

Special Meeting Minutes
Spokane Regional Emergency Communications Governing Board
May 2, 2023

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chief Cody Rohrbach called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. The following Board members were in attendance:

Board Members

Chief Cody Rohrbach (Chair) – Spokane County Fire District 3
Chief Brad Richmond (Vice Chair) – Airway Heights Police Department
Undersheriff Michael Kittilstved – Spokane County Sheriff's Office
Chief Dave Ellis – Spokane Valley Police Department
Chief Frank Soto, Jr. – Spokane Valley Fire Department
Chief Brian Schaeffer – Spokane Fire Department
Assistant Chief Howard Johnson – Spokane County Fire District 8
Gayne Sears – Citizen Representative

Staff

Lori Markham, Executive Director
Kim Arredondo, Deputy Director
Dusty Patrick, Technical Services Director
Brad Kane, Dispatch Operations Manager
Heather Thompson, 911 Operations Manager
Tim Henry, Finance Manager
Kelly Conley, Communication and Media Manager
Cherell Yates, Office Manager

Auxiliary Partners/Guests

Brian Werst, WBM
Chief Lonnie Rash, SCFD 8
Chief Rick Beghtol, City of Cheney
Mark Schuller, City of Cheney

2. Discussion and Possible Action Item(s)

Cheney Request for Membership

Lori Markham stated there was a request from the City of Cheney to have their police dispatch join SREC. Lori introduced Cheney Police Chief, Rick Beghtol and City Administrator, Mark Schuller. Rick explained the cost for maintaining their own dispatch center is becoming increasingly too high and because of the rising costs, they are also following behind technology wise, and positions are becoming more difficult to fill. Staffing is beyond critical, current staff are all working 12-hour shifts, and one or two more are anticipated to leave. Rick added that if Cheney PD joins SREC, Cheney will still have an office to maintain their 24-hour records center, and provide services to Airway Heights and Kalispel, support their Municipal Court with warrants and protection orders, and can process routine calls, i.e., utility calls.

Mark Schuller reiterated the dispatch center is just not sustainable anymore. They have considered this over the last couple years, and it just makes sense to join the regional system. Cheney Fire, Eastern Washington University (EWU), and other partner agencies are on the system, which supports mutual aid and creates more clear and concise communication in emergency situations. Additionally, the labor union contract is expiring for the dispatchers and Cheney is already struggling with wage and benefits.

Lori explained that though SREC's staffing is not ideal, it is getting better. The newest academy of seven will be on the floor by end of May and a new academy will be in June with hopefully four to eight new hires. This will put SREC in a better position to take on Cheney PD dispatch. Conversations have been had with SREC's Law Dispatch Supervisors regarding the additional workload if Cheney were to join; they will be able to handle the additional work, and there should not be a need to make any changes to the radio channels. SREC is updating the member/non-member policy to include: All membership requests must be in place by June 30th for the upcoming budget year. Lori stated she is working with legal on drafting an ILA with the City of Cheney for dispatch services and recommends the Board extend the same 'member rate' to Cheney as was done with the Spokane Fire Department (SFD), for the remainder of 2023, with the presumption that Cheney will sign an SLA by June 2023 for services. Lori explained that based on past experience with the City of Spokane, verbiage has been added to the ILA that if Cheney decides to change their mind and not sign an SLA with SREC for 2024, they will be required to pay back fees at the non-member rate for the months services were provided.

Dave Ellis stated he fully supports having Cheney PD join SREC and the regional system but does have questions regarding the capacity of current radio channels, specifically channel 2. Dave asked if Cheney dispatchers will be coming over to SREC. Lori explained they will be given the same offers as SFD and will have to complete the background process. SREC would love to take on the four dispatchers Cheney currently has and have them join the June academy. Rick stated he has had those hard discussions with the dispatchers and there are mixed feelings, questions, fears, etc., so not sure if they will all come over, but the newest dispatcher will probably come. Mark explained that Lori had offered to come out to the center and speak with the dispatchers, which he feels could help answer some of their questions and ease their fears. Michael Kittilstved stated he is filling in for Sheriff Nowels and they both fully support the idea of Cheney PD joining SREC, but they also have questions about the capacity on channel 2, and how a major incident could impact that. Lori added that there is no opposition to adding an additional channel in the future but is currently looking to address the immediate request and how many channels current staffing can handle. There will be a need at some point to reexamine radio channels across the board. Dave suggested moving forward with Cheney PD's request and have a study done in the next year or two to assess the capacity of the radio channels. Howard Johnson clarified that Cheney PD already has subscriber units on the radio system, so there would be no additional impact to radio talk group loads. Brad Richmond explained having Cheney PD join SREC and be on the regional system is the right thing to do, particularly regarding Cheney Public Schools and the safety of the kids, having everyone on one channel is vital. Capacity and channel issues can be dealt with along the way as we evolve and move forward.

Brian Schaeffer asked about the radio consoles in Cheney dispatch. Lori explained those consoles would come over to SREC which could also help with the request from Spokane International Airport (SIA) for two additional radio consoles. If Cheney joins SREC, two of their consoles could be given to SIA, which would save the city of Spokane roughly \$200,000 that it would have cost SREC to provide SIA with new consoles.

Heather Thompson explained current 911 calls for the City of Cheney are relatively short because SREC answers the call, verifies the location and phone number and then the call is transferred to Cheney dispatch for processing, so Cheney joining SREC will add time to the SREC 911 call time processing. Now is not the ideal time to add that to the call receivers, but they can handle it and it will be better once the seven trainees are on the floor later this month. Lori asked if Cheney had a time frame for the transition to happen. Mark explained they would like it to happen as soon as possible, but also do not want to hinder SREC's operations, so they do have a little flexibility. Rick clarified there is some

flexibility as long as no one else leaves Cheney PD dispatch before the transition happens. Lori stated that if Cheney joins SREC, which is what it looks like the consensus is at this point, SREC will do what needs to be done to keep the responders and citizens safe, even if that means transitioning sooner than anticipated. Brian stated regardless of what was happening with the City of Spokane, SREC and the SREC Board's focus always remained on the community and responder and citizen safety.

Brian Werst explained there were lessons learned with the City of Spokane and the draft ILA for Cheney includes language regarding compensation if Cheney changes their mind or moves dates out further. The updated language encourages SREC membership. Lori added she is working with Tim Henry (SREC Finance Manager) on the financial piece and getting an updated budget to include Cheney, to the Board for approval. SREC will be working with Cheney to pull the data surrounding call volume and calls for service. Mark added there will need to be some community training for the citizens of Cheney on when to call 911 or Crime Check versus the Cheney business line for utility questions, etc. Lori reminded the Board that Cheney would fall under one of the smaller agencies and thus have Board representation through Brad Richmond who represents the Northwest Leadership Small Cities/Towns.

Dave Ellis motioned to grant the Cheney Police Department's request to join SERC. Brad Richmond seconded. All were in favor. Motion carried. Lori wanted to clarify that the Board was approving that Cheney was joining at the membership rate until the SLA is signed. The Board unanimously agreed that it will be at the membership rate. Rick and Mark thanked SREC and the Board for their consideration.

3. Adjourn

Adjourned at 2:26 p.m.



Board Member
Governing Board



Board Member
Governing Board