



Mark Gordon
Governor
K. Luke Reiner
Director

Wyoming Department Of Transportation

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes



Mark Harshman
Chairman
Telephone No.:
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I. Call to Order

The Public Safety Communications Commission (PSCC) met via videoconference on Wednesday, October 26, 2022. Chairman Mark Harshman presided, calling the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

II. Roll Call

The following members were present constituting a quorum:

Paul Bertoglio, Commissioner	Monte McClain, Commissioner
Matt Carr, Commissioner	Owen St. Clair, Commissioner
Mike Choma, Commissioner	John Wetzel, Commissioner
Phillip Franklin, Commissioner	Forrest Williams, Commissioner

Commissioners Jonathan Downing, Dwane Pacheco, and Cindi Shank were absent.

III. Introductions

The following attendees participated in the meeting:

Nathan Smolinski, Interim Chief Technology Officer & Emergency Communications Manager	Aimee Binning, 911 Planning Coordinator
Neil Gardiner, WyoLink Support Manager	Kimberly Chapman, Commission Secretary

IV. Agenda Adjustments

No adjustments were made to the agenda.

V. Action Items

1. Draft Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Commissioner Choma, seconded by Commissioner Bertoglio, and unanimously carried to approve the August 10, 2022, business meeting and August 9, 2022, education session minutes.

2. WyoLink Applications

It was recommended by Mr. Gardiner, moved by Commissioner Bertoglio, seconded by Commissioner McClain, and unanimously carried to approve the applications from Evanston Regional Hospital, Kemmerer Volunteer Fire Department, and Park County School District #1.

VI. Updates/Discussions

1. Director's Update

Mr. Smolinski provided an update on behalf of Director Reiner.

Federal Updates

National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Plan

Mr. Smolinski reported that WYDOT submitted its plan, which included 11 exception requests. Only three of the 11 requests were approved, and the department has received limited information on why the other eight requests were denied. WYDOT will move forward on the three approved locations.

General Department Updates

WYDOT Town Halls

The director has been conducting another round of town halls statewide to connect with employees. Five town halls have been held so far and two, final meetings will take place on Monday, October 31, 2022, in Cheyenne. The town halls provide the director with a great opportunity to update employees on important issues, answer questions, and address employee concerns.

Snow Plan

Director Reiner is working to update WYDOT's snow removal plan. With many snowplow driver vacancies, it is going to be difficult to maintain the same level of service this winter as was provided in the past. The department plans to move assets around the state, as needed, to respond to local or regional storms.

The department is also seeking current employees who have, could renew, or are willing to obtain a commercial driver's license. Properly licensed employees will be trained and added to a list of reserve snowplow drivers.

Wyoming Travel Authorization Program (WTAP)

Mr. Smolinski reminded commissioners about WTAP, which allows motorists to receive authorization to drive on sections of closed roadways when safe enough for travel. Interested travelers may register for the program on WYDOT's website.

Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) Meeting

The JTC will meet November 2-3, 2022, in Cheyenne. The Wyoming County Commissioners Association is bringing two WyoLink funding bills before the JTC. One bill would provide an allotment, every biennium, from the general fund to maintain and grow the system. The other bill would establish a trust fund to permanently fund WyoLink. WYDOT supports both pieces of legislation and will provide testimony to the JTC on November 3rd.

Drafts of these two bills were sent to the commission yesterday. Mr. Smolinski encouraged commissioners to review the proposed bills and to contact him with any questions.

Following a question from Commissioner Choma, Mr. Smolinski requested that commissioners let him know if they would like to provide public comment in support of WyoLink during the committee meeting.

Chief Technology Officer Vacancy

Interviews for the new chief technology officer are currently underway. The director hopes to announce the successful candidate soon.

2. Technology Division's Report

Mr. Smolinski and Ms. Binning presented a combined update.

General Updates

Mr. Smolinski reported that new laptops from the fiscal year (FY) 2022 replacement cycle are being distributed. The department is running about a year behind on laptop replacements, because docking stations were backordered.

A 1.6 gigabit microwave radio hop from the Century Link Building (location of the Transportation Management Center [TMC] and dispatch) to headquarters is scheduled for installation. This will provide a secondary route for network connectivity and will help WYDOT better maintain operations. The installation should be complete by the end of November 2022.

During a recent reorganization in the Emergency Communications Program, two sections—WyoLink and microwave—were merged to streamline operations and improve efficiency. The combined section is managed by Mr. Gardiner.

The FY 2023 budget has been approved. With the current supply chain issues, orders that would have been placed later in the year were moved up to mitigate any backorders or shipping delays caused by the supply chain crisis.

