

SALT LAKE VALLEY EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
November 20, 2019 Meeting Minutes
VECC Board Room
5360 Ridge Village Drive, West Valley City

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Gary Whatcott; South Jordan
Mr. Wayne Pyle; West Valley City
Mr. Mark Reid; Bluffdale
Mr. David Dobbins; Draper
Mr. Kane Loader; Midvale
Mr. Brett Wood; Herriman
Mr. Kyle Kershaw; South Salt Lake
Undersheriff Jake Petersen; UPD
Mr. Mike Reberg; SLCO
Chief Dan Petersen; UFA
Mr. David Brickey; West Jordan
Mr. Scott Harrington; Taylorsville
Mr. Mike Shelton; Cottonwood Heights

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mr. Mike Morey; Alta
Mr. Konrad Hildebrandt; Riverton
Mr. Doug Hill, Murray
Ms. Gina Chamness; Holladay

OTHERS PRESENT:

Mr. Tim Tingey; Cottonwood Heights
Mr. John Evans; West Valley City
Mr. Layne Morris; West Valley City
Mr. Jason Mazuran; UPD
Ms. Colleen Jacobs; West Valley City
Mr. Jeff Carr; South Jordan
Mr. Layne Morris; West Valley City
Mr. Troy Carr; Herriman
Mr. David Church, SLVECC
Mr. Brian Smith; Banjo
Ms. Natalie Seitz; Banjo
Mr. Scott Young; Snow, Christensen & Martineau
Ms. Lisa Burnette; SLC911
Mr. John Inch Morgan, SLVECC
Mr. Jonathan Bridges; SLVECC
Mr. Jeff Monson; SLVECC
Ms. Beth Todd; SLVECC
Ms. Gigi Smith; SLVECC
Ms. Shelly DeJong; SLVECC
Ms. Mary Bain; SLVECC
Ms. Jonna Nichols; SLVECC
Mr. Eran Bair; SLVECC
Ms. Trevicas Unsicker; SLVECC
Ms. Nicole Lopez; SLVECC
Ms. Lin Shaffer; SLVECC
Ms. Ambir Widdison; SLVECC
Mr. Andrew Smiley; SLVECC
Ms. Ashley Peck; SLVECC
Ms. Dominique Butner; SLVECC
Mr. Robby Petersen; SLVECC

Mr. Dominique Carter; SLVECC
Ms. Missy Widdison; SLVECC
Ms. Geana Randall; SLVECC
Ms. Andrea Partridge; SLVECC

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Mr. Gary Whatcott welcomed everyone to the Board of Trustees meeting and commented that there was a large agenda. He mentioned there was a close session scheduled at 3:00 p.m. to bring in a new candidate for the Director for introduction.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Gary Whatcott asked if there were any citizen comments. Robert Petersen is a resident of Magna as well as a dispatcher at VECC. He commented that he would be leaving Wednesday and was asked to mention some of the reasons he was leaving. He reported that SLC Dispatch has about 70 employees; 77 with the new group. They serve 2 police, 2 fire and 1 animal control agency. They are still hiring for more, they would like to have about 85 employees. They serve 300,000 citizens. In comparison, SLVECC has just under 100 employees, with a few more dropping. We cover 10 police, 8 fire, and 11 animal control agencies, all of which have different policies and procedures to keep up with. We serve over 900,000 citizens; 3 times as many with only 20 more dispatchers. Robert felt we needed to look at even more staffing. The dispatchers we have been losing are not just those looking for more money or those that don't want to do as much work. We've lost dispatchers who have won awards for being Civilian of the Year; every dispatcher leaving right now is a trainer that works significant amounts of overtime. Everyone he's talked with is extremely stressed and afraid of the future. Robert very much wanted to stay. He is a lead dispatcher and a trainer. He works significant amounts of overtime and has been working over the past year to make this the best organization possible. He's gone over the policy manual, he's worked with scheduling, breaks, he's helped everywhere that he can, as well as cross-training on Spillman to learn how that works. There has been a lot of good work towards making improvements in policies to help with some of the problems with some of this work we have done. But in the end, he decided he couldn't stay; he lost trust in the Board and he didn't think the Board could solve these problems. When it was announced that the Board was considering the budget increase as a possibility and you requested other options, it made him feel that they didn't realize what was going on in dispatch despite significant attempts to show you what the problems were and despite the numbers being very clear as far as call answer times, staffing and the number of people leaving. If you have a really great environment where things are easy and you are getting paid a lot, you aren't going to leave. If you lose one of these, it becomes a difficult decision. We've made the decision very easy for our dispatchers because they know they can go elsewhere for a better environment with less stress and better staffing and get paid more. We are pushing people away from working here because of the stress level and staffing; there is constant overtime with back to back calls and working with officers while taking calls, missing radio traffic. Robert will be taking a pay increase even though he's been here 8 years and making a decent amount of money, especially when you account for the lower cost in insurance. He wanted to be clear, things have been done, there have been strong efforts to make things work better such as changing the 911 protocol, limiting talk time on radios for non-priority traffic. But there is only so much you can do when what you need is more people on the floor. Improving the market adjustment would make a difference as far as stopping people from leaving, but that was always just a patch, trying to get more people not to go. At the end of the day, we need more than this; we are in a crisis. Neither the environment or the pay is enough to attract lateral hires. We need people that are trained now. Robert hoped that the Board could, at a minimum, make the market adjustment happen today and get it approved, as well as confirm that the double pay for overtime will continue, as long as there is mandatory overtime. People are working 50-60-hour weeks on a consistent basis, which is not sustainable. We need to award the employees that are sticking it out. It's a very difficult situation. He hates to leave but getting a new job and getting out of this stressful situation and bad environment is something he cannot say no to. He urged the Board to remember the crisis we have and keep it in mind for any future discussions regarding staffing as well as remembering the employees are the core of this operation and they will make you succeed or fail and need to be taken care of.

