

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

HB 5804 SA 83 *scan* 1976
Public health + safety 207-215
House 2813-2814
Senate (consent) 2691

Transcripts from the Joint Standing Committee Public Hearing(s) and/or Senate
and House of Representatives Proceedings

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people, paid for by the city of New Haven.

REP. ORCUTT: Has the state also participated in the building of these other facilities?

CHIEF SWEENEY: I would say they did.

SEN. CIARLONE: Any other questions of Chief Sweeney? If not thank you very much chief. The next bill we would like to call is CO 163, AN ACT CONCERNING THE COLCHESTER EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER. The first speaker is Norman Gustafson.

H B 5804

NORMAN GUSTAFSON: The heart of any public safety system is communications. Without an adequate and well coordinated communications system the extensive training, new techniques, and new equipment employed by public safety organizations will never be used to their fullest potential. It was with this realization that the Colchester Dispatch Center Committee was organized some three years ago.

Over 12,000 people will die in the United States this year as the result of fire, and another 300,000 will be scarred or impaired for life. Tens of thousands of people will die in automobile accidents and hundreds of thousands will die from heart disease in 1976 alone. Many of these deaths can be prevented if properly trained personnel and equipment are able to reach these victims in a shorter period of time. It is the goal of the Colchester Emergency Communications Center to reduce these unnecessary deaths and disabilities.

Our proposal calls for the consolidation of all police, fire, emergency medical services, and civil preparedness communications into one location. Each emergency service organization participating in the system would still retain local control of their emergency calls. These calls would be coordinated by paid professional dispatchers who would know what emergencies are occurring in a region which potentially could include 14 towns. In the past these emergencies have been handled by non-professional people such as housewives, answering services, and convalescent homes because that was all that could be afforded. As dedicated as these people may be, the best interests of the public are not being served.

Our proposal also calls for the implementation of a 911 emergency telephone reporting system that would allow the public one easy to remember access number to be used for all emergencies. The public must presently use a seven digit number for each emergency service organization in each town. If the number is not posted on the person's telephone that is calling for assistance, then they must either look up the number in the directory or call the operator. In either case critical time is lost. There are only five telephone operator stations in Connecticut and it may take several minutes before the appropriate responding agency is actually dispatched to the scene of the emergency. When only four to six minutes is all the time that is available to re-establish circulation in a victim who's heart has stopped beating something must be done to speed up this reporting process. The Colchester Emergency

Communications Center would reduce this reporting time from minutes to seconds.

We are aware of the serious financial problems that the state is experiencing this year. We would not be here today asking for your approval of our proposal if we did not think it to be of critical importance to the people of Connecticut. When the economy is depressed, the reliance on public safety agencies is dramatically increased. People don't have the money to practice preventive medicine thereby increasing the number of ambulance calls. Fires are on the increase because people are torching property to collect insurance payments. Crime is on the increase because people are out of work and frustrated by the decrease in their standard of living.

We ask that you move on this proposal this year, a year when the need is so great.

I have some letters that I would like to submit, written testimonies with your permission I would just like to read who they are from.

SEN. CIARLONE: Proceed.

NORMAN GUSTAFSON: We have a letter from the Northeastern Connecticut Emergency Medical Services Council, The town of East Hampton, the East Hampton Volunteer Fire Department, the East Hampton Volunteer Fire Department Board of Fire Commissioners, the town of Marlborough, the Marlborough Volunteer Fire Department, the Bozrah Volunteer Fire Department, the Lebanon Volunteer Fire Department, the town of East Haddam, the town of Bozrah, the town of Salem, and the Gardner's Lake and the Salem Fire Department, the town of Colchester, the New London Fire Chief's Association, the Willimantic's Switch Board Fire Chief's Association, the Middlesex County Fire Chiefs Association, the Colchester Hayward Fire Department, the Hebron Volunteer Fire Department, the town of Hebron, and the last one is from the East Hampton Volunteer Fire Department.

SEN CIARLONE: Thank you. Any questions of Chief Gustafson by members of our Committee? Rep. DeZinno.

REP. DeZINNO: Chief, do you have any idea of the cost of this system?

NORMAN GUSTAFSON: Yes we have a budget proposal I believe is attached to this and we are requesting, \$66,320.50. Which is a part of the total cost and the balance will be borne by the towns involved. The total cost is \$96,000. I am sorry \$97,000.

