

DELAWARE COUNTY 911 BOARD
MINUTES
October 10, 2008
DELAWARE COUNTY EOC

Special Meeting

In attendance at the meeting was: Tom Homan, Jim Ward (for Glenn Evans), Sheriff Davis, Chief Martin, Chief Vest, Chief Honeycutt, Chief Morris (for Chief McIntire), Chief Donahue and Chief Schuiling (for Chief Farmer).

Excused Absence: Steve Lutz
Absent: Bill Shively

Others Present: Chief Tom Stewart, Orange Twp. FD; Chief John Bernans Liberty Twp. FD; and Chief Dale Lipps, Elm Valley FD.

- I. Chairman Homan called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m with the Pledge of Allegiance.
- II. Chairman Homan acknowledged the additional Fire Chiefs in the room and their concern about the 911 Director leaving. Chairman Homan stated that prior to the Board moving into Executive Session, he would like to here the concerns of the Chief. Chairman Homan reviewed the events of the past several days. This included the concerns 911 Director Lyons voiced at the October 7 meeting. Late Wednesday morning, 911 Director Lyons called and stated that he had submitted his letter of resignation to Dave Cannon. Chairman Homan asked if he could submit to the board his letter of resignation with more of an explanation. This letter was released to the 911 Board on Thursday (October 9) and the letter has been released to the media through a public records request. The resignation letter contained a chronology of the events since 911 Director Lyons hiring to his resignation. Chairman Homan stated that the immediate need is to identify an Acting Director. He has spoken to Dave Cannon about the situation and consideration about contracting this position out. Homan further expressed that consolidation without a Director who has the confidence of the 911 Board and the County Commissioners will lead to the ultimate failure. He further stated that the 911 Director needs to closely work with the County Administration.

Chief Bernans stated that he was shocked and amazed at the events and knows how hard the 911 Board has worked to make consolidation work. The number one priority of the 911/Communication Center is to be the best for the safety of the fire and EMS personnel. Chief Bernans encourages the board to be transparent and to make public the employment issue the 911 Director faced. Chief Bernans asked that the Board discuss the matter in an open forum so that all concerned and interested parties can be part.

Chief Stewart apologized for not being present before and he is here to support the 911 Board.

Chief Lipps stated that he is in full support of the 911 Board. He stated that even if the information is ½ accurate, he is appalled at the actions by the County. It is clear that the County did not buy into consolidation from the beginning. In order for this to work, both sides need to buy in from the beginning. Chief Lipps stated this is a disgrace, for what, a political play.

Chairman Homan asked the Board its pleasure to move into Executive Session.

Chief Vest stated that he had no problem staying in open session. He expressed that we are going to discuss strategy, and the 911 Board does not have the authority to hire or fire. He stated that looking at the 911 Director position, there are very few with the capability, skill and career wise, who would be willing to come into this current complex situation. Chief Vest stated that he is very reluctant to do anything immediately. We should take the lessons learned, get resolved. Chief Vest opposes starting over.

Chief Honeycutt stated that we already conducted a nationwide search and found the best candidate, heads above the rest. Credibility has been lost. It is essential and the priority is to determine how this 911 Board and the County will operate concerning 911 and Communication. Chief Honeycutt feels like he has put forth a year for nothing. He is committed to consolidation for the fire service.

Chief Lipps expressed concerns with the long-term issues between the City and County over 911/Communication. He wonders if it will ever work. Chief Lipps wonders if going to the MECC type of system is the best option to consider.

Chief Martin stated that this 911 Board was modeled after Miami County, and was considered one of the best in Ohio and even nationally. He expressed that from his perspective, he has been encouraged by the unity and direction that all the public service agencies have shown. Having said that, Delaware PD is doing their own dispatching, but believes it could be better done regionally. He believes significant efforts have been done to undermine this process, and only if 50% of this is true, it is still clearly that the County has obstructed this consolidation. Chief Martin stated that he has put a lot of time and effort into this process and sold this to his personnel. What has happened could be catastrophic. Chief Martin still believes that consolidation is the best if we can move through this turf war.

