

Roanoke Public Safety Co-op Minutes 9-26-02

Shelly Alley	Roanoke Police
Donna Wilson	US Forestry
Chris Thomsen	VA Forestry
JoBeth Brown	US Forestry
Kim O'Brien	Roanoke Times
Lindsey Nair	Roanoke Times
Beverly Harris	IRS
Phil Patrone	Roanoke Co Police
Ray Lavinder	Roanoke Co Police
George McMillan	Roanoke Sheriff
Jennifer Donovan	Roanoke Sheriff
Reg Gray	Salem Police
Erin Barnhart	Newschannel 10
Mike Stater	VSP
Shane Mooreland	Newschannel 10
Mark Vaught	Vinton Police
Rod Belcher	Vinton News Messenger
Julianna Edwards	Salem Times Register
Meg Hibbert	Salem Times Register
Dutchie Hughes	WVTF
Jim Kent	WDBJ-7
Joe McKean	WDBJ-7

I Meeting took place at WDBJ-7's new studio. Co-chair Shelly Alley brought the meeting to order and welcomed the group before introductions were done. Shelly then introduced Sarah Huddle from John Lambert and Associates.

II. Sarah gave us a summary of what she does:

- Gets calls from client, asking her to come over, what they need to do, etc.
 - Companies aren't usually prepared for a major incident. "Usually when I arrive it's chaotic."
 - She gets facts, coordinates with emergency response agencies. Ultimate goal: Apprehend the criminal
 - Also goal to get info to media in timely manner
 - "We give clients advice. They don't always listen." Clients sometimes like to hunker down and hope it's going to away. "It's not going away."
 - Some of her clients: Advance Auto, Medico, Friendship Manor, Roanoke gas.
- Also works with clients outside Roanoke and does project work. Brought in when Pulaski Furniture closed.
- Not just media relations, employee relations too
 - At crime scenes, Sarah said she lets police take lead. Question from Shane Moreland: Isn't job to protect client? Sarah: In the case with Advance Auto, victim said the company didn't have authority to release his name. Law enforcement was trying to

respect wishes of victim.

- The best we can hope for is that our side of the story gets out, Sarah said. Re: Advance Auto ... it was a tough one. She's sorry for the media struggle with that incident.

- Roanoke County Lt Phil Patrone: Police had problems notifying next of kin. Dealing with personnel issues was tough.

- Chief Ray Lavinder: "We didn't handle it the best we could. We'll try to do better in the future.

- Meg Hibbert of Salem Times Register to Sarah: Thanks for letting us know about stories a community paper can use. Lauded Beth Baldwin for her help. Sarah had praise for The Roanoke Times for opening their daily meetings to the public.

III. Paging system:

- It's still not working right for everyone. Meg Hibbert said she got a message that their's would be disconnected. Salem was the only ones with that problem, though. Some people getting blank pages.

- New people have been using the pager, including VDOT, Blue Ridge Parkway rangers and Roanoke County police

- The \$20 voice box was moved to Sheriff McMillan's account.

- Right now, looks like we're stuck with VoiceCom unless we can find someone else. Tidewater and Richmond areas both use VoiceCom. Shelly and Kim have had no luck finding someone else in the Roanoke area to provide us with the kind of system we need.

IV. Incidents for discussion:

- Shane Moreland said he though the Henry County/Short case was handled pretty well, with the sheriff's twice-daily press conferences. The pager might have worked at the beginning, but press conferences worked out fine.

- Chief Lavinder wanted to know if the media prefers press conferences? Shane and Erin Barnhart from NewsChannel10 said they're a good way to get information to a lot of people. Kim O'Brien from The Roanoke Times said she doesn't like them, prefers just listening then ask own questions one-on-one.

V. Other items of interest:

- Chris Thomsen from the Forestry Department said fire season runs Oct. 15 to Nov. 20. Leaf peak is expected the weekend of Oct. 18-19.

- Fire index still over 500. Would take five inches of rain to saturate the top layer of soil. It will take several seasons to get over the drought.

- Game and Inland Fisheries said hunting season was about to begin. When there are fatalities, they'll try to let us know via paging system.

VI. Next meeting:

- Scheduled for Nov. 21. Speaker to be announced.