

DRAFT

Southeastern Arizona Communications (SEACOM)  
Joint Powers Authority (JPA)  
Minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 14, 2021

Chair Mark Dannels called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. at SEACOM, 1728 Paseo San Luis, Sierra Vista, AZ, 85635.

Members Present:

Mark Dannels, Cochise County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) Charles Potucek, City of Sierra Vista (CSV); Mark Savage, Fry Fire District (FFD); Suzanne Harvey, Huachuca City (HC)(Remote); OPS Committee Chair Billy Seamans (FFD)

Also Present:

Lawrence Boutte, (SVPD); Pablo Duarte, CCIT, Rich Karwaczka, Cochise County Administrator; Michael Cline, SEACOM Director; Judy Lynn, Cochise County; Melissa Clark, SEACOM; Tammi Jo Wilkins, Cochise County; Victoria Yarbrough, CSV; Tom Alinen, CCSO

**Call to the Public** –No member of the public requested to address the Board.

**Items 1 Approval of the Minutes for the September 9, 2021, Regular JPA Board Meeting (Action Item):**

Mr. Potucek moved the JPA Minutes for September 9, 2021, be approved as written. Mr. Savage seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote of all Members in attendance.

**Item 2: Discussion of IGA / Bylaws rewrite effort:**

Ms. Yarbrough explained to the Board that the Committee had met to discuss proposed amendments and she has had conversations with Mr. Karwaczka. She stated there seems to be a different interpretation of what the Committee is tasked accomplish.

Mr. Karwaczka stated his understanding was they were to look at the agreements and conform them to the goal of what is SEACOM supposed to be. If the goal is for SEACOM to be a stand-alone entity, this is not represented in the agreement. If that is the goal, in addition to the IGA and Bylaws, service agreements need to be prepared, assets need to be transferred. He believes there is clarification necessary for them to move forward. He requests direction from the JPA whether it is simply moving forward as is or moving towards independence. They need to have an end goal.

Ms. Yarbrough stated she believes the discussion of SEACOM being a stand-alone entity focuses on the clarification of it being autonomous or financially independent.

Mr. Potucek stated under the Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) SEACOM is its own entity and its goal should be to provide the best service at the most efficient cost. He agrees clarification is

needed relating to ownership of assets, responsibility for O&M,. If separate service agreements are required they should be discussed and prepared.

Ms. Harvey asked Mr. Karwaczka what he perceives as stand alone. He stated it would be a separate entity with agreements for things it can't do for itself. The goal is not to make a profit, but it should have a business model. He stated that roles have to be defined, needs have to be agreed upon. He gave the example of the current practice of Human Resources. The City HR and personnel rules apply to SEACOM employees, they are directed by the City, not SEACOM. Independence really needs to be clarified.

Ms. Yarbrough stated she believes through the agreements the City and County give the power to SEACOM.

Mr. Potucek stated he didn't think the group is at cross purposes. There are things that certainly need clarity. Administrative and asset ownership are difficult subjects.

Mr. Dannels agreed, the agreement needs cleaning up and the inclusion of the County Administrator on the Board needs to be done as the JPA has already agreed to it. He asked the members if a Strategic Plan to mirror the agreements should be developed. He stated the entity needs stability so it can do the job of providing 911 services.

Mr. Cline stated clarification of these issues is necessary to attract new subscribers. Mr. Seamans added that the subscriber matrix also needs to be evaluated so when they do talk to prospective subscribers everyone is clear what they are getting and what it is going to cost.

Mr. Dannels stated the reputation of the JPA, and the Operational role of the OPS Committee are the business and steering mechanism, the Director, leadership, and staff are the most important. This should also be reflected.

Mr. Karwaczka reiterated the need for service agreements. The County currently provides the facility and maintenance and IT, the City, Admin and finance. This should be a goal.

Mr. Savage added that he doesn't see the entity being stand alone without ongoing subsidies. This process is providing an opportunity to add clarity and to continue the process of refining and implementing policies.

Mr. Dannels requested Director Cline prepare a vision statement for SEACOM from an operational level.

The committee will continue its work.

### **Item 3: SEACOM Director Report:**

Staffing: Mr. Cline reported he is expecting to lose 4 dispatchers in the coming months for various reasons. There are 19 in various stages of the application process and one new hire that is expected to be in training until February 2022. Staff continues to look at options to slim the timeline for the hiring process.

Melissa Clark is currently working through the application process to become a ProQA instructor.

Staff attended several events and a job fair. They made contact with a lot of people and are actively following up with interested individuals to encourage them to apply.

