



MINUTES – May 22, 2025 - 7:30 AM
BENTON COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES EXECUTIVE BOARD
REGULAR MEETING
Richland City Hall ~ Council Chambers
625 Swift Boulevard

Call to Order

Chair Jon Amundson called the meeting to order at 7:32 a.m.

Attendance

Michael Alvarez	Benton County (2 Votes)
Brian Dansel (<i>in for Stephen Bauman</i>)	Franklin County (2 Votes)
Erin Erdman	City of Kennewick (2 Votes)
Jon Amundson	City of Richland (2 Votes)
Brent Gerry (<i>Remote</i>)	City of West Richland (1 Vote)
Dennis Bates (<i>in for Paul Carlyle</i>)	Benton County Fire Districts (1 Vote)

Absent

Stephen Bauman	Franklin County (2 Votes)
Kevin Crowley	City of Pasco (2 Votes)
Rachel Shaw	City of Prosser (1 Vote)
Bill Reed	City of Benton City (1 Vote)
Paul Carlyle	Benton County Fire Districts (1 Vote)

Also Present: BCES Executive Director Atwood; SECOMM Manager Lettrick; Emergency Management Manager Davis; Richland IT Operations & Services Supervisor Smith; Administrative Assistant/Board Secretary Cimrhakl

Other Attendees: Franklin County IS Director Beckley; Benton County Sheriff Commander Clarke; Kennewick Finance Director Platt; Kennewick IT Manager Troutman; Kennewick BiPIN Software Analyst II Amundson; BiPIN Business Analyst Gonsalves; Richland Assistant City Manager Florence; Richland Finance Director Allen

Approval of Agenda

ERIN ERDMAN MOVED AND MICHAEL ALVAREZ SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED. MOTION CARRIED 10-0.

Public Comments

None.

Approval of the Consent Calendar

1. Approval of the April 24, 2025, Benton County Emergency Services Executive Board Regular Meeting Minutes
2. Approval of the May 5, 2025, Benton County Emergency Services Executive Board Independence Workshop Special Meeting Minutes

ERIN ERDMAN MOVED AND MICHAEL ALVAREZ SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT CALENDAR AS PRESENTED. MOTION CARRIED 10-0.

Director's Report

3. Manager's Report – Jay Atwood

Staffing

BCES Executive Director Atwood reported the job posting for Emergency Communications Dispatcher has resumed following the implementation of Workday. There are currently 84 applicants set to take the typing test today (5/22/25). Those who pass will move on to CritiCall. One (1) candidate (pre-Workday implementation) is in background with hopes she will begin academy in June. One (1) lateral dispatch applicant is in process, and we've heard there are a couple others who are interested.

Sarah Schaffer was promoted to Dispatch Supervisor this week. With her promotion, there is one supervisor vacancy left to fill.

The IS Manager candidate has accepted our offer and is in background with anticipated completion mid-June.

Geographic Information System Analyst Michael Mendez and Executive Director Jay Atwood will attend the Hexagon Conference in June to attend classes and investigate options for CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch), RMS (Records Management System), and JMS (Jail Management System).

Microwave

The project remains on track and ahead of schedule. Classroom training on the Microwave System and the new equipment will take place at the end of June. Motorola's request to modify the initial payment was briefly discussed with the consensus of the Board opting to pay according to the existing contract terms.

Radio System

A technician will be on site the first week of June to begin looking at the radios that are currently attached to the 800MHz radio system (primarily Law Enforcement). A large order will be placed for the portable radios (primarily Fire) to allow for programming and distribution towards the end of summer or early fall. Day Wireless will begin scheduling with the fire districts to conduct a fire apparatus census to determine the equipment that will be necessary for installations. The number of radios to be purchased has been reduced from original requests as some radios can be reprogrammed and recycled.

Items of Business

Benton County Emergency Services (BCES)

None.

Benton County Emergency Management (BCEM)

None.

Southeast Communications Center (SECOMM)

None.

800MHz System

None.

Benton County Microwave System

None.

Strategic Advisory Team (SAT)

None.

BCES/BiPIN Consolidation

None.

Discussion Items

4. Independence Task Force - Update

The current BCES budget is about \$6.3 million dollars. The proposed budget for a fully independent BCES is estimated at \$8.4 million due to the addition of multiple necessary positions (HR, Finance and IT). Trimming several positions (HR Director, HR Generalist, Finance Director and a second IT Systems Analyst) is expected to save roughly \$600k. Some services could be contracted.

Tax Options

Scenario 1

In 2026, each of the Big 5 will have \$1.3 million due in Capital costs (Microwave and 800MHz). From 2027-2035, the Big 5 will split \$4.4 million in lease payments. If a 1/10th of a percent tax was enacted, an estimated \$8 million dollars between both counties would be collected (conservative estimate), possibly more (\$9 - \$10 million). Eight (8) million dollars would cover current Capital expenditures, systems maintenance & operations (Microwave and 800MHz) and build about \$600,000 in Capital reserves. It would reduce the BCES budget burden to about \$7.1 million.

Scenario 2

Collected taxes would be applied against all Capital expenditures, systems maintenance & operations, and a portion of SECOMM operations with no additional Capital contribution. The BCES budget burden would be reduced to about \$6.7 million.

Considerations for running a tax initiative:

- Duration of the tax (10-year sunset, perpetuity, partial sunset – 2/10% for x number of years then reduce to 1/10%, etcetera)
- 1/10% vs 2/10% (Securing 2/10% would essentially eliminate the budget entirely and would create \$2 million dollars per year in Capital funding)
- Upcoming Capital considerations (SUA renewal, BiPIN, backup center, the current BCES building, etcetera)
- When to run the initiative (general or primary election)
- How to successfully educate voters and create a successful campaign

The next step will be Charter development, which will allow BCES to continue operating as is until sustainable funding is secured. City of Richland Attorney Heather Kintzley suggested the task force continue using Attorney Kenneth Bagwell as he could represent the interests of the BCES Board collectively. The task force will then work on branding and boilerplate language for the Charters. Once drafted, the BCES Executive Board can review and eventually approve to move forward with the quest for an independent BCES.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:08 a.m.

APPROVED:



Jon Amundson, BCES Executive Board Chair

ATTEST:



Carole Cimrhakl, BCES Board Secretary

Date Approved: June 26, 2025

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