

Vermont Communications (VCOMM)

Best Western
Waterbury, VT
September 18, 2006

Minutes

Present: Al Barber, Dan Manz, Paul Duquette, Mark Miller, Peter Coffey, Heather Gibbs, Roger Marcoux, Jim Colgan, Mike Manning, Walt Goodell, Ron Kumetz, Gene Perkins, Terry LaValley, Doug Lawrence, Paco Aumand, Charlie Kremer, Ron Gauthier, Phil Colby, Dave Mace, Lucie Garand, Jake Elovirta, Jim Leene, Trevor Lashua, Doug Johnston

Not Present: Doug Brent, Tom Cheney, Barb Farr, James Finger, Chris Herrick, Bill McManis, Thomas Murray, Scott Richardson

Start: 0910hrs

Chief Duquette:

Opening Remarks

- Reason for meeting: hit critical points in VCOMM process
- Around the room introductions
- In order to leverage HSU funds had to enter into MOUs with key agencies; have all signed except with VT Career Chiefs – believe we have majority on this now

Sub-committee changes

- Roger Marcoux was Institutional/Governance Chair - will now be Vice Co-Chair of Steering Committee
- Doug Johnson was Operations subcommittee Chair - will now be Institutional/Governance subcommittee Chair
- Mark Miller will now be Operations subcommittee Chair
 - No objections from the VCOMM Board

Frequency Coordinator RFP

- ACD Telecom came back as the lowest bidder and came highly recommended
- In process of drafting contract for ACD Telecom now
- Should be on board late October, early November
- Will deal with FCC issues and determine what frequencies are used and which ones aren't

Project Manager RFP

- Is currently posted on Think Vermont web site (www.thinkvermont.com) and the VCOMM web site (www.dps.state.vt.us/need)
- Will handle day to day operations of VCOMM to include visiting sites, dealing with vendors, etc.

Lt. Colgan:

Macro Project RFP

- Need to complete review of RFP and get back to Macro with final draft
- If anyone needs an RFP they can request a copy from Heather
 - Send Mark Miller and Doug Johnston copies
- Macro is currently paid up to date with the exception of the RFP
- The Technical Committee has reviewed the RFP with very few comments/changes
- Terry LaValley has also reviewed the document with few changes
- This is a good opportunity for those of you with comments or suggestions to discuss them
- Goal to have RFP wrapped up in the next 5 – 10 days

Information Sharing

- The lack of information getting out re: VCOMM has been a hindrance to this project – this is a reminder that we are all expected to provide and push out information to the people that you represent
 - The first phase of this project is several years old, dating back to the microwave system
 - The frequency coordinator position will be critical in the months to come
 - Many agencies holding on to a high number of frequencies that are not being used
 - We are looking at making better and available the frequencies that are out there – this is the next phase in a multi-phase project

Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP)

- A host of issues came out of this, one is a statewide TICP
- V-Call/U-Call fits very nicely into this plan
- Communications an issue in Vermont, Capt. Reinfurt was at a recent bank robbery and attested to the fact that communications was a major problem
- This plan is something that is going to be used in day to day operations, it will not be shelved
- We will be able to communicate with NH using V-Call/U-Call frequencies
- Much of what was done this summer was outreach to the public

Terry LaValley:

Macro Project RFP

- Lifeline system, populating around the state with transmitters
- Core system allowing everyone availability to a dispatch center for support, something we felt we could fund with this round of funding
- A system we will be able to expand upon in the future
- V-Call/U-Call transmitter, providing umbrella coverage throughout state of Vermont
- Next stage of project to provide coverage where there is none
- Scenario: Springfield area train derailment
 - First responders will come to area where MCP is set up, will contact command on one of call-in channels. The Communications Unit Leader

(COML) will assign a tactical channel for that group to go onto and the end user will change the frequency on their radios. If resources are needed they can call back to command on a call-in channel, but will use tactical channel for operations

- Police and fire (interagency communications) will be able to communicate, not in all areas at first, but these areas will be enhanced as funding comes in
- VT will never have 100% coverage though
- There will be areas where an incident will occur where these communications will not be available, we are trying to cover as many places as possible in the initial rollout
- Would potentially work on ground level (car to car, portable to mobile) just will not be as robust (i.e. LE channel 2, fire mutual aid)
- You will be able to contact a PSAP using the V-Call/U-Call system
- During the transition to narrow-banding, some coverage will be lost – V-Call/U-Call will allow for communications in interim
- Part of grant will upgrade the state's 11 PSAPs with V-Call/U-Call

Kremer: Talked to counterparts in NH who have a mirror system to what we are proposing, mentioned spending money in updating radios, cost them \$12 million but they did build new towers. The main thing was getting buy-in and they said what worked was meetings, meetings, meetings and meetings. Once they got buy-in and signed MOUs the project got traction and took off – this took years to get off the ground

Colgan: in testing our TICP, engineers from other states had high praise - many states across the nation are migrating towards a V-Call/U-Call system

