

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

The following document is provided by the
LAW AND LEGISLATIVE DIGITAL LIBRARY
at the Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library
<http://legislature.maine.gov/lawlib>



Reproduced from electronic originals
(may include minor formatting differences from printed original)

MAINE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM POLICY BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT 2007

Prepared January 2008

MAINE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM POLICY BOARD

“The mission of this Board is to ensure the provision of a professional, high-quality, cost-effective, and reliable public safety emergency communications system that provides our citizens a prompt and appropriate response to calls for service.”

HISTORICAL SYNOPSIS

ENABLING LEGISLATION

The 121st Legislature passed LD 1683, An Act Relating to the Establishment of a Central Maine Regional Public Safety Communication Center, as Public Law Chapter 678. Title 5 MRSA § 12004-I, sub-§74-D establishes the Maine Communications System Policy Board within the section for “Advisory Boards; Boards with Minimal Authority.” The primary responsibilities and powers of advisory boards and boards with minimal authority include the responsibility and authority to advise state agencies, review policies and procedures, conduct studies, evaluate programs and make recommendations to the state agencies, the Legislature or the Governor. Title 25 MRSA § 1531 through 1533 (Appendix A) describes the membership of the Board and its powers and duties, as well as the duties of the supervisor for the communications unit within the Department of Public Safety.

POLICY BOARD ORGANIZATION

The Board is comprised of 15 members representing the following:

- Commissioner, Dept. of Public Safety
- Chief, State Police
- Chief Information Officer, Dept. of Administrative & Financial Svc.
- Executive Department
- Towns < 5,000 Population
- Towns between 5,000 – 15,000 Population
- Towns > 15,000 Population
- Counties
- Police Chiefs
- County Sheriffs
- Fire Chiefs
- Emergency Medical Services
- Representative of Users of the System
- Non-supervisory employee of DPS Communications Bureau
- Citizen

The Board has organized into sub-committees for the following subject areas: Technology, Human Resources, Budget and Operations. The current acting chair of the Board is Robert Devlin, Kennebec County Administrator.

POWERS AND DUTIES

The Board is charged with establishing policies, procedures and standards for the cooperative use of the Department of Public Safety’s communications system for PSAP services, i.e. the answering of E911 calls by a Public Safety Answering Point, and/or for emergency communications dispatch services by municipal, county and state governmental entities; for formulating a budget for the Department’s communications unit; for developing an implementation plan to accommodate the *voluntary* consolidation of the various governmental communications systems in Maine with the Department’s communications system; and, for designing an appropriate communications unit within the Department.

POLICY BOARD WORK AREAS

Technology Subcommittee

Interface Data Collection

The members of the technology sub-committee have been working on an interface approach for sharing CAD (Computer Aided Dispatching) and RMS (Records Management System) data between a regional communications center and the customers or end users (mobile clients). There are approximately five separate CAD/RMS software vendors in the State of Maine and the ability to share the information from the regional dispatch centers would greatly improve efficiency and end user safety.

During 2007, the Public Utilities Commission had to decide on the single Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for Kennebec County, and during this time the issue of passing the E911 data from CMRCC to the agencies that would be decommissioned as a PSAP was a concern. In response to that concern, the Department entered into a contract with the CAD software vendor for those agencies that would no longer be a PSAP, and purchased the necessary hardware and software to pass the Automatic Number Information/Automatic Location Information (ANI/ALI) along to those agencies for their in-house systems.

To further the ability to interface with other agencies, the Department applied for a COPS 2007 Technology Grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, and on September 17, 2007, Commissioner Jordan received the letter informing her that the Department had been approved to receive \$5.625 Million in grant funds. A portion of this money will go to purchase a new Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system that will further provide greater opportunity for interoperability with other public safety agencies throughout the state.

As 2007 ended, the Communications Bureau and Kennebec County Officials are actively working to put in place the technology that will transfer the dispatching services from the Kennebec County Sheriff's Department to this Bureau. This transfer of services will have the Bureau providing dispatch services for the Sheriff's Department and for a number of fire and emergency medical services units.

Budget Subcommittee

The Director, as well as the Commissioner of Public Safety, spent considerable time explaining the consolidation efforts to various legislators and legislative committees in conjunction with the legislative work on the State's 2008/2009 biennial budget.

The acting chair, Robert Devlin, held similar meetings with local government representatives as the PUC's deliberation process for PSAP reduction unfolded and the impact to Kennebec County towns began to be more apparent.

Human Resources Subcommittee

Staffing

The Director worked with the Bureau of Human Resources to create a new position classification, that of Emergency Communications Technician, i.e. E911 call-taker. This position classification benefits the Department in two ways. First, it is an entry-level position into this Bureau, helping to create a better career ladder. The Bureau now has the progression from Technician to Specialist to Supervisor.

Second, it segregates the services of call-taking from dispatching in order to more appropriately bill PSAP-only customers.

Four Emergency Communications Specialist positions were added to the Gray RCC in conjunction with the contracts for provision of services to several towns in York County. Five Emergency Communications Technician positions were added to the Central Maine RCC in conjunction with the PUC's decision to designate only one PSAP for Kennebec County.