Sheriff Davis stated that he has been going through this process for over a year since he took office. After the resignation of the 911 Director, he approached the County Commissioners about taking over the entire 911 Communication Center. The Commissioners denied the request. Sheriff Davis stated that he would be glad to sit down and all work politely. He stated that there are different personalities that will be involved in the future. What is currently happening in the center is out-of-control, and control is needed.

Jim Ward stated that this is his first meeting that he has attended. He is here just listening. He stated that Glenn Evans was unable to be present for this meeting. Jim Ward stated that the reason this problem has been made has been the result of the dates in the MOU not met, and the authority not established. Ward stated that it is tough up stairs, he has heard very little problems, not aware of the day-to-day problems, and not privy to the operation.

Sheriff Davis stated that he was confused over the comment made by Jim Ward. Sheriff Davis stated that his Administration was investigating as a result of the lack of action taken by the County Administration. Sheriff Davis was in contact with the County Administration concerning the issue being investigated. 911 Director Lyons was asking questions to the County Administration about the investigation.

Jim Ward stated that he thought the 911 Board was responsible for the day-to-day operation.

Chairman Homan stated that the day-to-day operation was being coordinated through the County Administrator. The County Administrator showed up initially and since then has not attended any meetings. He further stated that if the County Commissioners were not aware of the investigation, they need to find out why.

Jim Ward stated that he was not aware of a criminal investigation. He became aware when it got elevated.

Chairman Homan stated that it has never been disputed that the County has the right to hire/fire. The Board has felt like it has been pulling teeth to get information trying to get the 911 Director hired from the County Administration. The confidence level on the future ability to recruit a new 911 Director is extremely low. He felt that the professionalism between the County Administrator and the 911 Director would be better. He voiced concerns with the 911 Director not receiving information. This is an extremely petty environment to work and clearly shows the undermining of the County. Chairman Homan will be recommending that the Mediator be contacted to see if a resolution can be met. There has been tension since day one. The immediate issue is the day-to-day operations.

Chief Vest stated that the board has been struggling to make consolidation work; however the County has not been cooperating. The County has the ultimate financial responsibility. The 911 Board has been trying to make everything else work. The 911 Director needs to be responsible to someone. We clearly defined the role of this position.

Chairman Homan stated that the Mediator would help facilitate this discussion.

Chief Vest stated that we need to go back to the drawing board. The door is always open. He expressed concern about the 911 Director how he went from one meeting of

concerns and frustration to leaving without providing more time to get problems resolved.

Sheriff Davis stated that he apparently had a lot going on. This is a tough environment to work in. This is not a retirement job. This requires someone who will provide 12 hours of work, someone dedicated that will take care of everyone.

Chief Vest stated that he had also heard of other things going on including the physical assault. When these types of situations occur, an internal review is immediately conducted. Chief Vest stated that his Powell PD supervisors have the capability to send an employee home. The actions to be taken are then reviewed the next business day.

Chief Lipps stated that speaking of County employees, why aren't these issues addressed. He stated that it seems that someone is not doing their job. He stated that this should be investigated.

Jim Ward stated that is like saying someone is guilty before the fact. He believes that we should wait until all the facts are collected.

Chairman Homan asked if the person has been placed on leave.

Jim Ward stated that they are waiting on one more Commissioner.

Chief Bernans stated that the investigation is a separate issue. We are looking for leadership. Delaware County should be held accountable, this situation smells funny.

Sheriff Davis stated that this could have been handled previously. Information was taken to the County Administrator. There was no resolution as a result of this. It was then taken to Human Resources, and no resolution taken. It was only at that point that it was directed to the Sheriff Office. The Sheriff Office then brought it to Gary Lyons and suggested that this person be placed on leave.

Chairman Homan asked the 911 Board for their recommendation of where we go from this point. There will be change with the Commissioners in January. What do we do in the mean time?

