

Clinton County Department of Emergency Services

Narrowband Radio Project Update

October, 2011

Report #8

INTRODUCTION

With October upon us, the deadline of December 31, 2012, for meeting the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Narrowband requirement is another month closer. We have had quite a bit of activity administratively since the last update. Representatives from DES along with our consultant have sat through presentations from various vendors to view the latest technology in communications center and tower site radio equipment. Additionally we have spent a significant amount of time with our consultant reviewing and finalizing the radio project RFP.

FCC licensing continues to be on our list of things to be completed. For the most part we have all licensing in place, but we still have a couple of items hanging in order to obtain sufficient channel capacity to achieve what we have planned for the enhancement of our public safety radio system.

While our consultant was onsite for the vendor presentations, we also spent time reviewing details specific to the planning of our various timelines. We also spent time discussing details associated with other work needing done at our tower sites besides addressing the radio equipment needs. Once weather breaks in the spring we also will be working to complete some site remediation work at the various tower sites we currently operate from.

During the month of October the RFP for the radio project will be released. We will be spending time conducting a site tour for the vendors intending to submit proposals and also answering any questions they may have specific to the RFP. We also hope October will see us finally putting all of the FCC licensing behind us. Furthermore, we anticipate, once we get through October we will begin to enter a pattern of little activity with proposing vendors as they will be working to complete their RFP's prior to the due date. There will likely be some local planning activity occurring at the county and field user level. However, this activity will also be limited as folks begin to focus on the upcoming hunting and holiday seasons.

Even though we will be entering a time of year where our thoughts begin to turn towards closing things out from one year and planning to enter into a new year, it is important you not lose sight of December 31, 2012. It will be here before we know it. The Department of Emergency Services is diligently working to address the public safety radio needs of Clinton County prior to the deadline date of December 31, 2012. I would encourage everyone to keep December 31, 2012 on your radar screen.

FCC LICENSING

Our consultant continues to work at securing the necessary frequency capacity we will hope to acquire for use in the enhancement of our public safety radio system. After a significant amount of back and forth along with reaching out to other governmental agencies to ask for cooperation, we think we are close to finalizing things. The FCC licensing process has certainly taken more time than we anticipated. Getting our existing licenses modified so we could maintain our current frequency capacity as narrowband was a fairly simple and painless process. Licensing of additional capacity for channels to be used for repeater pairs was where things became a little tricky. But, it looks like we have finally got some light at the end of the proverbial tunnel. I am hopeful that in our next update I will be able report that we have secured all of the needed frequency capacity.

As you may recall from last month's update, through our consultant we have identified a creative solution for public safety agencies desiring to operate a base station radio with the county's public safety radio channels from their facility. DES is working to finalize a draft of a survey/questionnaire in preparation for determining what agencies desire to be listed as a control station under the various county licenses. This survey/questionnaire should be going out via Email sometime during the month of October. Once we have determined the agencies desiring to be licensed as a control station we will work through our consultant to make the necessary modifications to our licenses. In order to maintain control of the public safety radio system, DES will require all agencies requesting to be licensed as a control station to enter into agreement with the county. The county will require you to sign this agreement before granting approval to operate your base station radio as a control station on the county's licensed channels. If you are not willing to enter into agreement with the county, you will not be permitted to operate your base station radio on the County's public safety radio system. Remember, licensing as a control station is only specific to the Clinton County's licensed frequencies. If you are using other frequencies in your base station radio equipment, it is your responsibility to ensure you are meeting the necessary FCC licensing requirements.

Based on our experience with getting through the licensing process, it is very apparent that FCC licensing can take time to get through. We are working to address the public safety side of things for you. At this point, the only thing you should need to be concerned about is the other channels you might be using. So if you have not done so, you need to getting moving if you have licensing issues needing addressed. 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

Through the month of September our focus has been on the vendor presentations and RFP development. As we worked through those items we continued to have discussion about the Technology Timeline. This will be the footprint or plan we will be following once a vendor has been identified for the project. We have a pretty good idea of how things will play out, but we were a little premature in thinking we would have the timeline finalized at this particular juncture. Finalizing the Technology Timeline will require interaction with the successful vendor prior to completion.

