

**Dakota Communications Center (DCC)
Board of Directors
Minutes of Meeting: 08.21.08**

Members Present: Burnsville – Elizabeth Kautz; Eagan – Mike Maguire; Inver Grove Heights-George Tourville; Lakeville – Laurie Rieb; Mendota Heights – Ultan Duggan; Rosemount – Mike Baxter; South St. Paul – Beth Baumann; West St. Paul – Darlene Lewis

Members Absent: Apple Valley – John Bergman; Dakota County – Nancy Schouweiler; Farmington – Kevan Soderberg; Hastings – Mike Slavik;

Alternates Present: Dakota County – Thomas Egan; Farmington – David McKnight

Others Present: DCC - Kent Therkelsen, Diane Lind, Jennifer Hildebrandt; Executive Committee Chair – Dave Osberg; Rosemount City Administrator – Dwight Johnson

Call the Meeting to Order: There being a quorum Chair Kautz called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM.

Roll Call: Members in attendance are noted above.

1. Announcements:

Baxter (Rosemount) introduced the new city administrator for the City of Rosemount, Dwight Johnson. Baxter informed members that Johnson would be the new executive committee representative for Rosemount.

2. Additions to Agenda:

CONSENT AGENDA

3.
 - a. Approve Minutes from Regular Board meeting of July 17th, 2008.
 - b. Adopt and Ratify Executive Committee's Approval of 06/01/08 – 06/30/08 paid claims.
 - c. Acknowledge Receipt of the June 2008 Financial Report.

4. **Data Practices. Receive report and consider recommendation to Board of Directors for appointment of DCC Data Practices Responsible Authority and DCC Data Practices Compliance Official.**

Discussion:

Action: Motion by Maguire (Eagan) to approve the consent agenda as presented. Second by Tourville (Inver Grove Heights). Motion passed unanimously.

5. 9-1-1 Update

Discussion:

Therkelsen (DCC) informed members that the executive committee had been discussing the telephone system on two levels. The first is the technical level and the second is the business level. Therkelsen stated that the telephone system had been performing well since the June 8th problem. Therkelsen added that there was a new feature called “non exclusive hold” added to the phone system recently. Therkelsen explained that non exclusive hold allows dispatchers to

share calls more effectively. Therkelsen assured members that staff was in heavy discussion with IES and PlantCML regarding warranty issues and will report back to the Board as circumstance warrant.

Action: No action. Update only.

6. Executive Director Report

Discussion:

Media Reports – Therkelsen (DCC) commented that the last month the DCC has been dealing with media reports. Therkelsen informed members that on August 2nd *ThisWeek* weekly paper published a fairly positive article with comments from the police chiefs. Therkelsen continued saying on August 16th *ThisWeek* weekly paper published a paper focusing on fire issues. Therkelsen reminded members that they had received a copy of these articles plus a commentary piece Therkelsen had submitted with a request for publishing. Therkelsen informed members that there were a couple relevant issues involved in these media reports along with three significant issues that were possibly giving wrong impressions to the reader.

Therkelsen (DCC) informed members that much of the medial focus was on DCC performance during the July 10 severe weather event which impacted much of the County. One issue centered on call answering during surge activity periods. Therkelsen clarified that on July 10th there was a very severe storm that moved through the county very quickly. This storm affected agencies county-wide creating unique demand on 911 with 290 calls coming in the first hour of the storm. Therkelsen informed members this was about 15 times normal call volume. Therkelsen assured that additional staff had arrived in anticipation of the storm but staff was still overwhelmed. Therkelsen informed members that people whose calls rang for 20 seconds go to an “in cue” message stating your call has been received but all lines are busy, please stay on the line for assistance. Therkelsen assured that the call continues to ring in dispatch. Therkelsen stated on a normal day it would be very rare that a caller would get this message as calls taking 20 seconds to answer are small in number but on July 10th during the storms, it happened. Unfortunately, the news article created the impression that callers are placed into a voice mail system:

Therkelsen (DCC) informed members that the DCC gave serious consideration to surge activity when designing the call-flow process for the 9-1-1 system. Therkelsen added that the only guidance from the State of MN is a requirement stating systems must be build with adequate capacity to ensure that no more than 1% of 911 calls will busy out. Therkelsen stated that the DCC system was designed with the intent that no one would ever get a busy signal. Therkelsen acknowledged that staff did triage calls and would occasionally put people on hold after determining the priority. Therkelsen reminded members that predecessor PSAPs had calls go to busy or never get answered during periods of heavy demand.

