



*Marshall County  
Communications Center*

*2022  
Annual Report*

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## Director's Message



Marshall County Communications Center, also known as MCCC is the primary public safety answering point (PSAP) for Marshall County, IA.

As you review this report, it is my hope it will increase your awareness and understanding of the services provided by the Marshall County Communications Center. The employees of the MCCC are a dedicated group of professionals who strive to improve the quality of life in our municipalities by providing the highest level of professional emergency communication services to our citizens, visitors, and partner agencies. Since its inception in 2018, the MCCC has continued to explore and implement updated equipment, technology and methods to deliver quality service to the public. Innovations and continued reassessments, along with an extensive training program and dedicated staff have allowed the Marshall County Communications Center to be at the forefront in its industry.

The professionals of the MCCC, along with 911 Leadership Team, is justifiably proud to serve our public safety partners and residents of Marshall County. We look forward to the future, and continuing to provide the highest level of emergency communications and exceptional customer service in a very cost-efficient and effective manner. I am proud of the accomplishments our team has made and the goals we have set as we look toward 2023 in Marshall County.



## Mission Statement

*The Marshall County Communications Center is committed to serving with integrity, compassion and care for the welfare and safety of our citizens and personnel. We support expedient, quality services through the industries best practices. Our standard is excellence and the road to success is through our teamwork. We serve as the critical link between the citizens and, visitors of Marshall County, and the public safety Agencies that serve them.*

**Safety is our First Priority**  
**Integrity is our Commitment**

## These Values We Believe

**Harmony** ~ We trust, respect, and care for each other and treat everyone as a valued member of our team

**Service** ~ Safety is our first priority – citizens are the focus of everything we do

**Integrity** ~ We are committed to the highest level of professional and ethical conduct

**Teamwork** ~ Cohesively working together to achieve a common goal for the betterment of the individuals we serve and the future of our center

**Fun** ~ Every day we will give our best effort and have fun along the way

## Vision Statement

To provide service in a manner that fosters trust, respect, confidence and appreciation as a trusted and valued member of the Marshall County Communications Center.

## Agency Profile

Since February, 2018, MCCC has been the single-source 911 call and dispatch center in Marshall County. Marshall County Communications Center (MCCC) provides vital public service functions in Marshall County. MCCC receives and records all 911 emergency calls for help within the County, and dispatches the appropriate public safety responders to the emergency. MCCC provides dispatch services to the city of Marshalltown, Marshall County Sheriff's Office, Volunteer Fire and EMS communities as well as Unity Point EMS within Marshall County.

MCCC 911 Communications Specialists are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to receive and record both 911, and ten-digit emergency and non-emergency calls from the public. These calls are dispatched at the appropriate level of public safety response based on protocols determined in conjunction with law enforcement, fire service, and EMS. The center is staffed with civilian personnel working together as 911 Communications Specialists in law enforcement and Fire/EMS dispatching, CTO's (Communications Training Officer), Supervisor, Leads, and the Director.

The Marshall County Communications Center is responsible for answering both emergency and non-emergency calls for service on a regular basis. The Comm Center monitors up to eleven (11) radio

channels, and has the capability to monitor an additional fourteen (14) channels if necessary. It also is responsible for three (3) E911 phone lines and an additional ten (10) emergency and non-emergency lines. In FY22, the Marshall County Communications Center handled a total of 78,418+ phone calls including emergency and non-emergency. In 2017 text-to-911 was implemented – a Next Generation 911 capability that allows citizens to text their emergency if unable to speak; a service that is not yet nationally mandated.

The Marshall County Communications Center has been recognized for professionalism, commitment to public safety, leadership, and innovation. Performance and training are measured against the standards provided by the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO). The MCCC’s authorized strength is fifteen (15) full-time employees to include eleven (11) 911 Communications Specialists, two (2) 911 Lead Communications Specialists, one (1) 911 Communications Supervisor, and one (1) 911 Communications Director.

*The Marshall County Communications Center operates three (3) twelve-hour shifts and one (1) four-hour shift on Fridays for a total of forty (40) hours per week in accordance with FLSA. We have four (4) Communications Training Officers (CTO) certified in through APCO to meet national standards.*

## **Marshall County Communications Center Staff**

Rhonda Braudis, CPE, RPL, NREMT ~ 911 Communications Director  
Tiffany Eibs, CTO, Tactical Dispatch Coordinator ~ 911 Communications Supervisor  
Shane Andrews ~ CTO, 911 Lead Communications Specialist  
Caitlan Reineke ~ CTO, 911 Lead Communications Specialist  
Tammy Bowman ~ CTO, 911 Communications Specialist  
Shannon Wegner, CTO, Tactical Dispatcher ~ 911 Communications Specialist  
Zac Mann, 911 Communications Specialist  
Kayla Ball ~ 911 Communications Specialist  
Maxwell Chapman ~ 911 Communications Specialist  
Alyssia Klosterman ~ 911 Communications Specialist  
Nathan Overmann ~ 911 Communications Specialist  
Hayley Paige ~ 911 Communication Specialist  
Caden Hobson ~ 911 Communications Specialist ..... to begin January 2, 2023  
VACANT ~ 911 Communications Specialist  
VACANT ~ 911 Communications Specialist  
Melinda Ruopp, Tactical Dispatcher ~ PRN 911 Communications Specialist  
Larry Springston ~ PRN 911 Communications Specialist

Collectively, the years of dispatch service, talent, and experience at the Marshall County Communications Center amounts to decades of experience – clearly indicating the drive, passion, and dedication to public service projected from a team of true professionals.

## **Training and Quality Assurance**

The Marshall County Communications Center implemented a full standardized training program in 2020 following the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) standards, and continue this today. Proper training is extremely important to the MCCC, as public safety agencies are held legally accountable for the actions of their personnel. Procedures included in the Communications training program provide a standardized and systematic approach to training. The training is designed specifically for the purpose of career development of all employees.

The Communications Training Officer (CTO) program continues to be redesigned to focus on essential elements and components of a one-on-one standardized training program, specifically through the use of Daily Observation Report's (DOR). Standardized training provides similar training to all new employees. Each employee is exposed to the same training experience, and each is provided the same opportunity for success. As we continue implementing changes within the training program following APCO and national standards through the San Jose model the program continues to grow in strength and validity.

The core of any training program is the trainer – the person who conducts the training and helps the student build skills, knowledge, and abilities. While the Director, and the Supervisor/Training Coordinator can have a positive effect on the overall program, the CTO is the key entity that delivers the training. CTO's make sure that citizens and internal customers continue to receive a high quality of service while transforming new hires into effective employees. The Marshall County Communications Center CTOs are all certified through the APCO Communications Training Officer Course as instructed by APCO or the Director/APCO Adjunct Instructor.

Abiding by Iowa Code 501-13.3(1) (80B) requirements, all 911 Communication Specialists are required to take the 40-hour Basic Communications course within the first year of employment. In accordance with ILEA training exception all 911 Communication Specialists continue to receive the APCO Public Safety Telecommunicator 40-hour basic course. The APCO Public Safety Telecommunicator (PST1) Course, is a level up from the State basic course and can be customized to Marshall County specifics for training purposes. The Marshall County Communication Center also requires that Supervisors, be certified through the APCO Communications Center Supervisor Course. Supervisor Eibs and Director Braudis continue to deliver the Public Safety Telecommunicators course.

Training is a constant mission in the Marshall County Communications Center. Not only are 911 personnel required to take their initial certification classes, they must also participate in Continuing Dispatch Education (CDE) training sessions for annual training minimums. These training sessions may be in the form of quizzes, dispatch related articles, protocol-driven exercises, in-service classes, or anything else deemed an appropriate learning related activity. In an ever-changing profession it is essential to continue dispatch education. There is always something new to learn in an industry that is constant in change.

Several forms of training were received throughout the year to include online learning, virtual live online learning, as well as in person classes to maintain their skills. In order to maintain their certification with PST1 and EMD completion of a quiz, twenty-four hours of training/CDE's and CPR/AED re-certification also occurred.

In an effort to continue training all 911 Communications Specialists within the Communications Center, talented members of our team are taking the necessary steps to become agency instructors for the disciplines taught. CTO Shannon Wegner, recently signed up to take the Emergency Medical Dispatch Instructor course through APCO. She is set to complete this course early 2023. She will begin teaching this course to newly hired personnel in collaboration with CTO Caitlan Reineke.

Caitlan Reineke recently filled the 2<sup>nd</sup> vacant Lead Position and will begin her duties January 2, 2023, she is very excited about starting this next journey and has much to offer.

