

UMATILLA MORROW RADIO & DATA DISTRICT  
BOARD of DIRECTORS MEETING  
December 5, 2023  
Umatilla County Fire District #1, Station 23

Present: Director Irons (telephonically)      Director Primmer (telephonically)  
Director Pratt      Director Pierotti  
Director Kennedy

Absent: None

Guests: Scott Skibness, Racom (telephonically)

Staff: Brett Mueller, Rosanna Brown

- I. Call to Order and Recognition of Guests: The meeting was called to order at 1:30pm.
- II. Changes/Additions to the Agenda: None
- III. Business from Guests: None
- IV. Consent Agenda
  - A. Minutes from the work session and meeting on October 3, 2023.
  - B. System Administrator's Report
    1. District Income Review
    2. District Expenditures Review
    3. District Bank Statement/Checks Review
    4. LGIP

*A motion to accept the consent agenda was made by Director Kennedy and seconded by Director Pierotti.*

*Director Irons: Aye*

*Director Kennedy: Aye*

*Director Pratt: Aye*

*Director Primmer: Aye*

*Director Pierotti: Aye*

- V. Old Business
  - A. LMR System Project Update

Brett reported that he had taken some time off after the October board meeting. When he returned, he learned of a big issue on the system. The emergency button activation was failing to go through to Dispatch, unless the field user also keyed up. Tait implemented a fix and it was installed on 11/14/23. After some testing, it was found to have taken care of the issue, as well as some other issues related to the ISSI Phase 1/Phase 2 problem. Tests were conducted with ODOT Wireless. Based on that success, the process was started for getting dispatch consoles for the State onto the ISSI, so they would be able to talk to local units natively. The tentative plan to cutover was the following week. This change would make it so the state users did not have to go through a VHF patch any longer, and experience the related delays. After the change, the delay would go the other direction, but affect fewer users overall.

The day after the system upgrade, Brett received the first of many complaints about phantom priority talk group beeps. Users were hearing a beep when the radios were scanning, indicating a call on their priority talk group, but there would not be any traffic. After reviewing the logs, there was no indication in the system that a call had been made. Users were concerned that they were missing traffic. In response to Director Pratt's question, Brett explained that the dispatchers were not seeing it. Rod Ekholm escalated the issue to Tait, but there had not been any updates as of today's meeting. Scott Skibness also reported that he had not received an update. Brett noted that it was frustrating but not unheard of, to fix one bug and introduce or create another bug, when working on computer issues. It was not an excuse and he was working to get it fixed. Director Kennedy had experienced the problem. Director Pratt had not received any complaints.

Brett reported that he had worked on a program for Pendleton Fire's demo portables. Director Pierotti had not seen them yet. Brett understood that they were only available from Day Wireless for a set amount of time.

Brett reported that he was contacted by St. Anthony Hospital. They had complaints about poor VHF performance. Brett spoke with the facilities director and it looked like the equipment was installed correctly. He noted that their location was not ideal for a signal and that arrangements could be made for them to be on the District's system. However, based on the District's past relationship with the hospital, they would be expected to purchase their own equipment. Scott reported that they had purchased equipment and had someone to install it. The installation of a BDA was not discussed. The main objective was for the staff to hear from field medic units. Brett's intention was to program the radio with several talk groups and possibly a TAC channel, if necessary. If that were the case, it would be programmed into Pendleton Fire's radios.

Missing calls from Tribal were reported to Brett before Thanksgiving. Dispatchers were able to hear the calls, but the field users weren't, even though the calls were from areas where they should expect coverage. Brett hadn't heard complaints from the Hermiston area for some time, so he thought things were working acceptably. After a call from Jimmy Davis the previous week, Brett discovered that this was not the case. Brett noted that there had been some base station adjustments on the Pendleton and Hermiston zones and this may have caused problems with the radios getting bad control channel information and looking for another site. This did seem to be an on-going problem, even though the coverage fulfilled Racom's obligation of meeting better than the standard of 95%, so the question was what other improvements could be made. 100% coverage was not possible and there would always be things that would affect the signal, such as interference, bouncing, and antenna patterns. Based on this, Brett proposed hiring a consultation firm, a third party, to evaluate the District. He felt that there might be more extensive experts that could offer new ideas. The problem could be possibly be helped by breaking up the simulcast zone and there were pros and cons for doing that and also so many variables. Additionally, breaking up the zones would require finding more channels and purchasing more site controllers. In response to Director Kennedy's question, Brett said he did not know what something like that would cost, and he would like to get a quote from Adcomm. He expected it to be an hourly rate and hoped Adcomm could provide an idea of how many hours might be involved.

Brett asked Scott for any comments and Scott supported the idea of someone looking at the system issues with fresh eyes.

Brett encouraged the use of talk around groups like NEON for fire agencies, on established fire scenes. It was off the system and direct and there would not be missed calls. He thought it was a safer way to operate when inside buildings, where users could not always rely on the system infrastructure. Director Pierotti did not feel like the system was being utilized when using direct channels. He supported the idea of a consultant and hoped a report from them would help the board decide if the District should keep the system or not.

Brett also noted that Jimmy was considering just using VHF. That would eliminate some issues, because they would be unable to scan and would be operating very differently than they currently were.

Brett also noted that missed calls related to signal issues are presenting differently in the new system. In the old analog system users would have heard some of those calls, but they would have been static. In a digital system, users heard nothing.

The Board agreed that they'd like to see a proposal from a consultant.

With regard to the VHF TAG, Brett noted they were still waiting for help from the Omnitronics engineers.

B. Ukiah Site Construction: Brett reported that all of the studies had been completed and he was waiting on the State building permit.

C. Communications Technician Position/Racom Service Agreement: Brett reported that he had offered the position to an applicant and that a background investigation was being conducted.

D. Safety review: Staff reviewed information regarding winter illnesses and preventative measures.

VI. New Business: None

VII. Open Discussion

Brett noted that the next meeting was schedule for January 2 and asked if the directors would be available for that date, due to the holidays. Director Pierotti indicated that he would be out of town, but would call in to the meeting. The other directors indicated that the meeting did not need to be rescheduled.

December's meeting was the last that would be held in Station 23 for the foreseeable future, due to UCFD1's current projects. Starting in February 2024, those meetings would be held at the Stafford Hansell building. Director Kennedy noted that Station 2 in Umatilla was also available.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 2:11pm.

Next Meeting  
January 2, 2024  
1:30pm  
Boardman City Hall