

**Dakota Communications Center  
Executive Committee  
Regular Meeting Minutes: April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

**Members Present:** Tom Lawell – Apple Valley; Melanie Mesko-Lee – Burnsville; Matt Smith – Dakota County; Dave Osberg – Eagan; David McKnight – Farmington, Joe Lynch – Inver Grove Heights; Justin Miller – Lakeville; Mark McNeill – Mendota Heights; Logan Martin – Rosemount; Joel Hanson – South St. Paul; Ryan Schroeder – West St. Paul

**Members Absent:** Dan Wietecha – Hastings

**Alternates Present:** BJ Battig – Dakota County

**Others Present:** Tom Folie, Cheryl Pritzlaff, Jen Hildebrandt – DCC; Jerilyn Erickson, Dave Lang – DCC Fiscal Agent, Lakeville

**1. Call to Order**

Recognizing a quorum, Chair Martin called the meeting to order at 3:03pm.

**2. Roll Call**

Because the meeting was held electronically, Chair Martin requested a roll call. Members in attendance are noted above.

**3. Approve Agenda**

**Discussion:**

**Action:** Motion by Mesko-Lee (Burnsville) to approve the agenda. Second by Osberg (Eagan). Motion passed unanimously.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**4. Consent Agenda – Executive Committee Chair**

- a. **Approve the February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020 regular meeting minutes**
- b. **Approve paid claims**
- c. **Receive 2019 Audited Financial Report and March 2020 Unaudited Financial Report**
- d. **Monetary Limit**
- e. **Operations Committee Meeting Minutes from February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

**Discussion:** No discussion.

**Action:** Motion by McKnight (Farmington) to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Second by McNeill (Mendota Heights). Motion passed unanimously.

**REGULAR AGENDA**

***Presentation***

- 5. Governance: Dakota County Office of Performance and Analysis (OPA) will present findings**

**Discussion:** Folie (DCC) reminded members that in August of 2019 a DCC recommendation was brought before the Dakota County Commissioners requesting consideration of a phased-in takeover of management of the dispatch center. In response to the request, the Board of Commissioners suggested DCC leadership consider modifications to the governing structure. The Board also agreed that additional information on efficiencies with various models would be useful. The Dakota County Office of Performance and Analysis (OPA) began a study in October of 2019 to compare the DCC to other dispatch operations in the metro area. Folie noted that the analysis was done and members of the OPA were in attendance to present their findings. Tom then introduced Alex Jermeland and Dave Paulsen who reviewed a presentation with members of the Executive committee. The presentation compared governance, level of consolidation and funding of the DCC, Anoka, Ramsey, Scott and Washington Counties.

Osberg (Eagan) referred to the executive summary and how one of the directions from the County Board was to have OPA staff do research on measurable benefits associated with potential County management of the DCC. Osberg then inquired if any of the OPA findings identified anything that related to benefits of the County taking over. Paulsen (OPA) noted that there were some differences in terms of the aspects of staffing and contracted services. Paulsen noted that the DCC frequently placed a higher focus on internal operations than would be found in other counties. Paulsen noted that the HR and IT functions were quite often more concentrated in the DCC than other dispatch centers, and members would see a shift in terms of contract revenue and expenditures. Paulsen noted this is what you would see with any larger organization economies or scale of service provided. Jermeland (OPA) concurred.

Smith (Dakota County) noted that one thing he believed member agencies desired was, regardless of who funded or managed the operation, to be able to determine if there was a service level impact to the end customers. Smith commented that he got the sense that it was hard to discern if there were really any differences in level of service or even efficiencies between the models. Paulsen (OPA) acknowledged, noting that it was not specifically focused on for the report because of that difficulty.

Miller (Lakeville) asked if Smith felt this report would “move the needle” at all. Smith (Dakota County) responded that it was hard to say. Smith noted that had the report been able to clearly identify that county management was more effective, more satisfaction of end users, etc, it may have been more palatable. Smith reminded members not to lose sight that there were really two topics: DCC management and DCC Funding. Smith commented that it was hard to see the County picking up control of the DCC, so maybe the discussion needed to turn more towards the second topic, revisiting funding of the operation. Smith added that the report should

be brought to the DCC Board of Directors first, allow some discussion, and then bring to the Dakota County Board of Commissioners.

