

**North Carolina 911 Board Work Session  
Summary  
Cape Fear Ballroom Salon B  
Hilton Wilmington Riverside  
301 North Water Street, Wilmington, NC  
December 7, 2017  
10:00 AM – 5:00 PM**

<u>Members Present</u>	<u>Staff Present</u>	<u>Guests</u>
David Bone (NCACC) Martin County	Ron Adams (DIT Temp Solutions)	Victor Williams, Beaufort Co Sheriff's 911
Heather Campbell (CMRS) Sprint	Richard Bradford (DOJ)	
Eric Cramer (LEC) Wilkes Communication (WebEx and phone)	Tina Bone (DIT)	
Chuck Greene (LEC) AT&T	Ronnie Cashwell (DIT)	
Len Hagaman (Sheriff) Watauga County	Pokey Harris, (DIT)	
Greg Hauser (NCSFA) Charlotte Fire Department	Danette Jernigan (DIT)	
John Moore (VoIP) Spectrum Communications	Richard Taylor (DIT)	
Mike Reitz (APCO) Chatham Co 911		
Jeff Shipp (LEC) Star Telephone		
Jimmy Stewart (NCAREMS) Hoke Co 911		
Slayton Stewart (CMRS) Carolina West Wireless		
Amy Ward (LEC) CenturyLink		<u>WebEx Guests</u>
Donna Wright (NENA) Richmond Co Emergency Services		
<u>Members Absent</u>	<u>Staff Absent</u>	
Secretary Eric Boyette (NC CIO) Board Chair	Marsha Tapler (DIT)	
Andrew Grant (NCLM) Town of Cornelius		
Jeff Ledford (NCACP) City of Shelby PD		
Niraj Patel (CMRS) Verizon		

**Call to Order**—Vice Chair Bone opened the meeting at 10:00 AM, asking 911 Board Executive Director Richard Taylor to call the roll.

**Roll Call**—Mr. Taylor called the roll of participants he anticipated to be on the phone. Eric Cramer did not audibly respond, but Mr. Taylor noted that he was logged into WebEx. Jeff Ledford did not respond, nor did Andrew Grant, but Mr. Taylor said he expected Mr. Grant to join later.

**1. Vice Chairman's Opening Remarks**—Vice Chair Bone took a moment to thank everyone for coming, observing that during the year there is so much going on that this annual retreat provides a chance to slow down and look at the big picture. He reflected that this process historically has allowed good conversations to take place, and that staff looks forward to the opportunity this retreat presents to receive good direction from the Board.

**2. Discussion on updating the State 911 Plan**—Mr. Taylor began his remarks on this topic by noting that since this is a work session, no motions will be made or votes be taken. He paused momentarily as Eric Cramer checked in on the phone, then concurred with Vice Chair Bone in stating that this is an opportunity for good, open, honest, frank discussion. He underscored that it is important for staff to hear what the Board has to say, as it sets the stage for staff assignments for the upcoming year. Mr. Taylor also pointed out that Marsha Tapler is absent due to having fallen and injured her arm and wrist yesterday afternoon, so Danette Jernigan will be standing in for her. Before Mr. Taylor continued, Vice Chair Bone interjected that he wanted to emphasize that this work session is more informal than regular meetings and encouraged everyone to open up and let it be organic rather than formal. Mr. Taylor concurred, "Absolutely!"

Mr. Taylor reviewed the genesis of the State 911 Plan, which began with the passage of Session Law 2007-383. He explained how, in response to the directive in that session law for the 911 Board to create and periodically update a "911 State Plan", the 911 Board enlisted the aid of a study group comprised of non-Board members representing the same associations 911 Board members represent, both public and private. He advised that group met periodically for nearly a year, ultimately proposing a plan to the Board in January of 2010, which the Board formally adopted in May of that year. He spoke about the findings and recommendations contained in that plan, touching upon the current status of each, observing that we have completed many, are still working on others, and yet others remain unfulfilled.

