



## **BERRIEN COUNTY FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION**

**Call to Order:** 0830-1035

**Date:** December 16, 2020

**Old minutes:** Motion to accept old minutes and seconded. Motion passed. None opposed.

**Treasurer's Report:** October Beginning :\$3876.44. Check for retired chief plaques\$300.00, Ending balance: \$3576.44. November beginning balance: \$3576.44. Ending balance: \$3576.44

**Communications/Bills:** Patriot Tour. Chief Davidson thanked everyone that participated in the Patriot Tour. Chief Davidson gave 10 county challenge coins to the Patriot Tour group. Chief Davidson stated he would pay for them himself unless the association wanted to cover the cost. Motion by Chief Jesswein seconded by Chief David Flick for BC Fire Chiefs association to cover cost of the 10 county challenge coins. Motion passed. None opposed.

**New Chief/Visitor:** Welcome Jim Millin Public Safety Director Niles City. Director Millin stated he has been tasked with oversight of the Niles Fire Department but Niles is not a public safety department.

Special guest Brian Disette. Chief Davidson introduced Brian Disette from the Berrien County Board of Commissioners. Chief Davidson and Captain DeLaTorre discussed the communications committee meeting from Tuesday. Since we did not get our radio grant again the communications committee met on Tuesday to discuss options moving forward in transitioning Fire/EMS onto the MPSCS system. The Committee felt mobile 800 radios for each apparatus was the biggest need in continuing to move forward. Mobile radios have approx. 35 watts of power versus 800 portables 3 watts of power. The increased power of the mobile radios would help in the known areas of weak 800 signal. By moving forward with mobile radios for each piece of apparatus this would allow for paging/dispatch/mobilization/response/command communications on the MPSCS 800 system. Fireground operations can still be done on VHF. The county has the VHF fireground channels currently licensed until 2025. Chief Davidson stated he had a discussion with County Commissioner Jim Curran and he stated the County has a vested interest in getting Fire/EMS moved onto the MPSCS 800 system and talked to Brian Disette to see if the county can help. The county has offered up low interest financing for fire departments/jurisdiction to use in the purchase of 800 radios. Brian Disette stated the county has assisted several municipalities with in the county with projects like road improvements/sewer improvements/Water main improvements/etc..... This county would offer this same financial assistance to fire departments/jurisdictions to finance the purchase of 800 radios. Brian Disette stated the county could have funds available for use in 45-90 days if departments are interested. Discussion on length/new/used/brand/etc... Brian Stated 5-7 year low interest loans. Departments would have the choice of purchase used radios/purchase new radios/choose brand/vender of their choice. Brian stated oversight would be making sure the funds the department/jurisdiction requested were used to purchase radios. This would be a department/jurisdictional purchases not a county wide purchase. Departments would have to follow their department guidelines on purchases. Once department/jurisdiction has the ok to make the purchase department would need to get complete cost estimate of purchase to include but not limited to; number of radios/vender of choice/any additional items needed for radios/installation/etc.... and contact Brian Disette to set up financing. Chief Stover discussed by going with this option and following it up with a grant request for 800 portable radios would significantly reduce the grant dollar amount requested. Chief Stover also stated he can work into the narrative on the grant how we as a county have already contributed to the purchase of 800 pagers, and now mobile radios and the final piece now needed is 800 portable radios. Chief Stover stated with the pager purchase and by taking part in the counties financing offer he would be able to show we have put in much more than the normal 5 percent match increasing our chances to get the portables. Now this in no way guarantees we will get a grant for 800 portables but it will help to show we as a county have made the effort to cover some of the costs in this project. The next grant cycle is tentative planned to open March 2021. Chief Stover stated he would continue to write the grant. Discussion on if counties finance offer is only limited to mobile radios.

If a department would like to use the counties finance offer to purchase mobile and portable that should not be a problem but know the department/jurisdiction would be responsible for that purchase. If the grant were to come through on 800 portables you would not be able to use grant money to pay for your radios financed through the county. If anyone has questions, on this direction please contact Chief Davidson or Captain DeLaTorre. Departments interested in participating in the counties financing offer, the association will have Brian Dissette contact information at the January meeting.