Martin (Rosemount) commented that the group maybe never expected the findings of the report to “move the needle”. Certainly not the political end of it. Martin referred to the DCC as a well-run ship and acknowledged that the concerns really weren’t related to the operation of the DCC. Martin then commented that he heard some county-wide interest in a public safety levy and asked if that might be an option. Smith (Dakota County) acknowledged that this topic had been coming up in Law Enforcement meetings lately. Smith added that based on the findings in the report, continuation of a county-wide levy discussion may be gaining momentum.

McNeill (Mendota Heights) commented that it sounded as though the next step would be to have the same presentation to the DCC Board of Directors. McNeill agreed that the financing is going to be difficult and while he was hoping for more emotion toward a phased-in operations takeover, that discussion would be up to the Board.

Schroeder (West St. Paul) thanked OPA for the report stating that it was very well done. Schroeder noted that the result was a little surprising as he thought there would be something that screamed out in favor of county management, but there really wasn’t anything beyond confirming what the group already knew. Schroeder commented that the Ramsey model was sort of a compromise that the group should be considering. Schroeder noted that if the expectation of movement toward the County Board of Commissioners accepting something, it is most likely to accept something that that already exists, without a full takeover. Schroeder commented that he didn’t see the County taking over the DCC and he suggested consideration of chatting more about the Ramsey model that “splits the baby”. Schroeder acknowledged that the DCC did benefit from greater operational interest of the members in the room than what might otherwise occur under a typical county management model.

Hanson (South St. Paul) referred to Schroeder’s comments noting that Ramsey was a compromise between St. Paul and the suburbs with the majority of the tax base residing in the suburbs. Hanson added that the model had the suburbs concerned about absorbing big increases not through any need of their own.

Smith (Dakota County) noted the uncertainty in the current environment and potential impacts. If an approach were made to talk about a gradual phasing toward a different cost-sharing model that had the county picking up more of the cost, that may be more palatable. Smith noted that having the county pick up the entire thing, operation and costs, was simply a non-starter.

Martin (Rosemount) recapped the discussion thanking OPA for their efforts and noting that the report should next be brought before the DCC Board of Directors for further discussion.

### ***Action Items***

#### **6. Refund of 2019 Excess Fund Balance**

**Discussion:** Folie (DCC) noted that the fund balance for 2019 was in excess of the 14% limit and as a result, there needed to be discussion on a refund to member agencies. Folie reviewed a brief presentation with members stating that the refund would be in the form of a credit for use against 2020 member fees. Chair Martin then opened the floor to questions.

Lynch (Inver Grove Heights) asked if member agencies had the option of a credit memo for use against 2020 member fees, a lump refund, or holding the credit memo to be applied toward their 2021 member fee increases. Erickson (DCC Fiscal Agent) suggested that the members would have to recognize the receipt on the books in 2020 but what was done with it after that was up to the member organization.

Smith (Dakota County) commented that he liked the approach of holding the refund to apply against the 2021 budget increases. Smith noted that 2020 costs were already budgeted for. Erickson noted that it would be helpful if the group would arrive at a consensus how to handle the refund.

**Action:** Motion by Smith (Dakota County) to issue the refund for use against member 2021 fees. Second by McKnight (Farmington).

**Further Discussion:** Osberg (Eagan) suggested holding off on a recommendation until after discussion of item #7, the 2021 Operating and Capital budget.

**Action:** Motion by McNeill (Mendota Heights) to table the recommendation until after recommendation on the 2021 Operating and Capital Budgets is made. Second by Osberg (Eagan). Motion passed unanimously. Item continued to August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020 Special Meeting.

#### **7. 2021 Operating & Capital Budgets**

**Discussion:** Folie (DCC) noted that the budget was prepared and sent to Lakeville on March 12<sup>th</sup>, prior to COVID-19 becoming such a significant impact to daily operations. Folie then reviewed a presentation noting a 3.13% increase from 2020. Folie noted that personnel expenses made up approximately 72% of the operating budget. Folie noted that most costs were already known, and the budget included a .5 dispatch staffing increase. Folie added that other contractual costs were 28% of the operating budget. He noted that legal fees, LOGIS fees, audio logger and radio expenses made up most of that portion of the budget.