Mr. Cline stated he continues to work on the development of a dispatcher training program / academy at Cochise College, essentially an opportunity to “build our own food chain” for dispatch and law enforcement. Mr. Savage stated this would be an incredible opportunity. He inquired if any follow up was done with candidates that dropped out of the process and if the compensation and benefits were comparable for recruitment and retention. Mr. Cline stated incentives are being discussed. They recently increased the part time wage by 6% to match the raise the full-time employees received in July. Mr. Potucek added, the City does market surveys each year to calculate wages. We are falling behind the valley so the 6% was done this year. It is likely the same increase will be given next year. The class-comp is not 100% yet but getting closer. Mr. Savage asked if the hiring/training process was as streamlined as possible. Mr. Cline said they are doing everything possible to shorten the hiring process timeline. They are looking at all aspects for ways to shorten it for example the time allowed to return a background questionnaire. That is typically 30 days, no reason it couldn't be done in 10.

Mr. Cline did point out that there has been a change, the employees leaving are doing so for good reasons, not in reaction to problems at SEACOM.

Mr. Dannels commented he appreciated the sentiment but by his count they are down to 8. He is a supporter of the ProQA program but has a problem as it seems we are being held hostage. Four months to get a new person on a console is too much. Even trained persons such as himself can't even get on and work. There are lots of individuals that could be helping but they are not certified. They have National Guard members, but they can't work the system. He requested a representative of ProQA come to discuss this with the JPA.

Ms. Papatrefon did state individuals without ProQA certification can triage calls and do other things such as Spillman or CAD without the ProQA training, but there is still training involved.

Mr. Dannels asked what happens if the system goes down? What is the backup plan?

In response to the question of whether ProQA is giving a better result, Ms. Lynn stated there is data that shows the results are better. This is partially attributed to the dispatcher remaining on the line and giving callers specific instructions and information rather than answering, dispatching, and then hanging up.

Mr. Potucek asked if there was a way to amend our agreement with ProQA to address emergency situations? He agrees the conversation as well as the training issues need to be discussed with ProQA.

911 Service Plan: Ms. Papatrefon stated that the plan was written so that all PSAPs (except Benson) are on the same platform. The process is called hot seating and dispatchers can essentially do their job from any console.

Ms. Papatrefon also stated that in September 2022 changes will be coming down from the State 911 funding. Smaller PSAPs are set to lose funding for the program. Those agencies will still have the option of dispatching their own calls but will have to fund themselves.

Mr. Dannels stated the issue of backup is a priority. There has to be a stand by plan as well as bodies to do the job should it be necessary. As we saw in the past year with Covid, an entire workforce can be down very easily. He has 18 National Guard individuals that can be put to work. Mr. Cline indicated he has the paperwork, Ms. Pregler will be doing background checks. It is progressing.

There is the option of placing the Sabre group currently monitoring cameras 24-7 for CCSO. This could be done. The unit could operate from a console at SEACOM. There would be multiple individuals per shift so they can rotate in on the monitoring. The idle members could work phones when not on the console. This group is different than the cohort Ms. Lynn is working on that would be assigned to SEACOM to be trained as dispatchers and spend their full mission in that position. Ms. Lynn indicates she continues to work on the program with the Guard. There are liability issues due to the public facing component of the job.

Building and IT updates: Ms. Echternach is working on a new temporary server and adjustments to the Spillman patch to attempt to control program freezes continue. The water riser is being addressed. It has a leak and parts have been ordered to repair it. County facilities cleaned up the landscaping.

Mr. Cline asked if the JPA would support staff inviting the State 911 Director and agencies that could potentially lose funding to meet at SEACOM to discuss. Mr. Dannels stated the challenges the small agencies are about to face could drive them to SEACOM for service. Mr. Savage asked if it had to be a JPA meeting, Mr. Cline stated no, it would be the staff level. He will reach out and organize it. Mr. Alinen reiterated, even if the agencies lose funding they can still dispatch. Ms. Papatrefon added, it could be an opportunity for them to phase in to SEACOM like Tombstone is doing.

#### **ITEM 4: Tentative Date of Rotary Aware for Rebekah Colby**

There will be an award ceremony at SEACOM for Ms. Coby on 10/21/21 at 11:30 a.m. She will be receiving a Life Saving Award for the cardiac save call in St. David.

#### **ITEM 5: State 911 Changes (Discussed as Part of Director Report)**

#### **ITEM 6: Discussion and possible action on collaboration with National Guard and CCSO Sabre Unit in SEACOM (Discussed as Part of Director Report)**

For the Good of the Order:

Mr. Seamans cautioned against turning off ProQA without a plan. From the Fire side there has been a definite improvement in calls. He does support the possibility of splitting out radio/call takers from ProQA dispatching.

Mr. Dannels thanked all in attendance.

Mr. Boutte agreed with Mr. Seamans, there would need to be a plan in place if ProQA was going to be shut down. His experience is the system is better now and improving. The long term gain from the short term pain.

Mr. Dannels stated he is a huge supporter of ProQA and is not advocating a shut down, he just wants to know the options given the situation.

There being no further business before the Board, Chair Mark Dannels adjourned the meeting at 10:26 a.m.

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Mark Dannels, SEACOM JPA Chairman