

LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT & INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE

Minutes

July 10, 2025

Call to Order and Roll Call

The second meeting of the Legislative Oversight and Investigations Committee was held on Thursday, July 10, 2025, at 1 p.m. in Room 131 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Scott Sharp, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Sharp, Co-Chair; Senator Jason Howell, Vice-Chair; Senators Danny Carrol, Gerald A. Neal, Aaron Reed, Reginald L. Thomas, and Phillip Wheeler; Representatives John Blanton, Lindsey Burke, Matt Lockett, Steve Riley, Tom Smith, Pamela Stevenson, and Wade Williams.

Guests: Steve Shannon, executive director, Kentucky Association of Regional Programs; Elisha Mahoney, executive staff advisor for the Office of Legal Services, Justice and Public Safety Cabinet; Major Todd Kidd, director for the Division of Electronic Services, Kentucky State Police; Brandon Marshall, statewide interoperability coordinator, Communications Branch, Kentucky State Police; and Natalie Brawner, director for the Division of Real Properties, Finance and Administration Cabinet.

LRC Staff: Committee Staff Administrator William Spears; Committee Analysts Jacob Blevins, Austin Fraley, Christopher T. Hall, Taylor Johnston, Jonathan Rickett, Austin Sprinkles, Shane Stevens, Joel S. Thomas, and Holly Tracy; Graduate Fellow Chris Sierra; and Research Assistant Maegan Mohr.

Approve Minutes from December 19, 2024 and June 12, 2025

Upon motion by Representative Lockett and second by Senator Neal the minutes for the December 19, 2024 and June 12, 2025, meetings were approved without objection.

Summary of Staff Report on Fire Commission Minimum Training Standards and Administrative Spending

Committee analyst Christopher T. Hall presented a summary of the staff report "Fire Commission Minimum Training Standards And Administrative Spending." Staff's full presentation is available on the Legislative Oversight and Investigations Committee webpage.

Senator Wheeler asked if reimbursements to the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) equaled the 5 percent shown on slide 13 of the presentation. Mr. Hall answered that the gray columns on the graph represented administrative reimbursement and the blue

columns indicated the threshold for reimbursements, indicating that administrative reimbursements were below the threshold.

In response to a question from Representative Smith regarding how the Fire Commission invests its carry forward funds, Mr. Hall answered that the information was out of scope. Representative Smith requested that staff inquire how funds are invested and how to improve returns.

After a roll call vote, the staff report "Fire Commission Minimum Training Standards And Administrative Spending" was adopted without objection.

Staff Update on Child Fatality and Near Fatality External Review Panel

Committee analysts Jacob Blevins and Jonathan Rickett presented the staff report "Kentucky Child Fatality And Near Fatality External Review Panel 2025 Update." Staff's full presentation is available on the Legislative Oversight and Investigations Committee webpage.

In response to a question from Representative Blanton, Mr. Blevins answered that he could not speak as to why specific agencies did not respond to the panel's recommendations. In response to a question from Representative Blanton, Mr. Blevins confirmed there are no penalties for agencies that do not respond to the panel's recommendations.

Senator Carroll discussed his observations as a member of the panel. The number of cases reviewed has resulted in meetings lasting 5 or 6 hours. He has seen concerning patterns related to ingestion deaths. He stated that those responsible for actions during investigations should be held accountable to concerns of the panel. The panel's technology for reviewing cases is difficult to use.

In response to a question from Co-Chair Sharp, Mr. Blevins confirmed that the SharePoint and REDCap programs used by the panel were commercial systems. In response to a question from Co-Chair Sharp, Mr. Blevins said the panel's new software was not a ready-made commercial product but the panel's representatives would have to explain its agreement with the Commonwealth Office of Technology to develop the new system.

After a roll call vote, the staff report "Kentucky Child Fatality And Near Fatality External Review Panel 2025 Update" was adopted without objection.

Child Fatality and Near Fatality External Review Panel Representatives

Steve Shannon, executive director, Kentucky Association of Regional Programs and Elisha Mahoney, executive staff advisor for the Office of Legal Services, Justice and Public Safety Cabinet were present to answer questions on behalf of the Child Fatality and Near Fatality External Review Panel.

In response to a question from Co-Chair Sharp, Mr. Shannon said the panel hoped to have the new case management program by January 2026.

In response to Co-Chair Sharp's question about the lack of written procedures, Ms. Mahoney said panel analysts follow an analyst binder when reviewing cases, but panel staff are hesitant to update it until the new case management system is completed.

In response to questions from Senator Neal, Mr. Shannon said the panel was established in 2012 or 2013. Mr. Shannon did not have the number of panel recommendations that resulted in changes to policy. In response to a question from Senator Neal, Mr. Shannon said the panel has tried to improve the system by changing the format and number of recommendations.

In response to a question from Representative Stevenson, Mr. Shannon said the panel investigates fatality cases as well as near fatality cases. In response to a question from Representative Stevenson regarding recommended policies, Mr. Shannon answered that the panel advocates for the safe storage of medication and handguns.

Senator Carroll said he would look at ingestion cases in the next session. There is inconsistency in how these cases are investigated. He theorized the panel would need to be given more authority for the panel to be meaningful.

