

**MINUTES OF A SPECIAL BOARD MEETING OF THE  
SOUTH EAST REGIONAL EMERGENCY SERVICE AUTHORITY  
HELD ON THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2016**

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. at the Eastpointe City Hall, 23200 Gratiot Avenue, by Chairperson Duchane with the following Board Members present:

Adkins, Holland, Smith and Woodcox

Chairperson Duchane commented that this is a special meeting of SERESA and read over portions of the By-Laws of SERESA.

**Adoption of Agenda:**

Motion by Adkins, seconded by Smith, to adopt the agenda noting the outline inclusion for Item 6A (presentation by Chief James Berlin, Chief Todd Woodcox, Executive Director Cherie Bartram, Training Supervisor John Jannette, Union President John Jones and Consultant, Jim Marshall).

**MOTION CARRIED**

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:**

There were no minutes to approve.

**Correspondence Relevant to Special Meeting:**

FOIA:

Director Bartram commented that she received a FOIA from Chief Berlin on March 15, 2016, on Tuesday a ten-day extension was sent to Chief Berlin and read the FOIA request into the record. Chairperson Duchane commented that the Board's By-Laws speak to the ability to access public records but clearly those items are not really FOIA requests but will take appropriate measures to respond to that; relevance for the meeting today really isn't clear to him because we are discussing dispatch performance. Board Member Adkins concurred with Chairperson Duchane that the FOIA isn't for today's meeting.

**New Business:**

6A. Chief Berlin commented that TAC met and elected Chief Woodcox to be the spokesman on this. Board Member Woodcox commented that the items he has to present today may have been covered in the report prepared March 24, 2016. Briefly Chief and Deputy Chief from each City met and boiled down all the concerns they had – six primary areas that they would like to see addressed – 1) in progress calls are not being aired immediately – could be related to the set up at SERESA with call takers and can address this going forward; 2) quite often dispatchers will mention that a call came in and is in progress or just occurred when there is actually a five to ten minute delay in the call; 3) this issue is primarily an Eastpointe issue – dispatchers failing to send medical immediately on the first call on a “man down” call and this is a consistent problem and medical response is not sent at the same time; 4)

severe overlap with the assignment and scheduling of supervisory personnel in the dispatch center – if they are going to overlap for a long period of time no problem – not always a supervisor available so why are they overlapping so much - at one point in time three supervisors over a four hour period of time – needs to be addressed at SERESA; police department leadership would like an explanation of why so many supervisors are working at one time; 6) appears that supervisors are not regularly in the dispatch center supervising – seems they are in a certain isolated room where they are effectively unable to supervise their personnel; 5) disciplinary reports – understands as a Police Chief or Fire Chief being directly informed on specific areas of discipline would not be appropriate, however, as a Board Member he is concerned especially looking at the report submitted by the Director because there were several incidents of repeat offenses on several issues and discipline seemed insufficient; would like to see what training was utilized to correct a training issue and would like a little more defined role on the supervisors and exactly what they are supposed to be doing day in and day out that is supervisory in nature.

Vice Chairperson Smith asked did TAC actually meet and decide that Chief Woodcox would be a spokesman. Chief Berlin responded that the police chiefs met and decided but didn't have a TAC meeting. Vice Chairperson Smith asked are there specific examples of in progress calls not being dispatched because he wasn't aware of any. Board Member Adkins replied that he is aware of issues raised by Roseville police and fire. Chairperson Duchane asked Director Bartram to give us a summary on a monthly basis of complaints and that is the only way he would know. Board Member Holland commented that on that exact issue he questions the policy itself which tells what the dispatchers are to do what we ask them to do it and Director Bartram would have the answers.

Executive Bartram read her introductory remarks.

