

**MOBILE COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS DISTRICT**  
**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
Minutes of December 14, 2023

***Commissioners Attending:***

Roy Hodge  
Sam Cochran  
Chris McLean

Robert Adams  
Glenn Hodge

Pat Mitchell  
Timothy Hughes

***Staff Attending:***

Kristi Stamnes, Acting Executive Director  
Hayley Clough, Recording Secretary  
Katrina Brewer, Communications Manager

Jeffery Hartley, Attorney  
Ashley Carlisle, Comptroller  
Robert Jackson, Radio System Administrator

---

The REGULAR board meeting of the Board of Commissioners was held on December 14, 2023, at the Mobile County Communications Center.

**Call to Order** – Chairman R. Hodge called the meeting to order at 8:02 A.M. He welcomed and introduced new board member Sheriff Sam Cochran.

**Approval of Minutes** – Commissioner Adams made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 9, 2023, meeting, seconded by Commissioner G. Hodge, all approved.

**Treasurer Report** – Commissioner Mitchell made a motion to approve the November claims list, seconded by Commissioner G. Hodge, all approved.

Commissioner Mitchell made a motion to approve the MCCD Budget-To-Actual seconded by Commissioner Hughes, all approved.

**Personnel** – No Report

**Planning** – No Report

**Communications** – Commissioner Hughes reported that the radio department is still working on the preliminary plans for the Oak Hill tower site project. The plans have been received but we are still working to correct some things with the retaining wall and then will submit it back to the City of Mobile. Chairman R. Hodge updated Commissioner Cochran on the Oak Hill tower site project.

Commissioner Hughes reported that the plans for the warehouse are still being worked on to go out for rebid.

Commissioner Hughes reported that we have received notification from Harris that some of our radios will not be manufactured anymore and they will stop supporting them. He suggests going ahead and ordering new radios to replace the old ones. Some of the radios have been in use for 12-13 years. Robert Jackson reported that the concern is obtaining replacement parts for the old radios when they stop making them. We currently repair or replace radios as needed but will not be able to continue to do that very soon. Commissioner G. Hodge asked if we have an estimated date yet to which Robert responded that we don't have a definite date, but we are already starting to feel the effects of this transition. Commissioner Cochran insisted that we ensure they are truly ending manufacturing of these radios and that this is not a ploy to get us to purchase new ones. Robert stated that he does believe Harris is serious about ending the manufacturing because his department has already tried to order replacement parts and they are no longer available. He believes it would be a good idea to get the ball rolling on obtaining new radios. Acting Executive Director Stamnes stated that she and Robert have talked about a 3-year plan for obtaining the new radios and would start with the oldest radios first and then can plan accordingly with the budget on getting all new radios over time. Commissioner Hughes made a motion to have Acting Executive Director Stamnes and Robert work on forming a plan for this and then the board will take action at the next board meeting, seconded by Commissioner McLean, all approved.

Commissioner Hughes reported on an issue that has been ongoing with the Mobile County Public School System bus radios. Several years back, MCPSS had Motorola install radios in the buses and the installation was not done correctly.

The radios have a discrete emergency button that can be pushed, and this button in particular is accidentally engaged very frequently. Because the radios are on our radio system, the alarm goes out to every console and alerts the dispatcher of the emergency. This is a problem for the dispatcher because it happens so often, and they must clear the emergency alarm before they can handle other business. The alerts do not come with any information regarding the bus, or its location so there is no way to send help to them if they are in distress and the dispatchers ultimately clear the message so they can continue with other calls. Commissioner Mitchell stated that there was a system in place with the MCPSS dispatch office to try and fix the problem, but it doesn't seem to be working. Robert stated that his team can fix this problem by rewiring the discrete emergency button to not engage and the main emergency button will remain functional. Commissioner McLean asked if there was any way to identify which radio is assigned to each bus to which Robert answered yes, they would make a log when rewiring the harnesses. He stated that MCPSS may have this list, but it has not been supplied to us and they only host on our system, we do not pay for or maintain it. Commissioner Mitchell stated that there are approximately 750 buses and Robert stated that it would take roughly 15 minutes per bus to fix the problem. It would have to be an ongoing project, but it can be done. Commissioner G. Hodge asked if we should contract this out, to which Mr. Hartley stated yes, it would need to be contracted out as we would have the liability if we completed the work. The minute we touch any of the equipment, Motorola is going to cut ties with it. Chairman R. Hodge stated that since we cannot physically do the work, it sounds like something MCPSS should handle and maybe we could give them some type of ultimatum. Commissioner Mitchell stated that he would suggest contacting one of the superintendents and go from there. He does not think they have been made aware of this problem yet. Commissioner Hughes made a motion to allow Acting Executive Director Stamnes and Robert to contact the school board to resolve this issue and report back to the board, seconded by Commissioner Adams, all approved.

