

**ARKANSAS BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE ON LOCAL 911 SYSTEMS
(ACT 1171 OF 2013)**

**JULY 16, 2014
MINUTES**

The Arkansas Blue Ribbon Committee on Local 911 Systems met Wednesday, July 16, 2014 at 1:00 p.m. in the Fine Arts Center, East Arkansas Community College, Forrest City, Arkansas.

Members present of the Arkansas Blue Ribbon Committee on Local 911 Systems were Senator Linda Chesterfield, Senate Chair, Yell County Judge Mark Thone, Cabot Mayor Bill Cypert, Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM) Director David Maxwell, Consumer members Joel Hoggard and Todd Woerpel, and Association of Arkansas Counties (AAC) Legal Counsel Mark Whitmore, Chris Villines' designee.

Other legislators present were Senator Ronald Caldwell, Representatives Reginald Murdock, Marshall Wright, Mary Lou Slinkard, and Stephanie Malone.

Call to Order

Senator Chesterfield called the meeting order. She told the committee that Representative Tommy Wren, House Co-Chair was unable to attend the meeting.

Minutes of the January 6, 2014 and May 8, 2014 committee meetings were approved.

Opening Comments by Senator Chesterfield

Senator Chesterfield said the 911 Blue Ribbon Committee is charged with providing recommendations for improving the statewide 911 systems to better meet the needs of the citizens.

Welcome by Senator Caldwell and Representative Wright

Senator Caldwell welcomed everyone to the region and said it is one of the richest farming regions in the world and the largest sweet potato grower in the state. He said that good 911 coverage is particularly important in rural areas. He discussed the flooding that Brinkley and Monroe Counties experienced on June 29, 2014 and the lack of a good notification and warning system.

Representative Marshall Wright welcomed everyone to Forrest City. He said his home is Forrest City, an area that boasts world class fishing and duck hunting, as well as beautiful parks and trails.

Welcome by St. Francis County Judge Gary Hughes and Forrest City Mayor Larry Bryant

Judge Hughes welcomed everyone to St. Francis County. He thanked the committee for the work it is doing to address issues with the 911 warning systems across the state.

Mayor Larry Bryant welcomed everyone to Forrest City.

Welcome and Presentation by Dr. Coy Grace, President, East Arkansas Community College

Dr. Grace described the East Arkansas Community College (EACC) as a comprehensive two-year college which opened in 1973. The original buildings on the campus were funded by local millage. The Fine Arts Center was completed in 2010. The Center has over 15,000 square feet. It houses a learning resource center, business and industry training courses, and distance learning. It is one of only three Class A performance theaters in Arkansas. Dr. Grace said that EACC is a member of the Arkansas Delta Training and Education Consortium (ADTEC). During the 2013-2014 school year, participants in workforce training earned 22,862 non-credit training hours. Ms. Rachel Thompson a recent graduate of EACC described her experiences at the college.

Introduction of Randie Jones, the new 911 Coordinator for ADEM. Report on the status of Phase II Wireless 911 Deployment and the Status of Landline Enhanced 911 Deployment by County

David Maxwell, Director, Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM) was recognized. Mr. Maxwell introduced Randie Jones, the new 911 Coordinator for ADEM. He told the committee Ms. Jones will be contacting Public-Safety Answering Point (PSAPs) throughout the state. He advised the committee that all PSAPs in the state are now Phase II wireless compliant.

Overview of the Structure of the Arkansas Emergency Telephone Service Board (ETSB), its members, its Strategic Goals Established in Legislation, Review of Wireless 911 Funding Legislation, and ESTB Funded activities

Gary Gray, Chairman, and Renee Hoover, Board Administrator, ETSB were recognized. Mr. Gray discussed the funding of 911 wireless fees and referenced a document titled 9-1-1 Wireless (**Handout**).