Director Bartram reviewed the report she prepared for this meeting; at a Board Meeting on March 9<sup>th</sup> Chief Berlin stated that he was speaking for all three agencies stating that the quality of dispatch services provided by SERESA is no longer what it once was and that the rank and file have lost confidence in the dispatch along with a whole host of issues which are discussed in detail in this report; no other issues have been brought to her attention as of close of business on March 18<sup>th</sup>; first charge is no accountability – we are accountable through quality assurance and every supervisor is mandated by policy to report every time they take one of those reports and supervisors pull those automatically and under the EMD policy they pull one report per dispatcher per month which means they are pulling 18 medical reports every month which meets the standard set of approximately 10%; discipline step 1 is coaching depending on the severity and if it is a major discrepancy can jump to higher level of discipline; over half of staff has less than three years in a consolidated dispatch environment; also difficult to keep dispatchers accountable when they sit down at the police channels and there are different procedures for different agencies; Eastpointe and St. Clair Shores have done a good job of keeping their procedures the same and Roseville has different procedures; errors are going to occur; put signs up over the Roseville dispatch because of the different procedures; question on corrective actions taken – each separate individual discipline and corrective action taken was based on what occurred; dispatchers are investigated; will pull all the CADs and all the tapes and then call in the dispatcher who can't be without a union representative and for the most part the dispatcher will take full responsibility for their actions and if they don't, sometimes it will take more than a piece of paper to take the steps to make them better. Board Member Woodcox asked what the steps in progressive discipline are. Director Bartram

replied coaching, verbal, 1<sup>st</sup> written, 2<sup>nd</sup> written, 1<sup>st</sup> suspension, 3<sup>rd</sup> suspension, 5<sup>th</sup> suspension, termination. Board Member Woodcox asked what is written-verbal. Director Bartram replied that nothing is really verbal, everything they do is in written form even though it says it is verbal discipline. Board Member Woodcox asked about Dispatcher 14 who had four disciplinary actions. Director Bartram responded that two of them were EMD related and when they do quality assurance it means that over the year they chose the case report, wrong complaint, etc. Justin replied that quality assurance is intended for corrective action not disciplinary action so we keep track of errors in quality assurance and we have levels that if they continue to repeat the same errors, depending on severity of error, and disciplinary action will occur with it. Board Member Woodcox commented that corrective action listed on here didn't necessarily result in some type of punitive discipline. Justin replied that on this sheet it would be. Board Member Woodcox commented that he is looking at Dispatcher 14 had four issues in 2015 that needed disciplinary action and already had two issues in 2016 that needed disciplinary action and are still only at the written stage. Justin responded that the reason for that is because they are different areas of problems, not repetitive situation with that same incident, so they are separate disciplinary actions. Chairperson Duchane commented that this is a unionized work force, disciplinary action notice is given to employee, the union is notified of the process, they have a right to grievance and unfair disciplinary action; agreement is between the Labor Association and SERESA; does TAC have any role in our disciplinary procedures in our By-Laws or labor contract. Director Bartram replied no. Director Bartram commented that they have gone through multiple terminations and found that it is better if we have multiple levels of discipline before we terminate and multiple attempts at rehabilitating the dispatcher. Board Member Woodcox commented that it is better to correct a current employee rather than hire a new employee; asked when does the progressive discipline reset. Director Bartram replied three years. Board Member Woodcox asked about the grievance procedure - do you do discipline. Director Bartram replied that she will work with supervisors and they will do the discipline unless it is a termination. Board Member Woodcox asked who reviews the grievance and can overturn it. Director Bartram replied that she would decide and it goes to arbitration and the Board has no control over it. Vice Chairperson Smith commented that there has been occasions where discipline has been issued and grievances have been filed at St. Clair Shores and this is similar at SERESA. Board Member Holland commented that on Attachment 1, pages 21-22 it goes into discipline and the Director has been it broken down; asked about accountability and quality assurance – doesn't see in the list items such as incorrect location, long duration of time, etc. Director Bartram replied that if they are aware of them they are listed.

