

Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

Friday, March 5, 2021

A video recording is available at:

<https://authoring.ct.gov/ACIR/About-ACIR/-/media/8DD4CDACoAFD430F9CE1A3DBDBFo347E.ashx>

Members present: James Albis, Carl Amento, Debra Borrero (alt.), Maureen Brummett, Kathy Demsey, John Elsesser, John Filchak, Rick Hart, Martin Heft, Marcia Leclerc, Brian O'Connor (alt.), James O'Leary, Francis Pickering, Lon Seidman, Brendan Sharkey (Chair), Bob Valentine

Members absent: Kyle Abercrombie, Luke Bronin, Sen. Stephen Cassano, Sam Gold, Brian Greenleaf, Rudy Marconi, Neil O'Leary, Scott Shanley, Lyle Wray (Vice-Chair)

Other participants: Leah Grenier (alt.)

ACIR staff: Bruce Wittchen

1. Call to order and overview of telemeeting procedures

Commission chair Sharkey called the meeting to order at 10:35 and provided an overview of remote meeting procedures.

2. Agenda review and additions

There were no changes.

3. Approval of the minutes of the 1/8/2021 meeting.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the [minutes of the February 5, 2021 meeting](#) and the motion was approved unanimously.

4. Presentation: Update on Statewide Radio System: improving efficiency and effectiveness William Youell, Clayton Northgraves [Division of Statewide Emergency Telecommunications](#) [Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection](#)

Commission member Elsesser said this presentation is about a good news story showing the savings possible by sharing assets. He introduced William Youell and Clayton Northgraves of the Div. of Statewide Emergency Telecommunications. Mr. Youell explained that division staff had suggested the idea of opening the statewide network to municipal uses because the system has capacity to do so. It was an entrepreneurial in-house effort.

Mr. Northgraves provided an overview of the CT Land Mobile Radio Network (CLMRN) managed by his division and explained its various roles (see attachment). As shown on Slide 3, the network has 98% mobile coverage across the state and it is used by most federal and state departments and, due to a recent capacity expansion, by a growing number of municipalities.

Slide 4 provides an overview of the process by which municipalities can share the network. Mr. Northgraves described the simplicity of the process while noting the need for participating municipalities to purchase compatible equipment. He also pointed out that the CLMRN is not creating a monopoly for any vendor; the network is [Project 25](#) compatible. A municipality is not charged by the state, but there is a cost to purchase compatible equipment.

Slide 7 list benefits of using the network, include interoperability, volume pricing for equipment purchases, and lower capital costs. Mr. Northgraves noted some municipalities add coverage for mobile units. He said Coventry paid \$100,000 to upgrade its system via the CLMRN instead of \$3 million for an independent system. He described interoperability benefits for municipalities with mutual aid agreements and mentioned his agency is in discussions with NY state regarding potential interoperability with users of that state's network.

Mr. Northgraves highlighted that CLMRN offers 365/24/7 monitoring by a real person with rigorous backup systems and an inventory of spare parts. As indicated on Slide 8, 76 municipalities have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to join the CMRLN, 71 have requested an MOU, and four MOUs are pending. He noted that some participants are not listed on Slide 8 and mentioned that the Dept. of Transportation and Dept. of Corrections, which maintain more limited systems, are going to join.

Slide 9 identifies some of the potential uses of the network beyond public safety purposes. Commission member Elsesser said Coventry had three towers and described the improvements and savings gained by joining the network. They now can communicate with the resident state troopers of neighboring towns and with public safety departments at nearby UConn. They can reach their staff even when across the state at a meeting. Significant savings are possible statewide and he also mentioned the benefits for regional [public safety answering points](#) (PSAPs).

Commission member Hart asked if municipalities are able to contract with vendors through a state bid and Mr. Northgraves said they can, but some go out to bid on their own. They also discussed encryption and interoperability requirements. Commission member Brummett asked if this is the only such state network and asked about schools joining. Mr. Northgraves described DOT's and DOC's lower capacity, independent networks, adding that they will join the CLMRN. He said adding schools to the network is no problem, but they frown on including school buses because the drivers can get chatty.