## Emergency Medical Dispatch ~ Instructor



Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) is a systematic program of handling medical calls for assistance. Trained telecommunicators, using locally-approved EMD Guidecards, can quickly and properly determine the nature and priority of the call, dispatch the appropriate response and then give the caller instructions to help treat the patient until the responding EMS unit arrives. Topics Include: Roles, Responsibilities and Resource Allocation, Legal & Liability Issues (National & State Standards), Call Taking & APCO EMD Guidecard Information, Chief Complaint Types Review, Anatomy & Physiology, Quality Assurance and Recertification, Stress Management. The classroom setting provides practical exercises to help the new EMD become familiar with the theories and practices of EMD and students will practice with either their agency's Guidecards or the APCO Institute Training EMD Guidecards in simulated EMD calls.

## Organizational Integrity

The Marshall County Communications Center has adopted the Telecommunicator Code of Ethics published by the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials – International (APCO). Members of the Marshall County Communications Center are required to abide by the Code of Ethics, especially when situations arise which are not directly addressed by other policies. The Code of Ethics is located within their personnel files. All personnel are required to read, acknowledge receipt of, and abide by the Code of Ethics.

## Training Accomplishments – Courses Conducted

**PST1 (APCO Basic 40hr) ~** An introduction to the critical principles in support of public safety and techniques for handling domestic violence, potential suicide, hostage, and civil unrest situations as a public safety telecommunicator. Techniques to overcoming barriers, achieving effective communications, handling difficult callers, listening effectively and resolving conflicts will be addressed. This course will provide the information necessary to understand the job of a public safety telecommunicator and is the foundation to begin working in police, fire and EMS or a combined service communications center. Ideal for training the new-hire or as a refresher for existing staff, APCO's PST1 course covers the basics skills, knowledge and abilities every successful public safety telecommunicator needs to meet the demands of this critical work.

Students successfully passing the final exam receive APCO Institute certification demonstrating completion of a training course that meets and exceeds industry accepted national basic training standards, including the APCO/ANS 3.103.2.2015 and NFPA 1061 2014 Edition.

Building on foundational topics such as communication skills, call taking and radio techniques, the PST course blends in the most up-to-date information on technology and work-related issues in public safety communications centers. "Hot" topics include NextGen 9-1-1, emerging technologies, continuing ed., and liability.

**EMD 5.4 (Basic 40hr pre-requisite)** ~ An introduction to the critical principles in support of public safety and techniques for preparation needed to receive a call requesting assistance for emergency medical services (EMS) and allocate community resources in response to such requests. Techniques to overcoming barriers, achieving effective communications, handling difficult callers, listening effectively and resolving conflicts will be addressed. This course will provide the information necessary to understand the job of an emergency medical dispatcher and is the foundation to begin working in a fire, EMS or a combined service communications center. Topics covered provide the student with the knowledge and foundation to answer calls for emergency medical service and properly prioritize the response. The course also provides the student with the knowledge needed to convey proper pre-arrival instructions to the caller when needed. Topics include: Roles, Responsibilities, and Resource Allocation; Legal & Liability Issues – National/State Standards; Calltaking and APCO EMD Guidecard Information; Chief Complaint Types Review; Anatomy and Physiology; Quality Assurance and Recertification; and Stress Management. The classroom setting provides practical exercises to help the new EMD become familiar with the theories and practices of EMD and students will practice with either their agency's APCO EMD Guidecards or the APCO Institute Training EMD Guidecards in simulated EMD calls.

**INTD (Incident Tactical Dispatch / FEMA)** ~ An Incident Tactical Dispatcher is a specifically trained individual qualified to operate away from the dispatch center in a command post, base camp or at the incident scene. Incident Tactical Dispatchers leverage the multi-tasking, communication, accountability and documentation skills of successful Telecommunicators to provide public safety communications expertise and support at planned events and extended incidents such as hostage situations, multi-alarm fires, search and rescue operations, bombings, and active shooter incidents. Incident Tactical Dispatchers may support the Communications Unit as a single resource or as part of an incident tactical dispatch team. This course provides a basic understanding for the roles and responsibilities of an incident tactical dispatcher working in a tactical environment. Pre-requisites for this course were ICS (Incident Command System / FEMA) IS-100 (Introduction to the ICS), IS-144 (Telecommunicators Emergency Response Taskforce), IS-200 (ICS for Single Resources and Initial Incidents), IS-700 (National Incident Management Systems NIMS Introduction), and IS-800 (National Response Framework NRF Introduction). Members of the Tactical Dispatch Team attended this training. Supervisor Tiffany Eibs, CTO Shannon Wegner, and Part-Time Melinda Ruopp all attended this four-day course and passed earning certification as INTD. They now have 2 years to complete their incident tasks books to be recognized by the state of Iowa.

**Peer Support** ~ Offered by the Midwest Counterdrug Training Center in Johnston, Iowa, this four-day course was restricted to US military, sworn in law enforcement to include trainers, supervisors, and dispatchers. There was no cost to attend this training. This course is designed to teach dispatchers not just how to survive, but how to live. Students learned overall officer survival, survival stress, coping with shootings, dealing with department stress, family stress survival, defusing situations and debriefings, communication skills, recognizing mental disorders, and confidentiality. This course was attended by Caitlan Reineke and Kayla Ball. Shane Andrews has expressed interest to attend the next one offered within Marshall County. This course offers training to 911 Communications Specialists that want to act in the position of peer support.

*These are specialized courses attended throughout the year, in addition to this numerous additional training opportunities were offered and taken to continue Dispatch Education.*

## Personnel Actions

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>2022</b>
Verbal Warning / Training	Continuous Training
Counseling	4
Written Reprimand	1
Suspension	0
Termination	0
Fit for Duty / Retirement	0
Total	5 + Continuous Training

## Warrants

<b>Category</b>	<b>2022</b>
Active	203
Served	1003
Recalled	88
Detained	19
Posted Bond	16
Cleared	1
Cancelled	21
Total	1351

## NCO's – No Contact Order / Exparte

<b>Category</b>	<b>2022</b>
Served	213
Not Served	16
Not in Effect	101
Total	330

## 911 Dispatch Statistics

<b>Calls Received</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
911	16,037	14,473
Administrative	60,524	60,322
Crime Stopper	400	273
Ring Down	4,343	3,350
Total	81,304	78,418 *

National standards 3.1 as published in the NENA Call Answering Standard/Model Recommendation 56-005.1 (revised 2017). Ninety percent (90%) of all 9-1-1 calls arriving at the Public Safety answering Point (PSAP) shall be answered within ten (10) seconds during the busy hour (the hour each day with the greatest call volume, as defined in the NENA Master Glossary). Ninety-five (95%) of all 9-1-1 calls should be answered within twenty (20) seconds. The Marshall County Communications Center greatly exceeds this standard with an average ring time of three (3) seconds.

## Call for Service Statistics

<b>Fire Related Incidents</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
Marshalltown Fire Department	2,938	3,209	3466
Albion Volunteer Fire Department	63	78	76
Clemons Volunteer Fire Department	30	26	29
Ferguson Volunteer Fire Department	4	4	0
Gilman Volunteer Fire Department	47	43	66
Green Mountain Volunteer Fire Department	50	45	58
Haverhill Volunteer Fire Department	41	46	44
Laurel Volunteer Fire Department	27	25	30
Legrand Volunteer Fire Department	59	54	82
Liscomb Volunteer Fire Department	35	44	53
Melbourne Fire Department	47	57	53
Rhodes Volunteer Fire Department	42	56	48
State Center Volunteer Fire Department	85	89	145
<b>.... TOTAL ....</b>	<b>3,468</b>	<b>3,776</b>	<b>4,150</b>

<b>Medical Related Incidents</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
Unity Point Hospital	4,492	4,619	4,898
Albion First Responder	139	172	135
Gilman First Responder	106	136	172
Green Mountain First Responder	78	94	109
Haverhill First Responder	24	5	0
Laurel First Responder	21	2	3
Legrand First Responder	161	162	210
Liscomb First Responder	133	171	137
Melbourne First Responder	138	139	162
Rhodes First Responder	133	139	158
State Center First Responder	165	195	209
<b>.... TOTAL ....</b>	<b>5,590</b>	<b>5,834</b>	<b>6,193</b>

<b>Law Enforcement Related Incidents</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
Marshalltown Police Department	29,341	28,120	27,711
Marshall County Sheriff's Office	23,191	20,512	24,217
Melbourne/Rhodes Department	110	63	35
State Center Police Department	1865	1,346	1,272
Outside County / Drug Task Force	12	27	24
<b>.... TOTAL ....</b>	<b>54,519</b>	<b>50,068</b>	<b>53,259</b>

## **Call Handling Procedures**

The Marshall County Communications Center continues refining policies, procedures, and guidelines for handling all types of calls for service. Communications personnel receiving phone calls, judge the characteristics of the call, to determine whether it is an emergency, or non-emergency. The Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system is programmed to assign a given priority to each type of incident based on the call type chosen; however, the dispatchers have the option to notify field personnel and assign additional responders to higher priority calls when appropriate. As EMD IntelliComm continues to evolve, its purpose is to process priority and special response calls; and provide instructions when needed for Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD). Implementation had been ongoing and rollout was November 1<sup>st</sup> 2021. Quality Assurance / Quality Improvement followed into 2022.