Kentucky State Police and Finance Cabinet Update on the Status of Kentucky Statewide Emergency Responder Voice System

Major Todd Kidd, director of the Division of Electronic Services, Kentucky State Police; Brandon Marshall, statewide interoperability coordinator for the Communications Branch, Kentucky State Police; and Natalie Brawner, director for the Division of Real Properties, Finance and Administration Cabinet presented an update on the Statewide Emergency Responder Voice System (SERVS) project to the committee. Their full presentation is available on the Legislative Oversight and Investigations Committee webpage.

Co-Chair Sharp asked Mr. Marshall to explain the icon colors in the presentation. Mr. Marshall clarified that magenta icons indicate the server cores, green icons show existing sites, yellow icons identify greenfield sites, and blue icons represent sites that still need to be completed. Greenfield sites are sites where a tower needs to be built.

In response to questions from Co-Chair Sharp, Mr. Marshall said he hoped Phase II of SERVS would be completed by 2027 and that Phase III would be completed by 2028 or 2029.

In response to questions from Representative Blanton, Mr. Marshall confirmed that SERVS required about 80 towers to be built. Four towers are complete and two towers are in the process of being built.

In response to questions from Representative Blanton regarding project delays, Mr. Marshall cited issues with site acquisition and tower construction as the main contributors. Red tape has not been an issue. The property acquisition process seemed lengthy, but the Division of Real Properties has saved Kentucky State Police (KSP) millions of dollars and protected them from millions of dollars of liabilities through title searches and surveys. Representative Blanton said he

was concerned the technology would be outdated by the time it is active. Mr. Marshall said he would return to the General Assembly to request upgrades and maintenance on the system.

Representative Lockett asked if KSP could lease space on preexisting towers for SERVS equipment instead of building new towers. Mr. Marshall said KSP needed to build towers in specific locations to avoid gaps in coverage. Building towers guaranteed that the system would be built to public safety grade specifications.

Representative Lockett asked for the price difference between leasing space on an existing tower for the state's equipment compared to buying the land and building a tower. Mr. Marshall said the cost of building a new tower is about \$2.1 million and the monthly cost of a lease is \$2,500. The SERVS towers are built to different specifications than commercial towers.

In response to a question from Senator Reed, Mr. Marshall said the SERVS project had not used eminent domain to acquire property.

In response to a question from Representative Smith, Ms. Brawner answered the Division of Real Properties and the Kentucky State Police worked together on SERVS consistently. Representative Smith asked to meet with the SERVS project team about the construction contract requirements.

Representative Burke asked if the commonwealth could generate revenue with the towers for future upgrades. Mr. Marshall said they were doing so in some cases. The existing leases of the Kentucky Emergency Warning System (KEWS) towers did not allow subletting; however, Mr. Marshall planned to renegotiate those leases upon their expiration next year. Additionally, he did not feel comfortable renting space on some of the non-KEWS towers since the landowners allowed Kentucky to lease property for \$1 or no cost.

In response to questions from Vice-Chair Howell, Mr. Marshall said that other states have systems like SERVS along with some of the same problems, and they get advice from those teams as they build SERVS. Tennessee and other states completed their systems through a vendor in the past, but he was not aware of any that were currently going that route. When KSP was crafting SERVS, it did consult with other states.

Representative Williams suggested that KSP set a deadline for progress and look at alternatives if progress is not made.

In response to a question from Senator Thomas, Mr. Marshall said KSP has not used artificial intelligence in the SERVS project.

In response to questions from Co-Chair Sharp, Mr. Marshall answered that four towers had been completed. An additional 78 still need to be constructed. Phase I of SERVS is complete, but Phase II is still in progress. Of the 70 towers needed, 2 are under construction. In response to whether the majority of the uncompleted towers were in Eastern Kentucky, Mr. Marshall referred

to the map on the "Phase II" slide of the KSP presentation and indicated that the yellow dots demonstrated what was left west of I-75.

In response to a question from Co-Chair Sharp, Mr. Marshall said some local and county stakeholders were excited while others did not want to be a part of SERVS.

Ms. Brawner explained the land acquisition process between the Division of Real Properties and the private vendors contracted to aid the SERVS project by gathering information about potential sites. In response to a question from Co-Chair Sharp, Ms. Brawner and Mr. Marshall confirmed that nine properties were purchased outside of the vendor contract, but no properties had been acquired under the contract.

In response to a question from Co-Chair Sharp, Mr. Marshall confirmed KSP has considered using towers already owned by local governments. Hart County purchased a piece of property for the SERVS project that the county sold back to the state.

In response to questions from Representative Blanton, Ms. Brawner said they do not have an exact turnaround time because the Division of Real Properties has not yet purchased any sites under the new vendor contract. Ms. Brawner confirmed that 70 sites still needed to be acquired.

In response to Representative Blanton's question about why Kentucky's process for land acquisition was taking longer than when local entities purchased the property as Hart County had done, Ms. Brawner said that her division's process is more thorough and required more time to execute due to procedures like title searches.

Co-Chair Sharp commented there have been many incidents in the commonwealth when emergency personnel could not communicate.

In response to a question from Senator Carroll about delegating tower and land acquisition to the local and county entities wherein the respective towers were planned, Mr. Marshall said a few partnerships were already in progress.

Co-Chair Sharp asked about the status of the data request submitted by committee staff. Mr. Marshall said it was mostly finished and currently under cabinet review.

Adjournment

Upon motion by Representative Burke and second by Senator Carroll, the meeting was adjourned at 2:49 p.m.