Mr. Taylor next spoke about the update to the 2010 plan that had been crafted by a second study group in 2012, although never adopted by the 911 Board. He explained that some Board members serving at that time were concerned about some of the findings and recommendations which that study group had presented, principally, though not exclusively, regarding secondary PSAP funding and PSAP consolidation. After a vote to adopt the study group's findings and recommendations failed, the Board just thanked the study group for its work but did not update the existing State plan, which Mr. Taylor felt was a real slap in the face to the members of that group after all the traveling and work they had done without any kind of compensation. He observed, however, that although not formally adopted, secondary PSAP funding and PSAP consolidation have actually been implemented in the intervening years; in fact, all of the findings and recommendations contained in that plan have either been implemented or are presently being worked upon for implementation by the 911 Board.

Mr. Taylor then explained that in 2014, rather than convening another study group to propose an update to the State plan, the decision was made to have the National 911 Program (<https://www.911.gov>) perform a National 911 Assessment instead. He felt that the assessment would identify potential areas of improvement for the state 911 system. It was begun in early 2015, with initial findings presented to Board staff in November of that year, but Mr. Taylor and the staff were disappointed with the results. He related that they felt the assessment findings were too "yes or no"; that they were more focused on what was specifically mandated legislatively rather than whether or not a desired outcome was being achieved, regardless of legislative mandate. Staff filed comments with the National 911 Program expressing its concerns, which the program incorporated into its findings as comments, but the final report as amended was not accepted by staff until late 2016, and even then, only grudgingly.

Although that assessment's findings were not used to formally update the State 911 Plan, Mr. Taylor noted that the Board has actually embraced and run with several of them, one good example being telecommunicator (TC) certification. He explained that many of the findings were helpful to the Board in determining its goals for both

2016 and 2017. He related that a small group of Board members met a couple of times in 2016 to consider updates to the state plan, and did come up with a list of comments on what issues it felt were important, which he displayed onscreen. He touched upon each item in the list, and although those items were never formally adopted within an updated state plan, he remarked that he, and he hopes the Board, would like to see a formal update to the state plan take place in 2018. Observing that he's enthused with the present Board composition, he reflected upon how everyone is engaged, how much they have accomplished and are accomplishing, and how he would like to get some direction from Board members on what the path forward should encompass.

Before opening the floor to Board member input, Mr. Taylor added that one absolutely imperative subject which must be addressed quickly is coming up with an information flow system to allow fast, accurate, efficient, and easy information sharing among PSAPs and 911 Board staff and AT&T. In researching that, Mr. Taylor discovered that DIT is working with Microsoft on just such a solution, called Dynamics 365. Staff has seen a couple of demos of the product, AT&T has been included, and Mr. Taylor feels it does exactly what we want it to do...and the icing on the cake is how it has the potential to totally streamline the PSAP financial reporting process as well. Although DIT and Microsoft have not quite nailed down what final licensing costs for the product will be, the price they have quoted, which will provide licensing to all the PSAPs, 911 Board and staff, and AT&T would be approximately \$57K.

While on the topic of easily sharing information, Mike Reitz opined that the eligible expenditure list needs to be clarified; that PSAPs are frustrated by wishing to purchase something which appears on the list but receive pushback from 911 Board staff about how much they can spend on that purchase. He contended that if the money is in the PSAP's budget, cost should not be an impediment to purchase. Mr. Taylor responded that in its effort to be a responsible steward of the 911 Fund, staff faces several challenges. As an example, he pointed out that different companies use different nomenclature to describe identical products or services, which is very confusing to staff—and PSAPs. He also pointed out that the 911 Board has placed caps on some eligible expenditures when it has determined that a product or service fully capable of meeting the PSAP's stated need is readily available at or below that price, although vendors will frequently quote much higher prices. He related how many times staff has seen one PSAP pay a much higher price *to the same vendor* as another PSAP did for *the identical product or service*, and in the interest of good stewardship cannot just turn a blind eye to such a situation; the staff has a fiscal responsibility to address the problem.

Several Board members joined in the discussion, which Vice Chair Bone applauded, but he speculated that it was getting too far in the weeds for today's meeting. He conceded that reaching a middle ground between the Board meeting its obligation to be a good steward of the 911 fund and PSAPs having the freedom to make purchases they feel are justifiable is a challenge. He pointed out that the Funding Committee has been working on trying to make sure we are good financial stewards, providing both stability and consistency in procurement, and that as much as he appreciates the feedback today's discussion has provided, it is an ongoing process; it is not an issue that can be resolved at this meeting. The discussion continued with Board members speculating that expenditure caps or creation of an acceptable "state rate" for procurement might be most effective in resolving this problem.

