

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND TOURISM**

Anchorage, Alaska

December 16, 2003

1:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Cheryll Heinze, Chair
Representative Lesil McGuire, Vice Chair
Representative Nancy Dahlstrom
Representative Sharon Cissna
Representative Harry Crawford

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Pete Kott
Representative Vic Kohring

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

ALASKA'S 911 SYSTEM

TAPES

03-15, SIDE(S) A & B

03-16, SIDE(S) A & B

CHAIR CHERYLL HEINZE convened the meeting of the House Special Committee on Economic Development, International Trade and Tourism at 1:00 p.m. Present at the call to order were Representatives Heinze, Dahlstrom, and McGuire. Representatives Crawford and Cissna arrived as the meeting was in progress.

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

MARK MEW, Director, Security and Emergency Preparedness, Anchorage School District; President, Alaska Chapter, National Emergency Number Association (NENA), spoke on the need to change Alaska's 911 system and NENA's desire to facilitate discussion without forcing any specific solution over another.

JIM HARPRING, Chief Information Officer, Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs; Chair, NENA Legislative Affairs Subcommittee, stated that the way the future 911 system is handled and implemented will have a profound effect on Alaska.

ROBERT GRIFFITHS, Director, National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center, pointed out that Alaska lacks even a "basic" 911 system, since many rural communities route all of their emergency calls to a local business or a phone tree.

MILTON HAKEN, Police Chief, Nenana, stated that 911 calls in his area were made over unsecured airwaves making it impossible to get a location on the caller or any information about the person.

MATT GEPHART, Matanuska Electric Association, noted that the 911 calls in Healy were routed to an 800 number and then forwarded to the University of Alaska Fairbanks campus without the Automatic Number Identification (ANI) information being included.

MR. HARPRING responded that the Healy situation was a direct result of a decision made due to concerns about a local utility's being responsible for emergency services.

REPRESENTATIVE DAHLSTROM asked if the representatives of NENA were familiar with the military's interest in Alaska Land Mobile Radio and whether or not they thought that the technology might be useful in solving Alaska's 911 problems.

MR. GRIFFITHS responded that they were aware of the technology and felt that it would be useful but that it wouldn't solve the problem of how a phone call gets to an emergency answering point.

REPRESENTATIVE DAHLSTROM asked who managed, paid for, and oversaw the ANI system in Alaska.

The NENA representatives explained the ANI system.

CHAIR HEINZE asked what happened in the Godfrey case [which showed inadequacies of the 911 system].

MR. GRIFFITHS explained the case and why it happened.

CHAIR HEINZE noted that Alaska's 911 system seemed to be a patchwork quilt instead of an integrated system.

MR. GRIFFITHS agreed, saying that all involved needed to pull in the same direction with the same goals to make [the 911 system] work.

CHAIR HEINZE asked if the 911 upgrades were federally mandated.

MR. GRIFFITHS explained the Federal Communications Commission's Phase I, II, and III evaluation systems.

MR. GRIFFITHS continued with several ideas for moving Alaska in the right direction from NENA's eight-point plan. He also mentioned solution possibilities being considered in the Lower 48.

MR. MEW spoke more on the differences in Phases I, II, and III as they relates to the amount of information received by the Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) as well as surcharges the upgrades would incur.

JUDY OHMER asked if the technology existed right now that would allow these problems to be fixed.

The NENA representatives replied that it absolutely did and was being implemented in several cities in the Lower 48.

CHUCK KOPKEY, Police Chief, Kenai, added that Alaska desperately needed a statewide coordinator and that the state government needed to take an active role in the process.

RED BOUCHER, Communications Consultant, H.A. "Red" Boucher & Associates, as consultant to Chugach Electric Association; President, Alaska Wireless Technology, noted that the important thing was finding a coordinating organization and funding it. He also mentioned Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and 802.11b wireless technology as further potential problems for the 911 systems.

MR. HARPRING addressed the role the Regulatory Commission of Alaska (RCA) does and will play in the future of wireless 911.

MARY ANNE PEASE, Vice President, Corporate Communications, Alaska Communications Systems (ACS), was called to testify. She mentioned that ACS was fully supportive of enhancing public safety. She said that ACS is attempting to upgrade their system from Time Division Multiple Access (TDMA) to Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA), which will allow e-911 capability. They want a waiver from the FCC so that they won't have to support

the cost of running both a TDMA and a CDMA system. That way the expense won't have to be passed on to their customers. Ms. Pease asked for a letter of support from the committee and the legislature to that effect.

CARLOS CADIENTE, Juneau Police Department, commented on the different needs in rural and urban areas.

The NENA representatives responded to Mr. Cadiente's concerns

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA asked whether the various technologies involved were all compatible.

The NENA representatives responded that for the most part, they were.

Mr. BOUCHER testified on the history of Alaska's 911 system and its future. This included new technologies and local groups that have been on the forefront of this issue from the beginning.

DAVE GOGGINS, Chairman, Alaska Telephone Association Engineering and Planning Committee; Vice President of Operations, TelAlaska, Incorporated, testified on rural Alaska's 911 system. He pointed out that it is very bare bones and inefficient. The e-911 system wouldn't work in most of these rural communities due to the lack of addresses in many rural areas.

MR. HARPRING joined Mr. Goggins in fielding questions and expanding on Mr. Goggin's testimony.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA commented on the testimony.

MS. DOYLE, Flight Instructor, spoke on the importance of a reliable, informative e-911 system for Alaska's aviators. Precise location information is often difficult to determine after a crash, a 911 system that could ascertain that information automatically would save lives.

WALT MONEGAN, Police Chief, Anchorage Police Department, testified on the Anchorage Police Department's stance on Alaska's 911 system, the RCA's role, the proposed surcharges for upgrading Alaska's system, and the response time and efficiency of Anchorage's present system.

BILL DOLITTLE, President, Dolittle and Associates, testified on new technologies and his work with Anchorage and ACS to get Anchorage compliant with [the FCC's] Phase II requirements.

REPRESENTATIVE HEINZE asked about the possibility of a recurrence of the problems exposed by the Godfrey case.

MR. MONAGAN said the system was still in place and explained why.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

COMMITTEE ACTION

The committee took no action.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Economic Development, International Trade and Tourism meeting was adjourned at an unspecified time.

NOTE: The meeting was recorded and handwritten log notes were taken. A copy of the tape(s) and log notes may be obtained by contacting the House Records Office at State Capitol, Room 3, Juneau, Alaska 99801 (mailing address), (907) 465-2214, and after adjournment of the second session of the Twenty-Third Alaska State Legislature this information may be obtained by contacting the Legislative Reference Library at (907) 465-3808.