

These minutes are subject to approval at the next Radio Committee Meeting

AD HOC COMMITTEE  
PROPOSED TWO-WAY RADIO INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT  
Wednesday, January 08, 2020  
Multi-Media Room  
Mulvey Municipal Center

CALL TO ORDER

First Selectman Bishop called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. In attendance included: First Selectman Bishop, Lynn Spencer, Gregg Prevost, Mike Jenkins, Rick Darrin, Don Izzo, Paul Connelly, BOF Chairman, Selectman Hall, Chris Ehlert, BOF member, Tony Cozza, BOF member, Rich Annino, Park & Rec Director, Paul Zito, New England Radio, LLC

COMMENTS FROM CHAIRMAN

Mr. Bishop reported that the Needs Assessment document was developed by Mr. Zito and received in the Selectman's office at 9:40 p.m. on 1/7/20. Copies of the report were available at the meeting; not only to Committee members, but to members of the public in attendance. Mr. Zito, New England Radio Consultants, report was distributed to Committee members and is included with the minutes. The report was submitted on time and on budget and offers options for Committee consideration. The Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations will be forwarded to the BOS for further action.

DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED NEW ENGLAND RADIO CONSULTANTS, LLC REPORT

New England Radio Consultants (Paul Zito) were hired to do an analysis of the in-house proposed project (as submitted by Mr. Izzo), the State of Connecticut's system, and to develop options to improve communication throughout Westbrook. Mr. Zito provided, at the meeting, a very extensive, thorough and detailed overview of his entire report that included several appendices, maps, etc (please see the entire report attached to these minutes).

Mr. Zito outlined the protocol (interviews with current and past users of the system, discussions with Valley Shore, State of Connecticut, Committee members, State Troopers and other individuals) used to gather data and to develop the report.

The report includes 3 scenarios for consideration including: the State's (CTS) Trunked System, the 4 Site Emergency Management/Don Izzo Proposed System, and a 6 Site Enhanced Coverage System. The intent of the report is to provide to the Town the tools so that the Town can make an informed decision relative to a two way radio infrastructure project.

As indicated in the attached report, the consultant had significant reservations about the 4 Site Emergency Management/Don Izzo Proposed System and recommended a hybrid system with the State.

AD HOC COMMENT MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Izzo reported that he, in consultation with Chief Jenkins and Lynn Spencer, Board of Fire Commissioners, reviewed the report and recommended that the BOS pay the consultant, disband the Ad Hoc Committee and study all options further. Options outlined in Mr. Zito's report need to be thoroughly pursued and studied further. He commented further that there is no rush to pursue a project at this time, appropriate SOP (Standard Operating Procedures) are in place to insure the safety of first responders (Mr. Bishop distributed the SOPs to Committee members). These SOPs are reviewed

regularly, updated as needed and “signed off” on by all appropriate personnel. In addition, Valley Shore has “triple redundancies” in place relative to communications.

Chief Jenkins agreed with Mr. Izzo’s comments and reported that we are “not in a position to make any decision right now”. He continued that it appears that the State’s system is probably the Town’s best option; however, he stressed the importance of studying the option further. He expressed concern that the State, while offering their service at no charge now, they may, in the future, request payment for the use of their system.

Mr. Prevost reported that many towns are now pursuing options with the State. The new tower site in Madison will provide coverage in our “void” areas and the State’s system is the only way that Westbrook will be able to communicate with everyone.

Mr. Zito commented that the State is offering, at no charge, use of their system to municipalities. His understanding is that the State is offering towns 5 years with no costs and three, 5 year renewals. However, he stressed the need to have this provided, IN WRITING, by the State.

Mr. Bishop commented that several surrounding towns have expressed an interest in the State’s system including Haddam, Middlefield, Essex, Deep River, Chester, and 9TT. Durham is using the State’s system. The committee briefly discussed possible grant funding for a regional system since the State has expressed interest in regionalizing whenever possible. Mr. Bishop will contact towns, through the COG, that are interested in the State’s system or who are currently using the State’s system.