Dominique Carter is a resident of West Valley as well as a SLVECC Dispatcher. He has been with UPD since 2015 and this will be his final week here at SLVECC. He wanted to give some perspective to the numbers and the people behind the numbers. From the meetings he has attended here, the Board has stressed culture change and that pay isn't the issue; he 100% agrees with this. But he also wants to stress to everyone that dispatchers didn't pick this job because of pay. He is leaving to go to SLC and it's not because of pay; he's only getting \$1.00 more per hour; and he can't put into perspective what that dollar means to him because it's peace of mind, which is why he's leaving. He's leaving due to issues with trusting the Board. He knows the Board is making what they feel is the right decision for them and their cities, but he realized you get what you pay for. When great dispatchers leave, they must be replaced with new people, who it takes time to get them trained. He wanted to stress that the resources provided to SLVECC have not been enough. Dominique wanted to be an officer, but if he was an officer, he couldn't feel safe in this environment, and this worries him for the people in the field now that he works with every day. He mentioned a caller last month whose son was hanging; she was on hold for 911 for 4 minutes and disconnected because she didn't have help. She took the time to look up UPD's non-emergency number in hopes of getting help. Luckily a dispatcher was able to get them help. This is an extreme example, but it happens daily, from routine calls to this. As a company, he would love us to take accountability for what's going on. We've had a dispatcher take his life; we've had others attempt to and want to. We spend a lot of time here, especially due to mandatory overtime, which compounds personal life issues. We need staff and he feels that nothing will wake the Board up. These are just a few reasons he felt he needed to resign. If he stuck it out, there's 8 other people that would have taken his position. SLC is the biggest competitor here; they will be hiring again in a few months, and he knows many more people will try and leave. He doesn't want to see this place go down. He asked that the next Director that is chosen be accountable, be a true leader, innovative and open to change, a vested interest in this place and be willing to listen.

With the large agenda presented, Gary Whatcott terminated the public comment period so that we could move forward.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 16, 2019 BOARD OF TRUSTEE MEETING

Motion –

. . . by Mr. Kane Loader; to approve the minutes of the October 16, 2019 Board of Trustee Meeting; the motion was seconded by Mr. Wayne Pyle; the motion carried unanimously.

