

Emergency Communications Community Advisory Board

December 19, 2024

Members present: Kevin McWhorter, David Thorne, Greg Kalkwarf, Jennifer Chambers, Randy Reynard, Sharon VanHorn, and Melissa Webb.

Also, present: Director Elora Forshee, Assistant County Manager Rusty Leeds, Deputy Director Alayna Moreno, and 911 Workforce Specialist Jackie Blackwell.

1. Call to Order

David Thorne

2. Approval of 10-24-2024 Meeting minutes

Approved unanimously

3. 911 Updates – Director Forshee

- a. **Staffing & Training** – One Call Taker position open as of today. Another Academy Class will begin on Monday, January 6, 2025. Dispatch class that just graduated out of the academy are in the OJT part of the process.
- b. **New Year's Eve Staffing and Non-Emergency Line** – The non-emergency line will be open on New Year's Eve from 9:00PM to 1:00AM, with three staff members on that line.
- c. **2025 Discipline-Specific Dispatching Update** – The groundwork for Discipline-Specific Dispatching has already been laid by conducting workshops with Dispatch Supervisors and the Employee Advisory Board. On Monday, December 16, a 7 ½ hour meeting was held including Dispatch Supervisors, Employment Development Team, Employee Representatives, and Administration. The Discipline-Specific Dispatching will include a structured training plan, requesting members of the WFD, SGC0 FD, and EMS to be a part of the Academy training. We would also like to incorporate tours to EMS and Fire to be able to physically see the 1st responders in their elements with their equipment giving Dispatch a better way to support their community partners. One of the requests of the Dispatchers are 10-hour shifts to be incorporated.

4. 911 Workforce Coordinator Report – Jackie Blackwell – Retention, Recruitment, & New Hires

- a. **Retention** – Jackie Blackwell has been working over the last two months going over the retention numbers and ways in getting those numbers up as well as finding ways in motivating employees to stay. We are currently at a 60% retention rate, averaging current employees on the floor at 1458 days, equaling just under four years. Jackie is also working with Connor and IT in developing a feedback form for the employees to complete. Working with Dispatch Supervisors to get employees to take the survey, have received 15 employees complete the survey, so far. Questions include things like what motivates them to stay, what changes could be made in helping to keep previous employees, etc.?

- b. Recruitment** – Jackie has re-invigorated the “Recruitment Team”, which includes ten Emergency Communications Employees. In addition to recruitment events, they have been doing public education. They have been visiting elementary schools and talking with mostly first graders on: 1) How to use 911; 2) When to call 911; 3) How to escape during a fire; 4) Handing out refrigerator magnets with helpful info printed on them; etc. They are scheduling more visits next semester after the holidays. More specifically to recruitment, Jackie has been reaching out to WSU, Butler County Community College, and other surrounding colleges to help in recruitment. We ask that if any of our board members or communities have recruitment events that Jackie can attend or any departments that have recruitment activities that can coordinate with Jackie to help with the 911 recruitment process. **Board asking about digital information that can be sent from the school/teacher to the parents/guardians. Possible QR Code to be created by IT with this helpful information.**
- c. New Hires** - We recently had 148 applicants from our most recent job posting, where 40 applicants attended the Job Information Meeting, 34 came in to observe the Call Taker and Dispatchers for two hours each, and we have 28 interviews scheduled December 18th and 19th. The candidates that qualify in this round will begin on January 6, 2025. We will have definite numbers on how many we hired from that posting, at our next Board meeting in February 2025.

5. 2025 Goals Discussion – David Thorne

a. PR Initiatives

- i. Review of previous PR campaigns** – Approximately 12 years ago it came about a campaign of “don’t” call 911 for everything, identifying when to call and when not to call. 911 attended community meetings to get the word out on when to call and when not to call, trying to keep it generalized. **A Board Member asks, “In Colorado they have a non-emergent line, ‘311’; has this been suggested for Sedgwick County/Wichita?”** It has been mentioned and a need for a different set of employees would need to address those non-emergent calls. Cell phone misdials was also an issue, and continues to be, but has also been addressed in many community meetings. In 2020 due to Covid not many community meetings were attended, but the issue of Text to 911 was pushed out to news outlets and media.

b. Surveying the Community

- i. How to reach each neighborhood effectively** – What are some frequently asked questions that Elora Forshee receives? Elora will provide some of the questions that she receives to the Board.

c. Capturing feedback

- i. Methodology** – There is discussion about a feedback form on the website or hiring a vendor, similar to WPD, to capture feedback.

6. Off Agenda Items/Comments

- a. **GOALS** - Focus on (2) maximum (3) Goals for 2025 instead of listing multiple goals that may not be attainable within the year.
- b. **Emergency Communications Community Advisory Board MISSION** → **according to the County Commissioners** – *The Community Advisory Board is to give recommendations to the County Commission regarding the 911 Communications Center.*
- c. **Why (2) headsets?** Per Elora Forshee, the idea of one headset is being explored. More information will be discussed and explored on this topic as additional data can be provided.
- d. **Comment by Rusty Leeds** – Another avenue of public education involves Leadership Wichita. Leadership Wichita has evolved and Emergency Communications has been part of that lineup for the past three years in welcoming different community leaders to learn more about 911 to tour the communication center and further understand the inner workings of 911.
- e. **Obtaining Informal feedback** – Asking acquaintances with their 911 call experiences, positive or negative.
- f. **Attendance** – Important to ensure board members are present for the meetings, so that time spent during these meetings can be productive and prevent having to repeat the previous topics.

7. Adjournment @ 6:00pm