Mr. Taylor asked Board members to each recommend someone to represent their organization in forming a study group to craft a state plan update this year. He stressed that the people they recommend do not necessarily need to be from their organization, but rather someone whom they or their organization recognizes has a commitment to and expertise in 911; someone with whom they have interacted in their capacity as 911 professionals. He observed that with the ESINet project going live, it would be helpful to have people who are network and IT savvy, especially if they have PSAP experience, as that will equip them with knowledge about the challenges the PSAPs may face. He also expressed the hope that once the study group makes recommendations to the Board, that the Board respect its findings, and if necessary work with them to iron out any rough spots, not just simply fail to adopt the recommendations as happened in 2012, reiterating how great a disservice he felt that was to those individuals.

Discussion about whether to have Board members serve in the study group ensued, with consensus emerging that they would be encouraged to attend, but to have the study group membership limited exclusively to non-Board members. The topic of whether a facilitator might be helpful also came up, with both Mr. Taylor and Mr. Bradford noting that none had been assigned to any of the earlier study groups, but they would be amenable to such an appointment. That said, several Board members felt that would be a good idea, especially since Board

staff members do not need more responsibilities than they already have on their plates. Mr. Taylor agreed that appointing a facilitator this time could provide focus and direction, and that person could also regularly report progress and/or direct questions to the Board. Mr. Bradford characterized the issue of Board participation and/or liaison activity as a policy and efficiency issue, reminding everyone that Board members do not need additional workloads any more than staff members do. He suggested the Board could provide a few priority items to the study group, helping provide the facilitator a direction to pursue.

At ~11:10 AM Vice Chair Bone suggested everyone take a short break, and upon reconvening work on putting together a list of bullet points to provide a roadmap for the study group.

At ~11:30 Vice Chair Bone reconvened the meeting, advising that Danette Jernigan would record bullet point recommendations from the Board on her laptop and project them onscreen as they developed. After lengthy discussion among Board members, as well as input from both Mr. Taylor and Mr. Bradford, list that emerged was:

- Start with 2010 approved plan, 2012 proposed plan, and 2016 comments
- Look at national assessment as a starting point to develop a plan
- Organize the plan into sections that use the current 911 Board Committee structure
- Goal for completion of draft plan - June 2018
- Have the committee report on progress at the May 2018 911 Board “mini-work session”
- Have a detailed look at the eligible expenditure list
- Moving forward with ESInet - what is the status of secondary PSAPS?
- Five-year plan to be updated/revised every two years
- Review the financial reporting requirements

Conversation returned to study group composition; whether each Board member should suggest only one or more than one representative from their association, should that person(s) be a go-getter willing to confront the issues, etc. Mr. Taylor responded that he felt it was important to limit the size of the group—too large a group could become difficult to manage—so he would recommend only one representative per Board member. He embraced the thought of having those individuals be go-getters who are outspoken and willing to confront the issues, observing that even contentious relationships within groups such as this bring value to the process.

Timing of updates to the state plan was also discussed, with Vice Chair Bone suggesting a five-year scope for the plan, i.e. projecting forward for the next five years, but with reviews and possible updates every two years. Mr. Taylor concurred. The group also examined streamlining the financial review process somehow; Mr. Taylor observed it would be wonderful if it could be done, but reminded everyone that performing the review process thoroughly enough to meet our fiscal responsibility to be good stewards of the 911 fund is an extremely difficult job. He speculated that perhaps we are expecting too much detail, but asked how do we reconcile being any less detailed with meeting that fiscal responsibility? Consensus emerged that as complicated as the process is, it deserves further attention, further clarification; perhaps more written policies and procedures explaining the process in greater detail would help. An observation was made that it sounds like many times the same questions are asked repeatedly by different PSAPs, yet there is no public forum where the answers to those questions are available for all to refer to. Mr. Taylor said he would work with staff to compose an FAQ of commonly asked questions to post on the website.

At approximately 12:30 PM Vice Chair Bone proposed taking a lunch break, adjourning the meeting until after lunch.