SEN. CIARLONE: Rep. Smoko.

REP. SMOKO: Could you tell me possibly how many such systems are currently in effect?

NORMAN GUSTAFSON: Presently there are just two of that I know of, there is one

in the Danielson State Police Barracks, and there is one in Tolland.

REP. SMOKO: OK. and the funding on those two is similar to this in the state subsidy.

NORMAN GUSTAFSON: Yes they are.

REP. SMOKO: Thank you.

SEN. CIARLONE: Rep. Belden.

REP. BELDEN: Are they state funded on an annual basis?

NORMAN GUSTAFSON: Yes on an annual basis.

REP. BELDEN: What we are really talking about here is a this number would stay the same, somewhere around \$60 or \$70,000 dollars on an annual basis that would be the state's share?

NORMAN GUSTAFSON: That is correct, the one in Danielson has been operating I believe just two years. Tolland has been operating some, quite a long time before that. I don't anticipate any great increases. The only increase in cost would be if the public utilities or the telephone went up or electricity went up. That would be a basic increase.

REP. BELDEN: Back in your initial presentation, you talked about potentially it could include 14 towns, there are letters here from a number of towns, are there some other towns besides the ones with the letters that could potentially fall into this?

NORMAN GUSTAFSON: Yes there are other towns that are interested and we have invited any town that wants to belong to this system to participate.

REP. BELDEN: If these towns were to come into the plan, would the amount of money that the state would have to put in would it go down, at all?

NORMAN GUSTAFSON: It wouldn't necessarily go down, the biggest expense of course is payroll for paid dispatchers. And these dispatchers could handle additional towns without hiring more people.

REP. BELDEN: Would the local participation, when you indicate on here the local first year of \$30,000. are you pretty much planning that most of these towns will be in and that will be the share donated by the towns?

NORMAN GUSTAFSON: Yes.

REP. BELDEN: Can you give me a ballpark about how many square miles are you talking about?

NORMAN GUSTAFSON: In square miles I can't.

SEN. CIARLONE: Are there any other questions? The next speaker is Trooper Johnson.

TROOPER JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, I am Trooper Thomas Johnson, I am Legislative Liaison Officer to the Department of State Police.

I am here on behalf of Commissioner Edward P. Leonard, and speaking on the Communications Center in Colchester. The Department of State Police, fully endorses the Communications Center that Chief Gustafson has just outlined to you.

I won't go into the points that he covered, you have a good deal of information in the handout that he has given you. But let me say this, at the present time, plans are to include the Communications Center at the State Police Barracks in Colchester. It is the largest State Police Barracks in the state, it has garage facilities, a good deal of room, for placing this communications center in it, and is presently the site of the area for civil preparedness headquarters of civil defense.

It is ideally located in Colchester, it is more or less in the geographic center of the towns that are in question. I myself, until I was assigned to the Legislature I was attached to the Colchester barracks. I know the area, I know the problems with dispatching emergency services there. I was a desk officer at the Colchester Barracks.

At the present time, the State Police covers the majority of the towns which you will find on the list with the exception of Willimantic and East Haddam. Our response time in all of our dispatching is done by telephones to the barracks.

The fire departments and ambulance services are in several towns and there is really no central communications for them. Problems do arise in dispatching various ambulances to different areas, there is delays in mutual aid, regards to fire, and the communications center such as what is proposed here with the 911 system, would bring all of these various emergency services into one area. We would be able to dispatch, we would cut down response time, and lets face it we are talking about a rural area.

When I was on patrol in that area, I covered 120 square miles by myself. An obviously it will be a medical emergency or anything along that line, the amount of time you cut down your response is essential. Especially in an ambulance situation where you are dealing with heart attacks the first ten to fifteen minutes counts.

One of our prime considerations, and I know that a lot of the members of the committee have heard quite a bit about it lately are the nuclear power plants in East Haddam, Waterford, and the probability or possibility of some nuclear disaster or

something happening to one of these plants. Hopefully it will never happen. However, it is the position of our department we do have to have contingency plans. This system we do have, enough room, we actually have nuclear fallout shelters which is a large one at the Colchester barracks, we have our emergency service division there, we, this would also be the repository for emergency equipment in the event that such a happening could happen.

