

LEA COUNTY COMMUNICATION AUTHORITY

Meeting of the Board of Directors

Wednesday, February 17, 2021

Lea County Event Center, Front Meeting Room, 5101 Lovington Highway, Hobbs, NM

Call to Order

Chairman Mike Gallagher called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. Acting City Manager/Fire Chief Manny Gomez led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Members present were Hobbs Police Chief John Ortolano, Hobbs Deputy Police Chief August Fons (*Arrived at 10:07 a.m.*), Lea County Manager Mike Gallagher, Lea County Emergency Management Director Lorenzo Velasquez, Hobbs Fire Battalion Chief Kevin Shearer and Acting City Manager/Hobbs Fire Chief Manny Gomez.

Absent was Lea County Sheriff Corey Helton.

Also present were Mr. Chip Low, Lea County Finance Director, Mr. Craig Bova, Lea County Human Resources Director, Mr. Mitch Tuckness, Lea County IT Administrator, Ms. Angela Martinez, Lea County Communication Authority (LCCA) Director and Ms. Sandra Boltshauser, Hobbs Clerk Record Specialist.

ITEM01:

Action Items

Consideration of Approval of February 3, 2021, Meeting Minutes

Hobbs Fire Battalion Chief Kevin Shearer moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting held on February 3, 2021. The motion was seconded by Acting City Manager/Hobbs Fire Chief Manny Gomez. The vote was recorded as follows: Ortolano yes, Gallagher yes, Velasquez yes, Shearer yes, Gomez yes. The motion carried.

Consideration of Approval to Renew Audit Contract with Scott Northam, CPA, PC

Mr. Chip Low, Lea County Finance Director, stated Scott Northam, CPA, PC, has done a great job preparing the annual LCCA audits for the last five years. He stated this will be the final renewal of the contract between Lea County and Scott Northam, CPA, PC. The final payment will remain the same as previous years at \$7,590.56.

Acting City Manager/Hobbs Fire Chief Gomez moved to approve the renewal of the contract with Scott Northam, CPA, PC. The motion was seconded by Lea

County Emergency Management Director Lorenzo Velasquez. The vote was recorded as follows: Ortolano yes, Gallagher yes, Velasquez yes, Shearer yes, Gomez yes. The motion carried.

ITEM02: Comments

Comments from the Public

There were no comments from the public.

Comments from the Board

Lea County Emergency Manager Velasquez expressed his appreciation to LCCA Director Angela Martinez and the staff at LCCA for their quick thinking during a recent pipeline explosion. When the call came in, LCCA Director Martinez quickly realized email was down and messages were not getting to the appropriate departments. She called the Lea County Emergency Services Department on the radio and they were able to control the situation with no damage to the surrounding property.

In response to a question from Hobbs Police Chief John Ortolano, LCCA Director Martinez stated LCCA is still working on the Hobbs Code Enforcement radios. She stated there is still no dedicated dispatcher for the Hobbs Code Enforcement calls and the dispatchers are using the common channel for call outs. She added they are currently keeping the volume turned up so that they can see how busy Hobbs Code Enforcement will be on the radio. LCCA Director Martinez stated LCCA is currently working with Hobbs Police Captain Shane Blevins regarding emergency calls for Hobbs Code Enforcement.

Acting City Manager/Fire Chief Gomez stated moving forward he would like to see a priority placed on crisis management with LCCA and the entities. He stated there are new incidents and he would like to see the LCCA Board better prepared in the future. He asked that Crisis Management be placed on the agenda for discussion at the next LCCA meeting.

Lea County Emergency Manager Velasquez commended the City of Hobbs Communications Department for their wording on social media informing citizens regarding the recent weather related posts. He stated it was good information for the public.

Lea County Manager Gallagher agreed it would be good to discuss crisis management and lessons learned.

Responding to Lea County Manager Gallagher's question, LCCA Director Martinez stated LCCA lost power for several minutes every half hour for two days during the recent freeze. She added the tower generators did kick on and ran for three days.

ITEM03: Discussion Items**Discussion of LCCA's Membership Criteria**

Lea County Manager Gallagher stated he and LCCA Director Martinez met with Mr. James Williams, Lovington City Manager, Mr. Terrence Lozardo, Lovington Fire Chief, and Mr. David Rodriguez, Lovington Police Chief, to discuss the possibility of the City of Lovington joining LCCA.

LCCA Director Martinez stated LCCA has been dispatching calls for the Lovington Fire and EMS Department since the LCCA consolidation. The Lea County Sheriff's Office previously dispatched the calls for Lovington Fire and EMS.

Lea County Manager Gallagher stated there is more interest now from the City of Lovington. He stated they discussed Lovington's call volume and the type of services they would like to move to LCCA. He mentioned the possibility of Lovington keeping their Records Department.

LCCA Director Martinez stated there are six dispatchers currently working for the City of Lovington. She further stated these dispatchers answer after hour calls on animals, water services and streets. She added LCCA currently has four consoles that are complete, with the exception of radios, and could be used immediately.