Director Bartram addressed officer's best interest – from the first day of training SERESA employees are evaluated on a specific point in their training and that they have officer safety as one of the topics they are graded on and don't live up to proper standards of officer safety they don't make it through the training program; 2015 in December asked law enforcement agencies to consider calling out their traffic stops; 2015 – seven traffic related fatalities; always been bothersome that officers didn't call out traffic stops because dispatchers want to know where the officers are to keep them safe; when we started doing status checks got a lot of push back from the officers; listed different statistics on complaints; they are human dispatchers and they do make mistakes but don't do it with malice; have best interest of officers and fire personnel at heart. Board Member Woodcox commented that he really appreciates SERESA being willing to take the added work load for calling out traffic stops and asked her to clarify for him about statistics and more complaints. Director Bartram responded that she started getting more complaints two weeks ago. Board Member Woodcox commented that she didn't receive any new

complaints from his department. Board Member Holland asked have you not included and provided to the Board a list of complaints every year. Director Bartram commented that when this topic came up she knew after the March 9<sup>th</sup> meeting the complaints would go up to make a point that SERESA was doing a bad job. Board Member Adkins commented that it is important in the statistics that there are a number of unfounded complaints and some are founded and she has done a good job in answering them. Chairperson Duchane commented that the Board is not suggesting that we take pride in having founded complaints; the issue is accountability; complaints will happen based on the service levels received; those service complaints are addressed properly and may or may not lead to a variety of actions by the Director including disciplinary actions up to and including termination; they aren't being ignored by the participating members; whatever the numbers are the numbers are; if 100% are unfounded would have questions and issues about the quality of input and quality of review; Board is primarily concerned with the safety of our personnel; mistakes may happen from time to time and make sure there is a process in place to address those complaints and concerns and they are resolved. Director Bartram commented that she has been doing quality improvement reviews for twenty years and any dispatch center that says they are 100% are lying. Chief Berlin commented that she made a statement that since March 9<sup>th</sup> complaints have increased which her opinion was that it was to discredit SERESA; Roseville has forwarded two complaints over to SERESA; is that an increase in complaints or is it being directed at Roseville; both of the issues need to be addressed by her staff. Director Bartram responded that she received three complaints from Roseville – two occurred in February and one forwarded from an officer stating that she hopes this example is helpful and she assumed it was a complaint, viewed it as a complaint, logged it as a complaint and investigated it as a complaint. Chief Berlin commented that it was a complaint and was the question ever asked “was the suspect on scene” and you made the statement that it was done to discredit SERESA. Director Bartram replied that she never said that. Vice Chairperson Smith commented that he didn't hear that; when this issue first came up, he said we can't address concerns that we don't know about; unless we know these issues are here, we don't know that; told his police and fire chiefs that if the first time he hears about issues is at a SERESA Board meeting that is a problem; if police and fire have an issue with dispatch and they are suffering in silence to you but not suffering in silence to the public, that is a problem; if we are going to say things about SERESA we mean all the users and not addressing it to the Director and the Board, that is a problem; fully expected that people would start saying more and he knew the number would go up; the dispatchers don't know they are doing something wrong if we don't tell them they are doing something wrong; no one is enjoying this process today but things at SERESA will be better, communications between the Board and Departments will be better and it is a good thing. Chief Berlin commented that the two complaints forwarded were provided by the supervisory staff and one of his officers complaining that it put someone in jeopardy or not a timely response so to be accused of nitpicking; he only forwards complaints that come from his personnel and not every complaint is forwarded over; both of these complaints he felt something should be done because one was a fifteen minute delay in dispatching an ambulance and that is unacceptable; other complaint was a procedural issue on the part of the dispatcher where a coaching issue might be fine and might want to ask if the person was still on site during a larceny. Director Bartram responded regarding the delay in ambulance and when the dispatcher was questioned, they didn't have any memory of it because it was a month ago; there was an unacceptable delay but we don't know why because it was too long ago; the other one was a new dispatcher that didn't ask all the right questions. Chairperson Duchane commented that we are looking as a policy board at cultural and institutionalized processes and concerns; it is good that we are drawing these out now; we can all work through this to create a better organization; this is not

an inquiry or hearing to rehash any of their old discipline and many are for a learning process and organization improvement process. Vice Chairperson Smith commented that today we are talking about dispatch and discipline and there is not a department that he oversees that is perfect; no one is expecting these folks to be perfect; the concern is are we doing everything we need to do to get them as close to perfect with training, etc. Chief McNeilance commented that he has forwarded a few complaints in the past three weeks; just trying to get the best possible service for our residents; Director Bartram is always upfront in addressing our complaints, but would like to see some consistency and follow through with discipline. Chief Berlin dittoed that and has asked his officers to address any complaints to his office; goal in the day is to provide the best possible service for the residents. Board Member Adkins commented that we hate to micromanage our chiefs but he has asked his chiefs to copy him in writing for anything that they send to the Director.

