

**Franklin County REMC Meeting**  
**March 31, 2026 | 6:00 p.m.**  
**Northwest Regional Planning Commission Office | Zoom**

**Attendance:** Reginald Beliveau, Jr. (Acting Chair, Swanton Village/Town EMD), Micah Genzlinger (Fairfax Fire Chief), Michaela Foody (VEM), Shaun Coleman (NRPC), Ric Piaseczny (Sheldon Fire Chief), Ron Bushey (Sheldon Fire), Tim Stetson (Angel Ministries, DART, Enosburgh et al.), Ron Kumetz (Alburgh Fire, State Dispatch Task Force)

The meeting began at 6:02 p.m. There was no quorum

**Public Comment** – None.

**Introductions / Adjustment of the Agenda** – Introductions were made. No agenda adjustments.

**Disaster Animal Response Team** – Tim Stetson, Angel Ministries, Enosburg Falls, VT Emergency Services and Disaster Response

Tim and his wife Kathy oversee Guardian Angel Ministries, a faith-based but non-discriminatory organization providing humanitarian and emergency services to all people regardless of faith. Tim is a Senior Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Richford.

The core programs of the Ministry include:

**Disaster Animal Response Team (DART)**

- Operate independently but affiliated with Vermont DART (VDART).
- Provide preparedness, response, and recovery services for animals during disasters.
- Support pet sheltering alongside evacuated families.
- Distribute pet food and offers emergency pet safety education.
- Operate specialized trailers (equipment, mobile shelter, communications, bunk housing).

**Emergency Response Team (GAMERT)**

- Assisted families affected by 2023–2024 flooding through grant management.
- Led infrastructure recovery projects (e.g., rebuilding 5 damaged bridges).
- Developing a Tool Trailer for debris removal, rebuilding, and emergency repairs.
- Provides training in response skills (chainsaw use, tarping, muck & gut, casework).
- They do not proselytize or evangelize flood victims.

**Logistics, Communications & Technology**

- Maintain a communications trailer with radio systems and Starlink satellite capability.
- Enhance emergency connectivity and coordination capacity.
- Apply for grants & build partnerships to increase resources.

Tim noted that VDART received major funding (\$50,000 + \$35,000) to expand animal emergency support. The focus is on high-risk Vermont communities, aiming to equip 50% within 18 months. Municipalities must integrate animal sheltering into emergency plans and commit to training. Eligible municipalities are Bakersfield, Enosburgh, Highgate, Montgomery, Swanton Town and Ilse La Motte.

Other Community Support Programs Angel Ministries is involved in include:

- School Backpack Program (ongoing)
- Socks & Underwear initiative (started 2025)
- Donation-based efforts (tools, supplies, stuffed animals for comfort)

**Vermont Dispatch Task Force Update – Alburgh VFD Chief Ron Kumetz**

Ron is on the dispatch task force and reported on the recent dispatch concept and recommendations report that was released in January. The report includes recommendations for modernizing and coordinating a statewide public safety communications system, including governance, technology, operations, and funding strategies.

Land Mobile Radio (LMR) Improvements operate across multiple frequency bands (VHF and UHF) and radio technologies leading to poor interoperability. Fire and EMS networks are not interoperable with police networks, creating communication barriers during emergencies. Many LMR systems fail to meet the public safety coverage benchmark of 95% coverage within service areas. Coverage gaps, interference, and insufficient channel capacity hinder effective communication. Existing systems rely on legacy/outdated technologies that lack encryption, location services, and other essential features. Maintenance costs are high due to siloed architecture and aging infrastructure.

The Task Force recommends a Regionalized Concept with the goal of developing a statewide VHF network with 13 regional simulcast cells aligned with current dispatch regions for Fire/EMS agencies. Each cell will provide at least 95% coverage within its designated area. Initially deploy VHF analog communications for compatibility with existing equipment, with infrastructure capable of supporting digital P25 communications for future upgrades.

The recommendation will address interoperability. Common analog technology will be used initially, while deploying infrastructure that supports the nationwide digital standard P25. This will ensure common radio interfaces for all dispatch centers within a region and provide equivalent levels of coverage and equal access by all dispatch centers. The system will be designed with redundant backhaul and dual simulcast controllers to ensure reliability and failover capabilities.

Each simulcast cell will cost \$1M-\$3M. The system backhaul will cost \$5M (potential savings if shared with VSP). The total estimated cost is \$32M-\$35M. There is

The Initial funding from Act 78 budget. The legislature approved an initial \$2M during this session. Additional funding could be achieved through dispatch fees collected from municipalities not currently paying for dispatch services, state bonds, universal service funds, rental car fees, airport fees, and cannabis tax allocations. Vermont has the lowest universal fund rate in the nation.

There was a brief discussion about the system. Reg noted that there was little information known about the study or the task force. He asked Ron if he'd be willing to present again.

### **Vermont Emergency Management**

Michaela will be reaching out to communities to remind them that LEMPs are due June 1.

Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation training in April and an IC400 Advanced Training as well. Both trainings are over 2 days. An IC402 for executives training will be scheduled in St. Albans later this year.

### **Other Business**

None.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:00 p.m.