

Clinton County Department of Emergency Services

Narrowband Radio Project Update

August, 2011

Report #6

INTRODUCTION

Ever so slowly we continue to keep moving closer to December 31, 2012, the deadline for meeting the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Narrowband requirement. As is typically the case during summer months, this project is not much different. There has been very little activity specific to Clinton County's transition to narrowband. There continues to be dialog with our consultant on FCC licensing items and we have also fielded questions from emergency services organizations and municipal officials relevant to FCC licensing for base station radio operation.

Since our last update, probably the most significant item of interest or action has been the county entering into a Professional Service Agreement (PSA) with our consultant for over site of Phase II of the narrowband project. Having entered into this PSA the county will begin work with the consultant to develop our request for proposal (RFP) and finalize development of our timelines. A kick-off meeting with the consultant occurred via conference call on the morning of August 3, 2011 and a face to face meeting is scheduled for August 18, 2011.

One item of interest since the July update, while not necessarily having anything specific to do with narrowband progress in Clinton County, the Board of Commissioners and I have been invited to participate in a panel discussion. Because of the planning and preparation we have done to this point specific to narrowband we will be part of a breakout session at the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) meeting in mid August. Narrowband is a "hot button" issue for a number of counties across the Commonwealth right now and this will be an excellent opportunity for use to share with other counties what we have done to this point in an effort to transition in the most cost effective means possible.

While there has been limited activity concerning the transition to narrowband over the last month, it is important we do not lose site of the need for meeting the FCC mandate to be narrowband compliant by December 31, 2011. At the very least narrowband need to remain on your list of things to do. December 31, 2012 is still a ways off, but it will be here before you know.

FCC LICENSING

When we first began working through the licensing process for narrowband, Clinton County and its consultant identified twenty-one (21) licenses needing modification. To this point, all but three (3) of those licenses have been modified and returned to us. Additionally, a few of our existing licenses were also scheduled for renewal. These licenses have been renewed and remain as channels licensed to

Clinton County. In addition to the three (3) licenses yet to be received back with modification, we still have applications in process for some additional channel capacity to allow for “repeating” of our police and fire/EMS dispatch channels and also some “repeated” operational frequencies. At this point neither the county nor our consultant, have had any communication with the FCC concerning these applications for frequency use. Therefore, we can only assume our request is still in process and they have not identified any concerns thus far.

As a reminder, if any of you (Public Safety Organizations or Municipal Government) are operating a base radio unit from your municipal building, police station or fire/EMS station you have FCC licensing issues that will need to be addressed specific to narrow banding. Additionally, if your organizations desire is to have county licensed channels programmed in your base station radio equipment, an official request will need to be made to DES, whom will in turn need to provide formal written approval. As mentioned in previous updates, your agency or organization may have previously obtained this approval in years past. However, in order to be certain we are all in compliance we feel it is important go through this exercise in record keeping/maintenance. Again, I would suggest holding off on making any changes to your licenses until the county receives final FCC approval on its proposed frequency plans. At this point I would simply recommend reviewing your records in preparation for making licensing changes.

Re-licensing and the approval process for use of the county’s licensed channels can be a little confusing. If your organizations intention is to operate a base radio and use county licensed channels, please make contact with me. I will gladly work with you to insure as smooth a transition as possible for permission to operate your base station with county licensed channels.

TECHNOLOGY TIMELINE DEVELOPMENT

Having entered into the PSA with our consultant, on August 3, 2011 we conducted a conference call where we had some brief discussion regarding a timeline associated with the technology portion of our narrowband project. This timeline should be finalized and in place by September. As a reminder, the Technology Timeline will focus on the creation of items such as the request for proposal (RFP) for the updating of the public safety radio system and the development of a schedule for the vendor (s) who will work with the County and the public safety agencies in transitioning to a narrowband compliant radio system.

OPERATIONAL TIMELINE DEVELOPMENT

Through the summer months communication with field users regarding narrowband transition has been limited. DES has received some feedback regarding the various radio vendors being used throughout the county, but we have done little with the data to this point. However, with work starting on Phase II we anticipate discussions concerning the Operational Timeline will most likely coincide with the Technology Timeline development.

REVIEW & REVISION OF CURRENT RADIO PROCEDURES

Aside from initial discussions and some limited review activity with the Fire Procedure Committee, again not much happening over the summer months. Without going into a great amount of detail, law enforcement is currently focused on another project related to records management, which is closer to kicking-off than our radio project and quite frankly is much more technology driven. Because the current procedures being used for law enforcement will require little change, I have opted to hold off on discussions related to their procedures until sometime in September or October. The Fire Procedure Committee is back on its regular meeting schedule and completed some productive discussion regarding radio procedure during its August 3, 2011 meeting.

CREATION OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

During the kick-off meeting with our consultant on August 3, 2011 a lengthy discussion occurred regarding a number of items needing to be discussed for inclusion in the RFP. More detailed discussion will occur during our August 18, 2011 meeting. Our goal has changed a little and we anticipate not having the RFP ready for distribution until mid to late September of this year.

BIDDING OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

It continues to be the hope of DES that the project will be in a position for the completed RFP to go out for bid to the various vendors in September of 2011. Following regulations set forth by County Code, the bids will be opened in an official meeting of the County Board of Commissioners. Once the bids are opened, they will then be reviewed by DES and their consultant to insure accuracy of the bids received. It is still anticipated this process will occur in mid November 2011.

AWARDING OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Following formal review of the received bids, a formal recommendation will be made to the Board of Commissioners. It is hoped the formal recommendation and the RFP will be awarded by December 2011 or no later than early in January of 2012.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Following the awarding of the RFP, the County will enter into contract with the successful vendor and project implementation will commence. It is estimated that the implementation of all phases of the transition will take approximately nine (9) months. The details of this work will be formally outlined in 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

While not much has actually transpired over the last couple of summer months, two (2) critical factors have been addressed. First, the Board of Commissioners have committed financially to the narrowband project. Second, we were able to officially get our consultant onboard to help guide us through phase II of our narrowband transition. With these components in place, the time has come to roll-up our sleeves and get busy. We will most likely go through periods where there will be a lot of activity, followed by times when we will be in a holding pattern. We will do our best to keep you as informed as possible on our progress and also be certain we reach out to you when we need your input.

With the **December 31, 2012** deadline in front of us, we are well on our way. We should have no issue meeting the goal of transitioning our public safety radio system to narrowband and being in compliance prior to the required due date of **December 31, 2011**.

As we continue to move forward over the next few months, the pace of things will be picking up as we more aggressively work through the RFP development and planning processes in order to efficiently work through the process to meet our public safety radio needs. DES 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. 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.