Next Generation 911 (NG911) Updates

Ms. Binning reported that the technology and geographic information systems (GIS) working groups resumed their work. The groups may bring suggestions to the commission in the future for their consideration, but the groups are currently focusing on the priorities in the NG911 plan and tasks relevant to technology and GIS standards.

Attempts to provide federal funding for NG911 were unsuccessful after legislation failed in the U.S. Senate. There will be no federal grant opportunities for NG911 in the near future.

The Wyoming Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) and National Emergency Number Association (NENA) will meet November 13-16, 2022, in Casper. Commissioner McClain, who is also the president of Wyoming APCO/NENA, shared that NG911 will be a major topic at the conference. Training and federal updates will also be provided to Wyoming's telecommunicators.

Last March, Ms. Binning submitted reports to the Federal Communications Commission and 911.gov detailing Wyoming's NG911 implementation progress. Two survey questions included in the report sought to determine total calls received by a public safety answering point (PSAP) and total number of calls transferred to another entity. The survey results indicated that 20 million calls in Wyoming are transferred because of a tower location. For example, a 911 call placed in Alpine on a mobile number will be routed through the nearest tower, which is in Idaho, and then sent to a PSAP in Idaho instead of the Star Valley PSAP, which can cause substantial delays.

NG911 requires location-based routing determined by GPS coordinates. GIS information is critical in preventing misrouted calls as Wyoming transitions to NG911. Certain laws will help telecommunicators better respond to emergency calls and route resources to the correct location. Kari's Law and the RAY BAUM's Act require 911 direct dialing from multi-line telephone systems and must include a geographically-accurate, "dispatchable" location.

Mr. Smolinski informed the commission that Wyoming's Enterprise Technology Services (ETS) will appear before the Joint Appropriations Committee on October 27, 2022, to provide testimony in support of a draft bill that would allow an ETS state chief information officer to appoint a cybersecurity division and a GIS division. Mr. Smolinski will provide support for the draft bill as it would help in establishing standards in GIS for NG911 implementation. Mr. Smolinski would appreciate assistance from any commissioners who would like to support the draft bill. Chairman Harshman encouraged commissioners to review the bill.

3. Emergency Communications Program Manager's Report

Mr. Smolinski provided his update. The update also included information presented by Mr. Gardiner regarding WyoLink operations.

16 Tower Buildout Report

Mr. Smolinski reported on recent activity at several of the WyoLink sites. The Buffalo, Orin Junction, Wright, Jackson, Greybull, Lusk, Alcova, Alva, Rock Springs-Blairtown, and 14-Mile sites are all fully operational with positive reports on improved reception and functionality.

Construction at the Ten Sleep-Meadowlark site was paused on October 24th due to adverse weather conditions. Unless conditions dramatically improve over the next few weeks, construction will pause until the next construction season.

Construction is mostly complete at the Northern Goshen County site. Field network equipment will be installed in the next two weeks, and the backhaul connection, which will be fiber optic, has been ordered. Mr. Smolinski anticipates the site will be online by November.

The team broke ground at the Newcastle site on October 10th, and construction is moving quickly. Since this site is a collocate with a Union Telephone tower, it is possible that field network equipment will be installed by the end of the year.

Field network equipment was installed at the Evanston site, and crews are currently working to bring the microwave connection online. The site may be ready for testing next week, which is the last step before the site is fully online. This site has a long range and will most likely improve reception for several users in that area.

Field network equipment is scheduled to be installed at the Northern Big Horn County-Little Sheep Mountain site the first week of November. Fiber optic is currently being installed as well. Construction started on August 5th, and the construction crew is efficiently and effectively completing the build.

All of the leases, funding, and permissions are in place for the Bondurant site, but construction will probably be delayed until spring 2023 due to weather. This site will most likely be referred to as the Kismet Ridge site in the future.

Mr. Smolinski also shared a photographic slideshow of the progress at several of the sites. Following questions from Commissioners Choma and McClain, Mr. Smolinski clarified that if testing goes well at Evanston and Little Sheep Mountain then both sites could be operational in a few weeks. If necessary, WYDOT resources (snowcats, tracked ATVs, etc.) will be used to ensure technicians can complete turn-up at both sites.

WyoLink Operational Updates

WyoLink System Reports

Mr. Gardiner shared WyoLink usage data from the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2022. The number of push-to-talks and airtime minutes was higher than the previous quarter, mostly due to seasonal influences, but totals were also higher than the same quarter in 2021. The average airtime between July and September 2022 was 175, 000 minutes, which is up 25,000 from the same time period in 2021.

The top 20 talkgroups for Q4 were mainly law enforcement agencies.

WyoLink System Upgrades

Mr. Gardiner reported that 11 sites were upgraded to GTR base stations/repeaters. There are 76 Very High Frequency (VHF) WyoLink sites currently operating, and 41 have been upgraded. Thirty-five sites still need to be upgraded, and the team will continue to convert the systems over the winter, weather permitting.

