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# Massachusetts Communications Supervisors Association
## Meeting Minutes for December 17, 2003
## Boston, MA

To Order: 10:15 Leslie Carroll, Presiding

**Attendance:** Rita Burke, Leslie Carroll, Stephen Cote, Anne Marie Cullen, Paul Doucette, Patricia Falcone, Laurie Favreau, George Fosque, Butch Garrity, Dave Hanson, Kevin Harrison, John Henderson, Kathy Henry, Sue Henry, Paul Polonsky, Paula Snow…and a couple others who did not sign the roster(!)

Our Hosts this month were the Boston Fire Department Alarm HQ. What a place! An historic Greek Revival building overlooking the Fens (must have been a whole lot wetter before the great 19th century drainage project). We were shown the modern CAD and alarm systems; nestled in their miniaturized computerized nooks amidst the massive copper barred signal devices that were their predecessors. They were impressive. If I paid enough attention to the tour, Boston FD was the first US city to use electrical signaling and alarm systems. (And aren't you glad YOU don't have to know Morse Code to call your units?) As I understand it some of these behemoths were in regular use until 1982! And they are being retained, in place, as a sort of living museum. Great!

**MINUTES**
Accepted as read

**TREASURER'S REPORT**
Treasurer's Report accepted. We have $10,000 in account

**SPEAKER:** Mr. Fosque introduced **Mr. Joseph Connarton** of the **Public Employees Retirement Administration Commission**. PERAC is the regulatory organization that oversees actions of local, county, and state retirement boards. With some 1500 Telecommunications Officers in Massachusetts (250 sworn officers and the rest Civilian) we find that Retirement Benefits and Pensions are a major concern.

Mr. Connarton explained that, while the Commission has "frozen" expansion of group benefits outside Group I until a review of state retirement policies has taken place, there *is* some activity. Senate bill 1473 (moving Harbormasters to Group IV) is on the Governor's desk and S-1580 (changing the status of University Security Officers) is on the way.

But he cautioned that moving Public Safety Communications up in the Groups will not happen until legislated at the Statehouse…and that there is no political will to do that right now. Such a change can only be made by the Legislature.

Looking at things another way…Towns can reclassify employees so as to fit them into the existing Groups (I and II). When the community does so reclassify, the PERAC rarely turns them down. Mr. Connarton noted that this kind of change, and the underlying perception of our jobs and duties, is subject to considerable local bias.

Mr. Fosque voiced our opinion that we believe we are incorrectly classified by archaic terminology. In Cambridge, for example, "Emergency Telephone Operators" were changed to "Senior Emergency Telecommunications Officers" which slotted them into the Group II structure.

Mr. Connarton: Yes but many communities will not step up to the plate and make such a decision. He recognizes that the profession and its duties have changed…but the retirement system has not.

Mr. Fosque: Our function should be updated. Will that work OK without having to go through the Legislature?
Mr. Connarton said he couldn't guarantee that it will fly. Because of the widespread perceptions about "foremen" v/s Public Workers, people will see the change as an "enhanced" benefit and will not accept the change. He commented that the more secure way to achieve this is the hardest way…through Legislative Action.
There was discussion that we have many people doing the same function but having different Group classes. Mr. Connarton noted that the heart of the problem is the ***Job Title***, or lack of one.
Mr. Fosque: If we prepare a package, and the Retirement Board says, "Yes", will PERAC agree?
Mr. Connarton said he cannot see why not…but, if there is disagreement along the way PERAC may not be able to agree to the change.
Mr. Fosque: We should all put together packets using common function titles. But *we must get all titles in sync.* "Our belief is that we meet the definition of Police and Fire "Signal Officers" and that we, therefore, should be in Group II."
Mr. Connarton, quoting Tip O'Neill ("All politics are local") said we need a clear example of ***function*** that applies to ***that*** community. Our effort should be on the local level, and coordinated. The only other way is to activate the Legislature to make the change. A major effort. He urged us to build consensus with common titles. Get on to the Local Retirement Boards to accept those common titles and stay within the Group II framework.