OPERATIONS BOARD REPORT

Chief Jeff Carr mentioned they discussed the Autism Safety Roster; the entire valley is on one roster, and it's moving forward. There was also discussion about a new program called One Worker program, someone responding to a resident to do a job can call dispatch and see if there is a hazard on the home. The police can come out and do a keep the peace if that's needed. They also continued discussion on moving away from Pro-QA, Beth had commented that it had already been discussed at the Trustee level and that SLC had already moved away from EPD. They talked about Spillman and the upgrade that was done; there was confusion as to whether the upgrade included getting everyone on the same server and same data-base; it did not and there is still more discussion to be had. Kim Vershon with Versaterm gave a briefing on some of the pros and cons regarding converting data for those moving to Versaterm. Sandy commented on this, they have recently been through this, moving from Spillman to Versaterm. They chose to just simply stop paying Spillman and use the system as a legacy system and just move forward with Versaterm; the cost was minimal. Finally, they discussed the anonymous email the Chief Carr had received along with some others outlining some of the things and other issues with dispatch and they had a discussion there. He volunteered to head up an effort by the Fire and Police Chiefs to actually come out to SLVECC at various times and talk with employees to discuss the issues. There was a lot of discussion, including what was said today, some of it being pay, culture and environment. The Operations Board can certainly work on some of those other issues that are not pay related, which they will do. In the next few weeks, there will be several times set up where the employees can come in so that we can have an opportunity to speak with them.

Approved Policies

Beth Todd mentioned that one policy which had a change made to it was the 911 policy approved by Users and Operations Board; to standardize the way we do things for both Spillman and Versaterm.

Banjo Presentation

Brian Smith and Natalie Seitz wanted to overview what's been looked at and answer any questions. The Board will be considering a Resolution that will allow Banjo to work with VECC to receive 911 call data in order for them to work with customers they have executed agreements with. They aren't asking to work with VECC directly, but in the event that they are working with some of the entities whose data is housed at VECC, they can work with them and the data. A critical piece of what they do is knowing what information they give to officers is relevant to the event they are going to; they need to know the event type from CAD. They would like to partner with VECC to provide a better service for their customers who happen to be members of the areas that VECC serves. Kyle Kershaw asked if they are partnering with any other dispatch centers in the state. Weber-Morgan and Central 911, Springville, Pleasant Grove and more recently, Washington County are some that they work with to gain access to their CAD information. There is a state cooperative contract and state funding; they aren't here to ask for anything like that, they are working with the state and other 911 centers for data providing purposes. Gary commented there was a Letter of Intent in the packet for Banjo and VECC to work together. John Inch said that David Church has reviewed and approved this for the Board to consider.

Motion –

. . . by Mr. Jake Petersen; to direct the Executive Director to enter an agreement with Banjo according to the Letter of Intent; the motion was seconded by Mr. Dan Petersen; the motion carried unanimously.

MID-YEAR BUDGET ADJUSTMENT

Jeff Monson wished to provide some additional information; over the past few months, there has been information provided staffing and there has been feed back from this Board. He has gone out and met with some of the different Trustees to try and narrow down the information that he can bring back to answer the questions and provide the information so that the Board can make a decision. From some of the letters and feedback that Board members have received, we have put together some different initiatives moving forward. He understands that this situation is a long-term situation; pay is one thing but not usually the only reason people leave. In speaking with individuals, this was really brought up and we are looking at all the different areas and concerns we are facing. There are some short-term initiatives, trying to make some changes right now to try and stop the exodus and cover some of the needs immediately. There are also long-term initiatives we want to put forward and in the next budget year, talking about this. Beth Todd said we do take our mission seriously to answer 911 calls and keep our responders safe. To this, we need employees and a sufficient number to be able to fulfil that mission. We are also obligated to help take care of the health and wellness of our employees and fairly compensate them for the workload. On turnover, Jeff presented numbers that have already been discussed. One of the questions asked was why, specifically, are employees leaving. He has been reaching out to individuals who have left and have received some information back. A number of individuals have left to SLC. The feedback we received was due to pay and benefits. Another issue we have been facing is due to being a large center, we are very complex with many different things going on. SLC dispatches for one agency. Losing people causes heightened stress as well. Some of the other individuals that left for better shifts; shiftwork can be very difficult. After the last meeting on November 12th, we had 7 more individuals who gave their notice. 3 of those will be going to SLC and a few will be attending school and have requested part time. We understand there are a lot of reasons that individuals leave, but we feel that the finance piece is an important factor to look at. A survey was also put out and asked why people were leaving; the survey results are in the Drop box for review. Right now, with the first question, the hourly wage increase, 63% said this is one reason they would leave. There were other reasons in the "other" column, with management, shift work, stress of the job and complexity listed. Beth mentioned that the 63% would prefer a wage increase to a retention bonus. On the question asked as to why someone would leave VECC, 53% chose to comment other and some of those were because they wanted to choose more than one option, and 27% wanted to express concerns with management. 24% would leave due to workload and 16% would be for financial reasons.

