



Mark Gordon
Governor

Wyoming Public Safety Communications Commission

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Darin J. Westby
Interim Director

Meeting Minutes

I. Call to Order

The Public Safety Communications Commission (PSCC) met at the District 3 office in Rock Springs on Wednesday, May 3, 2023. Acting Chairman Dwane Pacheco presided, calling the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m.

II. Roll Call

The following members were present constituting a quorum:

Paul Bertoglio, Commissioner	Dwane Pacheco, Secretary
Mike Choma, Commissioner	Cindi Shank, Commissioner
Jonathan Downing, Commissioner	Owen St. Clair, Commissioner
Karl Germain, Commissioner	John Wetzel, Commissioner
Phillip Franklin, Commissioner	Darin Westby, Ex Officio
Monte McClain, Commissioner	

Chairman Mark Harshman and Commissioner Matt Carr were absent.

III. Introductions

The following attendees participated in the meeting:

Nathan Smolinski, Chief Technology Officer	Jason Gilmor, WyoLink Office
Mark Kelly, Emergency Communications Manager	Mike Zolner, Union Wireless
Neil Gardiner, WyoLink Support Manager	Kimberly Chapman, Commission Secretary
Aimee Binning, 911 Planning Coordinator	

Susan Elliott assisted with virtual meeting management.

IV. Agenda Adjustments

Agenda item VII-2-C was tabled until the August meeting. It was moved by Commissioner Choma, seconded by Commissioner Franklin, and unanimously carried to approve the agenda.

V. Action Items

1. Draft Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Commissioner Bertoglio, seconded by Commissioner McClain, and unanimously carried to approve the February 8, 2023, business meeting minutes.

2. WyoLink Applications

It was recommended by Mr. Gardiner, moved by Commissioner Bertoglio, seconded by Commissioner Downing, and unanimously carried to approve the applications from Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area and Lincoln County School District #1.

3. Officer Election

Commissioner Choma nominated Commissioner McClain to serve as vice chairman. It was moved by Commissioner Downing, seconded by Commissioner Bertoglio, and unanimously carried to close nominations. Commissioner McClain was elected by acclamation.

VI. Updates/Discussions

1. Director's Update

Interim Director Westby presented his update.

Interim Director Westby is the new interim director, and he started in this role five and a half weeks ago. He is still learning about WYDOT, its operations, and the three commissions.

His background is in mechanical and civil engineering (he is a licensed civil engineer). The interim director spent several years in the private sector working for a civil and architectural engineering firm. He then moved to the public sector, working briefly for the Department of Environmental Quality before moving to Wyoming State Parks and Cultural Resources. His career with State Parks spanned 22 years, and he served as the director for the last seven and a half years.

Interim Director Westby stressed that as interim his focus is on agency continuity and stability. He believes that serving as an interim director provides an opportunity for him to better understand the agency and its needs and for the employees of the agency to get to know him. If, after learning more about WYDOT, he feels that the role is compatible with his personal and professional goals, he will apply for the permanent director role. His purpose in the interim role is to analyze all of WYDOT's programs, identify needs, and create a roadmap to success for the eventual, permanent director.

He shared some of his initial observations from his first few weeks with WYDOT. While the agency is large (with over 1,700 employees) the aims are much the same as State Parks—to maintain assets, serve the public, and support the economy. A larger agency may present more issues and challenges, but it also means there are more people available to help solve problems or address issues. Furthermore, he believes that WYDOT is staffed with good people who are proud of the agency and the work they do. There is also a group of committed stakeholders and partners to help the agency achieve its mission.

Interim Director Westby shared his appreciation for the agency's mission, vision, and values. He is proud to serve as the interim director and looks forward to working with everyone.

The interim director has spent his first few weeks meeting with the WYDOT executive team, program managers, and employees. He began traveling to the five WYDOT districts to meet with district leadership as well as personnel in the field. In meetings with maintainers, he gained a greater appreciation for their hard work and efforts to keep roadways open, operable, and safe during the past winter. Staffing in these positions was down 50 percent and some maintainers were working 16 to 18 hour days.

One of his main priorities is addressing employee retention and recruitment. Filling vital roles such as maintainers, Wyoming Highway Patrol troopers, and dispatchers is critical to mission success. Interim Director Westby believes that continuously increasing an employee's workload, year after year, will lead to burnout and even higher turnover. Retention will therefore be a high priority for him, the executive team, and district leaders.

National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Plan

Interim Director Westby has paused the NEVI project for the foreseeable future. He believes that the plan places too much risk on the state in regards to building charging stations. If a local developer pulled out of the project, WYDOT may still be responsible for the funds granted and may be required to repay the full amount to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The return-on-investment for the charging stations is fairly low, so Interim Director Westby felt that there was a strong possibility that developers would decline to participate.

