



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 29, 2015

County Looks Forward to Improved 911 Capability

Traverse City – In November 2014, voters in Grand Traverse County approved a surcharge increase for the County’s 911 program. Following that vote, the Central Dispatch/911 Board of Directors engaged in a six-month long assessment of the County’s 911 system and the critical need to upgrade the radio communications consoles. This led to a closer look at upgrading the public safety radio communication system. The process involved numerous technical meetings and periods of testing radios from the three leading manufacturers on the Michigan Public Safety Communications System (MPSCS). Radios were tested by representatives from all Grand Traverse County public safety agencies, the Michigan State Police/Communications Division, and MPSCS.

Following is the sequence of events leading up to tonight’s Grand Traverse County Board meeting, during which commissioners will decide (1) whether to enter into an agreement with the MPSCS to upgrade the County to an 800Mhz, and (2) whether to enter into an agreement with Motorola to provide the radio equipment for the 800Mhz system.

August 2014: After Grand Traverse Central Dispatch Director Jamel Anderson and (then) County Administrator Dave Benda proposed that a 911 surcharge increase for Grand Traverse County residents be placed on the November 2014 ballot, the Central Dispatch/911 Board of Directors requested permission to explore and offer assistance with future projects to which surcharge monies would be assigned, if the surcharge passed.

One of the suggested projects was to further explore the possibility of joining the MPSCS. The state funded and operated 800Mhz public safety radio system had become very robust over the course of its life, and many other public safety agencies in the state had either already migrated to or was in the process of migrating to the system.

September 2014: The Central Dispatch/911 Board of Directors’ Technical Subcommittee invited members of the MPSCS and the Michigan State Police Communications Division to make a presentation to subcommittee members about the MPSCS system, its components, and more. The outcome of that meeting was to schedule a county-wide coverage test, which is a planned, mapped, and controlled test to determine whether communications are adequate for public safety personnel to use a

system; whether more towers, transmitters, receivers, etc., are necessary; whether there is adequate coverage inside buildings. The current VHF system provides approximately 71 percent of outdoor coverage throughout the county. A coverage test was scheduled with the Michigan State Police/Communications Division.

December 1 through 3, 2014: Using members of many Grand Traverse County public safety agencies, a test on a grid system for every square mile of County area and of designated County building infrastructure took place. Controlled equipment provided by Michigan State Police/Communications Division, was used, and 719 transmissions were conducted.

December 11, 2014: During a Central Dispatch/911 Board of Directors' meeting, County Commissioners requested a consolidated assessment and unified project requests for upgrading the 911 equipment.

December 16, 2014: The Michigan State Police/Communications Division officially released the test results, and provided them to the Central Dispatch/911 Board of Directors' Technical Subcommittee. Results show 98.05 percent of building coverage throughout Grand Traverse County, within the state's existing infrastructure.

January 26, 2015: The Technical Subcommittee met with MPSCS representatives and a third-party radio communications expert, who reviewed test results, offered technical explanations regarding the different types of radio systems, and discussed the future of VHF systems versus 800Mhz systems. MPSCS Director Brad Stoddard stated he was in the process of proposing a one-time MPSCS "join" fee, rather an annual fee, which public safety agencies unanimously support.

February 2015: So that the MPSCS could determine whether equipment upgrades to its tower infrastructure would be necessary, and whether there would be additional costs to the County for any upgrades, an inventory of all County public safety agency radio equipment was conducted. It was determined that MPSCS would be able to upgrade its tower at no additional expense to Grand Traverse County, a savings of over \$250,000.

February 23, 2015: The Technical Subcommittee met and heard a presentation about a VHF simulcast paging solution for county fire and EMS alerting.

March 12, 2015: Central Dispatch/911 Board of Directors met and discussed with the County Commission's liaison whether the County Board would support a county-wide 800Mhz system proposal. The County will support such a proposal, and the Technical Subcommittee would be tasked with radio testing, selecting a manufacturer, and soliciting bids for the proposed scope of work, which is a single channel VHF simulcast paging solution for fire and EMS, and 800Mhz portable and mobile radios for all county public safety agencies.

March 23, 2015: During a Technical Subcommittee meeting, it was learned that, following an assessment of the current radio system infrastructure, the seven current towers could not be improved to simulcast without significant upgrades, because many of the sites do not have emergency backup power, and have grounding or other issues. The estimated (conservative) cost to bring the current Grand Traverse County Media Contact: Kristine Erickson at 231-922-4511 or kerickson@grandtraverse.org.

infrastructure into simple public safety grounding compliance, with emergency backup power, cooling, and heating, is \$2.5 million, plus. The subcommittee approved exploring the option of a single channel VHF simulcast paging solution on five of the MPSCS towers which comply with the standard, and would provide 24/7 alerts and notifications of equipment failures, etc.