**Emergency Medical** – Commissioner Hughes reported that he did contact MCEMS, and all is going well.

**Building/Configuration** – Acting Executive Director Stamnes reported that we are waiting on the architect to do a feasibility study and then we will continue to move forward.

**Board Attorney** – No Report

**Executive Director** – Acting Executive Director Stamnes introduced Escambia County Sheriff Heath Jackson to the board. He has presented Acting Executive Director Stamnes with a plan and financing to build six tower sites in his county, but he would like to tie into our core. He stated that they do not own the land that they will be building the tower sites on, but he has had many discussions with the landowners and is ready to have leases in place and permission to build. She stated that we would prefer our radio guys to perform the maintenance on the tower sites but replacing parts and lightning insurance would be their responsibility. She suggested a fee of no less than \$15,000 and having someone in their county be trained to work on their radios. She has also spoken with Mr. Hartley about drafting an MOU. One of the benefits of having them on our core would be for the State Troopers and other mutual aid agencies as it would expand their coverage as well. Sheriff Jackson stated that they are currently on a system that is not well funded, but he has been doing the work and obtained grants and other funding for this project, but they are not in a position to purchase a core. They cannot tie into Baldwin County because they are Motorola and Montgomery is too far away. His goal is to increase the coverage to keep public safety officials safe. There are many areas in their county that have minimal to no radio coverage and that is a huge concern. Commissioner G. Hodge asked if he had anyone on his team with Robert's skillset, to which he stated that he does not, but he doesn't think there is anyone in the region that is as knowledgeable as Robert. He has heavily relied on Robert's knowledge during this whole process. Acting Executive Director Stamnes stated that there was study conducted and it showed that with the addition of the six tower sites and microwave off of Baldwin, they will increase their coverage to 98%. Commissioner Hughes made a motion to approve this agreement with the figures Acting Executive Director Stamnes stated, seconded by Commissioner McLean. Commissioner McLean stated that he would like to add that the MOU be in place as well. Mr. Hartley stated that he has already started working on it and will get with all parties involved for final changes. All approved.

Acting Executive Director Stamnes stated about 3 years ago, the board purchased Pursuit Alert software and we have had many problems since deployment. She reached out to Mobile County Sheriff's Office, Mobile Police Department, and several other agencies for feedback on the software and they all agree that it is a great idea, but it doesn't work as intended and she suggests that we do not renew our contract. Commissioner McLean asked if the reason it is not working is because citizens are not downloading the app to which Acting Executive Director Stamnes stated it's a combination of that, officer safety having to engage the alert while pursuing the chase, some of the equipment is still not installed in the units, and the lack of actual engagement. We pulled some reports and most cities that do have it installed have not used it

at all and MPD in particular has had over 100 pursuits, and it has only been activated six times. Mr. Hartley asked if the contract had been gone over lately to ensure it does not automatically renew so that we may cancel this contract correctly. Acting Executive Director Stamnes stated she has not gone over it lately but did say that when it was first approved, it would be set for two years and then reevaluate on the third and we are already at the end of the third year. She stated that we are currently paying \$82,500 annually for the software. Commissioner McLean stated that if the software is just not being used, we should probably pull out of the contract. The board had high hopes for this to be a success in Mobile and still thinks it's a great idea. Commissioner McLean made a motion to cancel the contract following whatever protocols we need to, seconded by Commissioner Cochran, all approved.

Mr. Hartley asked where we were with the MOWA tower site issue to which Robert responded that Gary Hand has been working closely with the internet company owner on removal of his equipment. Gary stated that he has removed his equipment from the shelter and has been instructed not to touch the tower equipment. He stated that there is a quote coming in soon from a company for the removal of the equipment from the tower. The owner told Gary that he wanted to bring in a crane to remove the shelter as he wanted to keep it, but Gary advised him against doing that. Mr. Hartley stated that he would send him another letter in the next day or two reminding him not to touch anything and not to bring a crane in to remove the building.

Acting Executive Director Stamnes informed the board that we had an employee with a milestone year of service. Brandon Bray has been with us for 1 year in November but was out on training during the meeting. He works in the IT Department. Brandon is always smiling, happy to come to work, and loves to help others. He was presented with a service pin.

Acting Executive Director Stamnes stated that back in the summer, we put out a bid for a new 9-1-1 system, but the cost of the received bids was much higher than anticipated. Instead, we rejected all bids and voted to do a system refresh for a significantly lesser cost. We then budgeted for the system refresh and the actual quotes that have come in have been less than budgeted for. This will just be a hardware upgrade; the software will remain the same. Commissioner McLean made a motion to approve the system refresh, seconded by Commissioner Cochran, all approved.

