

Clinton County Department of Emergency Services

Narrowband Radio Project Update

January, 2012

Report #11

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to 2012 everyone! With the start of 2012, the reality of **December 31, 2012** to meet the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Narrowband requirement is now becoming very clear. So if you have been waiting to see what is going to happen, you need to seriously become informed and begin to take action so you are prepared for the transition.

On December 15, 2011 during the Board of Commissioners meeting, two (2) proposals for the radio project were opened. Following the opening of the proposals, they were handed over to our consultant and I for review. After receiving these proposals, we worked cooperatively during the last two (2) weeks of the year to review the proposals and prepare a recommendation for the Board of Commissioners. I am pleased to report that the Board of Commissioners accepted our recommendation and we are now working to finalize a contract for the project with the selected vendor. The selected vendor for our radio project will be TransCore, LP with offices in Hummelstown, PA.

FCC licensing remains an item we have not yet been able to “check the box” on. We are still awaiting the receipt of licenses for the additional channels we have requested. All indications are that things are in process and the FCC has no issues or concerns with the licensing we have requested.

While the county appears to have its FCC licensing all but complete, those of you with FCC licenses for two-way radio communications purposes really need to be certain you are getting your licensing in order. **December 31, 2012** is no longer that far away. However, you still have time to get things squared away before the deadline of **December 31, 2012**.

With the Holiday Season behind us, the time has come for us to shift our focus back to the business at hand. As you look and plan to handle the business of 2012 for your respective organizations, be certain to keep the deadline of **December 31, 2012** for FCC Narrowband Compliance on your list of things to do during 2012.

FCC LICENSING

We have yet to receive the remaining licenses we have requested from the FCC. As a discussion point during one of the by-weekly conference calls with our consultant, we are confident we will receive final approval and hard copies of our approved licenses in the very near future.

As we continue to await final approval from the FCC, we also continue to work on the FCC licensing for operation of base station radio equipment as control stations on our public safety radio network. While we are also awaiting approval from the FCC for control station operation, we are working on the development of a User's Agreement for agencies to sign. This agreement will authorize the field user agencies to operate their base station radio equipment on the County's public safety radio system, as long as they are abiding by the rules set forth by the county and the FCC. If you are an agency whom did not submit a form requesting to operate a base station radio as a control station on the county's radio network, we have not forgotten about you. There will be a follow-up opportunity in the future for you to request this approval. Keep in mind, if you have submitted a request, once we receive notification to proceed from the FCC, the control station option is only for frequencies licensed by Clinton County. Any licensing for private or municipal channels is the responsibility of the organization holding the license for those private or municipal channels.

With **December 31, 2012** staring us in the face, I cannot stress enough the importance of FCC licensing. Don't wait until the last minute. Evaluate your licenses & equipment and have a plan for transition. Failure to comply could result in an unplanned financial burden to your organization for not being FCC compliant. If you have questions or are confused about what you or your organization should be doing, please feel free to contact me. I will gladly try to answer your questions or get you pointed in the right direction.

TECHNOLOGY TIMELINE DEVELOPMENT

Now that we have selected a vendor and are awaiting the approval of a contract, we are getting closer to formalizing our technology timeline. Once we have officially entered into contract with TransCore, a kick-off meeting will be scheduled and timelines will be a topic of discussion during this meeting. The Technology Timeline will focus on the activities and work needing completed at the various tower sites and in the 9-1-1 center. A broad timeline is listed as part of the RFP submitted by TransCore. However, our kick-off meeting will afford us the opportunity to more formally determine bench marks for completion of the various phases of deployment and implementation.