As I stated before it is in geographically, geographical location which would be ideally suited to this. I understand from the people who know, and I really don't know about it, that an affected area, in the event of a nuclear accident is approximately 20 miles radius. This would put the Colchester barracks in the fringe of this area and response time would be immediate. That is about all I have to say, if there are any questions from the committee I would be happy to answer them, but we fully endorse theby the other towns support.

SEN. CIARLONE: Rep. Johnson has a question.

REP. JOHNSON: Tom, you mention that this is going to be located at the Colchester barracks,

TROOPER JOHNSON: That is correct.

REP. JOHNSON: Is it going to be any need for the personnel within your department to get involved in the operation of this at all, or is this going to be strictly the center and funds from the state?

TROOPER JOHNSON: This would be the center where the presently the same situation in the Danielson Barracks where there are structures which is part of this 911 system, there are a separate room and they will handle all the fire, police and what kind of calls. The police calls will just be put into the next room as far as our particular calls will be going, and if we got the city of Willimantic will have direct access to them by telephone lines where a 911 call comes in from Willimantic.

REP. JOHNSON: So you won't be manning the phones at all?

TROOPER JOHNSON: At the present time we do dispatch some fire calls, and we handle radio systems for the fire alerts in various areas, But this would all be given to the 911 communications dispatcher.

SEN CIARLONE: Thank you Tropper Johnson, any other questions of Tropper Johnson? Rep. Belden.

REP. BELDEN: These people will then not be state employees, and I quickly went through this presentation, Colchester something, Inc. actually will these people be employees of that.....office set up?

TROPPER JOHNSON: I really could not answer that, you would have to check that

out, I can get back to you on it. I don't know what the personnel structure, maybe Chief Gustafson know, I don't.

SEN. CIARLONE: Chief Gustafson,

NORMAN GUSTAFSON: They will be employed by the non-profit non-stock, corporation that would run this center. All the participating towns and agencies would be voting members of that corporation.

SEN. CIARLONE: Any further questions of the speaker? If not thank you very much. Laurén Marvin, first selectman of Colchester.

LAUREN MARVIN: Lauren Marvin, First Selectman town of Colchester. I would like to speak in favor of the bill providing for an emergency communications center in Colchester.

In as much as Colchester, being in the center of the large number of towns, providing emergency services in various means of and ways, this would provide a much quicker and certainly a much more efficient operation from the stand-point of the various agencies, ambulances, fire departments, etc. Based on this and the fact that there can be certainly some efficiencies built into this operation.

I would ask you to support this proposal.

SEN. CIARLONE: Any questions of First Selectman Marvin? If not thank you very much. I would like to recognize now Fred Ballek.

FRED BALLEK: I am Fred Ballek, First Selectman of the town of East Haddam, and part of my responsibilities are for the safety and public welfare, well being of the residents of the town.

I am here to speak in favor of this act concerning the Colchester Emergency Communications Center. The preparation for this, began more than two years ago, and has been an on-going dialogue between all of the surrounding towns and all of the necessary personnel for over two years.

I would like to make the following statements,

a. Although the bill mentions only the town of Colchester, it is designed to provide emergency communication service to a dozen or more surrounding towns.

b. These surrounding towns encompass a population of forty to fifty thousand permanent year-round residents and many additional seasonal residents; all would benefit from the bill.

c. The communications system would provide improved fire, police and ambulance service, and would also serve emergency civil preparedness operations for many of the subscribing towns.

d. Total cost of the project would be borne by a combined State appropriation and participating town subscription.

For these and other important reasons, I strongly urge FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE BILL AND STATE FUNDING.

SEN. CIARLONE: Any questions of the speaker. I would like to introduce my distinguished co-chairman, the Honorable Dr. Cohen from Bloomfield, who has joined us.

REP. COHEN: Thank you Senator.

SEN. CIARLONE: The next speaker is John Cunningham, third Assistant Chief Gardner Lake Fire Company from Salem.

JOHN CUNNINGHAM: My name is John Cunningham, I am third Assistant Chief of the Gardner Lake Fire Company in the town of Salem, I would just like to say that Gardner Lake Fire Company and the town of Salem is very much in favor of this dispatch center, and that we hope you consider it and hope that you will give it favorable consideration.

SEN. CIARLONE: Thank you Mr. Cunningham, any questions of the speaker? The next speaker is William Borst, Fire Chief, of the town of Hebron.