Commission member Seidman asked about the network backhaul and Mr. Northgraves described the network's use of microwave and fiber and its backup capacity. Commission member Leclerc asked about gaps between towers and Mr. Northgraves said gaps between towers are not equal to gaps in coverage. The division can map predicted coverage for mobile, portable, and in-building units on a town-by-town basis. Mr. Youell described division staff driving around the state testing coverage and Mr. Northgraves described an incident in Stonington when a person was apprehended because a chase by multiple towns and state police was coordinated across the CLMRN. Commission chair Sharkey thanked Mr. Youell and Mr. Northgraves for their presentation and said their contact information will be circulated.

5. CT Local Government of the Future Initiative

- a. Overview of 2/23 & 3/2 meetings and next steps re. [CAPSS Blueprint to Transform Connecticut's Public Schools](#) with [GANTT chart with expected cost of recommendations](#)

Commission chair Sharkey provided background regarding the ACIR's review to date of the blueprint, including a presentation at last month's meeting of the full ACIR and two subcommittee meetings since then. He provided an overview of discussions, including [CT Assoc. of Public School Superintendents](#) (CAPSS) that the Governor is pulling back from prior state [education cost sharing](#) (ECS) commitments by supplementing state funds with federal [Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief](#) (ESSER) funds.

Commission chair Sharkey said CAPSS and others are concerned about a future fiscal cliff if the state moves away from fully funding its obligation due to the temporary availability of federal funds. He said the subcommittees discussed an alternative in which the state fully funds ECS as previously expected and uses ESSER funds for eligible blueprint tasks. He explained that the recently circulated GANNT chart now includes a column of cost estimates for priority tasks CAPSS considers

to be eligible for ESSER funds. He has drafted a [possible letter](#) to the Governor regarding this possible approach.

Commission chair Sharkey said the goal for today's meeting is to discuss the recommended approach. He noted that some ACIR members might have differing opinions regarding the content and tone of such a recommendation to the Governor. Maureen Brummett said it is a plan to provide predictability and there was a discussion of the goals to make funding predictable and equitable. Commission member Filchak said he had participated in the subcommittee meetings and is comfortable with the recommendations but noted concerns about future funding obligations. An important question is what savings and other benefits are possible through the improved efficiencies.

Commission member Pickering pointed out that recommendations #18 would have the state provide non-education municipal funding according to the same formula used for education funding. If so, TAR funding for municipal roads would be based in part on a municipality's English language learner student population. He added that the state's education funding formula shorts Danbury, Norwalk, and Stamford.

Richard Porth said the proposed letter focuses on the use of ECS and ESSER funding and Commission chair Sharkey thanked him for the clarification and highlighted that the recommendation is to maintain ECS funding commitments and use ESSER funds for blueprint priorities eligible for that funding.

Commission member Heft said state agency ACIR members must vote against a proposal to change the Governor's budget recommendation and noted that OPM budget analysts disagree with some blueprint cost estimates. He suggested greater attention to the tone of the request, noting that ECS funding is always a bone of contention. The ACIR could offer it for the Governor's consideration without specifically supporting it.

Commission chair Sharkey said the budget is at the legislature now, so the ACIR's proposal would go to the Governor and the legislature. He noted that CAPSS has given a presentation to the Governor's office. Commission member Demsey said the [state Dept. of Education](#) (SDE), like OPM, supports the budget submitted by the Governor. She added that the SDE is working with CAPSS and said district spending of ESSER funds is a local decision. She also said some blueprint recommendations are in areas under [State Board of Education](#) purview. She added that additional funds might become available and recommended working collaboratively with local needs assessments towards the next 5-year plan.