Vice Chair Bone reconvened the session at approximately 1:15 PM, observing the timetable for the meeting was tightening up. He asked Mr. Taylor to touch upon the next agenda item lightly; to provide food for thought, and then move on to the following agenda items as quickly as possible.

**3.a) Discussion on grant cycles**—Reflecting upon this year’s rather unique grant cycle, Mr. Taylor said he had been thinking that perhaps two cycles a year could be beneficial; the first could possibly focus on consolidation or regionalization grants, and the second on PSAP enhancements. He speculated that doing it that way, PSAPs seeking enhancement grants wouldn’t be competing with PSAPs going after consolidation or

regionalization grants, as they are very different, to ensure that the consolidation and regionalization awards don't monopolize the process, i.e. "suck up all the money", allowing better opportunities for PSAPs seeking the lower cost enhancement awards to get them. Asked how the grant funds would be allocated between the different cycles, he replied that he thought perhaps two thirds for consolidations/regionalizations, with the remaining third for the enhancements. Discussion addressed topics such as: spacing of the two cycles; the workload impact on the Grant Committee; how to split up the Grant Fund total for the allocations; if discrete amounts could be prioritized in a similar fashion while retaining one application cycle rather than two; what to do about remaining funds in the grant account; and whether or not an arbitrary split doesn't defeat the purpose. Mr. Taylor also reminded everyone that grant awards do not have to be for the full amount requested in an application.

Saying he wanted to try to keep things on schedule and ensure plenty of time remains for the development of goals, Vice Chair Bone asked that this topic be taken under consideration, maybe discuss it in sidebar conversations, and bring it back up for Board discussion later.

**3.b)** Before completely leaving the topic of grants, Mr. Bradford was asked to discuss the distinctions between PSAP consolidation and PSAP colocation. He explained that although the grant application includes a definition of PSAP consolidation which is consistent with the FCC's definition as it appears in the TFOPA (Task Force on Optimal Public Safety Answering Point Architecture) report, a definition of colocation is not included. He pointed out that the distinction is when PSAPs consolidate, they not only combine into one physical presence, but they also combine under one governance structure, i.e. they operate under one governing authority. Conversely, he observed that colocated PSAPs, although sharing a physical space, operate under multiple governing authorities. Mr. Bradford noted that this is not an action item, rather it is something he wanted to make Board members aware of it, and perhaps it could be a topic for committee deliberation, as it is something that may well come up in the future.

Discussion touched upon how many PSAPs continue to have difficulty understanding the distinction. Mr. Taylor explained how colocation is problematic from a 911 Fund and financial review perspective, as all the agencies operating out of a colocated PSAP are not statutorily eligible to receive 911 funds, e.g. although they may dispatch emergency responders in response to 911 calls for service *transferred* to them from the primary PSAP, even if it is in the same room, they do not receive and process the initial 911 calls. He specifically cited Buncombe County as an example, where the agency entitled to 911 funds, i.e. the Primary PSAP by statutory definition, is Buncombe County Emergency Management, but it has used 911 funds to pay for expenditures incurred by the ineligible agencies it shares a space with, e.g. police and the Sheriff's Department, which has led to a nightmare for the Board's financial review staff, and has also resulted in litigation. That litigation, he added, which is likely to result in an appeal to the Board, is what prompted him to add the topic to today's agenda. Discussion of pros and cons for both consolidation and colocation ensued, and ultimately Vice Chair Bone once again observed it was good discussion, good questions, and good points for one of the committees to deliberate upon, but it was time to move on to the next agenda item.

**4. PSAP Managers Roundtable Discussion Summary—**Mr. Taylor solicited input from Board members, particularly those who attended the annual PSAP Managers conference in Greensboro, regarding what responses they've heard from the PSAP community to the roundtable discussion. Among the responses were: a reinforcement of the earlier suggestion of creating a financial FAQ on the webpage; hyperlinks from the FAQ pointing to vendors who offer their products/services on state contract; hyperlinks to eligible expense product descriptions; and hyperlinks to decisions the Board may have made in the past related to particular products/services which are considered current policy. Mr. Taylor mentioned that during the Board Chair's recent PSAP visit to Johnston County, Jason Barbour suggested that a specific cost cap should be allocated to implemental function cost claims rather than leaving it wide open. Discussion about the implemental function claims process ensued, with Mr. Bradford providing an explanation of how eligibility for such claims is embedded within the language of the 911 legislation. Consensus emerged that the PSAP representatives were pleased with the last hour of the session, when, feeling comfortable within a gathering of their peers, they were able to direct pointed questions to Board members, whether they were relevant questions or not.