- Act 582 of 2007 increased wireless fees for 911 service from 40¢ to 50¢ per month
- 49% of wireless fees were distributed by the Emergency Telecommunication Service Board (ETSB) on a quarterly basis to PSAPs for operating costs based on population
- 1% of wireless fees was used to pay ETSB administration and auditor costs
- Act 1221 of 2009 increased wireless fees for 911 service from 50¢ to 65¢ per month
- Act 1221 of 2009 increased distribution of wireless fees to counties from 49% to 83.5%
- Act 1221 of 2009 decreased the funds paid into the ETSB Interest Bearing Account from 49% to 15%
- Act 1221 of 2009 decreased Board administration and auditor fees from 1% to 0.5%

Mr. Gray told the committee the ETSB oversight is for wireless service only. There is no oversight for landline service to home and/or business telephone users. He believes that landline service should have some type of oversight. Mr. Gray discussed Next

Generation 911 which could transmit text messages to a 911 Center if the technology is in place. Mr. Gray believes a board or committee should be created to oversee 911 Centers statewide. There was discussion by committee members concerning the creation of a statewide agency or board to oversee 911 service providers. Mr. Gray was asked to provide the membership of the ETSB (A.C.A. 12-10-318). Mr. Gray was asked to explain the process for the distribution of funds held in the ETSB Interest Bearing Account.

ETSB Board Administrator Renee Hoover described the fund distribution process. Requests for equipment upgrades are submitted by 911 Centers to the ETSB Board with a cost study. Upon Board approval, the PSAP purchases and installs the equipment. A final approval request is submitted to the Board for reimbursement. The Board reviews the cost and the PSAP's allowable percentage amount to determine the amount that can be reimbursed for expenditures.

Report from the Arkansas Geographic Information Office (AGIO) on the Status of their 911 Mapping Project

Shelby Johnson, State Geographic Officer, AGIO was recognized. Mr. Johnson gave a PowerPoint presentation. He explained what a 911 dispatcher sees on their screen when they receive a call. Mapping information appears on the screen and the 911 dispatcher must determine whether the emergency should be dispatched to law enforcement, an ambulance, or a fire department. Mr. Johnson explained that his office does not have maps of service jurisdictions for all emergency service zones. In many cases, particularly in rural Arkansas without local fire coverage, a 911 dispatcher must decide which rural fire department to dispatch to the location. Mr. Johnson referenced Next Generation 911 and said that it is extremely data dependent and data driven. He said that before Next Generation 911 is implemented, good data must be in place across the state. This is extremely important. Mr. Johnson said that AGIO does have a statewide road and street map file and is proactive in working with counties to provide technical assistance with road mapping. The significance of the road and street file is that it gives consistency across the entire state. An issue does exist concerning street names. He gave the example of a town with 3 similarly named streets in the same subdivision. Mr. Johnson said this illustrates the lack of guidance and strict data standards, which exist because the 911 systems are decentralized. He then discussed address points, which is latitude and longitude together with a physical address, which is an integral part of a base map for 911 dispatchers. Mr. Johnson told the committee there are counties that do not have 911 service because not all citizens have voted for a local surcharge for 911 service. He told the committee that the AGIO has begun a survey to gather information from 911 dispatch centers, which will be provided to the committee upon completion.

Senator Chesterfield asked that all the agencies with information for the committee provide the written documents to Legislative Research staff for the committee's use in determining possible policy changes and consideration of a centralized 911 system.

Office of Emergency Management St. Francis County

Shane Dallas, Office of Emergency Management, St. Francis County was recognized. Mr. Dallas shared his experience as a first responder with the committee. He said that because each county operates its 911 centers differently, there are disadvantages. He believes the state should issue guidelines and set standards for the centers and 911 dispatchers.

Mr. LeRoy Dangeau, former legislator, was recognized for comments. Mr. Dangeau told the committee he is concerned for the safety of individuals visiting state parks. He asked that the committee recommend that wireless service providers ensure wireless service availability within Arkansas's parks.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Following adjournment of the meeting, members toured the 911 Call Center at the St. Francis County Detention and Dispatch Center and the Forrest City Police Department's 911 Call Center.