Osberg (Eagan) referred to a \$500,000 hardware refresh and asked for clarification on what that was. Folie (DCC) explained that the 911 phone system was 5-years old, which was a long time for most technology hardware. Folie noted that because of the importance of the 911 phone system, it was time to refresh the hardware which typically meant the server and the operating systems on the server. Folie commented that normally, a refresh should be at the fraction of the cost of a total replacement and he was shocked to hear that the refresh would be as much as was quoted. Folie assured that he also ran the information by the DCC's technical consultant. Folie commented that for that cost, he would consider doing a full RFP. Martin (Rosemount) referred to 911 fees that come from the state and asked for clarification on what they could go towards. Folie (DCC) clarified that there were certain items that grant dollars could be put toward and the phone system was one of them however eligible expenses exceed the grant and there would be no savings by just using those dollars for this project. Folie added that the same funds received from the state in 2020 would be received in 2021 so while they could be used for this expense, they wouldn't help to offset the cost.

Schroeder (West St. Paul) referred to the conference room chairs and expressed concern that the cost quoted was \$900/chair. Folie (DCC) acknowledged and stated that the chairs that were previously in there were comparable to the chairs in all the offices which were more costly than regular chairs. However, that was something that he felt could be decreased or pushed into future years if needed. Schroeder noted that it was minimal, but he didn't think that it needed to be that much. Folie acknowledged stating that the budget reflected a quote received but that there were other options.

Miller (Lakeville) asked what the dollar amount increase of the 2021 proposed budget was in comparison to the dollar amount expected refund. Erickson (DCC Fiscal Agent) noted that the fund balance reduction was approximately \$372,000 and the expenditures increase was approximately \$568,000. Erickson cautioned, however, that the refund was reflected in the 2020 estimates.

Martin (Rosemount) recapped that the request was for a recommendation for approval now, and then consideration for final approval in September. Martin asked if the potential rebate could be added as a column next to the per member increases.

Miller (Lakeville) asked for clarification on the timeline. Folie (DCC) explained that the budget workgroup thought a recommendation for approval could be made now and considered at the May Board meeting. Folie reminded members that the budget needed to be approved by September 1<sup>st</sup> or the 2021 budget would default to the 2020 budget. Folie explained that in September, after receiving more definitive costs from LOGIS and having more time to consider COVID-19 impacts, a budget

amendment could be made. Folie clarified that the JPA was silent to amendments. Miller (Lakeville) acknowledged that the proposed budget before the Committee was really a worst-case scenario. Miller then noted that with agencies living week-to-week right now, maybe it would be a good idea to table a recommendation until September. Miller asked what that would look like. Folie noted that it would require a special meeting of the Executive Committee and Board of Directors in August, but it could be done.

Martin (Rosemount) noted that prior to the special meetings, the budget workgroup made up of himself, Matt Smith and Melanie Mesko-Lee could meet with Folie & Erickson for a final review based on any issues encountered between now and then and also considering additional cuts.

Osberg (Eagan) suggested the Executive Committee Special Meeting be scheduled for Wednesday, August 5<sup>th</sup> at 3:00pm.

**Action:** No action taken. Continued to August 5<sup>th</sup> special meeting.

### ***Information Updates/Discussion Items***

#### **8. Executive Director Report**

**Discussion:** COVID-19 – Folie (DCC) informed members that the DCC was one of the first buildings in the county to close to any non-essential visits. Folie added that the dispatch schedule had changed to 12-hour teams to help decrease potential cross-contamination. Folie noted that a no-contact thermometer was being used as needed to help identify any employees with fevers. Folie noted that the 12 hour schedule was particularly trying because while dispatchers are considered first-responders, per FLSA law, they are considered clerical resulting in OT practices that have to be by the workweek.

Lawell (Apple Valley) asked if there were any stimulus packages or other financial opportunities that might be available to the DCC. Folie (DCC) responded that the DCC had signed up for the FEMA grant the previous week but that he was not aware of anything else directly tied to 911 and that the national organizations APCO/NENA had not mentioned any.

### **ADJOURN**

**Action:** Motion by Mesko-Lee (Burnsville) to adjourn. Second by Miller (Lakeville). Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 4:18pm.

**SPECIAL MEETING**

**August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020**  
**3:00pm**  
**DCC Training Room**

**NEXT REGULAR MEETING**  
**September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020**  
**3:00pm**  
**DCC Training Room**