Relevant information for each request for service is obtained and recorded to include control number, date and time of request, complainant information, incident type and location, units dispatched, time, arrival and return of service for each unit, as well as record of the final disposition or status of the incident. Misdirected calls are appropriately handled and rerouted, including correcting database errors.

Marshall County Communications Center personnel have received specialized training to include but not limited to: Disaster Preparedness: Are you Ready, 911 PSAP Leadership, Alerts and Supplemental Alerts – RapidSOS, Denise Amber Lee – BTD, EMT Refresher, Emotional Intelligence & You – How to Catch Yourself Before You Snap, Incident Tactical Dispatcher Training, Is Fire Dispatching your Second Language, Communications Training Officer 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, Emergency Medical Dispatcher 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, Peer Support, Resources & Recommendations for Calls Involving Missing Children on the Autism Spectrum, Crisis Negotiations, Dispatching During Civil Unrest, as well as attending the Iowa State APCO/NENA Spring Conference, APCO National Conference, webinars, as well as other courses for CDE credit. These courses and like efforts contribute to trailblazing efforts with the objective and priority of providing Marshall County’s emergency responders with a standard of care that corresponds with the mission, vision and values of its core team / 911 Communications Specialists.

Processing emergency/non-emergency calls can be inherently taxing, as callers are often dealing with traumatic events. Telecommunicators are trained to ask key questions, pertinent to each unique scenario, and obtain the nature and extent of the incident. Once this is ascertained they then determine what resources are needed to respond and dispatch the appropriate units. Due to the demands of this job and the need to get the right resources to the correct location the training program has been revamped; there is a thorough eighteen (18) week, training program as well as continued training requirements for all personnel in the center. Training includes weekly and monthly required trainings in police/fire related topics, as well as online training and in person seminars and scenario training.

## **Communications Center Accomplishments - 2022**

In 2022, MCCC continued team building, making incremental improvements and preparing for agency projects. The leadership team continued to focus on improving customer service, product quality and staffing.

A lot of energy and effort was dedicated to the Public Safety Radio System project in 2022. By the end of the year Marshall County continues to focus on going live this January, 2023.

**Commission Directives** ~ Through what is best described as another tumultuously unpredictable year after 2021, mixed with disaster and the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, all directives set forth by the Commission have been at the forefront while still navigating the events of 2022. We have stopped questioning the status quo and began establishing “what’s next” preparing for what is around the corner. Quality assurance is being performed randomly on calls taken to ensure standards are being met and succeeded, currently the national standard is 7-10% of calls, MCCC completes 20%.

**Training** ~ In 2022, the Communications Training Officer (CTO) program was again restructured to make better use of the skills and talents on in-house Communications Specialists. The CTO program consists of three phases and a final shadow phase. Training includes one on one on the job instruction, scenarios, as well as classroom training for APCO Public Safety Telecommunicator (40hr Basic) and APCO EMD instruction as they learn the disciplines of call receiving and police, fire, and ems dispatching. CTO’s play a large role in the successes of the training program, serving as role models and mentors to new employees just beginning their career at MCCC. It was determined while in training, the initial 12-hour shifts, as well as extended time off created a lack of skill retention within the trainee. Currently the program during its first phase will implement five 8-hour training days with set days off to assist in this deficit. Thereafter moving into phases two and through the end the trainee will rotate through with a trainer to best conform to the schedule set of a 911 Communication Specialist. The MCCC leadership team will continue to monitor this for continued success.

**Quality Assurance** ~ MCCC began work on expanding the current Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement (QA/QI) program for 911 Specialists in order to provide a larger review of call intake within the communications center. Customer service is extremely important in an organization. These changes provided information on gaps in training as well as highlighted exemplary actions of specific individuals and/or calls.

**Tactical Dispatching Program** ~ The specialized position of Tactical Dispatcher continues to be a success. The mission of the Tactical Dispatch Team is to provide emergency field communications support to a critical incident or event outside of normal operations. The Tactical Dispatch Team has the ability, equipment, and expertise to assist and support operations at the scene of an incident or from the communications center. The functionality of the team is solely dependent upon the staff and operations of the Marshall County Communications Center. The team employs a selected group of communications personnel who are trained to respond to a major incident with the capability, equipment, and knowledge to facilitate and support communications operations in the field. The concept of the tactical dispatcher is to integrate their unique skills (multi-tasking, attention to detail, active listening, etc.) into a command post environment or a large-scale mutual aid-type incident. Their primary focus is communications, accountability, documentation and resource allocation. Currently there are three Tactical Dispatchers: Melinda Ruopp (PRN dispatcher), Shannon Wegner and Hayley Paige. Supervisor Tiffany Eibs continues to serve as Tactical Dispatch Coordinator over the program. Training for the Tactical Dispatchers while be ongoing to ensure readiness. Training coordination with the SWAT Team and Task Force continue to strengthen the program.

**Recruitment** ~ As a public service organization staffed 24/7, recruitment and retention efforts are critical to ensure that staffing levels are met and employees are able to maintain a healthy work-life balance. As in previous years, MCCC operated at less than full-staffing levels due in part to normal attrition, life events, and those failing out of the training program. On-going recruitment

program efforts and the return of 911 Specialist Paige in 2022 will leave 3 positions open at the close of 2022. One position will begin on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, a second is in background to begin Feb/Mar and the final position is slotted to be hired mid-2023.

**Union Contract** ~ Meetings were held and an agreement was reached to take to the Commission Meeting for final approval/vote. A special thank you to Madaleine Welton and Evan Folk for being part of this negotiation process / committee. In November the Marshall County Communications Commission and Teamsters Local 238 Union Agreement was completed adopted and signed. Motion to approve the changes to the contract were made by Folk, seconded by Welton, roll call vote Folk aye, Summers aye, Pfantz aye, Welton aye, Eldridge aye, Phillips aye, Patten aye, Thompson aye, and Elder aye. Motion carried.

**911 Christmas Fundraiser** ~ The Marshall County 911 Communications Center each year attempts to find a way to raise money or provide donations to those in need. In 2022 Supervisor Eibs launched the first annual Breast Cancer awareness t-shirt project. This year the funds benefitted the Iowa River Hospice House. Total dollars raised for this project was \$658. Marshalltown and Marshall County has been through a lot of tragic events over the last couple of years. Those events range from the Tornado, Derecho Storm and the COVID-19 Pandemic. Marshall County Dispatchers put events like this on to simply be able to give back and help out.

## **Communications Center Goals - 2023**

**Emergency Medical Dispatching** ~ In 2022 a monumental task of continuous guidecard and system review for accuracy and best practices was conducted for the EMD maintenance team. This team consists of our Medical Director D. Blaine Westemeyer, 911 Communications Director Rhonda Braudis, and Communications Center Supervisor Tiffany Eibs. Implementation of the electronic version of guidecards IntelliComm was completed in 2022 and review and monitoring with quality assurance will continue throughout 2023. Fundamental practice of guidecards usage continues to remain the same however efficiency and ability to filter information directly into the CAD system without shifting back and forth improves immensely the workload of the 911 Communications Specialist allowing more focus to be placed on the caller and responders in the field.

**Phoenix G2** ~ Within a consolidated dispatch center such as Marshall County Communications it is essential dispatching is consistent in the way it is dispatched verses different operational features based on each entity. Unity Point EMS was the final entity not moving to the Phoenix G2 system. Working with Shari King in 2022 we focused as a team on how to get them connected not only to the Phoenix G2 system (Thank You Chief Rierson) but also moving towards implementing the new technology. While this started in 2022, it will be completed in 2023.

