

**Town of Woodstock
Board of Selectmen
Special Meeting
Thursday, October 23, 2019
5:00 PM – Meeting Room 1**

PRESENT: Michael Alberts, Frank Olah and Chandler Paquette.

OTHERS PRESENT: Atty. Rich Roberts; members of the public.

- 1. Call to Order:** First Selectman Michael Alberts called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.
- 2. Pledge of Allegiance:** Mr. Alberts led the Board of Selectmen and members of the public in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- 3. Discuss Technology that Tolland Emergency Dispatch Center is Employing:** First Selectman Michael Alberts introduced Executive Director Tyler Millix and Operations Director Douglas Racicot from Tolland County Mutual Aid Fire Service, both of whom shared a presentation on what the Tolland County is accomplishing in the short term and long term.

Mr. Racicot explained that Connecticut has opened the Connecticut Land Mobile Radio Network (CTLMRN) to all municipalities and public safety agencies. Tolland has chosen to leverage this opportunity, specifically to integrate low band mobile radio communications, UHF mobile radio communications and the 7/800 P25 mobile radio communications together in one hybrid system. Tolland is the second agency in the state to leverage this hybrid opportunity, with the Town of Durham being the first. It is currently up and running with the state system and testing is now underway. Tolland has signed a MOU, which is active for five years with an auto-renewal.

Under the CTLMRN P25 7/800 Trunk System TalkGroup 1 Conversion, the theory of operation is to leverage the technology to better communicate. Low band is fading away and manufacturers Tolland uses are no longer supplying low band. Tolland's intent is to keep their low band network up and running and reduce their low band sites from 18 to five. In doing so, they will leverage the state's P25 system for backhaul. The benefit to being on the state system is security—the network access is highly controlled, and coverage and audio quality is impressive. At the dispatch center, they will monitor the state P25 7/800 system. At the individual sites where they have UHF to low band cross band repeaters, they will take low band out and put the state network into it. By doing this, they will put up one low band station to accommodate those entities who are not ready to convert.

First Selectman Alberts asked Mr. Racicot with Woodstock's low band capabilities, should they look at this as a type of patchwork system with what the town currently has, but the town should be gearing its efforts toward the P25 7/800 system in the long term. Mr. Racicot said from a quality and control perspective, communities should strongly consider leveraging this technology.

The Tolland Highway Department is looking to join as well. All radios will be able to integrate into this system (e.g., highway department and constables). However, the MOU would need to be signed in order to join the system. Once that is done, a town would have the ability to bring public works on board and monitor what is happening on the troop level as well.

Tolland representatives were asked about associated costs. They shared that cost depends on the agency in the local community. In Tolland's case, the P25 network is the command and control. Fireground communication will maintain UHF due to it being cost prohibitive for them at this time. They will maintain a footprint in the low band infrastructure. They shared that the cost for mobile installed is approximately \$2,800, and portable radio is approximately \$1,800 to \$2,000. They recommended that if low band is currently in place, it should be kept for now. If there is decent coverage through the service area on UHF, the 7/800 platform will only enhance the communication.

Verizon apparatus that Tolland is using was explained, which includes:

- LTE (data package on phone) to Land Mobile Radio (LMR) Integration
 - (VIA) Voice Interface Application push to talk over cellular
 - Verizon (PTT+) push to talk plus (public safety brand of things)

They stated the VIA isn't a mission-critical purchase. The cost for 10 subscribers is \$625 annually. It would provide access via cell phone to command channels, one administrative UHF channel, as well as the P25 network. The users have control over the features, and the audio quality is significant. Towns would need to go through their government sales representative who would then offer a device base cost. Tolland provides the gateway to the radio infrastructure.

Tolland recently formed a Fireground Communications Working Group and identified six tactical channels that are licensed in their agency name and operating area. Communities will be assigned a tactical channel which can be monitored within the center. The Working Group focused on enhancing firefighter safety and parsing out some the communications at the low band side once at a scene. After soliciting input from stakeholders, the Working Group developed Standard Operating Guidelines, and three new region-wide Standard Operating Guidelines were established—County-wide Evacuation Procedure; County-wide Mayday Procedure; and County-wide Urgent Procedure. Consequently, there are now efforts in place to reduce firefighter injuries and deaths due to poor fireground communications.

Mr. Racicot shared that, in the near future, Eversource will have a more efficient system in place to allow them to submit trouble tickets electronically.

Mr. Alberts asked if there was anything to be aware of with Massachusetts being near Woodstock. Mr. Millix stated there may be some benefits at the local level. One partnership he is aware of is a roaming sharing agreement between MA and CT systems, which allows communication on the network and improves state and local systems as a result.

The Select Board thanked Mr. Millix and Mr. Racicot for their presentation.

4. **Citizen's Comments:** A resident of Woodstock offered his perspective as a career firefighter from Mansfield. The Town of Mansfield utilizes Tolland County for dispatching services, and he has been impressed by their level of professionalism and thoroughness.
5. **Adjournment: Motion** was made by Chandler Paquette to **adjourn** the special meeting. **The motion passed unanimously.** The special meeting adjourned at 5:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Cynthia Brown
Recording Secretary