WILLIAM BORST: My name is William Borst, I am the Fire Chief of the town of Hebron, you all have a letter from me, indicating my departments support of this bill, and from the first selectman, for the town of Hebron, who also supports the bill, was unable to be here but asked me to pass on his favorable indication.

Much has been said about this bill, this bill is very similar to several existing organizations which many of you are probably familiar with, so I won't go into any details. What I would like to do is to make a few brief statements about the regional impact of this type of thing which I think is something the state is concerned with. Those of us who operate the fire and emergency medical services, realize the need for communication between ourselves and with other public service organizations on the local, regional and statewide basis. We have shared responsibilities and shared problems and we need to share the cost of dealing with these emergency situations and with preparing for these emergency situations.

We need more reliable, effective and formal lines of communications. Right now we have a serious problem in our area with emergency communications. More effective communications will save lives, it will save property, and it can save money. We need a vehicle for communications with state related agencies to coordinate our local forces, with those who have a statewide and major responsibility.

I might refer to you ladies and gentlemen, the various state

agencies who we are concerned with and we must deal with, but in many situations we can't communicate with. I refer first to the State Police, who have already appeared here before you. There is obviously the need for emergency medical and fire departments to be able to communicate effectively with the State Police.

The more effectively we can communicate, the more effectively we can use state equipment, and state manpower, possibly cutting down duplications and eliminating unnecessary need for the State Police and for various state agencies. I also refer to the Department of Environmental Protection. Who have state wide fire responsibilities who we share with them. If we can't communicate with them, we may misuse their equipment, misuse their manpower, and of course the more serious problem is that we may not be able to cope effectively with fires.

In addition as of late we have been dealing with many environmental emergencies both in terms of spillages, in terms of fires which pollute the environment. We have to be able to communicate with the Department of Environmental Protection and each town have a communication system in someones home we can't effectively do that.

We also have to communicate with the Department of Transportation with the use of state vehicles in emergencies effecting the highways. We also have to deal with the state emergency medical services through the Department of Health who regulate us and who are attempting to coordinate services on a regional statewide basis.

I guess it has already been mentioned the need to communicate with the civil preparedness who have their area headquarters. at troop K Colchester where this facility would be located.

Many situations require us to deal with these agencies and we can only do so if we have effective, formalized communications.

This proposal which is similar to several existing state funded operations is small in terms of dollar impact. But is great in terms of the impact and in terms of lives and property and the many responsibilities we all have. Thank you.

SEN. CIARLONE: Any questions, yes Rep. Ferrari.

REP. FERRARI: INAUDIBLE NOT USING MICROPHONE.

WILLIAM BORST: No it is not, as was earlier stated, and is summarized in the handout which Chief Gustafson prepared, I believe the first year budget is in the 97 thousand dollar figure somewhere around that, if this is a share cost between small towns and the state. Hoping to share the cost as we share the responsibility. Many of these small towns cannot provide basic life services on an individual basis.

SEN. CIARLONE: Any other questions? John Semin from the Colchester Fire Department.

JOHN SEMINO: My name is John Semino, Fireman from the town of Colchester. I am definitely in favor of the Communications Center in the town of Colchester, everything has been pretty much discussed here so far. Several instances that I have run across being a member of the fire department, we have had several instances minor instances, fortunately there were no lives involved because it. If I am there by myself, and someone calls in, about fire we received the call, we mark it on a blackboard, the type of fire, the geographical location of the fire, we have to mark this down and it is really time consuming.

The reason why the communications center would be of benefit for the firemen, is it would eliminate the writing, of the location of the fire, or the type of fire, etc. So we would know exactly, in other words what I am trying to say in essence of this whole communications center, is that we would have faster response. Thank you.

SEN. CIARLONE: Any questions of the speaker?

DONALD STEELE: My name is Donald Steele, State Fire Coordinator from the office of Civil Preparedness.

From my experience, in this office, and past experience, with the fire service, I could verify, on the comments that the previous speaker made, regarding the problems of individual dispatching of various small town fire departments, with part-time dispatchers, and I could show examples of how the regional dispatch centers which are now in operation perform a valuable service.

With the goal of a 911 system, public access would be greatly simplified and with all of the emergency services police, fire, EMS, and CD, dispatched through the same center, it will be a coordinating function which is completely lacking when we have individual dispatching.