Jim Ward stated that there was no one in-house that can do the job.

Chief Schuiling stated that he was not aware that he was supposed to be coming to these meetings. He stated that he saw what happened. There was a lack of direction. The County Administrator clearly has more on his plate. He stated that the County Administrator asked the County department heads if anyone could assist in supervising the center. Chief Schuiling stated that Chief Farmer was the only one that stated he could do it. Chief Schuiling stated that the assault issue was addressed.

Chief Martin stated that this is the reason why the Delaware County should have embraced the 911 Director.

Chief Schuiling stated that he expected much more initiative from Gary Lyons. He stated that Gary Lyons was clueless on the ALERTS CAD system. He said he was appalled at the direction that the 911 Director was going.

Chief Martin stated that he thought the 911 Director did an outstanding job. He came to the City 911 Center and spent time with the personnel to understand the system. He came in during the morning and night. Everyone knew that he had to wrap up on the commitment he made in Sandusky prior to being hired.

Chief Vest stated that he takes exception to the comments made about the 911 Director. The County Administration should have been present. The 911 Director should have the authority 24/7 to place someone on paid leave. If someone within his organization physically assaulted, they would be looking for a new job.

Chairman Homan stated that we did not have the authority. There are plenty of examples where the County did not embrace this consolidation. Observations from the beginning indicated this. If these issues can't be fixed, we need to go back to where we were concerning the operation.

Jim Ward stated that Dave Cannon does not have the authority to hire or fire.

Chairman Homan asked if he has the authority to place someone on paid administrative leave.

Jim Ward stated that in emergency situations he does. Normally, these are brought to the Commissioners. He doesn't know why this wasn't. He is recommending that a firm be hired to manage the 911 Center.

Sheriff Davis again stated that he offered to temporarily take this over.

Chief Vest asked Sheriff Davis who would be assigned and how it would work with the 911 Board.

Sheriff Davis stated that the person would report to both the Sheriff and the 911 Board, with the Sheriff having the final decision.

Chairman Homan stated that the 911 Board does not meet on a day-to-day basis, so the person needs to report to someone.

Sheriff Davis agreed that the person has to be accountable to someone.

Jim Ward stated that Dave Cannon has been being blamed for the problems. The inadequacies of placing the person on leave, he asks why Dave Cannon is getting blamed and not the 911 Board.

Chief Honeycutt stated that he takes exception that this 911 Board is blaming Dave Cannon. The issue is that the 911 Board and County are not agreeing with the direction that the 911 Center needs to go.

Chairman Homan stated that he has spoke to Dave Cannon about the issues and asked him to attend the meetings. He has replied that he does not report to this 911 Board and he reports to the County Commissioners. As long as there is a mind set of not working together, nothing will get accomplished. He has spoken to Dave Cannon about the possibility of contracting the management out. The County has previously considered RW Kimble to manage. The thought was to have them manage until the end of the year and allow the new Commissioners to get established. He further stated that a trip to Miami County's 911 Center is scheduled for October 21. He believes we should continue with this tour in lieu of our regularly scheduled meeting that day.

Chief Martin stated that he recommends that the Mediator be brought back and to clarify the issues discussed

Chief Donahue stated that if we go with the private management operation on a temporary basis, what are we going to do until that is established?

Chief Vest stated that bringing in a management company may provide us an outside differing opinion. The outside could validate the concerns. He further stated that a good manager can manage anyone. Any good manager knows the limitations. We need a good solid person, someone independent looking at this.

Chief Honeycutt stated that he recommends to the County Commission that a consultant be hired to manage the 911 Center until the end of January 2009. This consultant would work with the 911 Board, County Commissioners and the County Administrator. Motion was seconded by Chief Vest. Chairman Homan also stated that he will enlist the services of the Mediator. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Homan reminded everyone that there would not be a meeting on October 21 and anyone interested in going to Miami County, to contact Chief Donahue.

III. There being no further business before the Board, they adjourned at 10:40 a.m.