**5. Legislative agenda for 2018—**Vice Chair Bone observed that this agenda item had been included to encourage Board members to share anything they may have learned about upcoming legislative initiatives which might impact the 911 Board; that Mr. Taylor did not have anything specific in mind when he included it. Chuck

Greene reported that he had heard some of “the same old stuff” about Board composition, etc., which may require, for lack of a better word, defense from the Board, but from his perspective he could not think of anything the Board needs to go after. Mr. Taylor asked Mr. Greene if he had heard anything relative to telecommunicator certification; Mr. Greene replied he had not, but Mr. Taylor then said that he had heard the NCACP (Police Chiefs’ Association) was going after that. He also shared that the Education Committee is putting together a stakeholders meeting concurrent with the NC APCO/NENA Telecommunicator Symposium in Greensboro in April to discuss its recent and ongoing work on telecommunicator certification.

**6. Open Discussion**—Vice Chair Bone explained that this agenda item was inserted to provide an opportunity for folks to brainstorm about goals, beginning with a review of last year’s goals. Mr. Taylor asked Danette Jernigan to prepare a flip chart to make notes on, then displayed a list of the 2017 goals onscreen identifying not only the goals, but what progress has been made in achieving them. The first had to do with training for both telecommunicators and PSAP management staff, which prompted him to digress from the list for a moment. He noted that Donna Wright has suggested, and Chairman Boyette has agreed with her, that the January 911 Board meeting be moved to Richmond Community College to coincide with the graduation of the first class to complete the college’s PSAP Manager Training course. He advised that both Chairman Boyette and RCC’s President will present certificates of completion to the graduates during that meeting. Returning to the list, Mr. Taylor commented on each of the entries as he progressed through it. Upon completion of that narrative, Vice Chair Bone opened the floor to discussion of what goals to establish for 2018.

**7. Establish goals for 2018**—Topics which were presented included improving per-call cost efficiency; providing telecommunicator training specific to the discipline the TC works within; providing funding to pay overtime to telecommunicator staff who must replace regularly scheduled TCs when they attend training; allowing 911 funds to pay for “train the trainer” courses; how training can be consistent when EMD is not ubiquitous; cybersecurity for PSAPs, possibly offered in the context of a statewide project; and reducing reliance on stand-alone back-up PSAPs once Primary PSAPs are connected to the ESINet. Other topics were: possibly providing a fixed amount of 911 funding sufficient to meet rule requirements, with any other expenditures paid for through different sources; how to handle video and other multimedia feeds to the PSAPs over the ESINet—perhaps establish standards for them; how to contend with the loss of valuable experience as more and more PSAP managers retire; making upcoming 911 Board meeting agendas and agenda books available to Board members sooner; and having minutes of committee meetings available online. As these topics were being addressed, Ms. Jernigan was recording potential goals based upon the discussion on the flip chart, with Board members and staff suggesting language and or revisions on the fly as the conversations progressed. The final list which was agreed upon was:

- Explore opportunities to expand continuing education (set up classes for basic TC instructor classes to teach in-house)
- Legislation to allow fund to pay for overtime for training
- Promote EMD statewide
- Reassess PSAP cybersecurity & utilize DIT contracts that are already in place
- Pursue mandatory TC certification
- Explore other funding opportunities / how to simplify reporting
- Establishing standards/rules for Next Gen 911

Mr. Taylor asked everyone to use a marker to place a check mark on the flip chart beside the four items on the list which they felt were most important prior to leaving for the tour of the US Coast Guard communications center, with the tally of those votes being reported at tomorrow’s 911 Board meeting.

**8. Tour of the US Coast Guard communications center**—At about 3:15 PM Ronnie Cashwell advised the shuttle vans to carry everyone to the Coast Guard station had arrived, and provided instructions on where to access them, etc. The meeting did not reconvene subsequent to the tour.