

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: CONTRACT EXTENSION FOR 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 23, 2015, 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, 2017. That agreement allowed City departments to continue to receive radio services provided locally by Electronic Engineering Company.

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 425 radios leased and 21 radios with only a tower fee previously purchased under this contract. The City also has two pagers for Information Services, and will continue to 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 \$290,000 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 the Ames, ISU and Story County 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. In addition,

City staff has joined with other Story County radio users in a joint effort to identify and hire a professional radio consultant to assist with those changes. A group that includes City staff members completed on-site interviews with five consulting firms during the last week of June, and hopes to have a consultant under contract by the end of July. The Story County E911 Board has allocated funds to hire this consultant.

It should be emphasized that it will take some time to develop alternatives, and the implementation of an alternative program will require a significant 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 extension with Electronic Engineering is for one year beginning July 1, 2017, and ending June 30, 2018. Prices under the proposed contract reflect a \$0.50 per month per radio increase in the tower fee. With 446 radios on the system, the total annual cost increase in the tower fee will be \$2,676 across all City departments. All other equipment prices will remain unchanged from the current contract.

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 extension with Electronic Engineering Co. to provide 800 MHz trunked radio equipment, pagers, and related equipment and services for City departments from July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2018.
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 one year contract extension 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.