OPERATIONAL TIMELINE DEVELOPMENT

As we start into the year 2012, we will need to begin thinking about how the end user/subscribers (field users) will begin transitioning to the new radio system. We are hoping to be able to operate both systems at the same time. Our thought process behind this is so we can maintain integrity of the current system, while also affording us the opportunity to conduct testing of the new system with field users as they conduct their day-to-day activities. Because this will entail having field user radio equipment programmed twice, there needs to be some consideration and thought given to

how this programming is going to happen. These discussions will occur as part of the Fire Procedure Review Committee and the Law Enforcement Committee. We have already had some initial discussion with law enforcement regarding programming, because we have FCC licensing complete for the police side of the radio system. However, more formal discussion needs to occur with both groups before we can move forward.

REVIEW & REVISION OF CURRENT RADIO PROCEDURES

Just as every other agency and organization out there, we also are working to get reorganized with things as we begin the New Year. The Law Enforcement Committee is scheduled to meet on January 19, 2012 and the Fire Procedure Review Committee is scheduled to meet on January 25, 2012. During these meetings items related to procedural changes will be discussed as we plan for how best to go about implementing those changes. While two-way radio operation is not considered to be rocket science, because we are adding frequency capacity and going to a repeated radio system, we are going to need to make some subtle changes in how we do business on our public safety radio system.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

While we are not yet formally under contract with TransCore, we anticipate this part of the process to be completed in fairly short order. Initial estimates in the RFP indicate we will be cut over to the new radio system well before the **December 31, 2012** deadline. We are hoping to be through all phases of implementation sometime in October of 2012 and be ready for system testing, acceptance and cutover. These details will be more formally outlined once we finalize the Technology and Operational Timelines.

SYSTEM TESTING

With hopes of all system components being in place and programming of field user radio equipment complete, system testing will hopefully be conducted through October 2012.

SYSTEM ACCEPTANCE

Upon successful completion of system testing, the County will accept the system as complete and then schedule an official date for cutover to the new system. Presently System Acceptance is anticipated to occur sometime in early November 2012.

SYSTEM CUTOVER

Official cutover to the new system will occur on the officially proposed date. Field user agencies will be notified of the official date and time for cutover. Presently the County anticipates cutover occurring in mid to late November 2012.

MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR

Things are administratively beginning to fall into place with respect to Clinton County Governments transition of its public safety radio system to narrowband compliance. We still have a lot of work to get completed in a short period of time though. As you look around the Commonwealth, we are in a better position than a lot of other counties. We engaged in this process back in 2010 and have spent a significant amount of time planning for this transition. By working through this process, we will not only be meeting FCC compliance by **December 31, 2012**, we are also cost effectively enhancing our two way radio public safety communications needs. Through the selection of TransCore as the vendor for our project, we anticipate a relatively painless transition. I am certain we will hit a few bumps along the way. But working as a team we will ensure a smooth transition.

As most of you will recall, when this process started in 2010, our work focused on completing a needs assessment of our radio system. Following the completion of this needs assessment a final report was developed, which outlined our short, medium and long term objectives for the county's public safety radio network. Through our diligence and the financial commitment from the Board of Commissioners, we will be able to see the bulk of these objectives realized. This will make our system a modern system, capable of being flash upgradable for future needs. Additionally, our infrastructure will be less susceptible to failure due to Mother Nature and other outside sources of potential interference.

We still have a lot of work ahead of us to insure we meet the **December 31, 2012** deadline. I am confident that as long as we continue working together, communicate openly and share information, we will see this project through to the end. With improved communications capabilities we will have more tools in our tool box to better serve the resident's of Clinton County.

The Department of Emergency Services remains committed to insuring an orderly transition to a narrowband compliant radio system. Furthermore, we will continue working as a resource to local municipal government and the public safety community. I would ask that you share this document with your fellow public safety personnel and municipal officials. Sharing of this document will help to keep everyone informed of the FCC mandate to be narrowband compliant by **December 31, 2012**. Sharing this document will also help to keep everyone informed of the activities associated with improvements to Clinton County's public safety radio system. As always should you have questions, please feel free to contact me directly by telephone or Email. My office phone is **(570) 893-4090 ext. 3407**, and my Email address is kfanning@ClintonCountyPA.com.