

Region 26 Council

Emergency Management & 911 Communications Center

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June 4, 2020

Public Service Commission
Mike Hybl, Executive Director
PO Box 94927
300 The Atrium, 1200 N Street
Lincoln NE 68509

RE: Application #911-073/PI232 – Public Comments

Dear Mr. Hybl,

Thank you for allowing members of the public to provide comments on the Advisory Committee's funding recommendations. Region 26 would like to address the issues as follows:

#1 Surcharge Formula: We would encourage the Advisory Committee to consider the formula to be divided 40/30/30. It is our experience at Region 26, an eight-county member, to use this formula to assess our member counties to fund our existing budget. In our eight counties we have quite a diversity of population and usage and this formula has provided an appropriate and satisfactory solution. In addition to this formula we have also implemented a sliding scale for the call volume covering several years. The purpose of the sliding scale is to prevent a county to experience a major increase to their assessment based on a year where they may have had an upsurge of calls due to a large incident.

#2 Eligible Uses: Region 26 is grateful to see this as a conversation point. As a 911 Center one of our main purposes is to protect and be there for the public. When they call for help, they of course expect a response and the use of radio and paging are key components to getting them the assistance required. Therefore, we enthusiastically recommend the Advisory Committee to consider allowing funds to cover radio/paging equipment or any expenses that are necessary in a 911 center to complete the service to a 911 caller.

#3 Audit: Region 26 does not find it would be in the best interest of the Commission's audit to cover the expenditures made with wireline and VOIP funding. In most cases these funds are already audited at a local level and in reality, may be more confusing as this would possibly require more guidelines on how the funds would be spent if they would fall to guidelines with the wireless funding.

#4 Allocation to PSAP Region: As Nebraska progresses in the quest to provide the most up-to-date services to the public, the need for new equipment will always be required. Funding to a PSAP Region would be most beneficial to meet the goal of providing excellent service to our public. If the PSAP Regions were able to receive funds it would take some financial burden off the individual PSAP's and allow them to serve their communities.

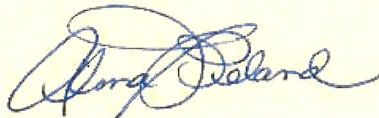
#5 Provider Funding: Region 26 does not believe that the wireless service providers should receive funding from the Public Service Commission. In our opinion, the providers have the opportunity to charge "for profit" companies and their customers. We have seen personally that they show no mercy with rent on their towers. This would also alleviate the need for any audits done by the Public Service Commission.

#6 Level of PSAP Funding: As discussed earlier the need for new equipment is always an issue along with the maintenance of our existing equipment. It is incredible to see the dramatic increase in costs for equipment and any repairs that need to be made on the radio consoles and any equipment that we use to serve the community. We would suggest on this issue to help the PSAP's meet new requirements that are constantly being made that the Advisory Committee would strongly consider to annually allocate funds to the PSAP's and not to the wireless service provider for the same reasons as mentioned in previous issue. We understand that some PSAP's still have funds in their accounts that have not been spent which is fortunate for them. However, there are PSAP's that have used their funds in upgrades and then with mandated changes face the need to upgrade once again. Region 26 PSAP would appreciate if the Advisory Committee would intently consider an increased annual allocation to help with the ongoing upgrades that are required in a Center. We understand to be able to fund the PSAP's, the 911 surcharge would need to be increased. The public continues to expect the service that is already provided through 911. As we progress in providing these services, the costs continue to increase. In our opinion, even if the surcharge was increased by fifty cents a month, that would allow the Public Service Commission to provide PSAP Regions and individual PSAP's the opportunity to serve their communities with **minimal financial impact to the consumer**.

#7 PSC Retaining Funds: The Public Service Commission needs to keep a reserve of the 911 funds to allow for any unforeseen cost as we move into this new age of Next Gen 911. What that amount should be we are uncertain of but should be a percentage of the funds expended.

Thank you again for allowing us to express our thoughts and concerns. We know that there is a lot to consider and we appreciate your work in helping maintain as well as improve our 911 Centers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Alma Beland", with a stylized, flowing script.

Alma Beland, Director
REGION 26 COUNCIL