

*City of Evanston
Emergency Telephone System Board
Emergency 911 Committee Special Meeting
Police and Fire Department Headquarters
909 Lake Street, Evanston, Illinois
Thursday, June 25, 2009
7:00 p.m.*

Board Members Present:

David Blatt, M.D., Community Representative
9th Ward Alderman Coleen Burrus
Police Chief Richard Eddington
7th Ward Alderman Jane Grover
Division Fire Chief Thomas Janetske, Director of Operations, Office of
Emergency Preparedness
Mr. Perry Polinski, Communications Coordinator

Board Member Absent:

Fire Chief Alan Berkowsky

Staff Present:

Deputy Police Chief Barbara Wiedlin, Support Services Division
Deputy Fire Chief Sam Hunter, Operations
Mr. Curt Kuempel, Assistant Communications Coordinator
Delphyne Woods, Recording Secretary

Guests:

Erin Dorn, Northwestern University student
Yvette Freeman, Northwestern University student
Linnea Jacobs, Northwestern University student
Betea Stern, Northwestern University student

Presiding Officer:

Alderman Jane Grover, Committee Chair

Summary of Action. This special meeting of the Emergency 911 Committee is held in the community room of the Evanston Police and Fire Department Combined Headquarters to introduce newly-elected Aldermen

Coleen Burrus and Jane Grover, and newly-appointed Community Representative, Dr. David Blatt. In addition, everyone will tour the Station, with particular interest in the Emergency 911 Operation Center.

Alderman Grover calls the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

1. ***Introduce New Board Members.*** At Mr. Polinski's suggestion, everyone introduces themselves.
2. ***Approval of Minutes.*** Division Chief Janetske moves to approve the January 22, 2009, meeting minutes, Mr. Polinski seconds, so moved.
3. ***History of the Emergency 911 Center.*** A Power Point presentation prepared by Mr. Polinski outlines the Emergency 911 Center's history originating nationally in 1968 in Haleyville, Alabama. In 1970, Evanston was the first North Shore community to implement an Emergency 911 System, which was the fifth in the State of Illinois.

On November 6, 1990, the Evanston Emergency Telephone System Board was established. Initially a 75¢ surcharge was placed on all landline telephones by referendum.

On May 9, 1991, the digitally computerized E911 Center became operational. In 1994, an enhanced E911 system was implemented delivering specific data on where to go and the location of the caller. Since 1994, there have been three major Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) software and equipment upgrades. The next upgrade is scheduled for 2010.

In 1995, due to increasing maintenance costs and long term operational expenses, a referendum was put to vote and the community supported an increase in the E911 landline surcharge to \$1.50.

In 2000, the Board opted to have increasing wireless calls routed into Evanston Public Safety Answer Point (PSAP) 9-1-1 trunks. Illinois State Police did not have the staff to answer emergency calls which, by default, would have been routed to them had the Evanston PSAP elected not to receive wireless 9-1-1 calls.

Wireless calls have increased steadily. In 2008, wireless calls exceeded landline calls. However, in terms of location determination, wireless calls are less accurate than Enhanced 911 landline calls as they can only transmit latitude and longitude. Digital mapping CAD software is required to plot wireless callers' location. The surcharge on wireless subscribers is determined by Illinois State legislation.

After September 11, 2001, the Board began investigating contingency plans, redundancy, and system improvements should a 911 Center be knocked out in a catastrophic incident.

November 5, 2002, all Northwestern University 911 calls were cut over to the Evanston 911 System, establishing Northwestern as a secondary PSAP. Initially, 911 calls went only to the Campus Police which was not sanctioned by the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC). This required extensive coordination and cooperation between the two operations sharing each entities' databases.

January 1, 2008, the ICC lowered the subscriber's fee from 75¢ to 73¢ and increased redistribution back to local PSAPs, so currently we now get 58¢.

Voice over internet protocol (VOIP), using the computer as a telephone, is the new technological challenge for the E911 Center in that there is presently no cost recovery. VOIP is viewed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as an information technology, not a communication technology. Public safety and communication industry groups such as Associated Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) and National Emergency Number Association (NENA) are currently investigating the Illinois State 911 funding model to accommodate calls from VOIP, text messaging, and other future developments. Nevertheless, companies such as Vonage (\$1.25 per line) and AT&T (\$1.50 per line) are voluntarily remitting surcharge revenue.