Additional channels have been added to the system. Aspen Mountain, Casper Port of Entry, Gillette, and Lander have all received (or will soon receive) an extra channel at each site. Rozet Hill, Hogsback Ridge, and Copper Mountain will soon receive additional channels as those sites were showing the most "busies." The sites will also receive additional repeaters to handle radio traffic.

Mr. Gardiner updated the commission on the service aggregated router (SAR) NPLS project. In addition to Ethernet, these routers also handle the microwave network at the WyoLink towers, which provides additional connectivity between the radio sites. The new routers will ensure a more robust system with extra backhaul. Technicians began installing the routers in northern Wyoming.

Converting sites from T1 technology to Ethernet will take a great deal of coordination between the WyoLink office and field personnel. Technicians will need to be at each site as the new routers are installed as well as at the core sites in either Casper or Cheyenne. Someone from the microwave team also needs to be on site to ensure the microwave network is correctly converted to Ethernet.

The SAR NPLS conversion will continue through the winter, weather permitting. Following a question from Chairman Harshman, Mr. Gardiner reported that some sites will experience a slight outage while the new router is installed, depending on the amount of redundancy at each site.

Mr. Gardiner reported that the Genesis system—the department’s management, monitoring, and reporting software—will be upgraded. This system manages the subscriber radios and the radio transmissions rather than the physical radio sites and infrastructure. Two new servers will be installed in Casper and Cheyenne today and will be programmed by Genesis next week.

Smart and Critical Connect

Mr. Gardiner reported that significant progress had been made to integrate Critical Connect into the WyoLink system. Critical Connect allows WyoLink subscribers to connect with other users on the same network or even on other emergency communications networks using either a radio or mobile phone. It is operated through a patch portal, which allows WyoLink talkgroups to be connected with other groups like Verizon and AT&T.

The system will be tested using the Wyoming Highway Patrol and groups in Cheyenne. The team is also looking to set up a talkgroup with Montana to test the system’s interoperable communications. Mr. Gardiner stressed the importance of the testing phase as it allows the team to work through any obstacles before it is released statewide and system issues would be magnified.

Statewide Interoperability Coordination Updates

WYDOT/American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds for Local Agencies

Mr. Smolinski provided an update on the ARPA funds WYDOT is pursuing for WyoLink. Of the \$35 million requested, \$30.5 million will be used to support and maintain the system, and the remaining \$4.5 million will be granted to local agencies for the purchase of WyoLink compatible equipment. Over 100 applications were submitted by partnering agencies that totaled over \$18 million in requests. With assistance from members of the Wyoming Office of Homeland Security’s senior advisory committee, Mr. Smolinski and

his team reviewed the applications to make funding recommendations (full, partial, or none).

A status update was sent on October 19th informing applicants of the team's progress and providing an updated timeline. Mr. Smolinski and his team are currently submitting the requests and justifications to the state's ARPA portal. The State Budget Department, the Attorney General, and the Governor's office will review and approve requests. Once approval is received, a final notification detailing approval status and funding levels will be sent to applicants.

In addition to maintaining the WyoLink system, the \$30.5 million would also fund other "shovel ready" projects, like the construction of a new WyoLink tower near Sheridan.

Work is ongoing to revise the Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan, the State Communications Interoperable Plan, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency Communication Annex. Mr. Smolinski expressed his appreciation to all stakeholders who have given time and information to help update these three plans. Many county government employees met with Mr. Smolinski and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency facilitators to integrate updated local plans into the state plan.

FirstNet/Front Line Updates

Verizon Front Line Presentation

Bob DeRosa, with Verizon Front Line, was unable to present at this time. Mr. Smolinski will invite him to present at the next meeting.

VII. Public Comment/Announcements

The 2023 meeting schedule was presented to the commission for consideration. It was moved by Commissioner Choma, seconded by Commissioner Carr, and unanimously carried to approve the 2023 PSCC meeting schedule.

The commission agreed to alternate in-person and videoconference meetings. It was moved by Commissioner McClain, seconded by Commissioner Carr, and unanimously carried to hold videoconference meetings in February and August and in-person meetings in May and October.

Ms. Chapman reminded the commission of the last two WYDOT town hall sessions on Monday, October 31, 2022.

Commissioners were assigned an online defensive driving course in order to drive WYDOT vehicles. Training links have been emailed to each commissioner.

There was no public comment.

VIII. Adjournment

It was moved by Commissioner Bertoglio, seconded by Commissioner McClain, and unanimously carried to adjourn the October 26, 2022, business meeting at 2:47 p.m.