Mr. Mitch Tuckness, Lea County IT Administrator, briefly reviewed the necessary equipment needed to connect the City of Lovington to LCCA. He stated there would be costs associated with the new connections. He further stated there are funds available for training of new dispatch employees.

In response to Acting City Manager/Fire Chief Gomez' concerns regarding the recurring expenses for new employees, infrastructure and maintenance, Lea County Manager Gallagher stated during the meeting with Lovington officials, there was no talk of shared costs. He reminded the Board that the cost to become a member of LCCA has been a factor in the past.

LCCA Director Martinez stated extra consoles were ordered when remodeling LCCA in 2019. She further stated the additional calls coming from Lovington citizens would increase the call volume and assist LCCA in receiving grant funding from the State of New Mexico.

After a discussion regarding the financial significance of joining LCCA, the possibility of regional dispatch centers and potentially hiring Lovington dispatchers at LCCA, LCCA Director Martinez confirmed that Lovington dispatchers would have to go through the application process at LCCA. She also stated funds for additional LCCA dispatchers have been included in the proposed FY 2021-2022 budget to be discussed later in this meeting.

Hobbs Deputy Police Chief August Fons arrived at the meeting at 10:07 a.m.

Acting City Manager/Fire Chief Gomez suggested a planning meeting to specifically discuss the financial aspect of the City of Lovington joining LCCA and

the importance of allowing the City of Lovington to have members on the LCCA Board, vesting them in the actions of the LCCA Board.

After a lengthy discussion regarding how costs could be split, what the entities might be willing to pay for membership, and the possible timeline for including the City of Lovington in the Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) for LCCA, Lea County Manager Gallagher reminded the Board that the communities in Lea County are intertwined and no community stands alone as everyone works and lives throughout Lea County. He added the bottom line is that citizens expect the same level of service regardless of where they may be at the moment.

Hobbs Fire Battalion Chief Shearer expressed concern regarding the 120-day withdrawal clause in the JPA. He suggested an additional memorandum of agreement with the City of Lovington to prevent unexpected costs if the City of Lovington decided to withdraw from the JPA.

Acting City Manager/Fire Chief Gomez suggested involving the Legal Departments from the City of Hobbs, the City of Lovington and Lea County to begin drafting documents negotiating the entry of the City of Lovington into the JPA.

To answer Hobbs Deputy Police Chief Fons' question, LCCA Director Martinez stated LCCA is funded through the general funds of the City of Hobbs and Lea County; however, other consolidated dispatch centers are funded by an excise tax or a percentage of the gross receipts tax collected in that county.

Lea County Manager Gallagher suggested he and Acting City Manager/Fire Chief Gomez meet with Lovington City Manager Williams to see what the City of Lovington has in mind for membership. He further stated they could also request a letter of interest from the City of Lovington formalizing its interest in joining as a member of LCCA.

Discussion of LCCA's FY21-22 Preliminary Budget

LCCA Director Martinez briefly reviewed the LCCA FY2021-2022 Preliminary Budget. She stated the costs associated with personnel have not been figured in to the preliminary budget. She further explained the operating expenses increased due to the renewal of the software license for the P25 900 MHz Radio System. She stated there is also an increase for education, physicals and polygraphs that will be required for new dispatchers. LCCA Director Martinez stated the increase in capital expenses is for the replacement of six security cameras that are over eight years old.

Mr. Craig Bova, Lea County Human Resources Director, stated the personnel expenses will be updated after a discussion with the Lea County Board of County Commissioners. He stated discussions will include a longevity pay plan as well as a possible increase in payroll and the possibility of a 5% increase in insurance costs.

Lea County Manager Gallagher stated there is also the possibility of a 3% increase across the board for Lea County employees but it is undecided if the 3% will be a merit increase, a cost of living adjustment or a combination of both.

ITEM04: Other Business

Set Next Meeting(s)

The next meeting was scheduled for 9:30 a.m., on Wednesday, March 10, 2021, at the Lea County Event Center, Front Meeting Room.

Adjourn

Lea County Emergency Manager Velasquez moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:58 a.m. The motion was seconded by Acting City Manager/Fire Chief Gomez. The vote was recorded as follows: Ortolano yes, Gallagher yes, Fons yes, Velasquez yes, Shearer yes, Gomez yes. The motion carried.

Lea County Communication Authority

Present Lia, phone Approved

Mike Gallagher, Chair
Lea County Manager

C. Helton

Sheriff Corey Helton, Member
Lea County Sheriff's Office

Present Lia phone Approved

Lorenzo Velasquez, Secretary
Lea County Emergency Manager

August Fons

Deputy Chief August Fons, Member
Hobbs Police Department

Kevin Shearer

Battalion Chief Kevin Shearer, Vice Chair
Hobbs Fire Department

Manny Gomez

Manny Gomez, Hobbs Fire Chief, Member
City of Hobbs Acting City Manager

John Ortolano

Chief John Ortolano, Board Member
City of Hobbs Police Department