Therkelsen (DCC) informed members that the second issue was the comment that it took DCC dispatchers 8 minutes to convey a structure fire to the appropriate agency. Therkelsen clarified that in reality it took the fire agency 8 minutes to acknowledge the call as they were overwhelmed also and had not heard the call. Therkelsen added that normal practice would be to page out mutual aid but there was no mutual aid available on July 10th. Therkelsen acknowledged that it took 2 minutes to transmit to the fire agency and on a normal day, 2 minutes would be slow but this was not a normal day. He clarified that this was not a criticism

of the Fire Department, which was also inundated with calls and simply could not respond immediately.

Therkelsen (DCC) informed that the third and final issue was regarding radio and pager interference.

Therkelsen (DCC) informed members that on August 19th KSTP did a media piece that was also the main focus of an issue staff was currently dealing with the fire chiefs on. Therkelsen informed members that unlike the law enforcement CAD configuration, the DCC Fire-CAD configuration doesn't establish priorities within the different CAD types. CAD is configured in this way according to previous direction by fire agencies that all fire calls were the highest priority. On July 10th staff had 75 fire calls to dispatch in 2 hours opposed to the normal 2.5 calls per hour on a normal day. Therkelsen informed members that dispatchers were unable to distinguish structure fires in the pending call screen from downed phone lines. Therkelsen assured that in response, staff agreed to work with fire ops to develop a fire prioritization system allowing staff to reconfigure CAD so dispatch could see different priorities in different colors. Therkelsen added that fire chiefs agreed that prioritization of the events had to be consensus and totally agreed upon for all communities. Therkelsen acknowledged that this would not be an issue staff would face very often but it is an issue that needed to be addressed. Therkelsen also acknowledged that there would be a trade-off as one fire department could have no active calls and be available but have a call in pending because another agency has a higher priority call. Therkelsen assured that the chiefs understood and agreed to the concept and staff hoped to put some substance to the discussion at the Fire/EMS Ops Committee meeting later in the day.

Egan (Dakota County) acknowledged the uniqueness of the July 10th storm and how it caught everyone, including weather forecasters, by surprise.

Tourville (Inver Grove Heights) commented that he had received a call from one of his council members stating they had called in a stalled vehicle and received calls checking on them every hour from midnight on. Therkelsen (DCC) acknowledged that he had just received Tourville's email and that staff would follow up. Therkelsen stated that when there is a perception that 911 isn't working, it is common to automatically think it is a problem at the PSAP. Therkelsen stated that in addition to the PSAP equipment, many other components need to perform properly in order to successfully deliver 9-1-1 calls. In our investigation of reported connection problems we have seen problems with customer equipment, network trunk lines and problems at wireless cell sites. Maguire (Egan) speculated that often the malfunctions reported are not necessarily DCC issues. Therkelsen (DCC) confirmed that had been the DCC experience with previous issues of this nature. Kautz (Burnsville) commented that it is reassuring knowing everything is recorded, time stamped and documented. Kautz reminded members that the board needed to be behind the DCC 100% or it wouldn't work. Kautz acknowledged the glitches and assured that they would be fixed.

Duggan referred to the state requirement of no more than 1% of calls busying out and asked where the DCC fit into that. Therkelsen (DCC) responded that he didn't think anyone had ever received a busy signal from the DCC.