Some of the short-term initiatives we are working on is reducing the time between hire groups to improve staffing numbers, and we have looked at the training program to see how we can compress this a little to get

people competent and able to work positions. Another option is to hire part time; we have gone to other agencies and asked if they can assist us with some part time employment to help boost our numbers. We will also approach SLC and do shared staffing. Our shift schedule has improved coverage; initially we went to 12-hour shifts, but we shortened the length of the next shift bid and added some 8 hour shifts back in. On work flow, we are working on trying to get employees trained to do direct entry in either system to cut down on the number of transfers and lower the stress on both sides of the room. We are looking at ways to communicate; employee committees and putting greater emphasis on this. Morale needs to be improved, which we discussed last month. We will be having more employee meetings with the Managers as well as have some of the non-operational assigned employees help with staffing out on the floor. Jeff reported he was looking at SLC as they are a major competitor. He looked at the training wage and possibly going right to the starting wage. In taking the training wage out, Jeff reallocated that money to different areas. This assists in bringing the start wage up. The time period between 4-8 years has been looked at and money has been allocated here to close the gap. He has also reviewed and will put together a proposal for a step plan for the next budget year. Beth explained that some of the long-term items to work on include an internal audit of the organization; looking at the staffing needs and work load as well as an overview of the entire organization. SLC did a similar type of audit and the cost was about \$110,000. We want to reorganize the operations floor, which will help improve work flow around the floor and communications between different areas and it will integrate the Supervisors better with the floor, making them more accessible. We would like to collaborate with our agencies to do some leadership training for lead dispatchers, supervisors and managers. We would also like our own in-house academy to work with POST and Priority Dispatch to have our own instructors; we can then hold classes when we need to so that we don't have to hold off hiring people based on an outside organization's schedule.

Jeff feels that with some of these initiatives it will help us deal with a lot of the concerns we have. The main concerns include improving staffing, the schedule, communications and morale. With recruiting, we have hired 5 new employees who will start on December 2nd and 5 additional people who will start on December 16th.

Gary Whatcott asked the Board members if they had any questions for Beth or Jeff. Chief Petersen asked Robert and Dominique if these initiatives worked for them. Robby said that the primary thing the wage increase will do is achieve parity. Once you've achieved parity, it will slow down the loss; people will be less likely to want to look for something else if it will cost them money or seniority. Overwhelmingly, the core issue that's exaggerating every other issue is staffing. Even if we were fully staffed and everything was great, this would be the most difficult dispatch center to work at because of all the agencies and policies. We have the hardest workers out there; he believes they should be the best paid. Dominique also commented that hiring people is great, but those new hires are not going to make much of an impact for at least 6 months. Jeff is proposing to move our hire wage to \$18.31 and go from there. Chief Petersen asked what it would cost to get to parity. Jeff feels it would be \$355k. The \$310k would get our current employees up to where they should be at. Wayne Pyle appreciated Jeff and Beth meeting with him, and a lot of the ideas brought up were either raised at the previous meeting, by himself, or other people. As he looks at the initiatives mentioned, he hasn't seen a ranking of priority, chronological estimate of how long it will take and sequential integration of this plan as to how it will be implemented, along with how it will work. He asked if it's been put together. Beth doesn't have it put together to show the Board in a presentation; her top priority right now is staffing, getting them on faster. We have 10 new hires starting in December 5 on Versaterm and 5 on Spillman. She did talk with the trainer coordinators; we are looking at just over 2 months to have them be able to help with call volume and be on their own answering calls. Improving the work flow and stress on each side, by doing direct entry into either Versaterm or Spillman will be in December with the Versaterm upgrade. We are already trying to improve communications and will always be an ongoing initiative. The shift bid starts next week and we are working on scheduling and working on improved coverage. Wayne said they are good steps but there is still not a plan; he encouraged them to go back and put everything together in a plan sequentially. This provides a light at the end of the tunnel of results. He also asked if these initiatives have been taken and communicated to the employees and what are they doing for that. He cares that the effort has begun, the initiative is going, and the employees understand where we are going and what we are doing with it. The pay scale is not going to take care of this problem if the other issues aren't taken care of. And if there is no plan and no communication, they will be here in the same setting with the same concerns next month. Brett Wood is in favor of moving forward on the parity problem. His Chief came in and spent a half a day here, sitting with a few dispatchers, and it was a great experience. He likes the idea of a step plan and he likes where it's going; we need to be more competitive with Salt Lake City. Wayne Pyle doesn't believe anyone here disagrees with what has been said.

