



**TOWN OF GRAFTON**  
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GRAFTON, MA

2023 FEB 15 1 PM 2:14

**SELECT BOARD  
PUBLIC OUTREACH MEETING MINUTES  
Tuesday, January 24, 2023  
7:00PM  
Community Meeting Room A  
Grafton Public Library  
35 Grafton Common  
Grafton, MA 01519**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by Chair Colleen Roy. In attendance were Chair Colleen Roy, Vice Chair Mat Often, Clerk Andy Jefferson, Ann Marie Foley, and Ray Mead. Staff in attendance were Town Administrator Evan Brassard, Assistant Town Administrator William Blake, Chief of Police Normand Crepeau, and Fire Chief Eric Mathieu.

**1. NEW BUSINESS**

- a) Public Outreach about Regional Emergency Communications Center (RECC)

Mr. Brassard gave the Regional Dispatch Overview presentation.

Lisa Kelley, Outreach Worker at the Grafton Senior Center, described how her relationship with the local dispatchers has helped to better assist residents.

Carl Palmer asked for data showing how the number of calls has increased over time. He suggested offering remote opportunities to dispatchers to reduce salary. He asked if the costs of regional dispatch would be split equally among the participating towns.

Mr. Mead and Mr. Often responded that each town's cost would be based on their population and number of calls.

Mr. Palmer noted that Westboro would receive the benefit of having a site cleaned up. He spoke on the value of dispatchers' local knowledge. He stated that he would like to hear from Chief Crepeau and Chief Mathieu and asked for this issue to be brought to Town Meeting. Tony Sikora asked to hear from Chief Crepeau and Chief Mathieu as well.

Chief Crepeau stated that three of the current dispatchers are from out-of-town, and dispatching is done by address now. He highlighted that the grant for regional dispatch would cover the huge expense for new radios. He spoke on the need for more dispatchers and the difficulty to find them.

Chief Mathieu agreed with Chief Crepeau and recognized the advantage of getting in on the ground floor now, so Grafton can have a say in how the RECC is built and set up.

Mr. Sikora asked how the valleys in this region would affect the equipment. He asked if the signals would reach Westboro, Southboro, and Hopkinton. He also asked if Northbridge, Sutton, and Millbury had been considered as part of the group.

Mr. Brassard described how the radio network would work and stated that Northbridge, Sutton, and Millbury were all invited to the 911 conference but were not interested. He stated that once the RECC is built, more communities may want to join.

Mr. Sikora highlighted the lack of representation at the outreach meeting, which he was unaware of until this morning. He asked if this issue could be brought to Town Meeting.

Mr. Brassard responded that legally, the Select Board must decide. He noted that he gave multiple updates on regional dispatch throughout 2022 at Select Board meetings.

Mr. Ofsen suggested posting a document directing residents to all past meetings where regional dispatch was discussed.

Mr. Jefferson noted the important clarification that regional dispatch would not impact any of the Town's mutual aid contracts, which coordinate emergency services between towns.

Dennis Perron asked about the savings in salary after three years. Mr. Brassard stated that the first three years would be covered by the grant, then the Town would start paying their assessment, which would be around \$350K. Mr. Perron and Mr. Brassard agreed that this includes all maintenance costs as well as salary, which is a significant savings.

Wendy Allen spoke on her concerns about the dark station.

Chief Crepeau stated that people could still be buzzed into the station if they need a safe place. He spoke on the safety that would be gained from radio infrastructure and the increased number of dispatchers.

Nancie Picconi asked how the assessment cost is determined at year five.

Mr. Brassard stated that it will be determined by population and number of calls. He noted that it could decrease if more towns joined the RECC or increase if towns left.

Ms. Picconi asked about the site tour in Westboro for the RECC, which Mr. Brassard then described.

Ms. Picconi asked about the current dispatchers not being guaranteed their jobs. Mr. Brassard stated that they are guaranteed an interview but not a position, which helps bring over talented, hard-working people. He noted that Chief Crepeau can make recommendations.

Ms. Picconi, Mr. Brassard, and Chief Crepeau discussed how the differences in rules and communications among the towns would be addressed.

Mr. Brassard spoke on the State's ownership of 911 equipment and the upgrades to other communications equipment that would come from the RECC.

Jim Davidson asked which towns were invited to the initial meeting and asked if the RECC would still make sense without the grants. Mr. Brassard listed the towns and spoke on the benefits of 911 grants, which make the RECC possible. He stated that the Inter-Municipal Agreement would be voted on at the February 7 or February 14 Select Board meeting.

Mr. Mead stated that he had been the lone dissenter on the Board, does not want anyone to lose their job, does not want a dark station, but heard support for the RECC from the Chiefs tonight. He appreciated the benefits of an efficient system and noted that these savings can be used to grow the Police Department.

Greg Marr asked how the dispatchers would be selected. Mr. Brassard spoke on staffing by the district, which will have an executive director.

Mr. Marr and Chief Crepeau discussed the presence of officers at the station overnight.

Nancy Therrien spoke on the fires that have occurred in her neighborhood and asked Chief Mathieu who would help if the Grafton Fire Department needed assistance. Chief Mathieu stated that mutual aid would stay the same as it is now.

Ms. Roy spoke on the time she has spent researching regional dispatch and stated she believes this is the best decision for Grafton.

Roger Trahan spoke on Inter-Municipal Agreements being in the purview of Select Boards and asked about the total cost for a new communications tower and facility. Mr. Brassard stated that these costs have not been determined yet and spoke on the timeline for the project. Mr. Trahan and Mr. Brassard discussed how the IMA would affect the capital and operating budget.

Taylor Joncas disapproved of the dark station and asked how Grafton could get their own dispatch back in place if regional dispatch backfired. Mr. Brassard spoke on the difficulty of restoring Grafton's dispatch if that were to happen and agreed that the dark station is a downside of regional dispatch but described how technology can help with that.

Mr. Joncas expressed concern that six out of the ten towns initially invited to regionalize have said they are not interested. He also noted the potential challenges from Grafton's Fire Department and EMS being different from the other three towns. Mr. Brassard agreed that this would not be an easy process.

Ms. Roy highlighted that the IMA provides the flexibility to have someone at the station 24/7 if the Town would like to do so.

Danielle Decker asked about the timeframe of the RECC. Mr. Brassard estimated at least 24 months and stated that the three years of no expense begins when the RECC opens.

Ms. Decker asked what would happen if Grafton decided not to regionalize after they had already received the grant. Mr. Brassard stated that there would be no financial penalty.

Mr. Palmer asked if any other sites had been considered for the RECC besides the one in Westboro. Mr. Brassard and Ms. Roy spoke on the other sites that were not suitable.

Ms. Decker noted the importance of residents understanding the difference between mutual aid and regional dispatch.

Ms. Picconi, Debbie Perron, and other residents requested better notification about these types of public outreach meetings.

b) Consider Signing the RECC Inter-Municipal Agreement (IMA)

The Board did not act on this item.

## ADJOURN

Mr. Mead made a motion seconded by Mr. Often to adjourn. Motion passed 5 – 0 at 8:41pm.

Select Board meeting materials are available at: <https://www.grafton-ma.gov/AgendaCenter/Select-Board-4>

A full recording of this meeting is available at: [https://youtu.be/2A\\_YXCWO8LU](https://youtu.be/2A_YXCWO8LU)