Lewis (West St. Paul) commented that members were in a reactive mode to any media that was coming out. Lewis then suggested the consortium take a more proactive approach with the

media. Tell them where improvements were made and the objectives of the consolidation. Remind readers that the DCC is different. Kautz (Burnsville) agreed and stated the DCC should be in control of the message rather than have an outsider interpret. Therkelsen (DCC) agreed that the DCC needed to get better at identifying where the public/staff contributed to good outcomes from use of the system opposed to bad outcomes. Kautz (Burnsville) suggested a guest writer for an article. Maguire (Eagan) commented that anything in an article should be presented to DCC staff to comment on. Egan (Dakota County) commented that if there was any way for staff to quantify or categorize the kinds of problems compared to what was experienced at previous PSAPs that may help readers to better understand.

Service Issues – Therkelsen (DCC) informed members that staff recently met with the Dakota County Fire Chiefs Association. Therkelsen added that he followed up to the chiefs with a plan addressing service issues, technology and storm follow up as well as requests from the DCC to the fire service. Therkelsen informed members that there was a Fire/EMS Ops Committee meeting later that evening and he planned to address the relationship between the DCC and Fire Chiefs Association. Therkelsen stated that the DCC recognized the Fire/EMS and Law Enforcement Operations Committees as the official venues for having DCC related discussions.

Familiarization on QA Efforts – Therkelsen (DCC) informed members that staff was working to be proactive to agency and public concerns and performance management. Therkelsen stated that staff had started to provide the operations committees with a information reflecting quantity of concerns/compliments on service that had been expressed by member agencies. Therkelsen stated that the DCC reports month by month and then year to date information. Therkelsen stated that at each meeting staff reviewed the issues case-by-case. Therkelsen stated that persistent issues should rise to the top naturally. Therkelsen stated that staff wanted to assure the operations committees that they were being heard. Therkelsen stated that of the 36,022 CAD events processed in July, the DCC received 21 fire issues and 33 law enforcement issues. Therkelsen clarified of those 54 events 19 were either exonerated or unfounded leaving 35 issues that required follow through action such as coaching/training, etc.

Therkelsen (DCC) informed members that supervisors were conducting 4 weekly random call audits evaluating both call taker and dispatcher. Those audits were then used in monthly coaching sessions with each dispatcher.

Therkelsen (DCC) reminded members that staff was continuing to conduct monthly public and agency performance surveys. Therkelsen states as managers it is normal to focus on what is broken and needs fixing, but that in 7 months of service, the DCC has really displayed solid progress in most of the performance areas. Therkelsen informed members that priority 1 times had improved tremendously and fire processing times had improved by a full minute since opening. Therkelsen stated that in January, 2008 staff dispatched 18% of fire calls in less than 30 seconds. In July, that improved to 53%. Therkelsen assured those performance measures were being watched very carefully. Therkelsen acknowledged that the DCC was experiencing a lot of impatience by staff and member agencies alike. Everyone wants this model to be the best right now. Kautz (Burnsville) asked how the relationship was between the DCC and the operations committees. Therkelsen (DCC) responded that the last couple of months had some of the most difficult operations meetings yet with lots of challenging discussions. Therkelsen acknowledged that to members, 7 months doesn't feel new anymore so expectations were elevating. Therkelsen stated that the foundation is solid and as long as members and the DCC are talking, everything

will be OK. Osberg (EC Chair) informed members that the August 6th Executive Committee meeting was probably the most grinding and toughest one the Executive Committee has had. Osberg stated that the meeting started at 1:30 pm and took over 3 hours. Osberg assured that the executive committee meeting concluded with acknowledgement that the DCC was experiencing tough times but that the committee had the utmost confidence in DCC staff. Osberg continued that anytime you roll out a new program the toughest part is the middle and the consortium was at that point now. Osberg stated staff was still working out the bugs but anxiety and patience may be growing thin. Kautz (Burnsville) commented that she was pleased to hear the comments from the executive committee. Duggan (Mendota Heights) commented that both the Fire and Law Enforcement chiefs from Mendota Heights acknowledged some hiccups but commented they were not unusual and they felt resolutions were being made.