**Training / Continuing Dispatch Education** ~ Training is essential within this profession, at the conclusion of 2023 the goal of the Communications Center is to have all personnel, and new hires trained in Public Safety Telecommunications (REQUIRED Basic-40hr), Emergency Medical Dispatch (REQUIRED, EMD), and Fire Service Communications. Further training will be sought out to enhance areas for continuous improvement within the Communications Center.

**911 Education Program** ~ COVID continues to remain an obstacle in this area. In October, 2019 a state grant was sought after and obtained for 911 public education funds. Approval was granted

for a total of \$12,000. Educational items were purchased and formal education began in the schools as well as community functions. In 2023 the team hopes to continue these trainings throughout the year. As we continue to move through obstacles, we expect to deliver education to area schools and throughout the community.

***Policy and Procedure*** ~ This has been a top priority not only for the Commission but the 911 Communications Director since arrival in 2019. Policy and procedure are a set of documents that are reviewed annually for accuracy. A new hire handbook is in production with Commission Members Evan Folk, and Madaleine Welton (volunteered) for the sub-committee to approve and recommend to the Commission once completed. This project is slotted to be completed at the close of 2023.

***911 Fundraiser*** ~ The Marshall County 911 Communications Center each year attempts to find a way to raise money or provide donations to those in need. While it is not yet determined what fundraiser will arise in 2023 the goal is to have one near the holidays.

***911 Communications Trailer*** ~ The Marshall County 911 Communications Center like many other dispatch areas did not have a 911 back-up center. While the state has a trailer in the event of a disaster we would be extremely low on that priority level to get usage of it. In 2022, grant money was provided through the Marshall County ARPA funding. This trailer will be shared by the 911 Communications Center, Marshall County Sheriff's Office, and the EMA. This will not only ensure its usage but also provide added benefit to Marshall County. In the event of a disaster 911 Communications have first right to the trailer, however it was built that it could be shared in the event two of the three parties have been displaced. It will also be used for exercises and events. We look forward to completion of the trailer in 2023 and usage of it. The value this brings to Marshall County is exciting.

***911 CAD System*** ~ In 2019 a member of the volunteer fire department requested the usage of Run Cards. During this initial discovery there was little to no help from the CAD company without spending money for the project. Due to the potential cost this did not happen. In late 2022 in helping the Marshalltown Fire Chief with their RMS program this project has come alive again. Now with a clear path that will not cost budgets the project has begun. This is a several step process and we're are in phase I, the slow and tedious space of data entry while we work through the 17,008 addresses within Marshall County. This project will take the majority of 2023; however, the goal is to have it completed at the conclusion of 2023.

## **Summary**

It is the vision of the Marshall County Communications Center to achieve the highest degree of public confidence. Our personnel are recognized for their professionalism, integrity, exemplary customer service, commitment to public safety, leadership and innovation. Marshall County Communications Center personnel are committed to saving lives, protecting property, assisting the public in their time of need, and ensuring the safety of our first responders through prompt, accurate, impartial, and professional call taking, dispatch and support services.

As 911 communications professionals, we strive to earn the public's trust and are challenged daily to maintain that trust. Every telephone call, every radio transmission and every service we provide demands our utmost attention and effective response. We effectively manage the resources, with fiscal prudence, in order to ensure an effective public safety response and a

financially secure and well-maintained 911 Communications Center and communications infrastructure.

As trailblazers in the field of emergency communications, we embrace a future course of change, improvement, and challenge focused on accomplishing our strategic goals, including keeping pace with advances in technology that improve interoperability and accessibility to our services; efforts to control escalating operating costs; replacement of aging or inadequate communications infrastructure; and the all-important sharing of resources.

The Marshall County Communications personnel continue to form integral partnerships with our customers, all levels of city and county government, neighboring jurisdictions, State and Federal agencies, and our collaborative partners, and will work together in accomplishing the strategic goals of Marshall County as a whole.

\*\*\*\* IN CASE YOU MISSED IT \*\*\*\*

# Radio project to bring more efficient communication

MAR 24, 2022

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO — A new 911 radio tower is currently under construction around St. Anthony and Clemons, which was pinpointed as a dead area where transmissions in and out were difficult. Once the tower is complete and the new equipment is installed, the radio coverage will be greatly improved.

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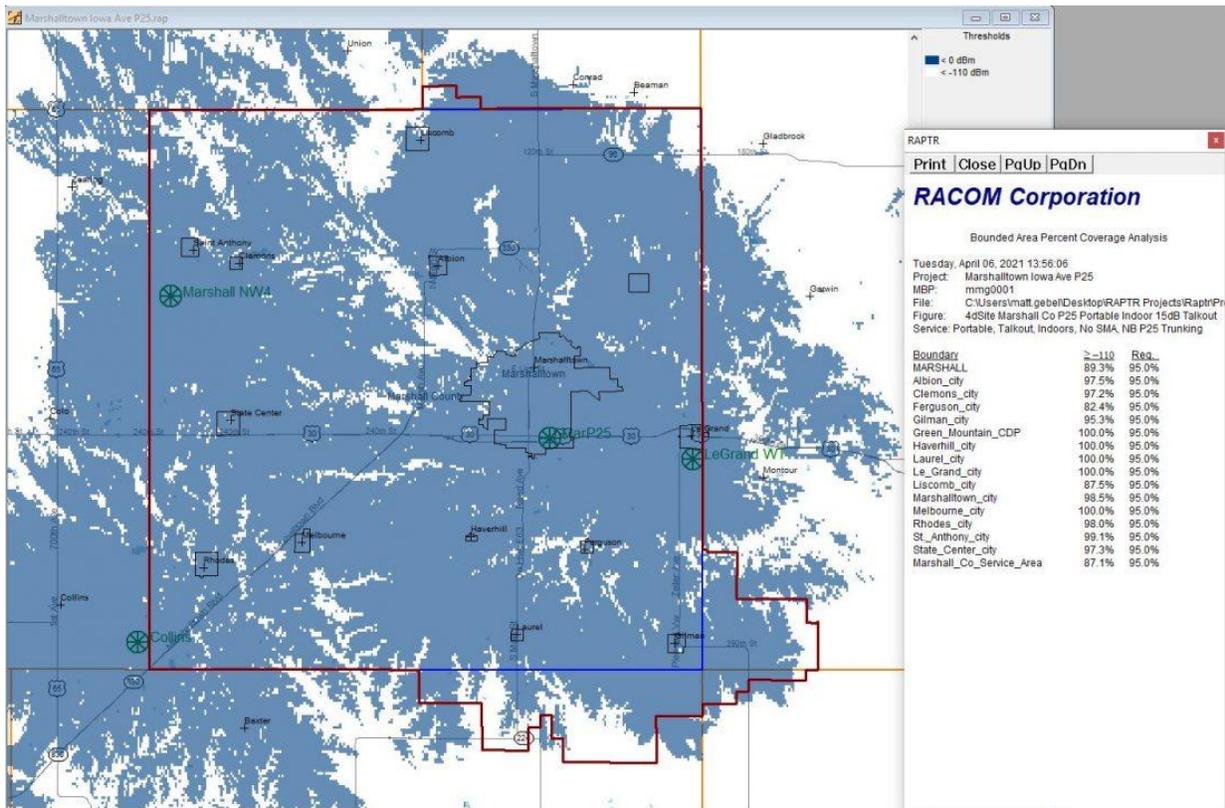
After two years of hard work and planning, the Marshall County 911 radio project is in the home stretch, and emergency service communications should be much more efficient once it is completed.

While the project itself is focused on upgrading and building radio transmission towers to meet new standards and cover more ground with less interference, Marshall County Sheriff Joel Phillips said several factors have necessitated the change, including the gradual transition from Very High Frequency (VHF) radios to Project 25 (P25) radios or digital radios, which started in 2012. With VHF radios, radio interference with transmissions was common, and there were areas where emergency responders couldn't be reached.

“There would be times where we couldn't hear dispatch. We couldn't hear other responders, and even with the new system with our new radios that we currently have, there are those dead areas where we aren't able to be reached and we aren't able to transmit,” Phillips said.

While the Marshalltown Police and Fire departments updated their radios to the digital system, Phillips said volunteer fire departments and volunteer emergency first responders in other Marshall County communities were still using the VHF radio system. The mismatched radio systems added extra steps for the communications center as they had to convert and boost the digital signals out to the VHF radios in order to communicate with them.

This made communication between emergency personnel more difficult, and 10 years after the conversion started, VHF radio parts and equipment became harder to find. The volunteer fire departments and emergency first responders had to find used equipment just to maintain their radios.