**Old Business** – Acting Executive Director Stamnes stated that the current software the fire departments use is being bought out and they will lose many of the functions they currently have if they remain with the same software. Last month, a quote was presented to the board, and it was tabled so that more research could be done. Acting Executive Director Stamnes presented the board with a few options on how to proceed. Initially, the quote was for \$108,000 but she was able to negotiate down to the \$78,000 that was presented last meeting. She now has a quote that has been broken down into items for review. The 9-1-1 tie into CAD is \$10,000 and the cost for everything we are currently paying for with the old system will be \$48,800. The additional costs are for things that involve the actual operations like scheduling among other things. She did state that it is cheaper to have a group rate rather than pay for each service individually. Commissioner Hughes stated that one of his concerns was being audited and it come to light that we are paying for something that is not communications based. Acting Executive Director Stamnes informed the board that we are audited every two years and they have never had a problem with us paying for this public safety software. Commissioner Hughes stated that he is just concerned if we are the right body to be paying for the operation software as we don't do that for anyone else. Commissioner McLean stated that he understands his concern and informed him that there used to be grants that the agencies could apply for to help with funding, but they usually required the agency to meet a certain percentage and they still just didn't have the funds to do that. He stated that he believes this aids communications and operations of these agencies but ultimately benefits the citizens. Commissioner Mitchell asked if Mr. Hartley saw any issue with this to which he responded yes and no. The statute is over 40 years old and does not account for the advances in technology that we have had. He stated that the struggle is where do you draw the line? There will always be someone that needs help with something, and this won't be the last time we come to this crossroads. It will be up to the board to define the line. Commissioner McLean stated that this conversation has happened several other times about various issues over the years, but he believes this is something we have already been paying for and should continue to do. Commissioner G. Hodge asked if this is something we would present to the auditors prior to audit to which Acting Executive Director Stamnes stated no, if they had an issue with it, it would be a finding on the final report, but we haven't had that problem and Ashley Carlisle was an examiner for 10 years prior to working here and she doesn't see an issue with it either. Commissioner McLean made a motion to approve the quote with all the options, seconded by Commissioner Adams. Commissioner Hughes checked with Mr. Hartley again to ensure this is fine legally to which Mr. Hartley read the statute declaring 9-1-1 boards can establish, operate, maintain, and replace an emergency communication system. He stated that he does think this falls under the statute and should be fine to move forward with. Commissioner McLean amended his

motion to state that only the costs of the functions we are currently paying for will continue to be covered by this board, seconded by Commissioner Adams, all approved. Shane Loveitt from Saraland Fire Department asked to speak to the board on this matter. He did research into this software and proposed it when he realized the old software would no longer work. Saraland Fire Department is one of two lifesaving departments in Mobile and because of that, they are required to do more reporting. These agencies did not plan on having to fund this software as they were under the impression it would be covered for them as it has been in the past. Commissioner Adams asked Shane if he was saying that we aren't covering the costs for what they need to which he responded that he didn't know what was presented to you to be covered. Commissioner McLean stated that the MCCD board has agreed to continue to cover the costs of the functions they are currently paying for with the new system, but nothing additional. Mr. Hartley stated that he has been working on the contract and marked out several things including them not having a warranty on their work. He will continue to work with everyone to get the contract completed.

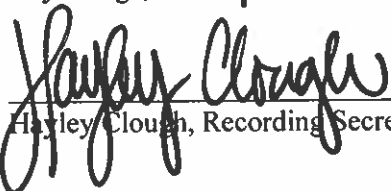
**New Business** – Chairman R. Hodge stated that the board needed to vote on a new Vice Chairman. Commissioner G. Hodge nominated Commissioner Adams for the position. Commissioner Mitchell nominated Commissioner McLean for the position. Chairman R. Hodge called for a vote. All in favor of Commissioner Adams for Vice Chairman: Chairman R. Hodge, Commissioner G. Hodge, Commissioner Adams, and Commissioner McLean. All in favor of Commissioner McLean for Vice Chairman: Commissioner Mitchell, Commissioner Hughes, and Commissioner Cochran. Commissioner Adams is now Vice Chairman.

**Announcement** – Next board meeting to be held January 11, 2024. Chairman R. Hodge also informed the board that a day or two after the last board meeting, Dr. Bowden's wife passed away. Dr. Bowden served this board for many years. Acting Executive Director Stamnes sent flowers to him on behalf of the board, and he sent a thank you note in return. He read the note to the board.

**Adjournment** – Commissioner Adams made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner McLean. Meeting adjourned by 9:12 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Roy Hodge, Chairman

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Hayley Clough, Recording Secretary