Our agency has a particular responsibility in severe emergencies particularly those involving unusual weather conditions, and incidents involving nuclear materials. Having the dispatch point for these emergency services, together, in the same building as our area headquarters, will greatly improve our ability to coordinate the functions of the various state agencies with the local agencies involved.

Speaking in behalf of the State Office of Civil Preparedness, I would like to be on record as being in favor of the bill.

SEN. CIARLONE: Thank you Mr. Steele, are there any questions of the speaker? Is there anyone else who wishes to be heard on this bill before we close this portion of our hearing? Thank you all. The next bill we would like to call is HB. 5778, AN ACT CONCERNING AN APPROPRIATION FOR COMMUNITY BASED ALCOHOL DETOXIFICATION CENTERS. The first speaker is Anne Wingate. Anne Wingate left her statement, the next speaker is Mary Ambler.

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I believe you missed that sir!

The Clerk please return to the call of the Calendar.

THE CLERK:

Calendar No. 795, substitute for H.B. No. 5804, An Act
Concerning Emergency Communications, File No. 736.

MR. GROPPPO (63rd):

Mr. Speaker, I move for the committee's joint favorable report
and passage of the bill.

THE GUEST SPEAKER:

Question is on acceptance and passage. Will you remark?

MR. GROPPPO (63rd):

Yes, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this makes \$40,000 available
for an emergency communications center in the Colechester Area. Funds for
this are out of the FAC Act in the budget for '76-'77 and I urge its
passage.

THE GUEST SPEAKER:

Further remarks? If there are no further remarks--

MR. GROPPPO (63rd):

Mr. Speaker, the Clerk has an amendment, LCO 3550.

THE GUEST SPEAKER:

Will the Clerk please call LCO 3550.

THE CLERK:

The Clerk has LCO No. 3550, House "A", offered by Mr. Groppo
of the 63rd.

MR. GROPPPO (63rd):

Mr. Speaker, may I waive the reading and explain the, summarize
the amendment?

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THE GUEST SPEAKER:

Is there objection to the gentleman summarizing? If not, please proceed.

MR. GROPPPO (63rd):

Mr. Speaker, this is a simple amendment. All it does is it says that the funds would be administered by the Comptroller. I move for its adoption.

THE GUEST SPEAKER:

Will you remark further on adoption of House Amendment Schedule "A"? If not, the question is on its adoption. All those in favor indicate by saying aye. Those opposed? House "A" is ADOPTED and ruled technical.

Further remarks on the bill as amended by House Amendment Schedule "A"? If there are no further remarks, will the members take their seats, the aisles be cleared. The machine will be open. Have all the members voted and is your vote properly recorded? If so, the machine will be locked, the Clerk will take a tally.

The Clerk please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Total Number Voting..... | 130 |
| Necessary for Passage..... | 66 |
| Those Voting Yea..... | 128 |
| Those Voting Nay..... | 2 |
| Those Absent and Not Voting..... | 21 |

THE GUEST SPEAKER:

The bill as amended is PASSED.

THE CLERK:

Calendar No. 797, substitute for H.B. No. 5977, An Act Concerning a Graduated Schedule of Tax on Dividends, File No. 738.

MR. O'NEILL (34th):

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THE CLERK:

Continuing on page 7 of the calendar going back to the third item at the top of the page, calendar 816, File 736 and 834, Favorable Report of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations. Substitute for House Bill 5804. AN ACT CONCERNING EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS. (As amended by House Amendment Schedule "A").

THE CHAIR:

Senator Houley.

SENATOR HOULEY:

Yes, Sir. Mr. President, I move the acceptance of the committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Will you remark on it, Senator?

SENATOR HOULEY:

Yes. Mr. President, this establishes in the Colchester geographical area the Colchester Emergency Communications Network, and it sets up the machinery under which that emergency service will operate. Makes an initial appropriation to help them get on their feet of some \$40,000.00 (indistinguishable) appropriations. It's a much needed bill to provide the public safety emergency treatment of fire, police and other emergencies. We ask that if there is no objection, Mr. President, that the bill be a Consent bill.

THE CHAIR:

Bill's been moved to Consent. Do you object? Hearing none, it is so ordered.

THE CLERK: