

DON GRAY

SANGAMON COUNTY CLERK

SANGAMON COUNTY COMPLEX
200 SOUTH NINTH STREET – ROOM 101
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62701
TELEPHONE: 217-753-6700/FACSIMILE: 217-535-3233
WEBSITE: www.sangamoncountyclerk.com



MINUTES

SANGAMON COUNTY BOARD SPECIAL MEETING

DECEMBER 28, 2021

The Sangamon County Board met in Special Session on December 28, 2021 in the County Board Chambers. The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. for the purpose of approving a County-Wide Public Safety Radio System.

ROLL CALL

County Clerk Gray called the roll. There were 18 Present – 11 Absent. Mr. DelGiorno, Mr. Forsyth, Mr. Fraase, Mrs. Hayes, Mr. O'Neill, Mrs. Scaife, Mr. Schackmann, Mr. Snell, Mr. Stumpf, Mrs. Williams, and Chairman Van Meter were all excused.

A motion was made by Mr. Madonia, seconded by Mr. Bunch, to appoint Mr. Preckwinkle as Chairman Pro Tempore. A voice vote was unanimous. Mr. Smith gave the Invocation and Mr. Madonia led the County Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

RESOLUTION 1

1. Resolution approving the procurement of goods and/or services by the Department of ETSD for the purpose of a County-Wide Public Safety Radio System in the amount of \$13,906,940.

A motion was made by Mr. Mendenhall, seconded by Mr. Bunch, to place Resolution 1 on the floor.

County Administrator Brian McFadden addressed the County Board. This came into fruition right before the regular County Board meeting. They did not have time to make sure everything was in order for this before that meeting. The pricing is significant and it represents a strong commitment by the County for something that is needed. It is not something they take lightly. He is convinced if they do not act on this by the end of the year, they will be paying more next year. Several price increases have been avoided through negotiations on this contract. If we want to lock in the pricing, we have to do this by the end of the year. This contract gives them flexibility and time to address any concerns. One thing that bothers him is if they are going to have time for this body to come up with a policy decision on how to approach some of the costs for the radios and maintenance costs. It is about \$3 million of this contract. The prices are locked in the contract, which is good, and it gives them the flexibility to approach that part of the contract in a way they theoretically could spend nothing on radios or spend what has been locked in. They could spend around \$2.9 million, which is what is locked in as the max. Somewhere in between is probably where they want to be, but it is not his decision. It is a policy decision to be decided by the County Board. Some believe it is unrealistic to ask the departments to pay for all this. Some may say it is unrealistic for the County to pay for all this, but the way it is structured gives them some time to work through that. He thinks that is the best situation they have at this point to give them some time to work through this situation with the maintenance costs. Even though it is a \$13 million project, it is spread out over a 15-year period with the main construction occurring over a two and half year period. Part of the contract is spread out over at least two years, so they do have some flexibility. They will have a better backup in place in case the system does fail compared to what they have today. He offered to answer any questions and Dave Mendenhall is here to talk about his part with the Radio Governance Committee. This is kind of the last stop before they ink the deal, if they decide to do so.

County Board Member Mendenhall addressed them regarding this contract. This is a project they have been working on for many years. Their existing radio system is on the verge, or could be on the verge, of failing. It is hard to come up with replacement equipment. They have been very lucky so far. They have put this out for bids and had two systems they bid on including a VHS stand-alone system and a Starcom system. The Starcom system came in quite a bit cheaper and that was kind of the direction the Radio Governance Committee had been going before they put it out for an RFP. Chris Mueller and Bill Lee have worked diligently on this and have done a great job. The concern is if the current system fails and they cannot dispatch an ambulance or fire department, it could create a huge potential legal issue for the County. They are heading in this direction. Some of the questions he has addressed, and others will probably come up with, are what the cost is going to be for the users of this system. They have several options available, but they have not really narrowed that down yet and are still looking into it. They are going to work through this and come to an agreement. There will probably be some increased dispatched fees, but this system will be tremendous. Anyone that was aware of the tornadoes in Edwardsville, knows the Springfield Fire Department and several other departments responded. If it were not for Starcom, they would have no communication whatsoever. It is obviously the way to go. We have one of our own here who might have some expertise to share.

Jeff Thomas stated the problem is if they do not go to this they will have zero interoperability with the counties or anybody. As people come onto this system statewide, prices will go down. There is a monthly cost for it, but as people come into the network, the prices will continue to go down. Question is how much is it worth to lose one life? Without Starcom, you do not have the interoperability with everybody else. Every person from state to federal has run into this problem. Everybody is going to it. If you do not go to this system and have your own stand-alone system, it will cost you in the end. Their maintenance and everything has been spectacular.

Mr. Hall stated he agrees with everything that was said, but their concerns are if they will represent some small departments with small budgets. There has been talk about this over the years. He hopes they really keep this in check for the small departments. Dave Mendenhall, who came from a small fire department, knows it is hard to run a budget on nothing. Every time he is at those meetings, he always hears "How much is a life worth for radios or for whatever it is". Yes, that is a great argument, but they just need to make sure their small departments are not going to be out in the dark. Mr. Thomas stated they would have to aggressively pursue grant money for this.

