

UMATILLA MORROW RADIO & DATA DISTRICT
BOARD of DIRECTORS MEETING
Boardman City Hall
May 7, 2024

Present: Director Irons Director Pratt
 Director Pierotti Director Primmer
Absent: Director Kennedy

In-Person Guests: None
Remote Guests: Adam Wilkinson (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 meeting on April 2, 2024.
 - 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 Irons and seconded by Director Pierotti.

Director Pierotti: Aye

Director Primmer: Aye

Director Irons: Aye

Director Pratt: Aye

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

Brett received a trouble report recently, of an incident that occurred about 4 blocks from the East Pendleton site. A Pendleton Police unit was trying to call out, and was being called by Dispatch, but was not hearing anything back. Brett thought it could be a bad radio, so Hank drove to the same area to do testing. He found the signal strength to be very strong, but there was a high error rate. This could indicate severe interference or multipath, which would be signals from different transmitters (or the same transmitter) going to the radio, but arriving out of time. Hank's radio was adjusted to dynamically look for bad error rates and it switched to Weston Mountain. That removed interference as a probable cause, since this meant it wasn't happening across system channels from other sites. A few days later Hank and Brett went back to the area and did not get any errors at all. Brett was unsure what, if anything, had changed so it was something he would keep his eye on and continue to try to determine the cause. This situation gave support to the wider use of the adaptive hunt function that was programmed into Hank's radio, that had prompted it to look for a site with lower error rates. Brett noted that he had been putting it into more rural use radios and hadn't expected to need it for units within the cities, but was reconsidering.

Director Pierotti asked Brett if the interference could be attributed to an outside system and Brett thought it was unlikely, since it should have had a greater impact on the much weaker signals coming from Weston Mountain, but instead they were better.

Brett reported that he and Hank were programming units, as fire season approaches. Hank was working through Morrow County. He completed Lone Fire and had Boardman, Irrigon, and Heppner on the schedule, then would move to Umatilla County. The update included voice annunciation for all units and Brett expected to implement the same adaptive hunt feature into those radios as well.

B. Ukiah Site Status

The generator was commissioned by the ODOT generator tech. The HVAC and DC systems were online and the batteries were good. The next step was for Racom to install the antennas and rack of equipment. Fiber needed to be connected by Wind Wave. The vendors were aware that the District wanted the site to be online before Ukiah's annual rodeo in June.

C. Update to the User and Subscriber Unit Issue Policy/Fee Schedule

Brett did not have an update, but he had been working on the policy. He thought it might need to include additional information, if cellular push to talk was going to be made available to fee paying users. This would be in the form of a licensed application on a mobile device. The board would have to decide if they wanted it to be available and, before that, Brett would need to work through what the cost might be and if there was enough capacity.

In response to Director Pratt's question, Brett confirmed that the push to talk app was working on the system. There had been an issue with the encryption working correctly, but that had been taken care of by Racom and Brett was waiting for them to do some testing and demonstrate that it was fully functional.

D. Fire Radio Committee Appointment

Adam Wilkinson reported that the committee met on April 26, 2024 and most members attended. Director Irons was nominated to be the assistant committee chair.

The group discussed the needs and wants for new radios, as requested by the board and Adam had the committee's list. Their list of needs included dual band UHF or VHF to help with interoperability. Their list of wants included OTAP and field programming. The radio needed to be durable, designed for easy dexterity with gloved hands, and intrinsically safe. They also felt that voice annunciation would be beneficial. One function that was lower on their list of priorities was a multiband radio, with cloning for ease of programming during wildland incidents.

The next step was to obtain demos and create an evaluation form that would measure needs and wants, and then objectively rate each radio. The committee's logistical plan was for the demo radios to go to users for 2 weeks at a time, then be passed to another department.

Adam also indicated that he was going to reach out to the other agencies that had not shown interest in the process so far. He reported that he had been working with Sage DeLong regarding options for funding and it would be most helpful to have all of the fire departments and districts involved, when asking for congressional funding.

Adam reported that, during the meeting, there was concern mentioned regarding the process for requiring or requesting commercial entities to have in-building repeaters. Oregon state law allowed for the fire marshal, or authority, to require commercial entities to install repeaters if the radios did not work inside their buildings. The committee was unsure of where the responsibility fell when the fire marshal found situations like that. They understood that the entity was responsible for purchasing the equipment, but that it had to go on the District's system. The chief of Umatilla brought up the issue and wanted a more defined process.

Brett responded that each distributed antenna system would have to be engineered for that building, for that geographic location in relation to the District's infrastructure, and that system would need to be approved by the District as being functional and not causing interference. Brett was unsure of what that might look like and suggested that the entity reach out to a vendor like Racom to perform the engineering. A generic process was not possible, because each situation would be different. In response to Director Iron's question, Brett indicated that it wasn't necessarily possible to create a standard equipment list. Director Pratt asked what the statute required, with regard to equipment and engineering and Director Pierotti asked who enforced it. Brett was unsure how some of the larger agencies implemented and enforced the law, but he thought the ORS put all of the financial obligation on the building owner.

