

MINUTES**SENATE AND HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEES ON
CITY, COUNTY, AND LOCAL AFFAIRS****OCTOBER 11, 2018**

The Senate and House Interim Committees on City, County, and Local Affairs met Thursday, October 11, 2018 at 9:30 a.m. in Room B, MAC, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Committee members present: Senators Alan Clark, Senate Chair, Linda Collins-Smith, Lance Eads, and Stephanie Flowers. Representatives Tim Lemons, House Chair, Sarah Capp, Carol Dalby, David Fielding, Mike Holcomb, Bob Johnson, Fredrick Love, Andy Mayberry, Roger Lynch, Johnny Rye, and Nelda Speaks.

Other members present: Senator Jonathan Dismang and Larry Teague. Representatives Reginald Murdock and Danny Watson.

Call to Order

Senator Clark called the meeting to order.

Comments by Committee Chairs

Senator Clark told legislators he participated in a meeting at the Garland County 911 Emergency Communications Center. A major topic of discussion at the meeting was funding for 911 systems statewide. Senator Clark believes an in-depth discussion by the committees is needed on how best to fund the state's 9-1-1 systems.

Consideration of Motion to Adopt Minutes – August 8 & 9, 2018 [Exhibit C, C-1]

A motion to adopt the minutes of the August 8 and 9, 2018, committee meetings was made by Representative Dalby and seconded by Representative Fielding. The motion carried.

Discussion of Arkansas's 9-1-1 Systems, Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPS) and Next Generation NG911 Project [Exhibit D]

The following presenters were recognized: Renee Hoover, Administrator, Emergency Telephone Services Board (AETSB), Josh Curtis, Governmental Affairs Director, Association of Arkansas Counties (AAC), A.J. Gary, Executive Director, Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM), County Judge Jimmy Hart, Conway County, County Judge Rusty McMillon, Greene County, Sheriff Rodney Wright, Saline County, and Shelby Johnson, State Geographic Officer, Arkansas Geographic Information System (GIS).

Mr. Gary said that several years ago, before the Legislative Blue Ribbon Committee on Local 911 Systems completed its study, a 9-1-1 ADEM subcommittee was created. When Mr. Gary was appointed as Director of ADEM two years ago, he reactivated the subcommittee. Consultants and subject matter experts then participated in the development of the proposed statewide Next Generation 911 (NG911) plan. ADEM's Office of Emergency Communication coordinated with stakeholders, including the Arkansas Municipal League (AML), the Association of Arkansas Counties (AAC), the Arkansas Sheriffs Association, and the Arkansas Association of Chiefs of Police.

Mr. Gary read portions of the Executive Summary of the Statewide NG911 Plan, which was provided to members in their meeting packet.

Mr. Curtis responded to questions by legislators and discussed aspects of the proposed NextGen 911 plan including:

- The AAC has drafted proposed legislation to create a board or state agency to be given the authority to monitor and coordinate the state's 911 communication centers
- The proposed legislation also recommends that the Executive Director of ADEM act as the chair of the newly created board/agency
- The state board/agency would be responsible for central purchasing of equipment, which will provide consistency statewide
- Have the authority to consolidate the number of Public Service Answering Points (PSAPs)
- Have the authority to require additional training for PSAP operators

Mr. Curtis responded to questions concerning costs. He said the 911 systems need an additional \$20 million in funding. Fees for 911 service are currently levied at \$2.20 per month for landline service and \$1.25 per month per device for cell phone service.

Judge Hart described the process Conway County undertook four years ago when they consolidated three PSAPs into one. Working with their intergovernmental council, grant funding was obtained to purchase an old post office building in the City of Morrilton. The building was converted to a stand-alone 911 system to serve the entire county. Judge Hart then discussed the shortfall in the current funding for the 911 systems statewide. He said the costs to cities and counties is \$25 million each year to subsidize the systems. This amount does not take into consideration the \$22 million needed to potentially implement NextGen 911 across the state.

Ms. Hoover addressed legislator's questions regarding proposed plans to upgrade the 911 systems with newer technologies. She said factors will consist of:

- Establish standards across the state with identical guidelines for all the 911 systems
- The standards will direct the systems on how to transition from the old Legacy 911 copper system to a Voice over IP (VoIP) system
- The state's standards will need to be aligned with standards set by the National Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) and the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) to develop and set 911 standards nationwide
- A newly created state board/agency will need to work with the national organizations to obtain assistance in setting consistent standards in Arkansas

Sheriff Wright discussed the difficulties law enforcement and first responders experience when multiple PSAPs serve an area's cities and counties. He gave the example of Saline County which is in his jurisdiction. He is unable to communicate between the Bryant and Benton Police Departments because they are on different radio frequencies. A recent call triggered one call center to dispatch an ambulance, another call center dispatched the fire department, and a third center dispatched the police department, all to the same location.

Judge McMillon told legislators there were two PSAPs in Greene County. The PSAPs have now been consolidated, with fourteen dispatchers housed in one call center. He said this has greatly improved emergency services and has provided more efficiency.

Legislators and presenters discussed the possibility of the consolidating the number of PSAPs in the state. Currently there are 127 PSAPs. Several suggestions were made. One suggestion is to

reduce the number from 127 down to 75, one per county. Another suggestion is to consider having several counties consolidate using a regionalization model. Mr. Curtis said the AAC and others who have been studying the issue have not finalized a formula but hope to present their recommendations to the Committee at a future meeting.

Mr. Johnson told legislators that part of the cost for operating 911 call centers is the cost of mapping. He said there are three counties who do not yet have address points mapped, which are essential to first responders. He said work is continuing throughout the state to provide accurate mapping for cities and counties. He said local addressing authority needs to be retained.

A motion was made to have the stakeholders involved in the state's 9-1-1 systems bring to the committees information on consolidating the current number of PSAPs down to five or six, twenty-five or thirty, or by regions, or a total of seventy-five PSAPs statewide with a possible formula to use, plus the estimated costs to consolidate systems, the training and equipment needed, operational costs, efficiencies gained, and any mapping and naming issues, including the need for local addressing authority.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:45 .m.