Ms. Spencer commented that Mr. Zito’s report was very comprehensive and provided the tools necessary for the Town to make an informed decision; in order to act responsibly; we need to explore all options further.

Mr. Bishop commended Mr. Zito on his work.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Cozza, BOF member, reported that several years ago, Mr. Izzo made an urgent Capital request for funds (approx. \$1.3 million) to address interoperability throughout Westbrook; however, the above comments made by Mr. Izzo suggest that there is no longer a pressing need relative to radio communications throughout Westbrook. Mr. Izzo responded that several years ago, Mr. Pytlik, BOF member at the time, was the BOF liaison for the project. At the time, current equipment was evaluated and the urgency was with the Town’s system, not the Fire Department. The school radios were not working adequately, the constables were having radio issues and Public Works had concerns. The Sandy Hook tragedy was also the impetus to purchase radios to address the schools. Currently, we are “happy” with the Town’s system as it stands today.

Mr. Ehlert requested clarification relative to potential use of the State’s system. Mr. Izzo reported that if the Town were to go with the State, a “black box” would be necessary to create a hybrid of two systems as was recently done in Middletown. The Middletown system is now being tested.

Mr. Bishop reported that “slowing down the process (Mr. Bishop recommended and the BOS approved an Ad Hoc Committee, going through the RFP process and hiring a consultant; which took several months) has been on our side” vis a vis the options presented by Mr. Zito.

Mr. Ehlert does not agree that time has been on our side. He commented that this project has been “kicked down the road for many years” and Mr. Bishop got “lucky” when he “stalled” the process.

Mr. Ehlert commented that Mr. Zito and others proactively mislead the FCC regarding the radio channels. Mr. Ehlert is in possession of email communications and newspaper articles. Mr. Ehlert continued that Mr. Bishop accepted advice from Mr. Prevost and took direction from Mr. Zito to mislead the FCC. This action was inappropriate because there was no funding in place, there had been no Town Meeting or BOS/BOF approval. Mr. Ehlert requested that Mr. Zito provide an explanation of his action.

Mr. Zito had “no comment” in response to Mr. Ehlert’s remarks but did report that he felt “threatened” by Mr. Ehlert’s comments and “tone” during a recent telephone conversation. Mr. Zito continued that nothing inappropriate was done, standard operating procedures were followed and that the FCC typically “looks the other way” in similar situations.

Mr. Prevost also had “no comment” in response to Mr. Ehlert’s inquiry.

Mr. Zito reported that when he started his consulting work, the Town had 2 radio frequencies set to expire and be turned back to the FCC. An effort to extend the frequencies was unsuccessful. If necessary, the Town may reapply for the frequencies but depending on the direction the Town takes, they may not be needed at all since Valley Shore may be in a position to assist the Town with a frequency in their possession. Valley Shore’s frequency is a stronger/better frequency than the frequencies turned back to the FCC.

Mr. Ehlert reported that the FCC requested that the Town relinquish frequency/channels. Mr. Bishop responded that the Town voluntarily relinquished the frequencies; there was no harm done and the FCC issued no penalties.

Mr. Ehlert expressed disappointment that this project was never presented to the Town. He recommended that the committee be disbanded and that the COG, Council of Governments (Mr. Bishop is on the Executive Committee of the COG) should be approached to facilitate radios with appropriate municipal personnel.

Mr. Bishop reported that the BOS will determine future of committee. All comments made by the Ad Hoc Committee will be forwarded to the BOS for future review since the Ad Hoc Committee was established by the BOS.

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Izzo made a motion to approve the minutes from the 6/26/19 meeting. Mr. Prevost seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Spencer made a motion to approve the minutes from the 7/17/19 meeting. Mr. Izzo seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### APPROVAL OF CONSULTANT’S INVOICE

Mr. Bishop made a motion to approve payment to New England Radio Consultants, LLC in the amount of \$9,000.00 as presented. Mr. Izzo seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Bishop made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:25 a.m. Ms. Spencer seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski  
Administrative Assistant