been addressed because there aren't many regional dispatchers who handle more than one police department.

Bonnie Reemsnyder asked about how LCD handles its capital planning.

Dan Soule stated that LCD has a capital plan that is presented to the board every 7 years.

Bonnie Reemsnyder asked if every town received the same amount of funding.

Dan Soule responded by saying that there is a formula that is used to allocate funds.

Bonnie Reemsnyder asked if dispatchers received a pension.

Dan Soule said that there is no pension, but the dispatchers do receive a 403b.

Rep. Demicco inquired into the selection process of the board members.

Dan Soule stated that the board members were appointed by the towns

Rep. Demicco thanked Dan Soule for his presentation and introduced Jeff Otto.

Jeff Otto gave a presentation about the prospects of regionalizing the emergency dispatch centers and the experiences of QVEC regarding regionalization.

Rep. Demicco thanked Jeff Otto for the presentation and opened the floor to questions from the committee members.

Betsy Gara asked about the issues that HB-6970 would cause regarding personnel and unions.

Jeff Otto responded by saying that HB-6970 isn't perfect, and he explained his belief that something still needs to be done.

Scott Gaul inquired into the current lack of regionalization from the towns.

Jeff Otto stated that every town needs police, but not every town can afford a police force. He further stated that this was the reason for the existing regionalization and many towns don't regionalize because they can afford their own police departments.

Dan Steward asked how the conversion in Tolland impacted the number of calls that QVEC receives.

Jeff Otto stated that there has been virtually no impact on the volume of calls QVEC receives and has no effect on the way they operate.

Dan Steward asked if the 911 calls were tracked.

Jeff Otto responded by saying that the calls are tracked until there is a response to the call from the correct emergency service.

John Filchak added that the relationship of the town's CEOs with QVEC is an integral part of the operation of QBEC. He further expressed his belief that regionalization should take a county approach because of the potential cost savings.

Bonnie Reemsnyder expressed her support for using a formula when exploring regionalization.

Jeff Otto stated that the size of the regional area determines the amount of money it receives.

Rep. Demicco asked if there were any issues associated with regional dispatchers lacking specific knowledge of the region.

Jeff Otto responded by discussing the arguments that many towns use to avoid regionalization. He further argued that the reasons stated by the towns weren't enough of an issue to avoid regionalization due to the cost saving opportunities offered by regionalization. He also noted that dispatchers are well trained.

Lyle Wray commented on the advantages of regionalization when the area is struck with very bad disasters. He explained that regional dispatches have more depth than local dispatches and those regional dispatchers can more effectively respond during particularly bad disasters.

Jeff Otto explained how regionalization saves money by reducing labor costs. He noted that regional dispatches can more effectively respond to disasters due to the larger number of staff in one location.

Brian Anderson stated that consolidation can cause issues when callers are unsure of their location and how in those instances local dispatchers are more effective.

Jeff Otto stated that by 2016 911 calls will be traced globally, so dispatchers will be able to find the caller's location.

Steve Vavrek explained that many of the issues associated with regionalizing emergency dispatches revolve around unions. He further elaborated that a mandate wouldn't necessarily resolve the issue due to court costs that would result from lost jobs.

Jeff Otto responded by suggesting that if the dispatches are run by private non-profits then the towns could avoid some municipal issues.

Steve Vavrek claimed that it is still an issue.

Jeff Otto agreed with Steve Vavrek.

Leo Paul inquired into the use of the COGs as a model for regionalization.

Jeff Otto replied by saying that using the COGs could be a good idea, but that any new attempts at regionalization shouldn't interfere with existing regionalization.

Brian Anderson expressed his desire to see other attempts at regionalization that don't cause people to lose their jobs.

Lyle Wray stated that regionalization doesn't happen quickly and that there is a step by step process that should occur.

Steve Vavrek asked if QVEC provided a pension.

Jeff Otto responded by stating that QVEC provides a 403b.

Steve Vavrek asked if HB-6970 addressed pensions.

Jeff Otto responded by saying that pensions are not addressed in the bill, but he expressed his desire to see it addressed at some point.

Brian Anderson explained that the cost of the pension cannot be avoided because if the pension is not included, the cost will appear elsewhere.

Rep. Demicco thanked Jeff Otto for the presentation and stated that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday, April 21, at 12:00pm.

Leo Paul announced that there would be a group looking at regional policing specifically.

Jon Ferrigno clarified by stating that it is a working group of the Regional Entities and Municipal Efficiencies committees that members can be a part of.

Rep. Demicco adjourned the meeting 12:41pm.