Duggan (Mendota Heights) asked if there was any training on the storm. Duggan clarified that he was more questing the access to the state funded language line. Lind (Operations Director) assured that the language line was state funded and that staff was fully trained and knowledgeable in using the language line. Lind acknowledged that use of the language line did delay processing of calls. Lind said that staff was not outwardly looking for bilingual employment candidates but that as staff gets younger, many applicants are reflecting bilingual capabilities on their applications. Lind assured that the language line was very effective. Lewis (West St. Paul) commented that as a volunteer in teaching English language classes, maybe they could work on mock 911 calls and assist people to better understand what information they would need to provide such as "I speak ____ language".

Outdoor Warning Sirens

Therkelsen (DCC) acknowledged that when sirens are activated there are inevitably people who call and ask why they were set off. Therkelsen stated this was a discussion topic at the recent executive committee meeting. Therkelsen stated that staff was clarifying the DCCs role in carrying out the siren activation policy as established by the Emergency Managers. Therkelsen stated that after storm season Emergency Management Director Dave Gisich would be attending an executive committee meeting to gather information for the emergency manager's annual review of the siren activation policy. Therkelsen (DCC) acknowledged that siren activation is now more targeted, with our ability to sound sirens by geographic zones, but if there is more than one city in the zone covered, the entire zone is activated, generating calls. Therkelsen stated that siren system modification would be done in the 4th quarter to better streamline the activation process.

Action: No action. Information only.

7. Miscellaneous

Discussion:

Kautz (Burnsville) commented that agenda items were becoming scarce and suggested decreasing meeting frequency to every other month. Kautz stated if members agreed the next meeting would be on October 16th at 8:00 am in the DCC training room. Kautz assured that if at any time a member felt the need to call a special meeting, it could be addressed with the board chair.

Action: Motion by Duggan (Mendota Heights) to change meeting frequency to every other month. Second by Maguire (Eagan).

Further Discussion:

Therkelsen (DCC) asked if that would be even number months. Kautz (Burnsville) confirmed. Maguire (Eagan) requested DCC staff remind members that the September meeting was cancelled. Hildebrandt (DCC) confirmed. Tourville (Inver Grove Heights) asked if the bylaws should be reviewed and possibly updates since the decision was to go to even number months going forward. Kautz (Burnsville) confirmed.

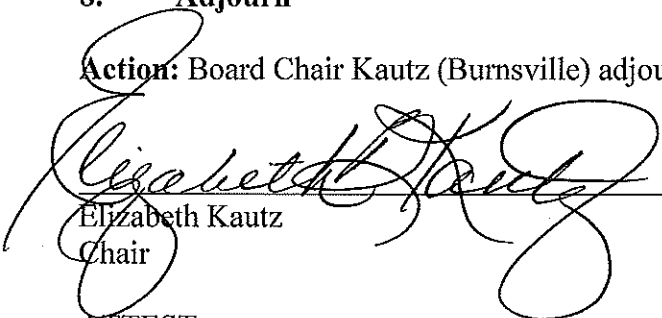
Motion passed unanimously.

Osberg (Executive Committee Chair) reminded members that on October 2nd and 3rd staff would be in contract arbitration with dispatch staff.

Duggan (Mendota Heights) asked if there were any updates in relation to the DCC and the RNC. Therkelsen (DCC) responded that there had been a lot of discussion on that topic with the metro area dispatch centers. Therkelsen added that two DCC staff members were going to a meeting later that morning regarding procedural requirements on radio patching, etc. Therkelsen stated that one of the best things about the migration to the 800 MHz network was everyone was very well connected and staff was not anticipating a need for additional staffing. Therkelsen assured that Ramsey County had a good back up in place.


8. Adjourn

Action: Board Chair Kautz (Burnsville) adjourned meeting by acclamation at 9:08 am.


Elizabeth Kautz
Chair

10/16/2008
Date

ATTEST


Kent Therkelsen
Executive Director

10/16/2008
Date

Next Meeting:
Thursday, October 16th, 2008
8:00 am
Location: DCC