CONTRIBUTED IMAGE — A map of Marshall County shows the coverage the radio towers currently provide. The blue shows the covered area, and the white represents dead spots.

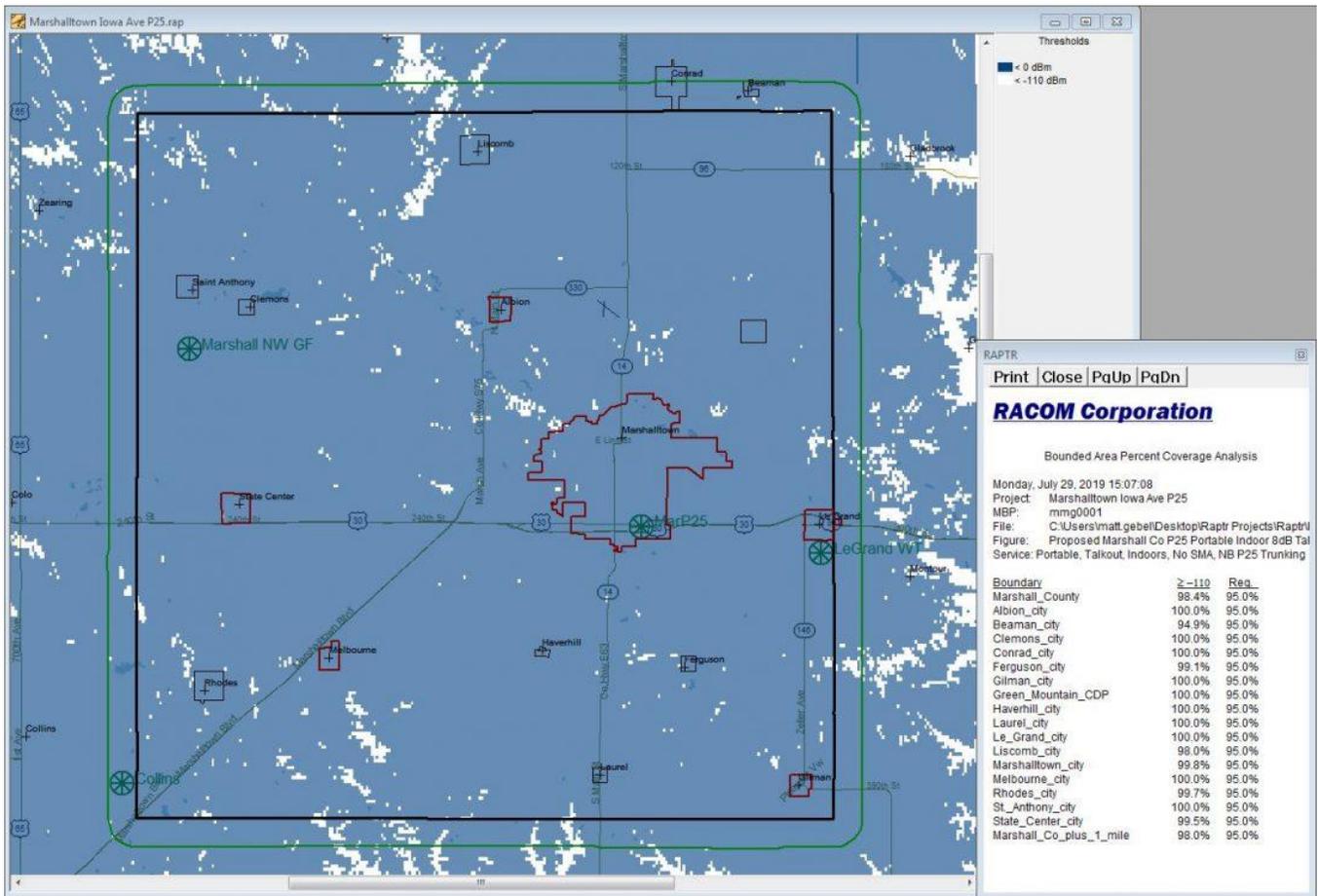
“It’s just not supported. It’s the end of life for VHF radios. They’re doing what they can to hold it together,” Phillips said. “This was the next step in the process to get everyone on the same system, the P25 system.”

In order to streamline communication between emergency personnel and to minimize “dead areas,” the Marshall County Supervisors approved the radio project just about two years ago. Multiple groups including manufacturers, electricians, engineers and public safety organizations all collaborated on the project.

“We’ve got a lot of these entities together, and we’ve come up with this project working together to kind of come up with a solution,” Phillips said.

RACOM — the Marshalltown company responsible for designing and installing the new radio tower technology — made a map model of where radio towers would need to go to offer wider coverage. Building new towers, coupled with upgrading current towers to better support the P25 radios, would make communication not just more efficient within one organization but between all of them.

With a general idea of where the towers should go to make that change possible, the next step was locating the necessary property.



CONTRIBUTED IMAGE — This map of Marshall County shows the coverage the new and upgraded towers will provide.

“Most of the time for this type of project, you try to find existing structures because building a tower is obviously really expensive,” Phillips said.

The largest dead area surrounded St. Anthony and Clemons, so they knew they needed a tower there. There were no tall structures available to build onto, however, meaning they would have to construct their own. Finding a suitable property proved difficult because the area they were looking at was surrounded by farmland.

While it did take a little bit of searching, they were able to locate a farmer in the area who was willing to lease an acre of property for the new tower to be built. It is currently under construction.

The St. Anthony/Clemons tower is the only one that was constructed from scratch for the project as the existing towers were modified for the new system, and the Le Grand water tower is being used to mount radio equipment, removing the need for a new structure there.

Marshall County 911 Director Rhonda Braudis is also looking forward to the benefits of the soon to be completed project as efficient communication is crucial to the call center's basic operations.

"Going to the new system, there is better coverage," Braudis said. "Your 911 dispatchers are your first,

first responders. They are the first point of contact for the responders in the field and those calling in for assistance needing help from those responders. So, it is vital for our dispatchers to be able to have that immediate contact with those responders."

Braudis said supporting the people who need help will be easier with the new system as well because dispatchers will be able to type the information into the system and the system will send out the dispatch.

"It's a benefit to the citizens of Marshall County because they're not having to lose the attention of that dispatcher just to assign those units and get them started. The system will automatically do that, and then (the dispatcher) can go back and update it," Braudis said.

While the dispatchers are still providing the information and sending a unit out, they won't have to do it verbally, which will allow them to focus on the caller.

Assuming all goes well, the towers should be completely tested and operational by December.

"We're very excited about it, and very hopeful," Braudis said. "Technology changes every single day, and when you're looking at that technology, you've got to make sure we're always staying with what's going to help Marshall County the most because we have to look out for our community."

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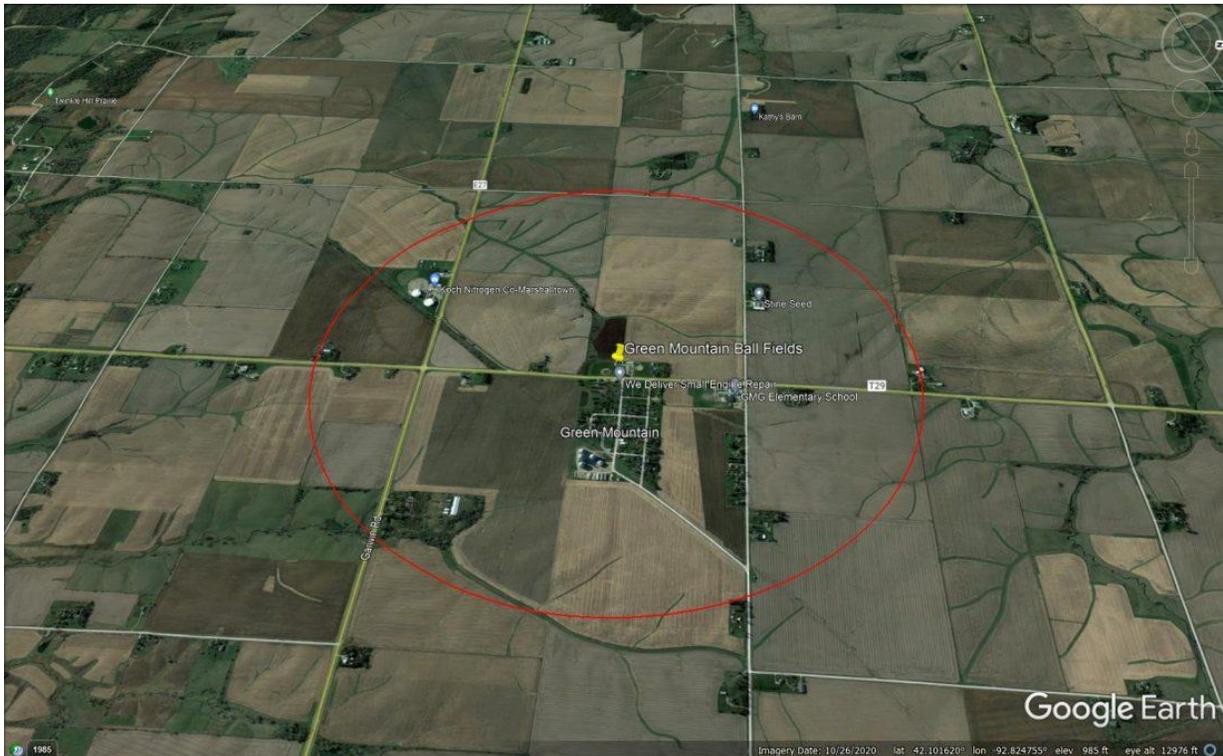
# Emergency management director shares latest update on siren project