Linda Fulgenzi stated she sat on the OEM Committee when she first came on the County Board and they were talking a lot about radios then, which was 15 years ago. She has learned a lot about the radios, and there were many small independent radio systems being used in the rural fire departments. Ambulances were not able to connect to those fire departments. That many years ago, those small fire departments already knew they would have to carry some of the cost of this, and it just kept getting worse and worse.

Mr. Mendenhall stated they do have several dead spots with the current radio system they have now. Not only can the ambulances and rural fire departments not receive calls but neither can the County Sheriff. They will need to build some new towers to support the countywide Internet or broadband system. This will be a huge improvement.

Mr. Tjelmeland asked if a system like this has an expected useful life. Mr. Mendenhall stated it has a 20-year warranty. Mr. Mueller explained Starcom takes care of all the updates. You pay a subscriber fee.

Mr. Smith asked if there is a useful life expectancy of the radios before the hardware would need to be replaced. Mr. Mueller stated they would have a 10-year life warranty. Damage to the radios could also alter the life of it.

Mr. Smith asked if they could break down the totals for them. Mr. McFadden explained they are looking at a roughly \$13 million contract, with \$7 million of that for the construction of the base system. That is the construction of the towers, the support structures for the towers, and the main parts of the base system. There is \$3 million on top of that for the purchase of the portable and mobile radios.

There is an additional \$3 million in maintenance costs and airwave costs they will be renting as part of the Starcom system. In year one there is over \$700,000 in expenses, and year two and three is when you see the rest of that \$7 million kick in as far as construction. They need to address that radio issue somewhere, significantly before the system comes online. The maintenance fees kick in once the warranty comes off around year 5. The rental of the airwave space starts once the system is operational, so it is not a \$13 million check they are cutting tomorrow. The primary funder of this is the 911 fund that is part of the ETSD system. They still need to resolve the issues of who pays the out year maintenance and airspace rental fees and for the radios. It is not ideal that they do not have this all worked out today, but they have the flexibility and time to get all issues addressed. No matter what those solutions are, they are coming back before this body for your approval or disapproval, and then they would start over again if needed.

Mr. Smith asked if the future planning of this is done through the Radio Governance Committee. Mr. McFadden stated he really has not given it that much thought, but traditionally it would go through the Radio Governance Committee. They would then present recommendations and advice to the OEM Committee who would then present to the County Board. This body does have the final say on everything. Mr. Smith asked where the initial \$7 million is coming from. Mr. McFadden stated it is coming from the ETSD department fund, better known as 911. Some time ago, the telephone surcharge fee was doubled. It has provided a pretty healthy revenue source. They are not just draining the fund. They are doing this in a way that keeps the fund balance to address future needs. Mr. Smith echoed his comments. There is no question of the value of the Starcom system. The safety of the members of the rural fire department is very important. He is very thankful they are moving forward with this project, but he shares Craig's concern that they are here to look out for their constituents in those small departments and districts, so they will look forward to working out the details in the future. He asked if the commitment to this contract commits them to spend the \$3 million on radios. Mr. McFadden explained that the price of the radios is locked in. They did a survey of the departments and then Motorola gave them a price for the radios and the portables. They picked a middle of the line product. The amount can vary depending on their needs. They can address their needs in a way that gives them flexibility. Mr. Smith clarified they do have flexibility with that \$13 million. They do not have to spend the entire amount.

Annette Fulgenzi stated it sounds like they need to move forward with this, it is never going to be cheaper, and this is something they desperately need.

Brian McFadden assured the residents that they have their backs. The system is far from perfect now, but they have a dedicated group of people who are not going to let people suffer because of this. They are taking steps for a dramatic improvement. There is a universal agreement amongst the Radio Governance Committee that this is the way they should go forward. They have a pretty diverse group of fire chiefs, former fire chiefs, and a County Board member who all agree on this. The experts on this believe this is the way to go.

What they are really talking about building here is a countywide emergency communication system in which law enforcement is already on. Other fire departments including the Springfield Fire Department could be part of this in the future. The immediate need is the rural fire protection districts, but they are trying to build a system that could be used by all emergency communication users. This could be part of the backbone of an aggressive broadband initiative. The County did a feasibility study on how to improve broadband Internet access countywide. This expenditure could also be used as the backbone for that as well and for potential future revenue for leasing on these towers.

Chairman Preckwinkle asked for a roll call vote on Resolution 1. Upon the roll call vote, there were 17 Yeas – 0 Nays for the adoption of Resolution 1.

MOTION CARRIED
RESOLUTION ADOPTED

RECESS

A motion was made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Bunch, to recess the meeting to January 11, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. A voice vote was unanimous.

MOTION CARRIED
MEETING RECESSED

Don Gray
Sangamon County Clerk