In October, the Department submitted a budgetary request in its FY08/09 supplemental budget package to establish an additional Emergency Communications Specialist position by reducing the amount of budgeted overtime. An analysis was conducted that determined the amount of budgeted overtime exceeded the amount of actual overtime used by enough to permit this change without adding any expense to the budget. The Director felt that this represented valuable resources being tied up in budgetary amounts rather than in an actual dispatcher on shift. (Prior to the release of this report in January 2008, we have learned that the Governor did include this request in his supplemental budget package. The request will now go through the deliberation process with the Legislature.)

Recruitment

The recruitment process was reviewed and refined by the Director, working with the human resources unit of the Security and Employment Service Center. Previously, the Director would receive no more than 6 candidates names each time a request for a list of certified candidates was received. This practice is the normal process for positions that are certified through the State's Bureau of Human Resources and are generally available throughout state government. Emergency Communications Specialists (dispatchers) and Emergency Communications Technicians (call takers) are unique to the Department of Public Safety and are called "direct hire" positions. They are not certified through the Bureau of Human Resources. Because of this direct hire designation, there was no reason to limit the number of names forwarded to the Director for interviews. Each qualified candidate is now offered an interview each time a position is open for recruitment. This change has expanded the number of candidates reviewed.

In addition to that change, the Director also worked to streamline the background check and polygraph process with the Bureau of State Police to minimize the time that elapses between a conditional job offer and final verification of a candidate's qualifications.

These two changes have proven effective in accelerating the recruitment process.

Operations Subcommittee

York County: In January with the assistance of the Public Utilities Commission, the transition of fifteen (15) York County towns dispatch service from the York County Communications Center to the Department of Public Safety's Regional Communications Center in Gray was completed. A users' group has been established and meets regularly to ensure that operations are conducted to the satisfaction of all members.

Kennebec County: In October, the Public Utilities Commission acted upon its determination to reduce the number of authorized PSAPs in Kennebec County to just one. The Waterville Police Department, the Augusta Police Department and the Kennebec County Sheriff's Office are no longer designated; therefore, all calls previously routed there were rerouted to the Department's Central Maine Communications Center in Augusta. Some towns petitioned the Public Utilities Commission to be

permitted to receive their PSAP service from the Somerset County Communications Center. The PUC permitted this change and the calls for those towns were rerouted again from CMRCC to Somerset.

Policy Review and Revision: Several administrative and organizational policies were reviewed and edited by the Supervisors and will be implemented. New operational procedures are being developed to encompass the new work of dispatching for local agencies and jurisdictions. These procedures are reviewed by the users' group and then the supervisors before being presented to the Policy Board for adopt.

APPENDIX A

Maine Communications System Policy Board
Members

Anne H. Jordan

45 Commerce Drive, Suite #1, SHS #104
Augusta, ME 04333-0104
Work: 626-3803
Email: Michael.P.Cantara@maine.gov
Commissioner of Public Safety, ex officio

Municipality of 5,000-15,000

Vacant

Timothy Beals

P.O. Box 747
Waterville, ME 04903
Work: 872-4612
Email: t.beals@deltaambulance.org
Delta Ambulance, EMS representative

Municipality of under 5,000

Vacant

William Crowley

36 Hospital Street, SHS #20
Augusta, ME 04333-0020
Work: 624-7076
Email: William.F.Crowley@Maine.gov
Email: chilebilly@verizon.net
DPS, ECS, Maine State Employees Association

Robert Devlin

89 Highland Avenue
Gardiner, ME 04345
Work: 622-0971/Cell: 838-2826
Email: bgdevlin@kennebecso.com
Kennebec County Administrator, County
Commissioners representative

Ralph Farnham, Jr.

P.O. Box 266
Oakland, ME 04963
Home: 465-3881
Email: jporter@oaklandme.com
Councilor, Town of Oakland, Citizen

Chief Deputy Everett Flannery

125 State Street
Augusta, ME 04330
Work: 623-3614 x205
Email: ebflannery@kennebecso.com
Kennebec County Sheriff, Sheriff's
Association representative

Robert Gasper

15 Oak Grove Road
Vassalboro, ME 04989
Work: 877-8063
Email: Robert.K.Gasper@maine.gov
ESCB, representing users of the
communications system

Chief Michael Tracy

Police Chief, Town of Oakland
PO Box 187
7Fairfield St
Oakland, Me 04963
Police Chiefs representative

Chief Mark Kimball

13 Pray Street
Gardiner, ME 04345
Work: 582-4535
Email: fire@gardinermaine.com
Fire Chief, Fire Chiefs representative

Col. Patrick Fleming

45 Commerce Drive, Suite #1, SHS #42
Augusta, ME 04333-0042
Work: 624-7200
Email: Patrick.J.Fleming@maine.gov
Chief of the State Police, ex officio

Richard Thompson

26 Edison Drive, SHS #173

Augusta, ME 04333-0173

Work: 624-7568

Email: Richard.B.Thompson@Maine.gov

Chief Information Officer, State of Maine, ex officio

Municipality of over 15,000

Vacant

Karla Black

1 State House Station

Augusta, ME 04333-0001

Work: 287-3537

Email: Karla.Black@maine.gov

Senior Policy Advisor, Office of Gov. Baldacci
Representative of the Executive Department