APR 29, 2022

ROBERT MAHARRY

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CONTRIBUTED GRAPHIC Green Mountain is one of the unincorporated areas that would benefit the most from new tornado sirens, according to Marshall County Emergency Management Director Kim Elder. The cost to add or replace nine sirens in incorporated cities and add new ones in the unincorporated areas of the county is estimated at \$734,000.

After the storms Marshalltown and Marshall County have endured over the last few years, it's more important than ever that the tornado sirens are fully functional and able to reach as many residents as possible.

Over the last several months, Marshall County Emergency Management Director Kim Elder has been providing updates to the board of supervisors on the grant application process for a project that would add or replace nine of the sirens in incorporated communities and add 12 more in unincorporated areas of the county along with a controller system to be installed at the

county communications center and three digital repeaters, or digipeaters, at a total cost of around \$734,000.

Elder is hopeful that most of the expense will be covered through a Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) grant, but she did mention the potential need to break the project into two sections during the most recent supervisors meeting. She said the incorporated city sirens are set in stone if they get the grant, but she is still researching placement spots for the unincorporated areas to make sure they are in the best possible locations.

“That’s the thing with all of these. We’re looking at the most populated areas first but also the areas that have the most outdoor activities, too, because that’s who we’re trying to warn is those people who are outside biking on trails, enjoying the campgrounds, golfing and baseball — things that we’re outside for,” Elder said. “That’s where these really come in handy.”

Marshall County 911 Communications Center Director Rhonda Braudis shared similar sentiments about the importance of effective siren systems to warn the public of impending danger.

“It’s essential. It really is, and to be able to have something... trying to mitigate and be able to get the sirens to areas that don’t regularly hear the sirens (is crucial),” Braudis said. “There’s a lot of things that go into play with this, so this is a pretty vital project. And unfortunately, Marshall County has been subject to a lot of disasters.”

The cost for the cities is estimated at about \$270,000, and the cost for unincorporated areas would be about \$464,000. According to Elder, states that are more disaster-prone are more likely to qualify for the federal funding, and the breakdown is 75 percent FEMA, 10 percent from the state and the final 15 percent from the local entities involved.

“Unfortunately, it doesn’t come with a low-price tag. They do cost, but if you look at the lifesaving measures vs. the cost, life always wins,” Braudis said. “You’ve got to look at what value you’re getting from this, and the value is high.”

The second course of action Elder mentioned was maxing out at about \$533,000 in FEMA hazard mitigation funding to cover about two-thirds of the project — all nine of the city sirens and six or seven of the 12 in the rural areas — and saving the rest for a later date using either local county dollars or applying for additional grants. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars have also been suggested as a potential source of funding.

“The sooner we can get the information back from the board of supervisors, I want to make sure the state pushes this up to FEMA so that we don’t lose out and get behind someone else,”

she said. “Right now, we’re pretty close to first in line for Iowa. We got our grant turned in to the state, and now we just need to fine tune it.”

The waiting period to hear back from FEMA is about 60 to 90 days, and if Marshall County is awarded the grant, it will have approximately a year to finish it. On the other hand, if the money isn’t available now, it could be a two-to-three year wait for the next grant.

The board of supervisors did not take any official action on the matter during the most recent meeting.

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# Recent 911 network change raises questions about telephone company bills

AUG 13, 2022

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SUSANNA MEYER

Staff Writer

Iowa 911 call centers have been utilizing landline technology to operate for many years, but recently there has been a push in the legislation to modernize and transition to a wireless network.

According to the 2021 Wireline 911 Cost Recovery Report, the primary goal of the transition from the legacy landline 911 network to the wireless Next Generation 911 network was to eliminate dated technology and to alleviate costs at a local level.

To accommodate the change, the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEMD) were going to absorb wireline costs historically paid for by call centers, or public safety answering points (PSAPs), and they started working with the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) on the project.

“Since the wireline migration, HSEMD has taken over the call flow process by funding transporting the call from the entry point of the 911 system to the PSAP, as well as the costs of hosting and managing the online Automatic Location Information (ALI) Database which is used by telephone companies and PSAPs to ensure location information is delivered with the 911 call,” HSEMD 911 program manager and legislative liaison Blake DeRouche explained.

The HSEMD asked that the ICN provide “all-inclusive pricing” for the project, but as they worked on it, they determined that the pricing provided by ICN only covered the transport infrastructure and not various other costs that certain telephone providers generally charged PSAPs.

The actual monetary value of these various extra expenses varied drastically from company to company, as did the actual services they were charging for. So, while the project eliminated the costs of the legacy transport network, formerly provided by Lumen (previously known as CenturyLink), it did not account for the other costs.

“HSEMD determined that there was no set standard cost being paid to the telephone companies by the PSAPs. Some telephone companies charged flat fees. Others cited National Exchange Carrier Association (NECA) Introduction Tariffs. Some charge for mileage. Others

charged for Automatic Location Information (ALI) database changes,” the cost recovery report reads.

These bills are still being charged to various PSAPs throughout Iowa, and currently, there is some debate within the Marshall County Communications Commission (MCCC), which is working with Lumen, whether or not that should be allowed. Last year, Lumen closed out all accounts after the wireline migration, and in the spring, they reopened accounts and resumed billing for certain items such as ALI Database changes. There was no communication beforehand, however.

“Our understanding in working with Lumen is that when they disconnected services and closed accounts for the portion that HSEMD was taking over, they mistakenly turned off billing for everything related to 911 for the PSAP and closed entire accounts. After a period of time, around a year, they discovered that it was a mistake, created new accounts, and reimplemented billing for some services,” DeRouchey said. “The billing that they have re-implemented is in line with types of charges that other telephone companies are still charging, although rates greatly vary.”

The wildly differing costs charged by telephone companies throughout the state are detailed in the report, and the lack of consistency makes it difficult to determine the best course of action when dealing with those costs. According to the cost recovery report, costs for ALI Database maintenance ranged from no costs to \$1,113.60 a month.

“During (the wireline migration) process, one wireline telephone company raised its tariff by 350%, raising some bills from \$290 to over \$1,300. The same telephone company began outreach to sell a two-year price lock to PSAPs, and then threatened price increases if the contract was not agreed to,” The report reads. “This further demonstrates there is no standardization of costs, and telephone companies can hold PSAPs hostage with their pricing under the current arrangement.”

While the lack of standardization or regulation allows telephone companies to charge PSAPs any amount they deem fit, telephone companies can’t actually stop providing services if a PSAP refuses to pay. The report stated that in several cases, the telephone company stopped billing altogether after a PSAP refused to pay for a certain amount of time.

The HSEMD is still determining the best way to handle the situation and are weighing different options to address the additional costs, including several different possible legislation changes such as a possible change that would prohibit telephone companies from charging for certain expenses, among others.

On the other hand, certain PSAPs are also approaching the situation in different ways. The Marshall County Communications Commission, for example, approved a cease-and-desist letter for billing to be sent to Lumen at their most recent board meeting last week.

The situation is ever evolving, and DeRouchey said that when the Federal Communications Commission rules on the open docket, it will provide more clarity.

To read the 2021 Wireline 911 Cost Recovery Report, visit [https://homelandsecurity.iowa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/APPROVED\\_Final-Wireline-Cost-Recovery-Report-082521.pdf](https://homelandsecurity.iowa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/APPROVED_Final-Wireline-Cost-Recovery-Report-082521.pdf).