Macro Project RFP Discussion

Kumetz: Insert language to ensure that everything is off the shelf and not proprietary

Colgan: We will advise Macro of this

Kumetz: We want vendors to elaborate on what they will provide and maintain so we have assurances going forward, so there are no loopholes

LaValley: The system is based on national standards, this standard dictates how radios communicate over the air – with a standards-based system we will have the necessary minimums

Kumetz: I am concerned with infrastructure components

LaValley: VCOMM will be maintaining the system and there is a state component – equipment purchased must be compliant – must find out what product is best in class where there is no standard (i.e. with routers)

Kumetz: We want vendors to point out when something is clearly not main stream

Duquette: To close up want to get RFP out within next 5 – 10 days

- Ask Heather for copy if you wish
- Refer any comments regarding the RFP to Heather by the close of business on Friday

Break: 0956 – 1011hrs

Duquette:

- Tentatively picked PL of 110.9 for U-Call/V-Call
- Only thing that needs to be licensed are the fixed sites

Population of subcommittees

- Technical Committee
 - Would anyone like to be on Technical Committee?
 - Add Ron Gauthier
 - Al Barber will assist
- Institutional Committee
 - Task will be to get board recognized similar to E-911 board
 - Currently under Executive Order and HSU is the funding mechanism
 - State of Vermont will need to provide funding
 - Anyone interested?
 - Add Trevor Lashua
- Operations Committee
 - Need training piece – how to use radios, when to use radios, what capabilities are, etc.
 - RJ Elrick will start teaching the training piece at the Academy once we have it identified
 - There is money in the budget for training
 - Anyone interested:
 - Paco Aumand will meet with Chair Duquette and see what is expected re: dispatching
 - Need to work on dispatch piece (Terry LaValley)
 - Previous Dispatch Study ended with recognition that state-funded PSAPs had to provide lifeline services – would not refuse any agency that needed to be dispatched, but they would not be involved in providing operational services to those new agencies
 - Discussion developed - what would it take PSAPs to provide full service dispatching? What would the cost be?
 - Ended with recognizing that technology very important in the future
 - Recommended dispatching study be conducted to identify how we could provide dispatch services for everyone and at what cost
 - Study used as a springboard to get Macro involved in the beginning of VCOMM (formerly CSG) process
 - \$200,000 is allocated for dispatch study as part of VCOMM project
 - Macro dispatch study on VCOMM web site
 - Marcoux: It would be a good idea to have Sarah Ferris, training coordinator with E-911, involved in training piece
 - Macro was asked to find best in practice and report back – quickly realized dispatchers in state of Vermont do more than just dispatching, have many tasks – it was hard for Macro to identify how many dispatchers we need

- Macro suggested study to see what dispatchers actually do
– Dispatch Summer Study

VCOMM – Spread the word

- It is important for you all to go out after these meetings and get the word out to anyone that you encounter – this is your job
- VCOMM flyers will be available soon
 - Send box to VLCT to hand out at town fair (October 5th)

Emergency Projects:

- Brighton Fire
 - Met with vendors and hopefully have plan to make it so they can have communications once out of their station
- Jay Fire
- Grand Isle County
 - Working with them to get them back into the VCOMM fold and get them a reliable system
- VCOMM will be reviewing emergency issues on a case by case basis
- Marcoux: What is going to happen with interoperability proposals sent to HSU?
- Duquette: Having people send proposals to HSU, they are then directed to me for review
- Colgan: In dealing with emergencies we are staying away from new radios and new equipment
 - Emergencies are those that need to have improvements to safeguard first responders
 - Let HSU and VCOMM make decision if this is emergency or not

LaValley: If anyone has any ideas about how to get the word out please let us know

Johnston: Mailing out the flyer is a good idea, by providing the names of committee members it will give them someone in their area to contact

Perkins: Send flyer to Green Mountain Responders

Smart Border Information (SBI) Net - Jim Leene

- Congress has funded this
- Four companies that are bidding on this – have proposals in for ideas on protecting border and are being reviewed now
- Budget estimated at two billion or more
- Swanton and Tucson border patrols (BP) picked as two pilot areas for this program
- BP will be trying to enhance their communications along borders from Mesena, NY to NH to Maine and down 100 miles
- BP will manage the contract submitted by a private organization
- BP would like to work with this group so as not to duplicate efforts
- VCOMM should form ad hoc group to meet with vendor selected to share project information
- Colgan: Are they looking at Northlink or Connect Vermont?

- Leene: All corporations hired local people to assist
- All vendors have different ideas of how to solve this
- Kremer: North Country Investment Council (NCIC) is teaming with NH, in the north country of VT and NH, from St. Johnsbury up, on a 12 million dollar project. They are looking to build tower sites and will hook into the fiber for both Northlink and AOT project – trying to get private vendors involved – may be going after 700mhz band – will be looked at for enhancement and redundancy

Closing Remarks – Chief Duquette:

- Thank you all for coming
- Ask Heather for any information
- Kumetz: Change URL to VCOMM instead of need?