

PLANNING FOR REGIONAL DISPATCH

MEMO: to Joint Fiscal Committee

RE; DPS Regional Dispatch grant proposals

From: Kim Cheney

Date: November 8, 2022

In preparation for the JFC's meeting tomorrow perhaps these observations will be helpful. I am concerned that the DPS grant process has not produced the Regional Dispatch plan ACT 185 envisioned. No "Plan" has been prepared that I am aware of. Instead the Commissioner ignored the department's own rules for grant making, and the DPS' own grant criteria for an award of grant funds. These rules were required by Bulletin 5 issued by the Agency of Administration to be followed denominated as UNIFORM GUIDANCE .¹

A fundamental requirements for receipt of grant funds was promulgation of a local governance plan. The Guidance requires that applicants be notified that if an application does not clearly meet eligibility requirements , the grant must be rejected, unless the HUS unit orders the application to be amended to supply omitted information (Page 13). I do not believe any applicant , other than Chittenden County Public Safety Authority, submitted a governance plan that meets eligibility standards. Therefore they either all must be rejected, or ordered to provide a governance plan to be eligible. Instead, the Commissioner has bypassed all grant requirements, and on her own decided to give money to certain agencies regardless of whether grant protocols were followed. This process is neither fair nor compliant with DPS and Administrative Agency rules. Nor is it a "Plan" which this committee can review and approve.

Admittedly, creating a workable "Plan" is extremely difficult. The past year is a clear demonstration of a failed process. Fundamentally, without state financial assistance no Region can fund both capital infrastructure, amortization and operational costs for land mobile radio, and public safety cellular service, out

¹ Uniform Guidance is based on 2 C.F.R. Part 200 Appendix I which among other things requires the DPS to promulgate a grant plan, which it did in June of 2018.

of property taxes. Regional dispatching will only come about if an equitable funding system , like that developed for schools is devised.

I urge this committee to fund the technical help the Commissioner has asked for. Concurrently it should urge the next legislature to create, and fund, an entity to devise a workable plan. That group should include representation by the Vermont Department of Taxes, Education , which has extensive experience in aid formulae, the Attorney General to assist in regional governance plans, and competent police, fire and EMS professionals. The preliminary work of the technical people could give this project a good start. If Homeland security funds, or “earmarks” become available, the State could be in a position to remedy a problem that has eluded it for 50 years. 2023 is likely that last chance to do this for a long time.