For now, Wyoming will wait to see if other states appeal the grant stipulations. If this happens, and the risk is to WYDOT and the state is lessened, then the agency will reconsider its participation in the program. If not, WYDOT will return the grant funds to FHWA.

Following a question from Vice Chairman McClain, the interim director said that he believed that most of the charging stations were to be built along the Interstate 80 and 25 corridors. There are a few individuals already building these stations in Wyoming, and they have contacted WYDOT to express interest in the project. An additional, significant concern is taxation. Charging station transactions will need to be taxed at a rate commensurate with the gasoline fuel tax. Interim Director Westby felt that all of these issues combined made the project too high-risk to be considered right now.

2. Chief Technology Officer's Report

Mr. Smolinski presented his update, with additional information provided by Ms. Binning.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

Mr. Smolinski informed the commission that WYDOT recently released a report detailing the results of the biennial Customer Satisfaction Survey. While the survey solicits feedback on the entire department, Mr. Smolinski highlighted the section on WYDOT's communication strategies. Customer engagement data shows a dramatic

increase in use of WYDOT's websites and web applications over more traditional methods like phone calls.

Much of the information sought by these customers is information collected by the Transportation Management Center (TMC). As of February 2023, WYDOT's website had received over 2.2 billion hits. Mr. Smolinski reported that the new "roadkill reporting" feature on WYDOT's 511 application had received 2,300 hits within its first year on the app, and over 600 carcasses were collected.

Ms. Chapman will send the commission a copy of the report.

Next Generation 911 (NG911) Updates

Ms. Binning thanked the commission for their participation in the tour of the Sweetwater County Combined Communications Center the previous day. Executive Director Rick Hawkins and Information Technology (IT) Director David Halter provided a thorough tour of the center and shared information on their operations.

Ms. Binning shared that the Sweetwater County Combined Communications Center has an innovative communications strategy—the center works with FirstNet while using 911 and WyoLink networks for primary communication. The center has supplied invaluable feedback to the telephone companies on all of the phases of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Enhanced 911 (E911) required data. Ms. Binning also praised the center's leadership for their readiness to share data and information with WYDOT.

Ms. Binning reached out to several telephone vendors—Verizon, AT&T, T-Mobile, and Union Wireless—to collect information on their performance relative to E911 requirements in Wyoming. Ms. Binning reminded the commission that Phase I data provides a public safety answering point (PSAP) with a location based upon the cell tower through which the call is routed. Phase II data provides the latitude and longitude of the caller's location. While E911 is considered legacy technology, and not NG911-ready technology, most Wyoming PSAPs are using E911 technology, so it is crucial that the telecommunications companies are performing well and we maintain positive relationships with the vendors.

Annual Reports

Ms. Binning reminded the commission of the two federal reports submitted by the department annually. The 911 Fee Report details the amount of fees collected that year, how the fees are allocated, and the specific programs funded. The NG911 Report describes the state's progress on NG911, including what equipment is being used at the PSAPs and what actions were taken to prepare PSAPs for the conversion.

A survey was sent to the PSAPs in January 2023 to gather data for the reports and the deadline was May 1, 2023. To date, 20 of the 33 PSAPs have responded to the survey. Ms. Binning will reach out to the non-respondents and attempt to gather the missing data to ensure complete accuracy in the final reports.

Ms. Binning reported that her team is working with the Public Service Commission (PSC) to gather financial data for the reports. As mandated by the legislature, the PSC collects information on the 911 fees collected in the state and the total expenditures.

Ms. Binning has a copy of the PSC's report, and she will incorporate the data into the federal reports. The PSC report contains data from all 23 counties, and Ms. Binning thanked all of the counties and county treasurers for submitting their information.

Vice Chairman McClain offered to assist Ms. Binning in obtaining any missing data from the PSAPs.

WyoLink Funding

Mr. Smolinski updated the commission on the \$35 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds allocated to WYDOT for WyoLink. As previously reported, a grant process was set up last year to award \$4.5 million to local agencies to purchase WyoLink compatible equipment. WYDOT received 119 applications from 116 agencies totaling \$19 million in requests. One hundred awards were made, and most of the equipment has been purchased or approved. WYDOT will pay the invoices for the equipment upon delivery to the local agency. Mr. Smolinski thanked the Emergency Communications Program for their work on the project and the Wyoming Office of Homeland Security's (WOHS) Senior Advisory Committee for assisting with the grant process.

Mr. Smolinski updated the commission on other WyoLink funding issues. During the 2023 General Session, two separate bills to provide sustained funding for WyoLink failed. The legislature then added an amendment to the general government appropriations bill to appropriate \$8.6 million from the General Fund for WyoLink. These funds will be available in fiscal year (FY) 2024 and will be used for general operations and maintenance. In the future, WYDOT will receive \$8.6 million per biennium for WyoLink.

