

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate Committees on Government Operations and on Finance,
House Committees on Government Operations and Military Affairs, on Ways and Means,
and on Environment and Energy^{DS}

FROM: Jennifer Morrison and Barbara Neal, Co-Chairs, Public Safety Communications Task Force

SUBJECT: Public Safety Communications Task Force Status Report

DATE: January 12, 2024

Background

The Public Safety Communications Task Force (Task Force) was created in June of 2023 upon the enactment of [Act 78](#). The Task Force was directed to oversee and manage the transition to a "statewide reliable, secure and interoperable public safety communications system, comprising integrated 911 call-taking and regional dispatch systems, and to ensure that system is equitably and sustainably financed and universally accessible by all persons throughout the state".

Task Force Membership

| Task Force Member Name | Title/Affiliation | Appointing Authority | Contact Info |
|-------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Jennifer Morrison, Co-Chair | Commissioner, Dept. of Public Safety | Act 78 | jennifer.morrison@vermont.gov |
| Barbara Neal, Co-Chair | Executive Director, Enhanced 911 Board | Act 78 | barbara.neal@vermont.gov |
| Paul White, Vice-Chair | Chair, Barre Town Selectboard and Chair of Regional Dispatch Working Group (2022) | Act 78 (Elected to Vice-Chair position by Task Force membership) | paul.white@vermont.gov |
| Mike Doenges | Mayor, City of Rutland | Vermont League of Cities and Towns | mike.doenges@partner.vermont.gov |
| Ron Kumetz | Chief, Alburgh Volunteer Fire Dept | Vermont State Firefighters Association | ron.kumetz@partner.vermont.gov |
| Jim Mack | PSAP Administrator, Shelburne PSAP | Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police | james.mack@partner.vermont.gov |
| Michael Wright | CEO, Calex Ambulance | Vermont Ambulance Association | michael.wright@partner.vermont.gov |

Status Updates and Legislative Requirements

The first meeting of the Task Force was held on June 28, 2023. The Task Force has been meeting regularly since and will continue to meet weekly or bi-weekly for the foreseeable future. Details about past and upcoming meetings are located [here](#).

Act 78 laid out numerous requirements for the initial work of the Task Force. The Task Force set an immediate priority to develop and release two Requests for Proposals (RFPs) to acquire project management and system planning expertise to assist the Task Force in meeting the requirements of the Act. Those RFPs were released on August 22, 2023 and are available [here](#). In November, the Task Force issued an additional RFP seeking legal support services.

In late December, Televate was selected as the winning bidder for the Project Management Services RFP. A contract was executed on January 5, 2024, and a kick-off meeting was held on January 10, 2024. Selecting a dedicated Project Manager, to serve as a trusted advisor to the Task Force, has been our top priority.

One of the first tasks for Televate will be to assist the Task Force with a review of the responses received in response to the System Planning RFP. The Task Force expects to select the winning bidder for that RFP in January. The Task Force's Project Manager will work closely with the vendor selected for the System Planning RFP to develop timelines and work plans.

Contract negotiations are currently underway with the successful bidder for legal services support.

Act 78 allowed for the possibility of pilot projects during 2023, however the Task Force decided against initiating any pilot projects until the system planning and project timelines have been developed further.

Act 78 directed the Task Force to "develop findings and recommendations related to draft elements of a preliminary design for a public safety communications system, including identification of a proposed implementation timeline and any addition". The Task Force cannot yet provide these findings and recommendations as they will be developed in consultation with the contracted system planning experts.

The Task Force is hopeful, but not certain, about its ability to meet the September 2024 deadline for completion of the data collection and analysis requirements outlined in Section C.114 (e)(1) of Act 78 and the December 2024 deadline related to final system planning as described in Section C.114(e)(2)(A-J) of the Act. The Task Force will be able to provide more specific timelines once the contract for system planning services has been executed.

Costs and Funding

Act 78 designated \$1 million in general funds for the Task Force to retain various subject matter and technical experts. Additionally, the Joint Fiscal Office was authorized to approve another \$1 million, if needed, for consulting costs in 2023. The Task Force will work with its legislative partners to ensure the appropriate mechanisms are in place to allow access to the full \$2 million as the work advances. The Task Force does not currently expect the project management, system planning and legal support costs to exceed \$2 million. To date there have been only minimal expenses related to Task Force member per diem payments.

Stakeholder Engagement and Communications

Updates regarding the work of the Task Force were distributed to law enforcement, EMS and Fire membership organizations by the Task Force in September 2023 and by the Commissioner of Public Safety in December 2023. Ongoing stakeholder engagement and broadening our stakeholder group is a top priority for the Task Force in 2024.

The successful bidder for the System Planning RFP will be tasked with developing an effective mechanism for soliciting and cataloging stakeholder input for the Task Force. We invite all stakeholders to attend the Task Force meetings and/or reach out to the Task Force membership with any questions, concerns, or input. The Task Force will issue periodic updates throughout the project which will be distributed by e-mail and posted to the Task Force [webpage](#).

Legislative Requests

The Task Force requests consideration of the following legislative actions to support the work of the Task Force in 2024:

- Language that ensures appropriate mechanisms are in place to allow clear and timely access to the second \$1 million in funding for technical expertise in 2024.
- Language that requires all public safety communications centers doing business in or for a Vermont agency to comply with the requirements for data collection outlined in other sections of Act 78 (inventory, current staff, budget/costs, detailed billing structures, etc.).

Please do not hesitate to contact either of the Task Force Co-Chairs if you would like further details. Thank you in advance for your continued collaboration on this important project.