



TO: Elizabeth Pauli, Interim City Manager
FROM: Jack Kelanic, Director of Information Technology *JK*
COPY: Government Performance and Finance Committee; Mark Lauzier, Tadd Wille, Steve Taylor
SUBJECT: Emergency Radio Service Access Fees & Cost Sharing
DATE: March 30, 2017

SUMMARY:

Information Technology Department staff will brief the Government Performance and Finance Committee on April 5, 2017 regarding its recommendation to execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with South Sound 911 addressing emergency radio system access fees charged to regional public safety agencies in 2017.

BACKGROUND:

The City has owned and operated an 800 MHz emergency radio communications network in support of critical City services provided by Tacoma Police, Tacoma Fire, Public Works, and Environmental Services for many years. To further regional interoperability for public safety providers, the City extended access to its emergency radio communications system for other local law enforcement agencies, fire companies, and other first-responders throughout the Tacoma-Lakewood-Puyallup metropolitan area in 2003.

There are now 27 external agencies, or approximately 1,700 external radio subscribers to Tacoma's emergency communications system.

The City completed a major upgrade of the 800 MHz emergency radio communications network in 2015 based on one-time project funding provided through South Sound 911. The upgraded system includes new digital emergency radios for all agencies participating in South Sound 911.

ITD charges flat access fees to all customers of \$35.65/month (non-dispatched service) and \$45.52 (dispatched service) per radio as outlined in the City's Public Safety Radio System User Agreement with each agency.

In January 2016, the City Council authorized the execution of a MOU between the City, South Sound 911, and Pierce County to cap the net monthly fee at \$30 for South Sound 911 customer agencies, and to reimburse the City in the amount of \$445,859 to offset lost revenue in 2016.

ISSUE:

The City's radio system operating costs and customer base have grown commensurately from 2016 to 2017. Accordingly, ITD has announced that it will not increase access fees in 2017.

South Sound 911 has proposed a 2017 "fee cap" for all participating agencies of \$31.50/month per radio, in a continued effort to stabilize radio service access fees and to neutralize potential market forces created by pricing differences between the City and Pierce County.



Staff recommends executing a memorandum of understanding with South Sound 911 such that in exchange for the City accepting reduced radio access fees from its customers at \$31.50/month per radio, South Sound 911 would reimburse the City for lost revenue in the amount of \$413,702. This agreement would be valid through December 31, 2017, and would only apply for SS911 agencies.

The parties would continue to collaborate towards longer-term solutions.

ALTERNATIVES:

The alternative is for the City to bill customer agencies at the non-discounted rate. This could have undesirable impacts on regional public safety communications, as some agencies may need to reduce the number of radios, switch service providers, or establish alternative communications systems without the interoperability features of the City and County systems.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact. Fund 5540 revenue projections remain accurate regardless of the revenue source.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended to execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with South Sound 911 addressing emergency radio system access fees charged to regional public safety agencies in 2017.