The final informational invoices were sent to the counties in April with a note emphasizing that it was the final round of invoices.

3. Emergency Communications Program Manager's Report

Mr. Kelly provided an update on the Emergency Communications Program. The update also included information presented by Mr. Gardiner regarding WyoLink operations.

Mr. Kelly reported that the process to upgrade subscriber units in WYDOT's maintenance fleet is ongoing. The team is reaching out to local entities to see if old units can be donated and reused. South Dakota has expressed an interest in obtaining some of the old units for their local governments and agencies, but Wyoming entities will be given first priority for donations.

Mobile units are scheduled to be installed in Wyoming Highway Patrol vehicles in Districts 3 and 5 the week of June 5th.

Following a question from Commissioner Choma, Mr. Kelly assured the commission that he and Mr. Smolinski will contact local agencies, like volunteer fire departments, to alert them about the free radios. Wyoming entities will be contacted and given the first option for the old units. Radios will only be offered to other states after in-state need has been satisfied.

Mr. Smolinski added that, with the ARPA funds grants, the team made a concerted effort to reach small or underfunded agencies, some of which were already WyoLink subscribers that were lacking equipment.

16 Tower Buildout Report

Mr. Smolinski reported that with the severe winter, there was almost no progress made on the tower sites under construction. The team is preparing for the upcoming construction season, but he estimates that three of the four sites—Newcastle, Meadowlark, Little Sheep, and Kismet—are most likely inaccessible because of the snow. While Newcastle might be accessible, it is not economically feasible to bring in a construction crew for one site.

Mr. Smolinski estimates that construction will not begin until late-June or July. It remains his goal to complete construction and finish out the project this calendar year.

Following a question from Commissioner Choma, Mr. Smolinski reported that there was no damage to any of the towers due to winter weather. The winter did lead to a discovery, which will result in a change to high-elevation sites like Meadowlark. The generator exhaust ports that come out of the top of the shelters will be raised to avoid blockages and clogging.

WyoLink Operational Updates

WyoLink System Reports

Mr. Gardiner shared WyoLink usage data from the second quarter (Q2) of 2023. There was an average of about 1.8 million push-to-talks (PTT) and 154,000 minutes of airtime for the quarter.

The top 20 talkgroups for Q2 were mainly law enforcement agencies, as expected. Mr. Gardiner noted that two WYDOT talkgroups appeared in the top 20 list, which indicates how much work maintainers were putting in throughout the winter.

WyoLink System Upgrades

Mr. Gardiner reported that the winter slowed down the pace of the GTR fixed station/repeater upgrade process. Four upgrades were completed in April, but several more sites that were scheduled for upgrades had to be canceled due to weather or accessibility. Six sites are scheduled for upgrades in May and 10 in June. Mr. Gardiner stated that this is an aggressive schedule, but he feels confident the team can complete it with Motorola's assistance.

Upon the completion of those 16 sites, 15 will still need GTR upgrades. Once all of the sites are completed, Mr. Gardiner and his team will be able to upgrade the whole system to the next software version.

Staffing

The WyoLink office hired three new employees who started work in March. The team was able to train the new hires on most all aspects of site maintenance and are currently providing equipment training. Mr. Gardiner is glad to have staffing levels increased in advance of the upcoming, busy summer.

Following a question from Commissioner Choma, Mr. Gardiner stated that most agencies and groups learn about WyoLink by word-of-mouth. There was a big push to market and educate stakeholders on WyoLink when it was first created, but the team's focus shifted to upgrades and system maintenance. The office still receives numerous calls about WyoLink, but Mr. Gardiner said they could expand their focus to include outreach.

The main issue is identifying which agencies are not on WyoLink and determining if they are interested. Mr. Gardiner stated that he and Ms. Binning regularly have conversations about the dispatch centers and how those centers are dispatching calls to determine if there are entities who want to be on WyoLink or use it as a secondary communication source.

Following a comment from Chairman Pacheco on the capacity created by new tower sites, Mr. Smolinski shared that the program is not necessarily seeing more new subscriber applications, but they are seeing PTT and airtime numbers increasing. This is because more subscribing agencies are using WyoLink as a primary communications network and moving more of their day-to-day operations onto the system.

Microwave System Upgrade

Mr. Smolinski informed the commission of an upcoming contract with Motorola to upgrade the microwave system. He shared that an upgrade is long overdue as the department is using legacy equipment (from 2006), which makes it challenging to keep the system operational. Multiple locations statewide were selected for an initial phase, and more sites will be upgraded as the project progresses.

The \$15 million contract will be paid for with ARPA funds, which must be expended by 2026. The contractor will begin work on the project the week of May 15th.

Statewide Interoperability Coordination (SWIC) Updates

Mr. Smolinski reported that he and Mr. Kelly are sharing the SWIC responsibilities.

