

SITING, RULES & ORDINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING
November 12, 2013
5:30 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jerry Potts
Susanna Zimmerman
Tim Dudley
Bill Oliver (arrived @ 5:35 p.m.)

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

COUNTY PERSONNEL PRESENT

Jay Dunn, County Board Chair
Mike Baggett, State's Attorney's Office
Steve Bean, County Clerk
Dan Sanner, ETSB Director
John Thomas, ETSB Assistant Director
Rick Bright, ETSB 911 Board Chair
Jeannie Durham, County Board Office

Meeting was called to order by Chair Jerry Potts at the Macon County Office Building.

MINUTES

Motion to approve the minutes of prior meeting (10-2-13) made by Tim Dudley, seconded by Susanna Zimmerman, and motion carried 3-0.

CITIZEN'S REMARKS

None

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Macon County, Illinois Emergency Telephone System Ordinance

Dan Sanner explained that the original ordinance was adopted in 1995 prior to the referendum. It was done in preparation of the referendum of November, 1996 on which there was a question posed to the public as to whether or not they wanted to approve a surcharge of up to \$1.25 toward the creation and maintenance of a 9-1-1 system in Macon County. The vote was overwhelmingly yes. The ordinance, although the referendum approved \$1.25 per wire line connection for the 911 surcharge, indicated that 90 cents would be collected because that is what the ad hoc committee had determined would be sufficient to pay the expenses. Since that time, over the last 17 years, it has been 90 cents per wire line connection. It served us pretty well up until about 5 years ago when new technology started catching up with us. Next Generation 911 came along and even though everyone knew it was coming, nobody knew the cost. Now we know the cost. It is considerably more. The entire 911 industry throughout the country is moving toward digital databases and mapping, so we don't really have a choice. We now find ourselves bringing in 90 cents per wire line, but spending considerably more each year. There was a period of a few years in the early 2000's when more was brought in than was being spent and a considerable amount of money was set aside for future years. The Board has been very careful about how it spends the public's money. To keep the budget balanced; this reserve has been drawn upon over the last 5 years. Routine expenses are exceeding the income. There are some major acquisitions on top of that. The reserve funds are being drawn down dramatically. This year \$800,000 more is being spent over what is being taken in. The reserve funds have been cut in half in the last 5 years and

the trend is not going to change. Ways to counter the trend are being sought. Expenses are being kept as low and conservative as possible administratively. There is hope at the state level. The wireless surcharge, which we have no control over, will eventually bring more money into the 911 systems. Their idea is not to raise it, but to redefine how the money is distributed. They've been talking for 5 years and there's no movement yet. We can't wait and hope that will happen. We need to be more proactive to make sure the 911 system is properly funded. The nice thing is that the \$1.25 has been approved and the County Board simply has to adopt a new ordinance stating that \$1.25 is the new surcharge. If that amount that was approved on the original referendum, it will require a new referendum. That is quite an involved process and as seen in other counties does not pass. We are not asking to do that.

Tim Dudley asked if the funds that are received are strictly from landlines or if they get a portion of cell phone 911 funds. Dan Sanner explained that their funds come from a combination of land lines, which the Board has control over, and the wireless, which the Board does not have control over. Tim asked if the fact that there are less and less land lines over the years has hurt some too. Dan said yes, that with the decline in population in Macon County and the decline in the number of land lines in use as more and more people go to wireless instead of land lines has decreased the revenue.

Jerry Potts asked, of the \$800,000 that is being spent, are the reserves gone. Dan said it is in the process of reducing the reserves. In the fiscal year just ending, out of that \$800,000, a quarter of that amount has been spent. In the coming fiscal year, the remainder of the \$800,000 will come. It is being spread over 2 fiscal years. There are still some reserve funds left, but the trend is clear that each year it is being drawn upon and it can be anticipated that in another 5 years the reserves will probably be used up. Jerry asked if the \$1.25 will cause them to break even or if they are still losing. Dan said they would still be losing, but at a slower rate. It should bring in an additional \$15,000 a year. Jerry said he did not realize that it had been 17 years since there had been any kind of increase and with the population and the number of land lines declining.

Bill Oliver asked if there was any chance there would be any legislation or movement to tax the wireless phones. Dan said they had been trying to do so for several years. During the last legislative session, there was a bill pending that would have redefined how the wireless surcharge is distributed. That would have increased the amount that comes to 911 systems from 54 cents per cell phone account to about 71 cents per cell phone account. That would have been a nice increase, but that bill did not even come up for a vote. We hope to see some movement on that in the next year or two. There is a lot of lobbying going on in that direction.

