

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: 800 MEGAHERTZ TRUNKED RADIO EQUIPMENT, PAGERS, AND RELATED EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES

BACKGROUND:

The 800 megahertz (MHz) trunked radio system provides for interactive communication between many City work groups and departments, as well as with the Story County Sheriff's Office, Iowa State University, Mary Greeley Medical Center, and all of Story County's other emergency responders.

On June 25, 2013, City Council awarded a contract to Electronic Engineering Co. for 800 MHz trunked radio equipment, pagers, and related equipment and services for City departments. The contract provided for lease of general radio equipment, law enforcement equipment, equipment installation and maintenance, and paging equipment and services through June 30, 2015. That agreement allowed City departments to continue to receive radio services provided locally by Electronic Engineering Company. There has been one change order to the contract to update the pricing for the emergency vehicle equipment currently being installed.

Radio equipment furnished under the contract includes portable and vehicle radios, base station radios, and specialized law enforcement communication equipment. The City currently has approximately 375 radios leased and 19 radios purchased under this contract. The City no longer leases pagers, but will maintain the pricing and availability of pagers on this contract for unexpected needs. At this time the Police and Fire Departments are the largest users of the City radio contract. Interactive communication with public safety agencies throughout Story County also occurs on this radio system. The total annual cost for radio equipment and related services is approximately \$230,000 per year.

The Story County E-911 Board completed a study of the current radio system in the Fall of 2010. The Board's consultant recommended that the County begin planning for a new radio system due to the aging equipment and limitations of the current radio technology. Since that time, the radio consoles have been replaced in each of the Communication Centers. In addition, some of the handheld and mobile radios have been updated. These changes allowed the City to extend the life of the current equipment, but have not eliminated concerns about reliability of the core system.

In response to these concerns, staff created a Radio Communications Team to evaluate existing communication systems/providers in the area who might offer a viable alternative to the City's existing system. The team recognized that there are changes in technology and new Federal regulations that the City will need to consider. Work on identifying radio alternatives continues at the present time. It should be emphasized that

it will take some time to develop an alternative plan, and the implementation of such a plan will require a significant capital investment. **Until a feasible plan can be established and implemented, continuation of the current radio contract is in the best interest of the City.**

The proposed contract with Electronic Engineering is for two years beginning July 1, 2015, and ending June 30, 2017. Prices under the proposed contract reflect an increase in the tower fee for each year. The tower fees will increase \$0.50 per radio per month for each year of the contract, and an option for a third year also includes a \$0.50 increase in tower fees. The initial \$.50 increase was anticipated and included in the 2015/16 Budget. Equipment prices remain unchanged from the previous contract, with the exception of equipment needed for change-outs on new emergency vehicles (e.g., light bars).

Historically, the Story County E911 Board paid the tower fees of the Police and Fire Departments, the two largest users under this contract. The E911 Board also paid the tower fees for other emergency response agencies in Story County. In 2013, it was reported to City Council that, because of declining revenues, the E911 Board would gradually shift that cost back to the cities and towns. That shift was to occur over a four-year period. Since that time, changes have been made in the state allocation of 911 surcharge dollars that returned additional revenues to the E911 Board. Consequently, the Board has determined that it will continue to pay 50% of the tower fees for Police and Fire. In the current fiscal year the E911 Board paid approximately \$12,000 as its 50% share of tower fees.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve the contract with Electronic Engineering Co. to provide 800 MHz trunked radio equipment, pagers, and related equipment and services for City departments from July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2017.
2. Reject the contract with Electronic Engineering Co. and attempt to purchase radio and pager services on an as-needed basis until the County-wide radio system study is completed and the Story County E-911 board acts on the resulting recommendations.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The proposed two-year contract for radio and pager equipment and services will ensure continuation of critical interactive communication between City work groups and departments, as well as with the Story County Sheriff's Office, Iowa State University, Mary Greeley Medical Center, and all Story County emergency responders.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1 as stated above.