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# Supervisors talk emergency communication funding, OK bandshell rental

AUG 31, 2022

ROBERT MAHARRY

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T-R PHOTO BY ROBERT MAHARRY Marshall County Supervisor Bill Patten, right, discusses a potential bandshell rental with Nancy Burke of the Marshalltown Arts and Civic Center as Board Chairman Dave Thompson, left, looks on beside him during Tuesday morning's regular meeting.

The Marshall County Board of Supervisors further discussed the division of costs associated with the new emergency radio system — and some American Rescue Plan Act dollars to help with some aspects of the project — during Tuesday morning's regular meeting.

Although item 10A on the agenda, which was previously tabled, was listed as "Marshall County Communication Commission request for County funding," seemingly in reference to the

ongoing discussion over access and maintenance fees for first responding agencies, Emergency Management Director Kim Elder and 911 Communications Director Rhonda Braudis explained that about \$500,000 in ARPA funding — \$100,000 for a recording system and \$400,000 for a backup center — had received approval from the county’s ARPA committee.

“The goal here is to make it just absolutely as best as we can for Marshall County in several different functions of what we do in emergency services,” Braudis said. “I’m really excited.”

After a second item was removed from the table, the board voted unanimously to give Sheriff Joel Phillips the green light to apply for a SARA system, which helps to facilitate communication between jurisdictions if Marshall County law enforcement would be traveling on something like an inmate transfer. According to Phillips, there is no cost to the county associated with the system.

Both County Auditor/Recorder Nan Benson and Board of Supervisors Administrative Assistant Shari Coughenour pointed out that the funding request for the access and maintenance fees had not been addressed during the discussion of item 10A, and Supervisor Bill Patten ultimately motioned to leave that issue on the table for at least one more meeting with no specific deadline on a decision. The motion was carried unanimously.

Earlier in the meeting, Marshalltown Arts and Civic Center (MACC) Director of Operations Nancy Burke stopped by to discuss a request to rent the bandshell for the MACC’s grand reopening on Sept. 18. The standard rental fee is \$450, and Burke asked about the possibility of a discount as the MACC, which has not yet reopened, does not currently have any revenue streams. The event is also free to the public, as she noted, so no money will be collected that day.

Board Chairman Dave Thompson said the \$450 had stayed flat for some time and probably didn’t even cover the actual cost of using it, and Patten worried about providing a discounted rate for some organizations as opposed to others and the perception of unfairness. Burke told the board she would be willing to pay the expense herself, but Patten informed her he already had anonymous individuals who had come forward with a willingness to cover the cost.

As Benson also explained, State Auditor Rob Sand has monitored transactions between nonprofits more closely to ensure that no laws or ethics guidelines are violated.

“We have to follow the rules. We don’t have to like them, but we do have to follow them,” Benson said.

Ultimately, a motion to approve the rental and fee passed unanimously. At the beginning of the meeting, County Attorney Jordan Gaffney and Substance Abuse Treatment Unit of Central

Iowa (SATUCI) Clinical Director Darcy Maiden-Parks stopped by to observe a proclamation of September as Recovery Month.

“I just want to extend my gratitude to SATUCI and all of the community partners who help us to fight this fight and continue to fight this fight in our community because a big part of what we do in the county attorney’s office is fighting substance abuse disorders,” Gaffney said.

Maiden-Parks also provided a brief update on the future of SATUCI after Center Associates, which it formerly shared a building with, recently moved to the south side of Marshalltown near the hospital. The goal for SATUCI, she said, is to potentially take over the rest of the building at 9 N. Fourth Ave. and expand services.

In other business, the board:

- Approved the hiring of Andrew Cole as a sheriff’s deputy at an hourly rate of \$28.37.
- Approved the abatement of real estate at 719 Fourth Ave. in Marshalltown.
- Approved the consent agenda as listed.

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# MARSHALLTOWN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

## Leadership Marshalltown kicked off September 15

The Marshalltown Area Chamber of Commerce recently kicked off the inaugural class of the newly revamped Leadership Marshalltown program on September 15. Formerly Iowa Valley Leadership, the new iteration has changed slightly by adding more robust leadership components.

The new Leadership Marshalltown course adds leadership qualities and lessons to each session of the program, while also continuing the community aspect of it as participants will continue to learn all about and tour all the great things offered throughout the community.

“Participants in the Leadership Marshalltown program will graduate the course with a better understanding of our local community, as well as be better leaders within their organizations. We had a great opening retreat and I am excited to see the progress this class makes each session!” stated Kyle Hall, facilitator of the program

The Leadership Marshalltown 2022-2023 class is made up of 30 area individuals. The program is a 9-month course from September to May each year, with meeting an average of once per month.

Leadership Marshalltown is Presented by ITC Midwest. Scholarship sponsors are Emerson and MARSHALLTOWN. Partners-Iowa Valley, MCSD, and Martha Ellen-Tye Foundation.



The 2022-2023 Leadership Marshalltown Class...Pictured in the front row, from left, Erin Carpenter, Erica Finders (facilitator), Juan Tejada, Kyle Hall (facilitator), Ryleigh Feather and Kendey Eaton-Manners. Second row, Tony Willsher, Hector Campos, Maria Rangel, Abby Woosley, Amy Kacmarynski, Yolanda Smith, Rhonda Braudis, Kacie Monroe, Alicia Sears, Alex Klyn, Rachel Buchanan, Charissa Baedke, Tasia Hulin, Hector Hernandez-Morales and Becky Hassett (facilitator). Back row, Jared Wall, Robert Maharry, Paul Waterman, Ryan Isgrig, Alex Craig, Josh Grosvenor, Deann Tomlinson, Kohle Nieland, Doug Bausman, Mark Dumbleck, Jordan Pope and Heidi Dalal (facilitator).

# Supervisors reach compromise on radio access fees

TODAYS NEWS  
OCT 26, 2022

ROBERT MAHARRY  
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T-R PHOTOS BY ROBERT MAHARRY — State Center Fire Chief Brad Pfantz, left, addresses the Marshall County Board of Supervisors on the issue of access fees for the new radio system while Chief Deputy Ben Veren, right, looks on during Tuesday morning's meeting.

The Marshall County Board of Supervisors reached a decision on the long-discussed topic of access fees for the new public safety radio system during a regular meeting held at the sheriff's office on Tuesday due to the election.

The agenda item took up over half of the meeting as the supervisors considered facts and figures before ultimately unanimously agreeing to charge a fee of \$10 per month per radio for public entities within Marshall County. Private organizations like UnityPoint and UnityPoint security that wish to access the system will be required to pay the full cost of about \$33 per radio per month.

"We've been kicking this down the road for a number of meetings, and I believe we need to finish this," Board Chairman Dave Thompson said.

Supervisor Bill Patten presented information on which agencies are paying access fees to RACOM, the owner of the current system. After paying for costs to build and install the new towers, Marshall County is set to take ownership in January, and the Marshall County Communications Commission (MCCC) has already agreed to cover the cost of the 10-year maintenance agreement for all participating public safety agencies. There are also several agencies, mostly in Marshall County's smaller communities, currently not paying any access fees as they are on an older system. Thompson asked Patten if the county would be taking on the same level of expenses that RACOM has incurred while owning the system.

"That would be, I think, a true statement," Patten said.

Marshall County Buildings and Grounds Director Lucas Baedke, left, received his 10-year service award at Tuesday morning's board of supervisors meeting, while County Auditor/Recorder Nan Benson, right, received her five-year award.

Thompson added, however, that because the county is a public entity and not a for-profit company like RACOM, he did not feel like the county needed to make a profit beyond covering its expenses.

Patten acknowledged the concerns that have arisen within the smaller volunteer departments about the costs, noting that all but two of the fire departments in the county are maxed out with the amount they can levy through taxes.

"Everybody's budget's tight. Ours is tight too, but we're careful how we spend it and where we're going on it," Patten said.

Originally, a monthly fee of between \$15 and \$20 was suggested, but State Center Fire Chief Brad Pfantz brought data of his own and contended that a monthly fee of \$9.08 for around 543 radios would still allow the county to cover its expenses. He also shared information about how some other counties in Iowa have handled the radios and later noted that during major emergencies like the 2018 tornado, all public safety agencies in Marshall County have worked together collectively.

