

MEDIA/PUBLIC SAFETY CO-OP MEETING MINUTES 3/20/03

- I. Call to order and welcome by Shelly Alley and Lindsey Nair
- II. Introduction of those in attendance.
 - Shelly Alley, Roanoke Police
 - Jennifer Faulkner, Roanoke Fire-EMS
 - Danielle Faal, Roanoke Sheriff's Office
 - Todd Burns, AEP
 - Ray Clark, Salem PD
 - Reg Gray, Salem PD
 - George McMillan, Roanoke Sheriff's Office
 - Lindsey Nair, Roanoke Times
 - Jason Bond, VDOT
 - Jimmy Brubaker, Roanoke Sheriff's Office
 - P.J. Patrone, Roanoke County Police
 - Melinda Payne, City of Salem
 - Karen Rawling, The Roanoke Times
 - Jennifer Conley Sexton, Roanoke Co Fire and Rescue
 - Chief Burch, Roanoke Co Fire and Rescue
 - Meg Hibbert, Salem Times Register
- III. Changes to the paging system
 - A. Lindsey Nair reports big improvements in the system from the media's point of view.
 - B. Shelly Alley hands out cards with instructions on how to leave a message on the system. She talks about the new numbers and hands out a list of those.
 - C. Roanoke Sheriff George McMillan suggests that if we ever encounter problems again, we consider Nextel's text and voice-paging capabilities.
 - D. Jennifer Conley-Sexton with Roanoke County Fire and Rescue wonders if we should expand the group to include music radio stations. Group discussion follows about how we currently provide information to those entities, whether it would be in their best interest or ours to include them in all the spot news information.
 - E. Shelly Alley volunteers to contact Clearchannel Communications about the paging system and Jennifer Conley-Sexton volunteers to

contact the Wheeler group. Lindsey Nair says she will contact a few more law enforcement jurisdictions to extend the offer.

- IV. Discussion on different agencies sending out pages on the same event. It is decided that this is a good idea.
- V. Discussion follows that Salem public information officer Melinda Payne does not feel that it is in her best interest to use the paging system for major events because she does not want certain media to get the information and broadcast it. She believes media would rather hear from her via telephone and says she routinely contacts Salem Times-Register first because they cover Salem exclusively. Debate follows about whether she should be using the paging system for events such as the recent train accidents and officer shooting. She says she has to check with city manager and other officials to receive permission to use the paging system. Others point out that it saves her time and is a good idea, particularly in case there is a disaster in the future.
- VI. Todd Burns of AEP gives testimonial to the benefit of using the pager. He experienced it's usefulness the morning of March 20 when an underground fire knocked out communications at their main office.
- VII. Rick Burch with Roanoke County Fire and Rescue wonders if other media have any problem with his agency sending out ideas for feature stories. He says one media outlet scolded him for sending these "unimportant" releases when there are other, more newsworthy things going on. Lindsey Nair tells him these releases cannot always be covered but are never a nuisance and encourages him to keep sending them as they help generate story ideas.
- VIII. Lindsey Nair complains that dispatchers in Roanoke and sometimes other areas do not seem appraised of big training incidents when she calls to verify that they are not actual spot news events.
- IX. Decision by group to try and have Salem's swift water rescue team as a guest at the next meeting. Melinda Payne will check on their availability and the availability of a room for the meeting, which is set for 10 a.m. on May 15.