Massachusetts Conference Reports

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Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association (April 12, 2017)
Marlborough MA

This was not a traditional "conference". It's really a vendor show, since there were no organized activities or presentations. I was not able to meet with any of the Massachusetts Public Safety Broadband Office members during the conference, nor was I able to confirm any of them were actually in attendance. Only vendors were going to have access to the attendee list, and the list wasn't going to be available until 2-3 weeks after the conference.

My most interesting conversation was with Joseph Griffin who runs the Greater Boston Police Council (GBPC), in conjunction with a Board of Directors. The GBPC runs the Boston Area Emergency Radio network (BAPERN), an interoperable radio network serving the greater Boston area. BAPERN boasts 166 total member agencies, including 130 police agencies, in the greater Boston area. There are two area wide channels, six "district" channels and four "district tactical" channels that can be used for inter- agency communication.

I did not identify myself as a FirstNet consultant during my conversation with Mr. Griffin, but rather as someone interested in the Council's function. Only after speaking with him for some time did I ask how the system would interface with FirstNet.

Mr. Griffin expressed serious concern about FirstNet. He said member agencies had invested approximately "$30 million in equipment" and since there "has been no clear direction on voice communication" with FirstNet they had reservations. However, he realizes "there may be changes" since the T-Band spectrum they use currently is "supposed to" disappear, "at least that's what the legislation says now". But, since T-Band is used by several large agencies in the country, "that may change". According to Mr. Griffin the agencies that use T-Band, serve about 30 million citizens total across the country.