Tim Dudley said that if legislation like that would come through in the next year or two, we could tailor it or reverse it if something like that did come about.

Bill Oliver asked about addresses that have more than one phone and if the surcharge is being collected on all the phones or if it is just charged to the residence or business. Dan explained that if a residence or business has individual phone lines, more than one, then each phone line connection is assessed a surcharge, but most businesses will have a phone system that are handled differently. There is a formula that is used where they are paying about 5% of what they would otherwise. They get a significant reduction in the amount of surcharge that they are paying.

Instead of the full surcharge for each line, it is 5% of the total number of lines they have. Bill asked what the primary expenses are. Dan said the things the 911 board can spend money on are defined by the state statute. They include anything that is directly to operating a 911 system such as administrative staff, rent, equipment for administrative purposes, the dispatch center, the 911 phone system, digital recorder to record all phone calls and radio traffic (about \$200,000 item), the CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch) system equipment, the 911 trunks, extension lines into each firehouse in the county so they can answer 911 calls in an emergency situation, all the addressing and digital mapping of the county, lots of software and servers, maintenance agreements (over \$100,000 a year), etc.... Bill asked if they had picked up any of the outlying phone companies like Consolidated. Dan said yes. Bill asked if they contributed anything back into the system. Dan said they provide database information, but those customers are paying the 911 surcharge just like all the other customers.

Jerry asked if the \$800,000 was mostly for the technology. Dan said yes. The 911 phone system is being updated to be compatible with Next Generation 911. That allows text messages to be sent to 911 systems. That seems to be extremely important. Jerry asked for an explanation of the Next Generation 911. Dan said that is a whole new operating platform from what has been seen in the last 17 years. It allows for any kind of communications device such as a cell phone, text messages, notebooks, the new cellular watches to access 911. This will provide a pathway for all of these devices. Jerry asked if there was an estimate on how far into the future this system upgrade will be. Dan said the vendors are saying it is easier to upgrade than upgrades were in the past when all kinds of equipment had to be ripped out and replaced. Now, software upgrades with a bigger server can get it done. Even though the upfront costs are much higher than we've ever seen before, the ongoing costs and ability to upgrade is much better and easier. The new system will also allow interaction with other 911 systems. In that past there have been 911 calls that went away and were answered by somebody a thousand miles away. It was a huge effort to successfully get that call back to where it belonged. With the new system, it will be a matter of seconds to get the information to where it belongs.

Jerry said it seems like at some point in the future, another referendum would be need to raise the \$1.25. Dan said possibly, but they hope not. The hope is that this increase from 90 cents to \$1.25 will help bridge the gap. There is a lot of long term planning for whole new different ways of funding 911. It may not ever come to a new referendum. Jerry asked if once the new equipment is purchased, if things should level out and not be as expensive. Dan said they should level out, but will level out at a higher level than they are now. After the Next Generation expenditures, if everything is running smoothly, your base line will have raised so that just maintaining things will be more expensive than they used to be. Jerry asked if the \$1.25 should be enough. Dan said yes.

Bill Oliver asked if the 911 system taped the Law Enforcement Agency and if it's a part of the 911 system they have. Dan said yes, it tapes (digitally records) all incoming 911 calls, all outgoing calls related to 911, and all radio traffic including police, fire and ambulance. That is a requirement set by the Illinois Commerce Commission. Bill asked if any of the other government entities contributed any monetary value to the system. Dan said no. Bills asked how much more income the 35 cents will give over and above what you have now. Dan said approximately \$15,000 in addition to current which should bring the total wired and wireless income to approximately \$950,000. Bill said he was asking because Dan had said it would be easier to

overhaul the system later at the \$1.25. You said you may not be getting enough money to run it, you said this would help alleviate some of the problems but not necessarily totally, so why don't we give you what you need instead of having to piece mill it. Dan said in order to give us what we need, we would have to go back to the public with a referendum asking for something higher than the \$1.25 and it is the feeling of the 911 Board that they did not feel like they wanted to do that.

Tim Dudley said that with all the money spent in this county and this city on the police departments, ambulance service, etc... it would be a shame not to have an acceptable 911 system and so Tim Dudley made a motion to approve passing the resolution on to the Finance Committee with a recommendation to approve, seconded by Susanna Zimmerman, and the motion carried 4-0

CLOSED SESSION

None

OLD BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Bill Oliver, seconded by Tim Dudley and motion carried 4-0, and meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Jeannie Durham
Macon County Board Office