Director Bartram reviewed the topic too regimented/follow a script; SERESA doesn't follow a script in dispatch for law enforcement; structured scripts are designed to engage the caller in a sequence of safety-related behaviors; scripts are referred to as dispatch protocols in the 9-1-1- industry and are recognized and recommended by NENA as Essential Best Practice due to the decreased liability and greater rate of success in saving lives; dispatchers don't have any protocol of policy for law enforcement for what an immediate dispatch is; don't have EPD protocols; identified for immediate dispatch the following types – caller in imminent danger, officer down, sinking vehicle, accelerator stuck and can't stop vehicle and active assailant; academy she just came back from recognizes that dispatch is an essential link and can actually increase the number of saved lives by approximately 50% by a rapid dispatch; so looking at implementing a rapid dispatch but there are no protocols for law enforcement; when we do a rapid dispatch we get feedback from the officers that is less than pleasant, who bombard them with questions, so then the dispatchers have gotten cautious about doing a rapid dispatch because they want to make sure they have those first questions answered then they won't get the grief from the officers responding to the emergency call; this needs to be a partnership, need to work together and knows what the officers need but have to work together and dispatchers want to give them the information, but if the dispatchers are going to be hit with sarcasm and unnecessary remarks when they do what they have been asked, they are going to stop; this charge is about those emergency calls where the call taker is getting all the information and there is a delay of two to three minutes, therefore, we have a dilemma. Vice Chairperson Smith commented that when Chief Berlin wants an immediate dispatch, officers want questions answered because they want more information first, so before today was Chief Berlin aware of the fact that you altered his immediate dispatch and slowed it down to ask more questions before you dispatched it. Director Bartram replied she doesn't know. Chief Berlin replied no, he requested immediate armed robbery at location and officer should wait for more information to follow; can't help that the officers want to pick it up and talk; asked repeatedly that when any officer is inappropriate on the radio, let him know; one officer comes across as sarcastic and the Lieutenant was wrong when he hung up on the dispatchers. Director Bartram commented that the dispatchers don't want to get into finger pointing because it will cause animosity and they don't want to create that. Chief Berlin commented that he can't correct the officers' behavior if dispatchers won't give names. Vice Chairperson Smith asked if the Chief is asking for something and your folks change what the Chief is asking for, then your folks need to let you know and the Director needs to tell the Chief; let the Chief listen to tapes and then the Chief can go back to their officers and talk with them. Director Bartram commented that the dispatchers and supervisors would not like to be in the role of tattletale and after an incident in Eastpointe the Lieutenant called them in and they apologized. Board

Member Holland commented that we have an operational issue as to when we decide to do things for the dispatchers; his perception as an employee/boss we are obviously missing a policy and should have a conversation with TAC and the policy should come from TAC. Director Bartram commented that we don't have a standard; supervisors are going through policy by policy rewriting them and will bring them to TAC with drafts. Board Member Holland commented that this is problem and we need to fix it; our organization is strong and let's fix these problems. Chief Berlin commented that he will call a TAC meeting for next week to discuss these policy drafts. Chairperson Duchane commented that we have some people that would like to address the Board and doesn't want to short change anyone but would like to hear some of the other people; if Board Members have any questions on Director Bartram's report, they can ask her. Chief Woodcox asked about delayed dispatch and appreciates the average time to dispatch from receipt of call data she provided; for clarification a traffic stop goes in as a zero priority, so these numbers for average time to dispatch include traffic stops which would have a zero time to dispatch; is there any way to pull those out since they are zero. Director Bartram replied that she will try.