Commission chair Sharkey said this was brought up by the question of how to spend ESSER funds: to backfill the state's previous commitment or to implement the blueprint? Commission member Elsesser noted that he represents the CT [Council of Small Towns](#) (COST) and said ESSER funds should be set aside for towns to get out of this budget year. Maureen Brummett said the State Dept. of Education had directed districts to use ESSER to supplement their operating expenses, not to supplant existing expenses.

There was further discussion of the use of ESSER funding and of the state not allocating additional funds to continue year-over-year ECS increases. Commission member Demsey said these are difficult times and there is a commitment in the Governor's budget to maintain level funding. She described funding and enrollment issues and said level funding is predictable and this need not be polarizing. Commission member Demsey said OPM Secretary McCaw described it as a pause in the ECS phase-in.

There was further discussion of state ECS and ESSER funding and Commission member Demsey said ESSER funding is intended to get districts through next year. Commission chair Sharkey noted

districts' expectation that state increases would continue and asked what level ECS funding would come back at after this period: at the same level it was or at the level it would have risen to if not interrupted? He outlined possible recommendations to the governor and legislature and asked what ACIR members would prefer to do.

Commission member Pickering said he did not see an ACIR role in determining the source of funding to be used. Commission chair Sharkey said he disagrees – it is a role of the ACIR to make policy recommendations. Commission member Pickering pointed out that the [regional council of governments](#) (COG) role in transportation spending does not extend to determining the source of those funds. Commission chair Sharkey asked if the group believes ECS should rise as planned, not remain level with ESSER making up the difference.

Mr. Porth said ECS is how CT addresses education funding disparities. That commitment is important for competitiveness and equity. Commission member Filchak said he agrees with maintaining the state's commitment to increased ECS funding and that the ACIR has purview. Commission member James O'Leary said he agrees. Commission member Valentine said his town has lost ground with ECS and the state should hold to its commitment.

Commission member Pickering said he agrees, but that is separate from the ESSER question. Commission chair said he agrees the state commitment has been made and pointed out that it might not have been fair to portray the use of ESSER funding as “backfill”. Commission member Heft said ECS is not the state's only local commitment; there is also payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT). The state should be asked to maintain that commitment too.

Commission chair Sharkey said that crystallizes it: the state should maintain its commitments. Commission member Elsesser noted that the state has also made other commitments and said the ACIR should be careful about picking and choosing among them. Commission chair Sharkey asked if it would be fair to recommend the state not use ESSER in this manner and Commission member Elsesser said it is only a one-time source of funds.

Commission member Seidman recommended looking to see what comes out in the legislature and also looking at how federal funds were used in 2007-08. He pointed out that some school districts opened at great cost; some did not. He said the state should use the funding to help districts meet state policy. The ACIR links the state and municipalities for a common goal.

Commission chair Sharkey suggested giving this back to the subcommittee for review while looking back to 2007-08. The question is about supporting the blueprint with prioritization and additional guidance. Mr. Porth said he agrees with such an approach but added that there is a larger issue regarding a state commitment: others need to be able to rely on it. How do we pay for public services? There was further discussion of the group's level of comfort with the draft letter and Mr. Porth said he believes the scope of the letter is reasonable.

Commission member Elsesser said changes are needed in the letter. The state is to develop its own plan and he believes this is too complicated to address in this year's budget. The ACIR should recommend the state give due consideration to the blueprint. Commission member Filchak said there should be a broader perspective on state commitments and property taxes. Commission member Pickering agreed and Commission member Seidman said there is a lot here and what do group members agree on? Commission chair Sharkey recommended the subcommittee discuss state commitments and the use of ESSER and, separately, what to do regarding the blueprint.

6. Other Old Business

- a. UConn & UGA policy studies

It was noted that Commission vice-chair Wray was unavailable to provide his update and Commission member Elsesser noted he is communicating with his student.

8. Additional Public Comments

There were no additional public comments.

