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Montco Takes Major Step to Replace Public Safety Radio Communications System

Norristown, PA (December 20, 2012) – The Montgomery County Commissioners today voted unanimously to enter into a $29.974 million contract with Motorola Solutions, Inc. to replace the county’s emergency radio system. The commissioners additionally agreed to a $9.882 million contract with Motorola for a 10-year maintenance contract for the system.

As recently as 2011, the previous county administration was using estimates of $100 million and up for the cost of the infrastructure and radio portion of the project. The $29.9 million figure includes $23.85 million for infrastructure equipment and installation of necessary microwave relays and the necessary software to upgrade 3,400 currently owned subscriber radio units. This would include the installation of 10 new radio towers throughout Montgomery County to eliminate dead zones and generally improve communications throughout the system.

The remainder of the $29.9 million ($6.124 million) would be used for the purchase of 1,800 additional radio units.

The commissioners took the action at their public meeting on Thursday, and then were joined by police chiefs, fire chiefs and other first responders and law enforcement officials from throughout the county at a press conference announcing the contract.

“Our fundamental responsibilities as commissioners are to protect the safety and well-being of our residents and to further protect the fiscal well-being of the county and make sure that taxpayer dollars are well-spent,” said Josh Shapiro, chairman of the commissioners. “Today we accomplished both. Under this contract, we are able to do more than was originally anticipated and we were able to do it for 70 percent less than the previous board said it would cost.”
Commissioner Bruce Castor, who was designated to lead the effort to identify what was needed for the upgrade and how to do it, praised the working committees he put together made up of police, fire, EMS, other public safety entities and municipal officials for their hard work.

“This was a long time coming,” said Castor, who voted against the attempt by the previous administration to address the situation. “Commissioners Shapiro and Richards placed their trust in me to lead this effort, and with the help of our excellent county staff and the stakeholders on the committee we have arrived at this wonderful day.”

Commissioner Leslie Richards was equally ebullient about the contract. “A year ago I was a supervisor in Whitemarsh Township faced with the daunting amount of money the previous administration said this would cost,” she said. “I felt like the necessary homework had not been done and local municipalities were being asked to make major commitments without that homework being finished. Today, I feel the total opposite of frustration.”

Speaking for the chiefs of police, Chief Mark Toomey praised the commissioners “for pushing this difficult rock up the hill. Our infrastructure is at a critical point, and I thank the commissioners for having the courage to bring this to fruition.”

Motorola is expected to begin work on the upgrades early in 2013 after the contracts are finalized.

“This is a great day for the taxpayers of Montgomery County and an even better day for the first responders of Montgomery County,” Shapiro said.
From Left: Commissioners Castor, Shapiro, and Richards were joined by police chiefs, fire chiefs and other first responders and law enforcement officials from throughout the county at a press conference announcing the contract.