"Even \$10, \$15 or \$20 is gonna be difficult considering the radios we have. In my mind — it's not my decision, it's the board's — the taxpayers of the county built the system through the bond, and to charge them and us agencies to use our own system is gonna be a difficult pill to swallow for a lot of the volunteer agencies to absorb that," Pfantz said. "We're having soup suppers and pancake breakfasts to pay for what we have now, and if we're hit with an access fee to use a system that we as taxpayers built, it's gonna be very difficult."

The MCCC's Technical Oversight Board (TOB) had originally recommended that the county cover all of the access fees for public safety agencies (with secondary access for secondary roads and public utilities), as TOB member and Marshall County Chief Deputy Ben Veren explained, but both Patten and Thompson questioned whether it was within that board's purview to make financial recommendations.

"I don't remember, when we put this stuff together with the commission, that the TOB was going to be giving their feelings about financial things. I thought they were only going to be giving things if we needed some help on what this radio does, what that radio does, so on and so forth," Patten said. "I didn't know that that was part of it. I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings, but..."

Veren questioned the upside of the county owning the system if the agencies would ultimately end up paying similar monthly fees, and Patten responded that he felt they should take some ownership to help “keep things in line.”

“They own them. They have to take the responsibility of taking care of them,” Patten said. “In the Army, I know I’d come in, and we didn’t own anything. And we came in and we just threw things down and we didn’t care. I can see that happening, and some of the people I’ve talked to who are on fire departments say that can happen. But if we own them, then it’s gonna be our responsibility, and I think responsibility is a good thing in budgets.”

Patten first made a motion to charge a fee of \$15 per month per radio for a long list of individually named public entities and the full \$33 for private organizations like UnityPoint and any other entities that want to join into the system at a later date.

Supervisor Steve Salasek then asked for an amendment to the motion to reduce the monthly fee to \$10 for the public entities, and his fellow supervisors agreed to it by a unanimous vote.

“All of the feedback I’ve been getting from people is that we ought to be taking care of this completely,” Salasek said. “I’m trying to look out for the small communities in Marshall County here — Rhodes and Ferguson and even Gilman and Le Grand. This is a stretch for those people. They’re in a bind.”

Patten worried that further expenses would come up down the line and saw the fee as a way of “drawing a line” to ensure the system can stay financially solvent long-term.

A revised motion to move forward with the \$10 monthly fee per radio passed by a 3-0 vote.

In other business, the board:

Approved an additional \$275,000 in ARPA funding for the Green Castle campground and showerhouse improvements and \$50,000 for the indexing of various auditor, recorder and engineer’s records with COTT.

Presented County Buildings and Grounds Director Lucas Baedke with a 10-year service award and County Auditor/Recorder Nan Benson with a five-year award.

Heard a quarterly report from YSS of Marshall County Director David Hicks.

Approved three fund transfers: \$700,000 from the Rural Services Fund to the Secondary Road Fund, \$2,300 from General Supplemental to General Basic and \$147,619 from the Capital Projects fund to the ARPA fund.

Approved a zoning waiver for Richard L. Goshon for the construction of a modular data center.

Approved the hiring of Sara Badger as elections/vitals/DNR/real estate clerk in the auditor/recorder department at an hourly pay rate of \$18.75 per hour.

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# Supervisors make no decision on radio access fees

Item again tabled until future meeting

TODAYS NEWS  
OCT 12, 2022



T-R PHOTO BY ROBERT MAHARRY State Center Fire Chief Brad Pfantz participated in a discussion about access fees for the new countywide public safety radio system during Tuesday morning's Board of Supervisors meeting.

The ongoing conversation about who will be responsible for absorbing the access fees associated with Marshall County's new public safety radio system will continue for at least two more weeks after the board of supervisors removed it from the table only to ultimately table it again during Tuesday morning's regular meeting.

As the item came up for discussion, Supervisor Bill Patten reported that he has been in contact with officials from other counties — in particular, neighbors like Story County — to see how they have handled the fees. Marshall County Emergency Management Director Kim Elder shared some of her correspondence with Story County leaders.

Marshall County has covered the cost of building and installing the towers, and the Marshall County Communications Commission (MCCC) has agreed to pay the 10-year maintenance contract. What remains to be settled is the monthly access fees for the radios, as the MCCC technical oversight board has recommended that the county cover those costs for all public safety organizations within Marshall County. The leaders of some volunteer fire and EMS departments, in particular, have expressed concern that being forced to shoulder the costs could decimate their already tight budgets.

In Story County, Elder noted, each entity that joins into the system pays a monthly fee of \$33.94 per radio with first responding agencies receiving half of the cost back through a reimbursement from the communications commission.

"I'm not trying to play sides or anything. I just wanted to see what they did. I wanted to see exactly where their money went," Elder said.

Both Patten and Board Chairman Dave Thompson sought clarification on how other public entities would be treated under the new system, and Thompson pointed out that the city of Marshalltown currently has several radios.

“It’s not the responsibility of the county to supplement the city’s budget,” Thompson said.

Sheriff Joel Phillips and State Center Fire Chief Brad Pfantz also joined the discussion in an attempt to sort out which entities would not be responsible for covering their own access fees, and Patten then responded.

“The people that yelled at me the most were the fire departments, and they said they can’t afford it. But we made a decision early on that they were going to buy the radios, and they found a way to do that,” Patten said. “I realize it’s property tax money wherever you go, but we all have our separate budgets and we’re all responsible for those budgets. I’m not willing to use our budget to pay for everybody else. It seemed to me that that’s what they were wanting to do.”

According to Phillips, all of the entities in question are currently paying access fees to RACOM, and Thompson replied that if that was the case, the only change will come in who they pay them to once the systems change over to county ownership. The only exception Phillips noted, however, was the volunteer fire departments, which he said have not had to cover the access expenses in the past as they were on an older system.

Before the discussion concluded, Patten said he had a list of entities that would not have to pay the fees saved on his computer, and anyone not on it — which would include UnityPoint and the school districts in the county — would have to pay for access. Because he did not have a physical copy of the list with him, the board opted to wait until the next regular meeting before making a final decision.

“We did agree to build the tower, but that’s where we stopped — not providing radios, and we didn’t,” Thompson said. “I’d like to see more information on this and the list before I would vote.”

Pfantz offered the supervisors a list of the current users of the radio system and a breakdown of the operating costs, but Patten told him he would rather utilize “our own information.”

“I understand what you’re doing, Brad, but we’ve got to do this ourselves,” Patten said.

In response, Pfantz said he was “sorry for trying to help.”

The board voted unanimously to re-table the matter until the next meeting, and the motion passed unanimously.

Just before that agenda item, the board discussed an ARPA funding request for an additional \$325,000 — \$275,000 of which would go to the Green Castle campground and shower house project after initial bids came in well over the original projection. The other \$50,000 would be put toward the indexing of various county records from the auditor's, recorder's and engineer's office. It was also tabled after Patten made a motion, saying he would like to take more time for review. The possibility of ARPA dollars going to the Wolf Lake paving project was also discussed, and County Engineer Paul Geilenfeldt said he believed it would happen with or without those funds.

In other business, the board:

- Approved a proclamation declaring October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month.
- Approved the consent agenda as listed.
- Approved the following appointments and reappointments: Will Wears to the zoning commission, Leah Bethel as medical examiner, Rick Landt to the Board of • • • • Adjustment and Kris Gilchrist-Dull to the Judicial Magistrate Appointing Committee.
- Approved the hiring of Rebecca Ledvina as a nurse in the sheriff's department at a wage of \$31 per hour.
- Approved a pay increase from \$29.02 per hour to \$31.50 per hour for sheriff's department nurse Stacey Freiberg.
- Approved a change to the holiday schedule to match the state schedule with Martin Luther King Jr. Day observed and employees working on Presidents Day. The floating holiday for non-union employees was set for July 3.
- Filed John Worden's petition for an engine braking ordinance in the Green Mountain area. No action was taken on enacting any potential ordinance.
- Approved the reinstatement of a 2021 homestead credit at 2364 Marshalltown Blvd.
- Approved moving the regular board meetings on Oct. 25 and Nov. 8 to the sheriff's office due to election-related activities at the election center.
- Approved a memorandum of understanding with the Teamsters Local #238 for a contract extension with sheriff's deputies and jailers.

- Approved the purchase of a new 2023 John Deere 644P Wheel Loader from Murphy Tractor and Equipment of Des Moines at a cost of \$341,950.
- Approved an adjustment to the county’s cybersecurity coverage that will remove the policy aggregate of \$1 million and the purchase of additional insurance to mitigate wind and hail deductibles.

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