The difference in opinion is how close are we and what do the numbers actually show. It has also been illustrated by numbers and prior meetings that the efforts that have already been taken, twice, in this budget year, have gotten us closer to parity. His emphasis would be in terms more of what is going to make the biggest difference and when. He believes this is a management issue largely in how it's planned, communicated and prioritized. If this Board votes and wants to do a third-time pay increase for 1/3 of the numbers, he believes we are still going to lose people if we don't have a real actual and lead plan to get us there. Chief Petersen commented that the Board owns the problem because they are the Board; they've allowed whatever has happened to happen. He only sees two things that would make a difference right now that the Board needs to do. He believes they should go for the full parity and make sure the right Executive Director is hired as fast as possible. He doesn't think sending Management away to build a plan is the best thing; he wants a Director hired, and then have him take the ideas and initiatives created as starting points to talk about. Then that new person will come back to this Board and tell us what is really going to fix the issues. Mark Reid would propose giving a dollar certain to the new Director and have them come in and identify what the problems are and then spend the funds in the way they would like to manage it. He hears that dispatchers are working 12-hour shifts in this type of work, he would never allow that to happen due to the stress. But he doesn't know what they go through. Gary Whatcott commented if they were months away from hiring a new Director, he might be inclined to jump on the immediate problem and solve it with the pay. He's a little worried they are getting ahead of themselves, being just around the corner in hiring a new person. He is interested in a more holistic approach; we aren't at 100% parity, but we are close. He believes 30 days isn't a big wait for someone to come in and take an examination of things; he likes the idea of getting something more than just pay increases, but looking at things with a new Manager, a new set of eyes. He's not saying more money wouldn't help but he's unsure if it's the right thing to do. He wants to fix the problems holistically rather than one piece at a time. Kane Loader believes there is a pay problem, a parity problem with SLC, who we are trying to keep up with and hold our staff. Cities are doing this to each other as well, it's the nature of the beast that we have today. He believes the staffing issue is a management issue, along with the environment. He believes someone, from a Management perspective, needs to look at this and come back to the Board with some fix ideas. Mike Shelton commented that given the proximity of the new Director decision, the pay needs to be moved forward only when there is buy-in from the hired person, who will be the expert with these kinds of operations. Tim Tingey agreed with fixing all the issues are necessary but fixing the pay issue and parity can be fixed right now. He thinks they can solve one of the problems and let the new Director focus on the management and culture, getting the parity piece done. This sends the message to the employees that parity matters; he doesn't believe the new Director won't talk about parity, competition and wanting to compete as effectively with other jurisdictions as well. He believes the parity should be fixed as soon as possible. The Board discussed the numbers and John mentioned that the audit hasn't been because they are waiting for a final determination on the CAD refund we may get. In the interest of time, Gary Whatcott asked for the approval of disapproval of Resolution T19-15, adopting the proposed amendment to the FY 2020 budget, which includes the \$310k.

Motion –

. . . By Chief Dan Petersen, to approve Resolution T19-15; the motion was seconded by Undersheriff Jake Petersen; the motion carried with 61% by roll call vote with the following votes; Bluffdale – No, Cottonwood Heights – No, Draper – Yes, Herriman – Yes, Midvale – No, Salt Lake Co. – Yes, South Jordan – No, South Salt Lake – Yes, Taylorsville – No, West Jordan – Yes, West Valley – No, UFA – Yes, UPD – Yes.

Motion –

. . . By Mr. Mark Reid, to move the meeting in to a closed session to discuss pending or reasonably imminent litigation; the motion was seconded by Mr. Wayne Pyle; the motion carried unanimously.

The meeting moved into closed session at 3:08 p.m.

Motion –

. . . by Mr. Mark Reid, to move the meeting into an open session; the motion was seconded by Mr. Kane Loader; the motion carried unanimously.

The meeting moved into an open session at 4:30 p.m.

There was nothing else to discuss at this meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 4:31 p.m.