

House Energy and Technology

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Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the impacts of the COVID 19 crisis on the statewide 911 system.

First, I will emphasize that during these unprecedented times the 911 Board has, as our highest priority, ensured the effective management and oversight of the statewide Next Generation 911 (NG911) system.

- The 911 system has continued to operate reliably throughout the COVID-19 crisis.
- In early February, we began working closely with our medical control at the Vermont Health Department to ensure our 911 call handling protocols were appropriate for the evolving situation. Our call-takers began asking COVID related screening questions in early March and continue to do so today.
- In mid-March, we began carefully monitoring 911 call volumes and the health of Vermont's six Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs).
 - I can report there has been little change in overall call volume and no reports of unusual sick leave usage at the PSAPs to date.

As I reported to this committee on 5/1/2020, the COVID-19 situation has resulted in a delay in the implementation of the INdigital NG911 solution. Originally scheduled for July 22, the implementation date has been postponed until October 22, 2020.

- Consolidated Communications will continue to provide their fully-hosted NG911 system until October at the existing monthly recurring charge...which is approximately **16k more per month** than the INdigital solution... we expect about **48K** in additional costs just to keep the system operating through October.
- In addition, we expect to incur about **10K** in project management costs through October (provided by the Agency of Digital Services).
- Obviously, if there are any further delays, there will be additional costs of about **20K per month through the end of 2020**.
- Additionally, in FY20 Our COVID 19 costs for personnel, overtime, equipment to build out our Emergency Operations Center, and other COVID costs is expected to approach \$44,000..00

Once the INdigital solution is in place, the Board will begin to see the expected savings in monthly recurring costs for the operation of the statewide system.

The postponement of the INdigital implementation means that approximately \$1.17 million in implementation costs will be moved to the second quarter of FY21. As you likely know, the 911

Board has carefully planned for these implementation costs in each of the last several budget requests.

The Board remains concerned about the recent, and ongoing, pressures on the Vermont Universal Service Fund (VUSF).

- The VUSF is managed by a fiscal agent contracted by the Public Service Department (PSD).
- The Board was notified earlier in FY20 that the VUSF may not be able to support the entire FY20 appropriation to the 911 Board.
- Unfortunately, those projections are now becoming a reality and it is likely that the VUSF will not be able to pay the entire FY20 appropriation before the close of the fiscal year. We anticipate a deficit of approximately \$733,000 in our appropriation. The Board also remains very concerned about the potential for continued deficits moving into FY21.

This deficit has impacted our capital project planning which pays for the INdigital implementation costs. We continue to work with Finance and Management and the Department of Public Service to find the path forward as we begin FY21.

The crux of the long term solution appears to lie in identifying effective solutions for the VUSF revenue declines so that the fund can support the programs it is required to support.

- The Board believes this is a critical conversation that must include input from F&M, PSD, the Administration, the Legislature and all stakeholders with programs supported by the VUSF.

I've said this before but it is worth repeating here.... it is always critical to have a properly funded 911 system, and it is critically important to have a properly funded 911 system in the midst of a pandemic – a reality for the foreseeable future.

The Board stands ready to be an active partner in finding these solutions and we appreciate the efforts of this committee and others in helping secure funds for any unanticipated, unbudgeted expenses as the COVID 19 situation continues to evolve.