OPERATIONAL TIMELINE DEVELOPMENT

There continues to be informal discussion among public safety groups. Those discussions have identified some thoughts and concepts with regards to testing and transitioning to the new radio system. However, logistically there will need to be some thought put into how we go about the field user community getting their radio equipment programmed and reprogrammed. In addition to feedback from the public safety community, we will also engage our consultant over the next couple months to guide us in the development of our operational timeline.

REVIEW & REVISION OF CURRENT RADIO PROCEDURES

Activity related to review of the current radio procedure continues for both the fire/EMS and police sides of the radio system. While there has been some progress, personnel from the fire & EMS side of things have reached a point where they are going to take time to brain storm some ideas and concepts until we officially know what our frequency capacity is going to be with the fire& EMS side of the radio system. Over the next couple of months, procedure committee members will bring their ideas and concepts to their monthly meeting for discussion. Those ideas and concepts will be taken into consideration and more formal action will be taken with regard to procedure changes. Review of the procedures related to the police side continues to be overseen by Q/A Supervisor Joanne Furl. Ms. Furl is working with law enforcement personnel to review radio procedure as part of the monthly Law Enforcement Committee Meeting.

CREATION OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

The RFP has been completed and is ready for distribution. Due to the sensitive nature of some information contained in the RFP, the official RFP document will only be distributed upon request to interested vendors.

ADVERTISING OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

The RFP is scheduled to be advertised beginning on Monday October 10, 2011. In addition to advertising in the local newspapers, the announcement will also appear on the County's web site. Vendors interesting in submitting an RFP will be required to attend a mandatory site walk on October 28, 2011. The site walk will be to give the vendors an opportunity to visually see what it is they will be basing their proposals on. Following the mandatory site walk they will have an additional six (6) weeks to ask questions, finalize and submit their proposals.

AWARDING OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

RFP's are due into the Clinton County Commissioners Office by close of business on December 13, 2011. The RFP's will then be opened during the regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners on the morning of Thursday December 15, 2011.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Following formal review of the received RFP's, recommendation for a vendor will be made to the Board of Commissioners. Once the recommendation is accepted by the Board of Commissioners, DES and its consultant will work to enter into agreement with the successful vendor and project implementation will commence. We expect to be under contract with a vendor by the end of December 2011 or first thing in January 2012 at the latest. 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

Through the month of September the Department of Emergency Services has been very busy with items related to the narrowband radio project. It has taken a great deal of patience and support from the Board of Commissioners to get this far. When we first engaged in the narrowband planning process, it seemed like getting this far was a long way's off. However, we are at point where things are beginning to move forward. With the RFP complete and ready for distribution, we remain on task with having a vendor selected and being under contract by late December 2011 or early January 2012. We are reasonably comfortable all of our FCC licensing issues are addressed and will have final paperwork submitted in fairly short order. The entire FCC licensing issue has truly been a learning experience. There are very specific rules they follow and it takes a tremendous amount of coordination and research to be sure there will be no interference with others whom might be operating on channels in close frequency range and location. Again, because of our experience in this process, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of now getting started on address any licensing issues you may have for your private or municipal channels. We engaged in this licensing process in April of this year and we are still not complete almost seven (7) months later. If you need help or have questions, please call. We are not able

to help you if we don't know you have an issue or concern. So if you have municipal and/or private channels requiring update or renewal, the **December 3, 2012** dead line will be here before you know it. Now is the time to get those licenses out and evaluate your needs for licensing of those municipal or private channels you have.

Things are beginning to fall into place for us as we look to soon be in the year 2012. I remain pleased with the position we are in as we work to meet the **December 31, 2012** deadline. The changes we have planned for our system will go a long way towards the enhancement of public safety radio communication in Clinton County, while at the same time making us compliant with the FCC's narrowband mandate.

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. 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.