**Sheriff:** None

**Red Cross:** None

**Dispatch/911:** Caitlin advised the VHF fire grounds are licensed through the county until 2025. Caitlin advised Motorola said fire grounds and the VTAC do not need FCC licensing to be used. Caitlin showed map of the departments currently using 80 paging. Caitlin requested all departments move to 800 paging as soon as possible and to please contact her/dispatch supervisor/ Denny to set up pager tests for your department. Still working with the RPU unit to get Niles Dispatch center set up with 800 paging. S.M.C.A.S. can go ahead and start 800 pager test with Cass County. The ASR site on Spectrum Watervliet has been held up in legal but is moving forward and expected to be operational in first quarter of 2021. Caitlin has requested from Motorola proposed sites in south east county Niles/Bertrand/Buchanan area as well as proposed costs. Caitlin gave suggested sites such as S.M.C.A.S tower and converting the Bertrand VHF tower to an 800 site. She is waiting on them to come back. Caitlin stated there is no longer grants for infrastructure. Question on why we need to switch to 800. Caitlin stated VHF is at end of life, it is becoming to costly to operate 2 systems, 800 puts all departments in the county on the same system, improves interoperability. Director Phelps stated 800 is a good system. He has used it for 25 years, both in Kalamazoo and here in Benton Harbor. Discussed critical connect. Critical connect test was done in October. Indiana did not properly program their radios and consoles so there was some difficulties but the teast overall has potential. Indiana wants to push forward on critical connect and has withdrew the 50 radio Ids that were offered to Michigan departments. MPSCS is more cautious and moving slower on critical connect. Chief Davidson/Chief Chase and Captain DeLaTorre participated in the October critical connect test. Captain DeLaTorre stated the auto roam feature was very nice. The radio used in the test flawlessly transitioned to the Indiana system with the auto roam. The auto roam was nice as was able to communicate with BC Dispatch and other MI Fire/EMS while in Indiana. However MI Fire/EMS was not able to communicate with IN dispatch/Fire/EMS. This was inpart due to IN not programing MI talkgroups into the IN radios. When the patching between IN dispatch and MI dispatch was done was able to communicate with IN fire/EMS. But it took awhile to set up patch. Caitlin stated patching normally would not take that long to complete. Additional test still to come. Discussion on how long it takes to get 800 radios programed from MPSCS. Caitlin suggested the association write letters and put pressure on our elected officials to fund the RPU so they can hire more programmers. Bertrand stated they have written a letter to Brad Paquette and Fred Upton. Chief Davidson stated he would work on that. Captain DeLaTorre reminded Chief Davidson that the association requested that we invite our local representatives to our meeting in early 2021 to discuss these issues with them.

**DNR:** None

**Funeral:** Berrien Springs

**Emergency Management:** None

Health Department representative Brandon Vallee discussed COVID vaccinations. Brandon stated the HD is working with Captain Adams to set up vaccination clinics in the county. Spectrum has received Vaccine already. There will be several rounds of vaccinations with hospital/EMS being first. Followed by essential worker's. This will include fire/police/utilities workers. High risk population. Then adult general and lastly child general population. Ther will be 2 doses of the vaccine 3-4 weeks apart. HD working with EM to set plan for distribution. Looking at fire departments for drive through clinics. Looking to schedule a set day at the HD for walk in vaccinations. Working with Van Buren and Cass HD to keep on track to prevent people from other counties coming/going to neighboring counties to get vaccination. Brandon stated expect 50-60 COVID vaccination clinics between now and May 2021. Remember this is not a cure. The vaccine wull help reduce the chance of contracting COVID and lessen the symptom if you contract COVID. Expect in the future to get COVID shots like flu shots. Discussion on DR Beyers zoom presentation on the COVID vaccine. It was very informational and helpful.

**EMS:**

**Medic-1:** Medic-1 Napier station to be used as a EMS/Firs Responder drive through COVID vaccine center.

**S.M.C.A.S.:** Have had a few employees out due to COVID and have had to reduce staff a couple of time, but trying our best to keep staffing levels up. S.M.C.A.S. facilitated the COVID vaccine zoom meeting with DR Beyer. We recorded the zoom meeting and if unable to find it on the MED Control facebook page contact me and I will see about sharing the link.