We thank Mr. Connarton for coming and explaining some of the realities of the Retirement situation. Mr. Fosque will upload some of the information covered to the MCSA website (www.MA911.org). Send any info you have regarding your community's approach to the issue to George Fosque for inclusion. (*http://www.state.ma.us/perac/*)

**ACADEMY AND TRAINING ISSUES**
With the transfer to SETB, there is no date set for the next Academy. There was concern that there will not be one until summer '04. There is still a demand for the school in the near term. Our PSAPs have new hires, right now, who need the training and cannot wait until summer. It was suggested that, perhaps, we can help out by running one more Academy ourselves until SETB can get set up to receive the baton.
Ms. Burke comments that we worked hard to get our communities to recognize the need for *professional* training through the Academy…and now, now Academy.
Mr. Fosque states there have been mailings but…then nothing.
Ms. Carroll asks the Training Advisory Committee (TAC) to communicate with SETB re this need and to advise them that, if they are not having one until summer that we are willing to run one ourselves. Mr. Hansen and Mr. Garrity will talk to SETB
Mr. Fosque asks where are the results of the SETB Training Survey? We need to see it and get feedback from Academy Grads. We need to keep close eye on our Training needs to make sure that Training money works to meet those needs.

TRAINING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Mr. Garrity told us that SETB has still not set a date for the TAC to meet. Paul Fahey had sent word that he has received no official word re MCOA's representatives on TAC. (There is some evidence that they have been chosen but there has been no notification.)
Mr. Garrity will contact MCOA to verify and offer assistance if needed.

**SETB**

Mr. Fosque advises that there have been meetings of both the Standards committee and the Board. He tells us that there has been official approval of a contract to select a contractor for the "Next Generation" PSAP/Wireless 911. This originally included Wireline but was withdrawn and resubmitted as above. The surmise is there will be a follow-on bid for Wireline. There were two bidders: CML and a Verizon/Plante partnership. Verizon/Plante were selected.
The SETB seems to be talking about local PSAPs opting to handle their own Wireless 911

**FIRE MOBILIZATION PLAN**
Mr. Garrity commented that very few, if any; Dispatch Centers have training in how to escalate into this plan. Even among the 15 Control Points there is wide variation in understanding and procedures. Dispatch Centers should have a seat on the Committee. He will brief us re this at the next meeting.

**3RD ANNUAL DISPATCH WORKSHOP**
Ms. Favreau presented tentative plans for the March 24 event. It will be held, again, at the Milford, MA Radisson Hotel (off I-495). The fee to attend will be: **$25 for members and $35 for non-members**.
In an effort to keep costs down, Ms. Carroll and Mr. Fosque are working together to locate some Vendor Sponsors. However none on the current list are likely to be able to offer much. Ms. Carroll will ask Paul Fahey if SETB can share some costs.
We will also contact APCO organs to get some publicity in national, regional, and chapter pages.

**PROPOSED SCHEDULE FOR WORKSHOP**

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| 07:30 | Registration |
| 08:30 | Class I: Acorn Recording Inc |
| 10:00 | 911 ANI/ALI Information |
| | 911 Paperwork MSAG? |
| 11:30 | Mass. Commission for the Deaf/HOH |
| 12:00 | LUNCH |
| 13:00 | Barry Wante - MEMA |
| 14:00 | The Dispatcher: Call taking (Panel Discussion) |

Also to be fitted in here is time for Verizon/911 and SETB

This should be another informative and fun event so start talking it up among your colleagues now. We would like to fill the rooms. For information call Laurie Favreau (978) 632-5600) or Leslie Carroll (781)893-3700

**NEWSLETTER**
Your Secretary and Minute-Taker has put his foot into it again. I will be working to develope a "Newsletter" which will allow us to expand beyond our current limited, and sometimes whimsical, "Minutes" format. This should allow us to include more items of less official nature. (Color 8x10 glossies with circles and arrows and a paragraph on the back....)
In the meantime, and in addition to these Email/Snailmail dispatches, keep checking on the MCSA website (www.MA911.org) for other information and delights.

Finally, Ms. Carroll re-emphasized that we very much need to expand the organization. Tell your fellow supervisers, ask them to join. Better yet, invite them to the next meeting and let them see for themselves what we are about.

**NEXT MEETING: January 21** (10:00AM)**: Amherst PD** (111 Main Street, Amherst
**February 18: Ipswich**

Adjourned: 13:12

S.J. Cote, Recorder