Director Bartram introduced John Jannette. Mr. Jannette thanked everyone on the Board for the opportunity to talk about this; we need to work together; addressed some concerns; 1) Eastpointe medical man down and did a pretty good job of addressing that issue; 2) overlap of supervision (training supervisor) – he works all four shifts, is in the center, has his console in the center, assists in call taking, works 1:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.; do have a policy that is set by the Board that we are on call; speaking on behalf of his supervisors; have over 100 years of combined service of working in a multi-jurisdictional police and fire dispatch center; asked Board Member Woodcox if that answered his questions. Board Member Woodcox appreciated the clarification regarding overlap of supervision. Mr. Jannette commented that none of the supervisors sit in the office because it is too far away from the dispatch center and he will assist in call taking when he is there. Director Bartram commented that if possible he will adjust his schedule when another supervisor might be off. A Supervisor commented that quality assurance can only be done in our office and they do that when Mr. Jannette comes in. Mr. Jannette reviewed statements made at the last meeting – take the statements very seriously and it is the mission of our center to provide the best possible service to police officers, fire fighters, paramedics, visitors and citizens for all three cities; officer safety is their highest priority; when issues arise they are dealt with immediately; high priority calls in progress – dispatchers are required to ask about weapons, drinking, drugs and any violent behavior of individuals involved; traffic stops – dispatchers are trained and required to do status checks on the officers in a timely manner; list of additional tasks for officer safety is presented in Director Bartram's report; every single complaint that we are made aware of on our dispatchers and supervisors is fully documented, followed-up on and investigated; if a complaint is found to be true there is progressive discipline, corrective action or performance improvement training; these complaints are all documented and have a yearly discipline log; we are bound to the rules of dispatchers contract, as well as, the process of progressive discipline; review of past year discipline log showed a minimum of repetitive discipline problems for the same dispatcher; 2016 – one dispatcher had two delays in dispatch; these numbers taking into account the amount of calls handled and amount of calls dispatched in the year doesn't think this provides a wide spread lack of performance of the dispatchers; script – dispatch center handles police, fire, medical and after hours for DPW for three communities; require dispatchers to verify the address of every call and get an immediate call back number because if the call gets disconnected we need to have a way to contact that person; all dispatchers are trained in call taking procedure; the dispatchers are holding in progress calls – there

have been some issues – in 2015 our 9-1-1 dispatchers handled 98,896 non-emergency calls and 91,896 emergency calls for a total of 190,792 calls; total calls for service for police, fire and EMS that dispatchers dispatched was 100,959; in 2015 had five complaints regarding delays in dispatch – all were different instances - one received a suspension and four others received written discipline; do not reveal consistent problems; many of current dispatchers have less than four years of experience working in a combined dispatch center; found that the majority of dispatchers learn from their mistakes; work together as a team to make sure in progress calls are dispatched as quickly as possible; acknowledge the most recent incidents made in 2016 and will make necessary adjustments to improve in these areas; intentions of dispatchers is to do what is right for citizens and responders; severe decline in services provided by SERESA in the past year – has not heard about blatant mistakes from St. Clair Shores Police Department in about two and a half years and can't speak for the other two cities; shows that in 2015 success rate of handling calls was 99.5% and in 2015 one citizen complaint that was unfounded; can certainly work together to do our best; past six months have been terrible on the dispatchers because of the scrutiny and this has to stop; we are an organization of good people; hopes Chief Berlin is willing to work with them.

John Jones informed Chief Berlin that he takes this personally; thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak; officer safety issues – is and will always be his main concern and hopes his co-workers hold the same high standard; train and review to be the best he can be; sat in on disciplinary hearings; 99.5% of calls handled are handled accurately and efficiently; hope today to resolve these issues for the dispatchers.

Jim Marshall commented that everyone in this room that serves the public is under enormous scrutiny; commented that learning and holding yourselves accountable is a no brainer; need to look at what is taking place here in SERESA in determining the level of accuracy and the degree of legitimacy of concerns very carefully; serious issue with the kind of stress that goes day in and day out for telecommunicators and we have to be sure that the processes that we use to hold them accountable are absolutely fair; asked the telecommunicators to share what impact the experience of scrutiny has had on them over the past number of months and they said they feel it has been going on longer than that; want to support positive movement of this meeting; need to know that the degree of distress related to the criticism they receive from Roseville in particular was from very to extremely great; perception was that Roseville officers are intentionally looking for errors to find fault and discredit SERESA operations; feeling that their professional confidence is being undermined; perception that constant questioning by road patrol is increasing self-doubt and fueling higher risk errors; morale is being significantly impeded by this; asked the Board to consider the process you use for communication between police, fire, medical and dispatchers.

