

FirstNet board does not vote on proposed draft RFP, will meet again in the 'very near future'

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Expressing a desire to ensure that the draft request for proposal (RFP) “right” before releasing it, [FirstNet](#) board members today said they will revisit the document during a meeting “in the very near future” to address remaining issues—specifically some financial aspects of the proposed nationwide public-safety broadband network.

Without providing a specific date for the next board meeting, FirstNet Chairwoman Sue Swenson said stakeholders should expect the board to meet “in the very near future” to discuss the unresolved topics with staff members to enable the eventual release of the draft RFP. In addition, Swenson said the board will work with FirstNet management “over the next several weeks” to prepare the draft RFP documents.

“This is a very complex and important process for this project,” Swenson said during the board meeting, which was webcast. “We want to make sure that we set up this correctly right at the front end of this. This is not something that you can put out there and hope that it works ... you want to be absolutely correct, in terms of how you frame this up.

“To that end, we anticipate, as a board working with management over the next several weeks, [to] work on a few items that ... we think we need to spend a bit more time on before we actually approve management to go forward with release of the notice for the draft RFP documents.”

Tim Bryan, FirstNet board member and chairman of the [finance committee that yesterday chose not to recommend the proposed draft RFP for a vote by the full board](#), also said that it is more important that the board release the best RFP possible instead of issuing a document simply to meet an artificial deadline.

“This is not a box to be checked—that the RFP document is produced, and it hits a date and you move on down the road,” Bryan said during the meeting. “It is an absolutely critical and vital piece that underlies our business plan, which is everything to FirstNet and is everything for our

public-safety constituency.

“I just want to continue to put it in the context that it needs to be put into, and I welcome the opportunity to work with the board and continue in the discussion.”

FirstNet Vice Chairman Jeff Johnson agreed and applauded the board’s decision, noting that public-safety users are more concerned with producing a good draft RFP than putting out a document by FirstNet’s stated goal of releasing the document by the end of the month.

“From the public-safety perspective, we have to get this right,” Johnson said. “The fact is, [if] we get it right up front and then move it forward, it will be more efficient moving through the system than if it is disjointed in any way. So, I’m really pleased with this decision, and I look forward to working through it.”

After yesterday’s meeting of the FirstNet finance committee, a FirstNet spokesman indicated that the full board today would vote on the draft-RFP recommendations provided by the other three board committees. However, no vote was taken.

When asked about the absence of a vote during a post-meeting conference call with members of the press, FirstNet Acting Executive Director TJ Kennedy said, “I think the biggest reason is that a lot of these things are tied together; it’s a complex equation. We just want to make sure we have all of the details put together. You’ll be seeing that come out over the next several weeks.”

During the same conference call, FirstNet Chief Counsel Stuart Kupinsky—who will be leaving FirstNet at the end of the week to begin a new job, it was announced during the meeting—said that the lack of a vote by the full board should not be interpreted negatively.

“I would not read anything dire into that,” Kupinsky said. “As you can imagine, there are a lot of complex pieces that fit together. It was not a material, substantive decision to choose to pass a resolution with all of [committee recommendations] later on versus part of them now. I would not read anything into that decision by the board. It was a procedural matter.”

Earlier this month, [Swenson stated in testimony to Congress](#) that [FirstNet](#) plans to release its final RFP by the end of the year. With the draft RFP not being released by the end of this month as expected, FirstNet will have less time to process responses and prepare the final RFP, if it wants to meet Swenson's goal.

Kennedy said he believes FirstNet still can release its final RFP by the end of the year, despite this delay in the release of the draft RFP.

"Our current goal is to move toward a final RFP by the end of the calendar year," Kennedy said. "Now, with this smaller timeframe that we just talked about, I don't see a material impact on the end of the year. It doesn't mean that there won't be in the future, but right now I'm not changing any predictions on that."

FirstNet officials declined to discuss specifically which details in the proposed draft RFP would be revisited by the board in the future, but Bryan's statements during the last two days indicate that the focus will be on specific items associated with FirstNet's financial model. However, Kennedy noted that the board is in agreement on FirstNet's basic business plan.

"We're not revisiting a business plan," Kennedy said during the press conference call. "We have a finance committee looking at material terms of a draft RFP set of documents. This is not revisiting a business plan."

Kupinsky echoed this sentiment, noting Swenson's statement that there is a "lot of coalescence" among board members around the proposed draft RFP prepared by the FirstNet staff.

"It's not a situation where there is a whole-cloth look at any of the material terms of the business plan, or anything of that nature," Kupinsky said during the press conference call. "But it's tough to give you full-color commentary, given the confidentiality of the information we're dealing with."

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