April 9, 2015: Central Dispatch/911 Board of Directors met and heard a presentation by MPSCS Director Brad Stoddard about the proposed one-time “activation fee” to join MPSCS, rather than the annual “mic fee.” Stoddard recommended that the board draft letters in support of this request to be sent to local legislators. Additional discussions were held about current VHF radio inventory versus proposed 800Mhz radios, and upcoming tests of Motorola, Kenwood, and EF Johnson radios.

April 27, 2015: The Technical Subcommittee met and heard presentations by and tested radio equipment from Kenwood, EF Johnson, and Motorola. Following testing, there were discussions about the tests, the current equipment being used in the County and by mutual aid partners around the state, and the MPSCS user numbers (over 98 percent use Motorola). The subcommittee decided to request a pricing proposal from Motorola for comparison to the MI-Deal pricing already supplied by MPSCS.

May 14, 2015: Central Dispatch/911 Board of Directors met and heard a presentation by Rich Uslin, state sales representative for Motorola. Uslin provided a proposal for a comprehensive project to include:

- upgrading the Central Dispatch/911 center’s consoles from Motorola Centracom Gold Elite (which are 20-plus years old and no longer maintainable), to Motorola MCC7500 (same as used by MPSCS, and the only radio consoles recognized as suitable for use on the MPSCS 800Mhz system)
- 800Mhz portable and mobile radio solutions for all Grand Traverse County public safety agencies, with six-year warranties (including installation in emergency vehicles and optional removal of VHF equipment)
- engineering and installation of a single VHF channel, five-tower site simulcast paging solution for fire and EMS alerting
- complete project management and coordination with the additional, ongoing NG 911 projects

The proposal amount is approximately 15 percent less than that of a state contract, due to the multiple project phases and amount of equipment needed.

The Board unanimously voted to pursue presenting and proposing a resolution to the Board of County Commissioners to enter into a contract with Motorola for the radio system upgrades.

May 19, 2015: In anticipation of presenting the proposed project during an upcoming County Board of Commissioners’ meeting, a “Frequently Asked Questions” document about the 800Mhz migration plan was shared with all county public safety agencies for briefing boards and department heads.

June 11, 2015: Central Dispatch/911 Board of Directors met and asked County Finance Director whether the proposed project would fit under surcharge funding, and whether a General Fund budget

request would be necessary. For budgetary purposes, the no “mic fees” cost was estimated at \$240,000, and with annual “mic fees,” cost was estimated at approximately \$400,000. The cost outlined on either proposal would still be significantly less than the original \$792,000, which was removed at the end of 2014 from the General Fund obligation to Central Dispatch/911. County Commissioners and the County Finance Director agreed this was a viable project proposal to present during the next Public Health and Safety Committee meeting.

July 1, 2015: Public Health and Safety Committee met and the proposal, with a recommendation to enter into contract negotiations with Motorola for radio consoles, 800Mhz radio equipment for all public safety agencies, and a single-channel, five-site VHF simulcast fire and EMS paging solution for \$3.6 million was presented. A motion to enter into a contract with Motorola passed with a vote of six to one.

July 29 2015: County Commissioners will take the final step in this project proposal process tonight, when they discuss entering into a contract with Motorola for 911 and radio equipment.

This project is unprecedented in Grand Traverse County. Every fire, police, and EMS agency is part of this effort. Upgrades will improve the current 911 system, and look to the future by making GTC interoperable with regional 911 programs. As a result, each agency will realize overall cost savings, and all Grand Traverse County residents will benefit from reliable and consistent 911 service. Public safety agencies involved:

- Blair Township Emergency Services
- Central Dispatch/911
- East Bay Township EMS
- Fife Lake Area Emergency Rescue Authority
- Grand Traverse County Sheriff’s Department
- Grand Traverse Emergency Management
- Grand Traverse Rural Fire Department
- Green Lake Township EMS
- Grand Traverse County EMS Coordinator
- Grand Traverse County Metro Emergency Services Authority
- Kingsley EMS
- Michigan State Police, Cadillac Post
- North Flight EMS
- Peninsula Township Fire and EMS
- Traverse City Fire
- Traverse City Police
- Whitewater Township EMS

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