

MABAS Communications Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 23, 2004

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. at Lisle-Woodridge Fire Station 1. Present were committee members Paul Maplethorpe, Round Lake; Dave Dato, Wauconda; Steve Rauter, Lisle-Woodridge; John Lozar, Ducomm; Jerry Tonne, Lombard; Bill Bouma, Mt. Pleasant, Dave Riddle, Channahan; Gregg Riddle, IFCA. Also present were Andrew Sneed and Mitch Viren, Winnebago County Sheriff's Office.

ITTF/MABAS Conference Update

Chief Maplethorpe and A/C Rauter provided an overview of information obtained and questions raised at the recent conference in Springfield.

Starcomm 21 – Numerous questions were raised concerning Starcomm, especially from departments in central/southern Illinois. It appears that considerable misinformation is being relayed to fire departments. President Reardon indicated during the conference that both the Illinois State Police and Motorola are re-evaluating their relationship.

Radio Programming – Andrew Sneed recommended an Advocacy Statement addressing radio programming issues for technicians and others that program radios. Issues like CTCSS systems, power levels, talk-back scan, channels labels, etc. could all be addressed.

The consensus was that a programming guideline would be a good tool. A/C Rauter agreed to draft an Advocacy Statement #8 – Radio Programming for consideration.

ITTF Interoperability Radios – Questions were raised concerning ITTF's proposed program to issue one VHF radio to each police, fire and EMS agency in the state to provide basic interoperability. Issues about frequencies, programming, local use, etc were the center of the discussion.

Issues for Future Meetings – Communications procedures addressing the use of vehicle numbers on MABAS responses and communications procedures at Level II staging.

Advocacy Statements

Chief Maplethorpe reported that the MABAS Executive Board approved Advocacy Statement #7 – Statewide Radio License at the meeting in Springfield on February 5th. An application was filed with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on December 5, 2004. The Statement will not become effective, however, until the FCC formally issues the radio station authorization, which is expected in late March or early April.

A/C Rauter questioned if the title of our statements were appropriate. A discussion ensued concerning the use of advocacy statements versus communications policies or recommended practices. It was agreed that our statements have been adopted by the MABAS Executive Board and are therefore policy. The consensus of the group was to leave our statements titled Advocacy Statements as we are advocating certain procedures, not mandating them.

Division 15 Grant

D/C Tonne reported the ITTF has approved the grant requested by MABAS for Division 15 to resolve dispatch frequency issues, freeing Blue Fireground for tactical use in the southwest suburbs of Chicago. Some discussion ensued concerning the status of the grant funds and how they would be processed. (Note: It was learned after the meeting that the grant funds will be issued directly to WESCOM. Chief Riddle will make sure the funds are spent for frequency relocation and maintain an appropriate accounting.)

Chief Maplethorpe reported that other areas of the state have approached him concerning grants or funding for frequency relocation and radio equipment. Rock Island County is using IFERN to dispatch several fire departments and have inquired about funding to relocate to a new frequency. Several departments have requested assistance for themselves or others to purchase new equipment capable of operating on the MABAS frequencies.

A/C Rauter recommended that MABAS look into interoperability or other grants to assist fire departments. D/C Tonne expressed concerns over MABAS becoming a clearing house for these types of grants.

Training

Chief Maplethorpe reported that he has been approached by Chief Joe Kelley of Morton, requesting training assistance for his newly formed division. He has indicated that dispatchers have received Chief Lipinski's dispatcher training but many questions remain. He is looking for assistance with a class on Saturday, April 3rd that will include audio tapes from actual MABAS incidents, as well as communications and response procedures.

Gregg Riddle questioned if their MABAS cards are ready and if communications facilities are in place. He suggested weekly radio drills to familiarize personnel with communications procedures. Chief Maplethorpe agreed to make the presentation with assistance from Chief Bouma and Gregg Riddle.

It was suggested that additional training be offered, perhaps at the IFCA symposium or conference in Peoria. Topics could include MABAS Advocacy Statements, box alarm procedures, creation of MABAS box alarm cards and their formats, and communications procedures. It was agreed that coordination with Chief Terry Lipinski is necessary to insure uniformity and reduce duplication of efforts.

Command/Communications Units

Chief Dato reported that ITTF is attempting to fund ten Command/Communications vehicles for distribution throughout the state through a \$2 million grant. Chief Frank Trout, Westmont, is chairing a MABAS committee to propose a standardized layout for these units. It was recommended that a unified process be implemented for both layout and communications capabilities, as well as concurrence with MABAS Communications Committee statements and goals.

The implementation of the ten proposed ITECS mobile communications trailers was also discussed along with their relationship to the Command Vans.

Information Technology

Chief Maplethorpe reported that during the MABAS Executive Board meeting in Springfield, Chief Greg Render from Signal Hill requested that MABAS address a standardized approach to information technology in the field. He mentioned computers and equipment for dissemination and storage of response and resource information, citing the statewide MABAS response plan as an example. President Reardon asked the Communications Committee to research this topic.

Websites

Chief Dato reported that the ITTF/Illinois USAR 1 has requested that the MABAS Communications Committee, through Lisle-Woodridge FPD, host and maintain a website for the team. A/C Rauter agreed to obtain a domain name and have his staff get a site on the web. D/C Steingart, Countryside FPD, a USAR team leader, briefly joined the meeting to discuss specifics for the website.

Chief Maplethorpe reported that President Reardon questioned the status of a policy addressing the MABAS websites at the February meeting. A/C Rauter agreed to prepare an advocacy statement addressing website operation.

Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee

The need for implantation of an SIEC in Illinois was again stressed. Addressing conversion to narrowband technology is one of many issues best suited for an SIEC. It was suggested that the committee draft a letter addressed to Homeland Security Director Chamness for consideration by President Reardon. It was suggested that disciplines for this committee mirror the IREACH Executive Board, however members should be both technically and operationally competent in public safety communications.

Copyright/Trademarks

A short discussion was held concerning copyrighting or placing a trademark on the MABAS name, logo and related documents.

The meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m. **The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 15, 2004 at 1000 hours at Lisle-Woodridge Station 1.** Please mark your calendars.