**Med Flight:** None

**Med Control:** None

**LEPC:** None

**BCFA:** None. Still zoom meetings.

**Training:** New Fire Officer 1 and 2 guidelines now in effect. Now must take Instructor 1 class. Do not have to do the student teaching for Instructor 1 but must take and pass the class. Benton Harbor Public Safety will be hosting an instructor 1 class in 2021. Director Phelps stated this will be his last meeting as he will be taking a job with City of Prtage starting in January 2021. Thank you Director Phelps for his time and help over the years.

**HazMat:** None

**MITRT5:** None. Allen Weich wished everyone Happy Holidays

**MABAS:** MI MABAS continuing to participate in leadership meetings with

Michigan/Illinois/Wisconsin/Minnesota MABAS leaders. All dispatch centers were invited to the November Executive meeting. Continuing to update and add information/documents to the members area of the MI MABAS website. If you have not signed up for access to the members area of MABAS website please do so. 2021 goals: online video trainings/ Continue POD exercises/possible regional POD exercises/State wide communications/Dispatch center meetings and trainings/build out logistics support/expand Mission Ready Packet MRP resources.

**Old Business:** Counties radio finance option discussed earlier.

**New Business:** Chief Davidson asked if NIFRS getting better. Many stated still having difficulty getting connected and/or getting password updated. Discussion on services like Emergency Reporting to help with NIFRS reporting. Approx. cost of Emergency Reporting \$2200.00. But it covers many other things/training/equipment inventory/gear inventory/library to put SOG/SOP's/Protocols/training and response stats on members/etc...

Plaque Presentation to Retired Chief Bruce Stover. Thank You Chief Stover for everything you have done. Elections discussion. Chief Davidson asked if anyone interested in one of the BC Fire Chiefs Association Officer positions. No one spoke up. Discussion to leave current leadership as is in place for 2021. ERG still available. Question on departments still holding trainings and meetings. Fire Departments were exempted from the meeting restrictions. Some still holding meetings/trainings. Some have suspended trainings/meetings for the time being.

**Next Meeting:** January 20, 2021 0830 Lincoln Twp. station. Chief Davidson thanked Chief Chiarello for the use of his station for the BC Fire Chiefs meetings.

**Adjourn:** Motion to adjourn and seconded.

Meeting adjourned 1035hrs.

**Berrien County Fire Chief's Association  
Attendance Sheet  
December 16th, 2020**

	Print	Signature	Temp	Dept.
1.	Tim Miller	<i>[Signature]</i>	97°	Niles
2.	Matl Remme	<i>[Signature]</i>	97	Bertrand
3.	Dave Flick	<i>[Signature]</i>	96	TOFD
4.	Amie Flick	<i>[Signature]</i>	97.9	NDTFD
5.	Mike Phelps	<i>[Signature]</i>	97.3	BWDPS
6.	Tim Jessen	<i>[Signature]</i>	97.3	Buck Trap / Niles Trap
7.	LARRY KLUG	<i>[Signature]</i>	97.5	BAROFA
8.	William Boyd	<i>[Signature]</i>	96.8	MEDIC 1
9.	Robert Adams	<i>[Signature]</i>	97.0	BCFD
10.	Teel Chase	<i>[Signature]</i>	97.1	GTFD
11.	Doreen DeLoach	<i>[Signature]</i>	98.2	BCTFD
12.	Dennis Exter	<i>[Signature]</i>	98.1	BC94
13.	Caitlin Sampson	<i>[Signature]</i>	97.2	BC911
14.	Amanda Bronson	<i>[Signature]</i>	97.4	WTFD
15.	Brendan Volter	<i>[Signature]</i>	98.1	BCHD
16.	Brian Dison	<i>[Signature]</i>	98.3	Berrien County
17.	Donna Linn	<i>[Signature]</i>	97.4	BSO/F
18.	JENNIFER FLICK	<i>[Signature]</i>	97.8	BC911
19.	Mike Davidson	<i>[Signature]</i>	97.9	CTFD
20.	FRANK DELATORE	<i>[Signature]</i>		SIMC/AS
21.				