Mr. Kelly reported that he attended the Regional Emergency Communications Coordinating Working Group in Salt Lake City, Utah, on April 19th and 20th. He was able to set up auxiliary communications testing with Montana and Utah. The department already conducts monthly testing with Colorado, and it will be beneficial to cooperate with more neighboring states.

On June 21st, there will be a joint Critical Connect training with Montana in Sheridan. Mr. Smolinski reminded the commission that Critical Connect is a system that enables WyoLink to connect to other communication systems like cellular networks or to other states' systems. Conversations are taking place with Montana, South Dakota, and Colorado on system-to-system communication.

A joint training with Carbon County Search and Rescue and the Albany County Sheriff's Search and Rescue was held April 17-21, 2023. The topic was Snowcat training and interoperable communications.

Update on Federal Partners

Mr. Kelly reported that he and Mr. Smolinski will attend the National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators on May 16th and 17th.

Planning is underway on the Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP) meeting to be held in July. A series of planning meetings have been scheduled around different topics, including a governance meeting on May 10th, a technology and cybersecurity meeting on May 17th, and a funding meeting on May 24th.

FirstNet/Front Line Updates

Mr. Smolinski reported that FirstNet will provide an update on their 5-year buildout at the October PSCC meeting. (FirstNet's contract with the federal government stipulated several benchmarks throughout the buildout.) Along with their presentation to the commission, FirstNet will send a report detailing their progress and success to Governor Gordon.

Mr. Kelly reported that the program received the compact rapid deployable (CRD) units from FirstNet. Mr. Gardiner and his team received training on its operation and will provide a demonstration at the October meeting. Commissioner Shank thanked the department for its willingness to share the CRD units with the WOHS for deployment during incidents and events.

Mr. Smolinski reminded the commission that WYDOT has two CRD units—one will be kept in Cheyenne and the second one will eventually be moved to another part of the state. Since the unit only supports FirstNet, the team is looking to position the unit in an area with a high volume of FirstNet users.

VII. Recognition of Outgoing Commissioner

Chairman Pacheco recognized Commissioner Forrest "Frosty" Williams, who is leaving the commission because of his retirement. He served as the representative for the Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation. Although Commissioner Williams was unable to attend the meeting, Chairman Pacheco acknowledged and thanked him for his service to the PSCC. The chairman sent his congratulations and best wishes to Commissioner Williams on a well-earned retirement.

VIII. Drone Presentation

Mr. Gilmor shared a video created by WYDOT Public Affairs on drone-conducted WyoLink tower inspections. Following a question from Commissioner Bertoglio, Mr. Gilmor confirmed that the team is able to easily identify issues, because the drones are able to capture very detailed images.

Following a question from Commissioner Downing, Mr. Gilmor and Mr. Smolinski confirmed that drone-conducted inspections reduce the number of tower climbs, which improves safety and saves the organization time. An additional benefit, according to Mr. Gilmor, is the data that will accrue over time. The team will be able to review files of past inspections to compare the data and pinpoint changes in a tower's condition. Following a question from Commissioner Choma, Mr. Gilmor stated that the team manually compares the data from multiple year's inspections as no software or program yet exists that can provide the needed comparative analysis.

IX. Public Comment/Announcements

Mr. Zolner, with Union Wireless, provided information on the transmission of 911 calls originating from mobile devices. He explained the entire process and traced the voice and data paths from the inception of a call to its arrival at a PSAP. After the call is dialed, it is routed to the nearest cell tower/site.

The cell site then routes the call to a radio network controller, which either sends the call on to a mobile switching center (MSC) or to a serving mobile location center (SMLC). The MSC then routes the call to a gateway mobile location center (GMLC). The SMLC provides information on a caller's position and the GMLC provides an emergency services routing key (ESRK) that determines the PSAP to which a call should be routed.

The GMLC then forwards the call back to the MSC so that the call can then be routed over a session initiation protocol trunk to the Union Core. Based on the ESRK, the Core will route the call to a 911 selective router, which in turn sends the call to the appropriate PSAP. The PSAP will receive Phase I and II data with the call.

X. Announcements

Ms. Chapman announced that the next meeting will be August 9, 2023, via videoconference.

The Wyoming Attorney General's Office will host the 2023 Board Member Training on Friday, May 5, 2023. The training will be held at the Capitol Auditorium in Cheyenne from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. There is a virtual option for anyone unable to travel to Cheyenne. Commissioners were sent an email with more information and instructions on how to RSVP.

Ms. Chapman provided the commissioners with an updated contact list and requested that commissioners send her any updated information.

XI. Adjournment

It was moved by Commissioner Choma, seconded by Commissioner Shank, and unanimously carried to adjourn the May 3, 2023, business meeting at 10:39 a.m.