Division Fire Chief Janetske reports that in May 2006, the E911 Board, in conjunction with Police and Fire Departments, examined then current emergency communications and how to enhance them. There were extensive coverage issues throughout the City, dead zones where Fire Companies in the field could not clearly communicate back to the 911 Center, particularly on foot.

It was decided a repeater system was necessary. Ultimately a taller antenna was installed as the main transmitter behind the Headquarters 911 Center, another transmitter/receiver at Ryan Field on top of the football stadium, a receive site at Fire Station #2 at Madison and Custer, another receive site at the South Water Tower down near Pitner, and now a third receive site at the new Fire Station #5 in northwest Evanston.

These receivers operate through a "voting system." If a signal encounters interference from terrain, bad weather, cell towers, other vehicles with powerful radios, big buildings, foliage, sunspots – nearby antennae will "vote" on the stronger signal, send it into the underground fiber network throughout the City, put it back into transmit sites and rebroadcast a stronger signal. Some problems remain, particularly in building penetration, but outside it is reliable and an order of magnitude improvement.

Mr. Polinski reports that the Police already have a second Police channel. They use the same footprint as the Fire Department and, for redundancy and diversity, use the underground fiber network instead of being at the mercy of AT&T telephone lines.

Mr. Polinski continues on to future technology. Since December 2007, similar to accepting wireless calls, the 911 Center accepts transfers from OnStar in GM vehicles. OnStar call takers transfer emergency calls to local 911 Centers, these calls are accompanied by location data. The Ford/Lincoln/Mercury Synch system will soon do this as well as luxury vehicle ATX Inc. systems. There is no arrangement for 9-1-1 cost recovery attached to PSAPs accepting calls from private vehicle transmitters.

In December 2008, responding to demands for equal access to 911 Centers for the deaf and blind disabled, the FCC mandated PSAPs to accept calls on 911 trunks from relay services. Relay services utilize webcam images and text messages from their customers. Emergency situations are transferred via an intermediary signing or texting to the PSAP. There are some issues whether relay service call takers are able to handle emergency situations, or whether they should be allowed to report on what is seen or heard in the background of webcam transmissions beyond the customer's message.

In January 2009, nine Northwestern Blue Light Emergency Telephone Posts went online on the outskirts of the campus which are routed directly into the City of Evanston PSAP 911 trunks. These calls have the advantage of automatic location transmission should the caller be unable to tell where they are. There are four in the residential neighborhood surrounding Northwestern University, and five along the CTA Elevated stops.

Funding for the Enhanced 911 Act of 2004 is nearing its sunset. The State of Illinois will be required to submit a plan, and the City will receive grant money from the State. APCO and NENA are working on changing the funding model to reflect evolving technology.

Capturing all the information coming in through these various media is the challenge. In addition to stationary VOIP, there is also mobile VOIP. Commercial carriers put the onus onto the subscriber to keep one's location data up-to-date on their personal website. Thus, if you are on business in New York and have not updated your location, your Evanston home or business address would appear in the New York 911 Center should it receive your VOIP 9-1-1 call. Also, there will be transmitters built into helmets for bicycle or motorcycle riders. New technology must effectively transmit information to the proper PSAP including location of the caller, whether the caller is conscious or not, disabled or not, whether there is a medical emergency, an explosive situation, electrical hazard, or toxic material hazard. PSAPs also must be able to pull information from other databases to determine neighborhood conditions.

4. *Tour of the Facility.* Conducted throughout the Headquarters.

5. *NENA Webinar: "Next Generation 9-1-1."* Mr. Polinski presents an edited webinar recapitulation of the challenges to and shortcomings of present E911 Centers, and a guide to broadband funding opportunities, including the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP), and the National Technology Investment Agency (NTIA). (<http://www.nena.org/>)

Alderman Grover mentions that as we move toward "Next Generation 9-1-1" technology, it will be necessary to change the name of the Board, since the word "telephone" will have become obsolete.

Mr. Polinski indicates that, despite burgeoning new technology, there still are rural areas in Illinois and elsewhere without even basic 911 service. Throughout the state various communities utilize all levels of technology and expertise, not every municipality even has an IS or GIS Department.

6. *Other Business.* The next E911 Committee Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 27, 2009, possibly in a new location, room 3650 at the Morton Civic Center. Alderman Grover asks for any further business, there is none.

7. *Adjournment.* Alderman Grover moves to adjourn, it is seconded, so moved. The meeting adjourns at 8:32 p.m.

PP:djw