Chairperson Duchane informed the participants that the Board will take this up at their next meeting. Board Member Adkins asked the Chairman if the Board could make brief comments at the end of the meeting.

#### **Hearing of the Public:**

Several dispatchers spoke on the following: believes the Board is interested in what the dispatchers have to say; asked the Board for understanding because we are a family and a team just like the police;

respect - we accept great responsibility when they put themselves at the end of the radio and asking that you treat them as you wish to be treated; accountability - provide them with the best on all levels (leadership, confident and supportive supervision); keep practices and policies current; keep our technology fresh and make our education a priority; grow us and let us reach our full potential; challenged the Board to individually get to know them; work with us through the exchange program; thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak; we are people dedicated to this job and the Board won't be disappointed with them; commented on years of dispatching; try very hard every day; like their jobs but has been stressful these last few months; do take it personally but has not lost confidence in the Board; doesn't like to hear that they have lost confidence in them; believe the most important aspect is responder and citizen safety; provided personal information on several dispatchers; SERESA is the only dispatch center some have worked for that has combined police, fire and EMS; most important aspect of job is officer safety; spoke about several other dispatchers.

John Jannette informed the Board that the dispatchers that came today are on off days.

#### Board Reports:

Board Member Woodcox appreciates all of the dispatchers and supervisors coming out to hear all sides of the issues and when he brings up concerns, please don't take it like he is trying to tell you how to do the job; he has to look out for the people that he supervises and when they bring concerns to him, we need to sit down and address them to work things out; thanked the dispatchers and supervisors for what they do.

Board Member Holland spoke regarding complaints – do not want our culture to look at complaints as bad; knows SERESA to be the best dispatch in Macomb County and improve it by identifying our errors and improving them; make sure our culture is that complaints are not bad so let's look at what we are doing and improve that; SERESA is the best dispatch he has ever worked with; are there problems – there is no dispatch center in the nation that doesn't have problems; hope that the dispatchers who have come here today don't take some sort of negativity with you; thanked the dispatchers for their service.

Board Member Adkins commented that he spent ten years as a dispatcher; communication is important and has to be fluid and ongoing; policy issues we need to address, all need to tackle quality control on all sides; some of the discussions today looking at a commonality of policies and that is something that can be discussed at TAC meetings; this meeting should have been held a year ago; role here as a Board Member is to do what is best for SERESA; City Council will have a discussion on SERESA in the future and he will give them the information from this meeting and try to provide some answers; good basis of how we should be operating; assured everyone that he will not drag this out with Council and hopefully get some direction within the next month.

Vice Chairperson Smith commented that he thinks today was a difficult meeting for everyone; for Chief Berlin and Director Bartram seems like you want to make it about those two folks; part of it is about that; both of those are professionals and they will take away from today communication; can only do what they can with the information they have; Chief Berlin wants the best for his police department and his community and Director Bartram wants what is best for them too but she has someone she has to

answer to just as Chief Berlin has someone he has to answer to; communication is key and don't feel you can't tell someone there is a problem; happy to hear that man down calls is resolved in Eastpointe; be vocal, speak up.

Chairperson Duchane commented that communication is important but it is also how you communicate; either work to make SERESA better or don't work with them; long term is that now we are running an agency that serves three units of government; this is our E9-1-1 center and we want to make it work right; clearly the Board has some things to think about; don't think the Board should have been here today or a year ago because the mechanism of this organization is there with the technical advisory work is to done between the participating members, appointed agency heads and the Director of SERESA and done in a constructive and positive way so we are working things out; day-to-day operations should be addressed at that level and worked out and not about who did something wrong; doesn't want to see this happen again.

**Adjournment:**

Motion by Woodcox, seconded by Holland, to adjourn the meeting at 11:55 a.m.

**MOTION CARRIED**

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Linda S. Lince, Acting Secretary