

Roanoke Valley Media Public Safety Co-Op

Minutes 11/21/02

Members Present

Shelly Alley	Roanoke Police
Jennifer Faulkner	Roanoke Fire-EMS
Melissa Preas	News Channel 10
Emily Ditmore	News Channel 10
Ron Wade	City of Roanoke 911
Mike Starter	Virginia State Police
Laura Bullock	Virginia Department of Transportation
Jason Bond	Virginia Department of Transportation
Donna Wilson	US Forestry Service
W.C. Thomsen	Virginia Forestry Service
Danielle Faal	Roanoke Sheriff's Office
George McMillan	Roanoke Sheriff's Office
Jimmy Brubaker	Roanoke Sheriff's Office
Lindsey Nair	Roanoke Times
JoBeth Brown	US Forestry Service
Reg Gray	Salem Police Department
Ray Clark	Salem Police Department
Juliana Edwards	Salem Times Register
P.T. Patrone	Roanoke County Police
Larry Brown	Radford University Police Department
Dutchie Hughes	WVTF
Marya Jones	WDBJ-7
Meg Hibbert	Salem Times Register

- I. Shelly Alley welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked everyone to introduce him or herself.
- II. Shelly introduced the speaker, Steven C. Sigel, Division of Forensic Science, Western laboratory.
 - There are four labs statewide: Western - Roanoke, Northern-Fairfax, Central - Richmond, Eastern – Norfolk
 - The division of Forensic science is part of the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS).
 - Director – Leornard Cook
 - Secretary – John Marshall

- Western Lab serves 34 counties, 17 cities and towns, 110 agencies are served by the full-service lab
- 43 employees
- Mandated Functions
 - Lab Examinations
 - Testimony
 - Forensic science academy
 - Breath test program
 - DUI/DUID
 - DNA data bank
 - Controlled substance field test kits
 - Biological evidence storage
- Core Capabilities
 - Controlled substances – drug analysis
 - Biology – DNA- highest profile, small samples
 - Firearms/Toolmarkers – 2 examiners, functioning
 - Latent prints and impressions – core function
 - Questioned documents- handwriting, computer, etc.
 - Trace evidence – fire debris, hairs, glass
 - Toxicology – drugs, alcohol
- FAQ
 - How does DFS provide services to the criminal justice system?
 - Investigative agency collects evidence
 - DFS receives the evidence
 - Exams conducted
 - Results reported to investigative agency only
 - Investigative agency holds evidence
 - DFS provides consultation and testimony
 - All inquiries referred back to investigative agency in court
- What is DFS's relationship to the Medical Examiner?
 - They are two separate agencies
 - The Medical Examiner's office is part of the Department of Health and reports to the Secretary of Health and Education.
 - The medical examiners perform medicological autopsies.
- What access does the media have?

- No case information is provided until case is adjudicated and all appeals exhausted
- Must avoid possibility of compromise of an investigation
- Must observe confidentiality of criminal records and privacy of the victim and the suspect.
- Which cases takes precedence over others?
 - Investigative information in violent crimes
 - Potential for additional violent crime
 - Incarcerated suspects and court dates
 - Juvenile suspects

III. Additional Discussions

- Paging System
 - Some people are not receiving the pages in a timely fashion or at all.
 - Sheriff McMillan suggested that we use text messaging instead of the paging system. He also decided to look into finding a company that might be able to do text messaging.
 - Until then we came to the conclusion that we will continue to use Voicecom since no other company does offers the same service.
- Dispatcher Discussion
 - Concerns were brought up about some of the state police dispatcher's attitudes toward those who call for information when there is an emergency.
 - It was suggested that it would be best to invite a representative from the dispatchers to either sit in on our meetings or have one of them come and speak at one of the meetings. The idea is to make them understand what the media wants when they call them for information when an emergency occurs.
- Next Meeting
 - Our meeting would be Thursday, January 16, 2003 . The speaker and location of this meeting are to be determined. Possible speaker will be from FEMA.
 - Discussions were held about inviting other jurisdictions and companies (American Electric Power) to the meetings.