

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION TO SELECT VENDOR FOR A NEW RADIO SYSTEM

BACKGROUND:

After a competitive bidding process that included City representatives, in September of 2017 the Story County 911 Board entered into a contract with Mission Critical Partners (MCP) of Port Matilda, PA, for a radio system needs analysis study for all public agencies in Story County. The 911 Board recognized that the radio system that provided service to the public safety (emergency responders) and public service (non-emergency radio systems users like Public Works and CyRide) agencies throughout Story County no longer met the requirements of the users. MCP delivered a final report on the radio study in December of 2017. The report called for the complete replacement of the existing radio system with a new system based on current radio technology and standards. The report also recommended that we use the opportunity to join one of the larger existing or developing radio systems in Iowa as that would facilitate interoperable communications with surrounding counties, state entities, and others who might provide support in emergency situations. The report also encouraged that the process proceed as quickly as possible to take advantage of the competitive bidding environment that exists in Iowa.

The City of Ames, Story County, Iowa State University, and the Story County 911 Board recognized that they could more efficiently and cost effectively acquire a new countywide radio system by working together. In February of 2018 the four entities entered into a 28E Intergovernmental Agreement to retain MCP for a second phase of the radio project, and to equally share the costs for those services. During Phase 2, MCP met with public safety agencies and public service agencies throughout Story County, and specifically with City departments, to more closely determine the needs of the radio system users. From those meetings MCP developed a model for a new radio system and cost estimates for its purchase and implementation.

The 28E Agreement that funded MCP work in Phase 2 also established a process for oversight and review of the activity and work. An Operational Committee had the overall responsibility for the project. The City's representative on the Operational Committee was Assistant City Manager Bob Kindred. A Working Committee was tasked with the day-to-day activity of the work with MCP. The City's representatives on the Working Committee were Joshua Bennett from the Fire Department and Doug Houghton from the Police Department. Together with partners from the other 28E Agreement agencies, these committees determined that a purchasing process should proceed through Iowa State University's Purchasing Department, in part because the state purchasing rules are the most comprehensive. ISU assigned two purchasing agents to assist with the project. In

October of 2018, based on the work from MCP and after review and approval from the 28E Agreement agencies, a Request for Proposals for a countywide radio system was issued by Iowa State University. Responses to that RFP were received on November 30, 2018. In December of 2018 the two vendors who provided responses made in-person presentations on their proposals to more than 40 people from agencies around Story County.

The City recognized that this project would require significant investment. Based on the cost projections provided by MCP, the 2018-2019 CIP included an initial \$1,000,000 to fund the radio system infrastructure. The 2019-2020 CIP includes an additional \$1,750,000 to complete the funding of the radio infrastructure and to purchase new radios. In addition, the City's on-going costs have been apportioned throughout the budget utilizing the funds that are spent on the current radio system.

As the project developed, the 28E Agreement agencies understood that there needed to be a mechanism that would allow the agencies, as a group, to purchase, own, and operate the elements of a new radio system. To achieve that end, in December of 2018 the agencies entered in to a new 28E Agreement to create StoryComm. StoryComm is governed by a Board of Directors that includes one voting member each from the City of Ames, Story County and Iowa State University. The Story County 911 Board is represented by three non-voting members. StoryComm will guide the next steps in the process and will own and manage the new radio system. StoryComm met for the first time on February 1, 2019, to answer questions posed by the Working Committee and to provide guidance on the purchasing process. Bob Kindred is the City's representative on the StoryComm Board.

MCP, ISU Purchasing and the Working Committee have now completed a comprehensive review of the responses to the RFP. Discussions with the vendors, particularly focusing on costs, have been on-going. In early March MCP, ISU Purchasing and the Working Committee will meet with StoryComm and, through ISU Purchasing, make a recommendation for a vendor for a new radio system. The details of the recommendation, including anticipated costs, will be available to StoryComm members in advance of the meeting. Should that recommendation be accepted by the StoryComm Board, ISU Purchasing will issue a Letter of Intent to Award to the recommended vendor. The Letter of Intent is followed by final contract negotiations and, if agreement is reached, a contract signing with the successful vendor. **For a variety of reasons including the condition and cost of the current radio system and incentives provided by the vendors, this process needs to move ahead promptly.**

City staff has kept Council informed in each step of the process over the past few years by requesting approval for the various agreements and CIP items. With that history, the City's StoryComm representative now seeks Council's approval to authorize him to act on ISU's Purchasing Department's recommendation to issue a Letter of Intent to negotiate a contract. That would only occur if the terms and conditions of the recommendation are in line with the City's performance and financial expectations. The Representative would then return to Council to present details of the final contract for approval before authorizing

StoryComm to complete the agreement with the vendor. The steps to a final contract are expected to take three to four weeks.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Authorize the City's StoryComm Representative to approve a recommendation for a radio vendor as long as the recommendation is in line with the City's performance and financial expectations.
2. Do not authorize the StoryComm Representative's request and provide guidance to the staff on the next steps toward a new radio system.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The City will greatly benefit in this joint effort with other agencies to acquire and operate a new interoperable communications system. ISU Purchasing has provided a strong framework for the process and the Letter of Intent is the next step. Authorizing StoryComm to proceed with the Letter of Intent will facilitate reaching final terms that can then be presented to Council.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, thereby authorizing the City's StoryComm Representative to approve a recommendation for a radio vendor as long as the recommendation is in line with the City's performance and financial expectations.