Brett attended the committee meeting and felt that Adam covered it well. He noted that the group also discussed the issue of radios getting wet. Their conversation about possible funding mechanisms included having buy-in from all of the agencies and the District.

Adam reported that the committee identified 5 brands that they would like to demo: Harris, Tait, Motorola, Kenwood and Bendix King. Brett also expressed his concern to the committee about sharing the system key with certain vendors. They would also have to make arrangements for any channel with encryption, because the District did not share the encryption key.

Adam requested approval from the board to start receiving the demo radios and asked if the District would accept responsibility for those units. The committee also discussed obtaining a small insurance policy for the units, but was unsure of the process for that. Their original plan was that the radios were received and distributed by the District and each agency was financially responsible for the units in their possession, during their demo period. Each agency would have the units for 2 weeks, then they would evaluate them and transfer them to the next agency. Adam thought that vendors would allow the demo period to last at least 3 months, due to how many agencies were involved.

In response to Director Pratt's question, Adam reported that he did not have quotes from the vendors but knew that the Motorola unit was about \$8,000, Tait was around \$2,000, and Bendix King was about \$6,500. He hoped to receive 3 of each type of radio and was unsure of how long it would take for the vendors to get the radios out.

Director Pratt requested that Adam reach out to the vendors and request contracts that explained how their demo program worked and what the parameters were, including liability. Regarding programming, Brett hoped that the vendors would do most of that and requested that Adam find out if they were able to, knowing that some of that would require sharing the system key.

The board wanted a contract with each vendor.

A motion to approve the committee moving forward and contacting vendors was made by Director Primmer and seconded by Director Pierotti.

Director Pierotti: Aye

Director Primmer: Aye

Director Irons: Aye

Director Pratt: Aye

E. Safety Review: District staff reviewed information on indoor and outdoor electrical safety.

VI. New Business

A. Public Contracting Policy Update

Brett reminded the board that special districts were required to follow the AG rules for public contracting, established at the state level, but that the District also had a more specific policy. Brett wanted to amend it, based on recent updates to thresholds for procurement. The small procurement and direct award threshold was increased to \$25,000, from \$10,000. The intermediate threshold was increased to \$250,000, from \$150,000. The District could benefit from the ability to avoid a formal bidding process for some projects. As

there were rules for public notice of a Contracting Review Board hearing, Brett planned to provide notice to conduct that during the next board meeting, in June.

Brett requested that the board also discuss raising the amount that the administrator may spend, without board approval. The current policy was \$10,000 and that amount only covered a purchase of 4 mobiles or 5 portables. Based on amount of time it was taking to receive the units, requiring approval for those purchases slowed down the process significantly. In response to the board's question, Brett noted that the \$10,000 was not tied to a budget line or amount.

The board agreed to increase the district administrator's authority for spending from \$10,000 to \$25,000 and directed Brett to make that change in the policy that will be reviewed at the Public Contracting Review board hearing.

B. Personnel Policy Update

Brett reminded the board that the health insurance premium was increasing by 14% for the FY 24-25 year. He asked that the board consider absorbing the increase and approve an update to the personnel policy, reflecting the new amounts. The current rates and proposed rates were included in the packet and showed that the District's cost would increase by \$8395 for the year. Brett also suggested, moving forward, to change the policy so that the amount the employees paid was a fixed flat rate and that the District covered the remaining amount, subject to annual review. Director Pierotti asked if the board should consider a percentage, versus a flat rate for employees, making it so the District was not incurring all of the increase. He wasn't sure it was fair for the District to cover the entire increase each year.

Director Pierotti noted that his cost for insurance went up every year. Director Primmer paid about \$238 for health insurance for herself and spouse and Director Pierotti thought he paid a similar amount. Director Irons noted that Boardman Fire paid 100% of employee insurance.

Director Pierotti noted that he was not opposed to the District paying the increase, but thought the board should discuss it. Director Pratt thought that the insurance coverage was a benefit to employees that helped with retention, but he was not opposed to changing the policy. Director Primmer thought the formula procedure should remain as it was, with the District covering the increase, and then have a discussion about changing it before the renewal next year.

A motion to adopt Resolution #24-05-07-02, updates to the Personnel Policy regarding health insurance, was made by Director Primmer and seconded by Director Pierotti.

Director Pierotti: Aye

Director Primmer: Aye

Director Irons: Aye

Director Pratt: Aye

C. Subscriber Unit Purchase

Brett received a request from Hermiston Police Department for 6 new mobile radios. He had just received an order of 10 mobiles, so this request left him with only 4. He wanted to replace those 6.