10. Next meeting

Commission chair Sharkey said the Subcommittee will meet March 23 and the full ACIR will meet April 9, noting it will be the 2nd Friday of the month.

11. Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting and it was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 12:25.

Minutes prepared by Bruce Wittchen, OPM

Connecticut Land Mobile Radio Network (CLMRN)

William Youell – Director of Statewide Emergency
Telecommunications

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Clayton Northgraves - Director of Emergency
Telecommunications

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Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection

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Connecticut Land Mobile Radio Network (CLMRN)

- Who are we?
 - Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP)
 - Division of Statewide Emergency Telecommunications (DSET)
- What do we do?
 - Statewide 9-1-1 system
 - Public Safety Data Network (PSDN)
 - Connecticut Land Mobile Radio Network (CLMRN)
 - Statewide Emergency Notification System (Everbridge)

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Connecticut Land Mobile Radio Network (CLMRN)

- CLMRN, what is it?
 - Mission critical first responder communications system
 - 98% mobile coverage across the state, portable level coverage varies but is increasing
 - Used by most state and federal agencies in Connecticut, and a growing list of municipalities thanks to a recent capacity upgrade

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Connecticut Land Mobile Radio Network (CLMRN)

- How can my municipality share this state resource?
 - Meet with DSET team to discuss your requirements (level of desired coverage, number of radios needed, what other first responders do you communicate with?)
 - Sign a simple MOU (yes, it's simple – only seven pages)
 - Purchase compatible radios, dispatch consoles and infrastructure if enhanced coverage is desired

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Connecticut Land Mobile Radio Network (CLMRN)

- Do I have to use a certain radio or vendor?
 - No, the CLMRN is Project 25 (P25) compliant (open architecture) meaning you can purchase most P25 compliant radios from any vendor of your choosing
 - We do not recommend or have a preferred vendor or radio

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Connecticut Land Mobile Radio Network (CLMRN)

Will my municipality be charged for the use of the system?

- No, you will not receive an invoice from the state for use
- You are responsible for compatible equipment costs, coverage enhancements (if desired) and maintenance costs for infrastructure – charges will come from your vendor, not the state

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Connecticut Land Mobile Radio Network (CLMRN)

- What are the benefits
 - Interoperability!
 - Reduced costs – vendors typically pass large volume incentives to municipalities who join the system
 - Capital costs for new systems are generally much less than purchasing a single stand-alone system. Current estimated savings to CT cities and towns in the tens of millions.
 - Wide area coverage (98% mobile coverage in CT) in discussions with NY, RI and MA on expanding coverage
 - 365/24/7 monitoring – one number for issues – always answered by a real person
 - Rigorous back up systems and we maintain 10% spare parts
 - Mobile phone/LTE integration

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Connecticut Land Mobile Radio Network (CLMRN)

- What towns are sharing the network or will in the future?
 - MOUs signed = 76, MOUs requested = 71, MOUs pending execution = 4
 - All Regional CT PSAPs
 - On Network = Madison, Darien, Bloomfield, Cheshire (BOE), Coventry, Durham, Groton City, Groton Town, Haddam, Ledyard, Middlefield, Middlesex Paramedics, Middletown (ISSI), New Britain, Rocky Hill, Stamford, Stonington, Norwich, Trumbull Fire, Wallingford (ISSI), Waterbury (ISSI)
 - In Planning = Avon, Bridgeport, Cheshire, Estuary Transit, Bridgeport Transit, Hartford Fire, North Branford, Norwalk Transit, Torrington, Fairfield, Norwalk, Westport
- Note – does not include, State and Federal Agencies

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Connecticut Land Mobile Radio Network (CLMRN)

- Is the system only for public safety?
 - The system can be used by all governmental entities and public safety first responders
 - Education/schools, public works, transportation, government provided utilities, health departments, etc.

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Connecticut Land Mobile Radio Network (CLMRN)

QUESTIONS?

Thank you!

Clayton Northgraves

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