Additionally, while Hank had been programming portables, he was finding units that needed alignment or repair. A common problem for the portables was an issue with the RF board. It could generate noise bad enough to keep it off of the system. Repairs were taking a couple of months, by the time they were shipped and returned, and some of the portables were coming back non-repairable. Regarding the non-repairable reports, Brett was unhappy about the vendor's response and planned to continue to push them about that issue. In response to Director Pratt's question, Brett reported that these radios were pre-Covid and the vendor considered them too costly to repair. Brett felt that, if the radio could not be repaired economically, they should replace it at their cost. He also noted that he might have a purchase request at the next meeting, based on how many failures were found while field programming.

Director Pierotti asked, now that Brett had help, if the programming would be an annual process. Brett hoped so. He was able to see, on the system, some of the radios that were having problems. There were some good indicators that he and Hank watched for and Hank had been able to detect those units and check on them, as they came up. In response to Director Pierotti's question, Brett confirmed that the District had contract pricing on the subscriber units, and that was in effect until 3 years from system acceptance. Since the District had not yet accepted the system, Brett was able to continue to purchase the units at the contract price.

A motion to approve the radio purchase from Racom, in the amount of \$29,358, was made by Director Pierotti and seconded by Director Primmer.

Director Pierotti: Aye

Director Primmer: Aye

Director Irons: Aye

Director Pratt: Aye

VII. Open Business

Brett reported that, in early April, he was informed about a new proposed wind energy farm project in east central Morrow County, extending into Umatilla County, with part of it on Gleason Butte. The farm would be very close to the District site and there was concern about what that would mean for the system. Brett collaborated with ODOT Wireless to discuss the ramifications and researched technical documents online to see what the possible interference would look like. He found that the placement of the towers was intentionally chosen so the microwave paths remained clear. A proposed tower would be set within about 1200' of the District's site, to the east southeast. They would be very tall towers, with the apex of the blade about 500'. Some of those could potentially be in the path of subscriber units in the field. Brett was concerned about that and also electromagnetic interference, as the District sites relied on a very low noise floor and EMI could dampen what was heard from the field. During the course of his research Brett discovered that, in the bands that the District occupied, there should be minimal effects. He could not confirm that there would be no impact, but based on conversations with the technicians that the energy company contracted, Brett and ODOT could not find any technical reason to object to the project and that was what was reported back to the Department of Energy. Brett planned to establish a good baseline with certified and calibrated equipment, before any construction took place. He also planned to do more field testing with bit error rate and signal levels where field units would be. Gleason was a high spot and covered a lot of area. In conversations with other entities that have radio systems next to wind farms, Brett felt it probably would not be causing problems. Responses to any problems that might come up would depend on what the problem was, and there was recourse with the FCC if the District experiences interference. Brett also noted that the District had a land lease for Gleason that was expiring and he would be negotiating with the landowner for renewal.

Brett spoke with Director Kennedy about a couple of recent incidents that started in Washington (Benton and Walla Walla Counties) and came into Oregon. These incidents involved multiple agencies from both sides of the river and Director Kennedy was concerned about the lack of communication between those agencies. Brett brought the subject up during a WORJIC (Washington Oregon Regional Joint Interoperability Committee) meeting, as a real world example of the need to find a way for multiple agency's field units and dispatch centers to communicate. The committee agreed that it was a good example of that need and Susan Ronning, with Adcomm, suggested that it was a good topic for a table top exercise.

Brett noted that the ISSI with the state was working very well, with the exception of the volume issues. Director Pratt confirmed that OSP field units and Dispatch were both really loud. He thought that some of the issues were individuals speaking at different volumes and their training. Director Primmer thought it was more to do with the nuances of the system. Brett confirmed that when users speak at different volumes it

was difficult to adjust for an average. He also explained that there was not option for volume adjustment on a digital system. In response to Director Primmer's question, Brett confirmed he informed the ODOT partners about the volume level problem. Brett also reported that there was new firmware that had more adjustments available on mic gain control, which is split on portables between the speaker mic and internal mic. Brett would continue to test adjustments.

Director Primmer reported that her agency's communications division command staff would be riding with the Pendleton Police and hoped to be able to narrow down the causes of some issues they are having. She will keep the board updated on that.

The District purchased a lab console. It was turned on but not connected and one thing prevented the staff from using it was the need to update all AVTEC consoles in the system, to the newer version level. That would need to be done before the District could create patches from the lab console. It was still possible to set up patches in the dispatch centers. Brett hoped to have the District's console updated soon.

VIII. Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 2:45pm.

Next Meeting

June 4, 2024 - 1:30pm

Stafford Hansell Government Center