

## Minutes of the "Ad Hoc" Committee on Emergency Communications and Dispatch

The "Ad Hoc" Committee on Emergency Communications and Dispatch of the McLean County Board met on Monday, April 14, 2003 at 2:00 p.m. Room 700, Law and Justice Center, 104 West Front Street, Bloomington, Illinois.

Members Present: Chairman Sorensen, Members Renner, Johnson, Selzer and Hoselton

Members Absent: None

Other Members Present: County Board Chairman Sweeney

Staff Present: Mr. John Zeunik, County Administrator;  
Mr. Terry Lindberg, Assistant County Administrator;  
Ms. Christine Northcutt, County Administrator's Assistant

Department Heads/  
Elected Officials Present: Chief Deputy Derick Love and Lieutenant Mark Bailey, Sheriff's Department, Mr. Bill Gamblin, ETSB Director, Mr. A.C. Cannon, Director, MetCom

Others Present: Honorable Jeffrey Swartz, Mayor of Downs, Mr. David Lander, Motorola, and Mr. Mike Reese, Clear Talk

Chairman Sorensen called the meeting to order at 2:10 p.m.

Chairman Sorensen presented the minutes from the meeting of March 10, 2003. He asked if there were any corrections or additions. Hearing none, the minutes were accepted and placed on file as presented.

Chairman Sorensen introduced representatives from StarCom21 and Clear Talk. A representative from Hill Radio had informed Chairman Sorensen that he would not be able to make a presentation at today's meeting. Mr. David Lander was present to represent Motorola and Mr. Mike Reese was in attendance to represent Clear Talk.

Chairman Sorensen commented that the Committee had received the informational packets from the two vendors and asked the Committee if they had questions for the representatives.

Mr. Selzer asked both representatives what percentage of coverage reliability they were willing to guarantee in a contract.

Mr. Dave Lander from Motorola stated that the contract that they have with the State of Illinois has certain coverage guarantees and that any negotiations with McLean County would refer to the contract with the State of Illinois. If there are requirements above and beyond what the State of Illinois has stipulated, those issues could be negotiated separately. Mr. Selzer asked what the required coverage was for the for State of Illinois. Mr. Lander replied that the contract states 95% local coverage for the geographic land mass in the State of Illinois. In McLean County, based on the current design, the coverage is 95%+. Mr. Lander further stated that there is a portable requirement for in-building coverage within the City of Bloomington and the Town of Normal.

Mr. Selzer asked Mr. Reese what Clear Talk would be willing to guarantee. Mr. Reese responded that their coverage guarantees would be very much the same as StarCom21 is using Clear Talk's towers for their coverage, except for one in eastern McLean County. To provide better coverage in eastern McLean County Clear Talk would recommend that the County construct a tower. Mr. Reese stated that what ever requirements that McLean County deems appropriate would probably be able to be met by Clear Talk. There would have to be negotiations, but it wouldn't be a problem.

Mr. Hoselton stated that he had spoken with some Clear Talk users and that they have problems with the towers "going down" on occasion. Mr. Hoselton stated that would not be acceptable in a public safety situation. He asked Mr. Reese if he could explain how that could be remedied. Mr. Reese stated that all of Clear Talk's towers are linked together by T-1 telephone lines. There could be a cut in communications between towers, but if that happens each individual tower will stand-alone. There hasn't ever been a situation of a tower "going down".

Ms. Johnson asked if the 95% coverage was geographic and not by population. Both vendors stated that was correct. Ms. Johnson then asked if they could explain what sources of stand-by power are available in case the need arises. Mr. Reese stated that, because Clear Talk is owned by the rural electrical co-ops, all of their tower sites have generator and battery back-ups. Ms. Johnson asked if the tower at ISU had generator back-up as well. Mr. Reese said he would have to check with Mr. Dan Vandiver, his technical advisor, and get back to her on that. Clear Talk does not actually own the ISU tower site. Chairman Sorensen asked if Mr. Lander would answer the same question on behalf of StarCom21. Mr. Lander stated that all of their sites will have generator as well as battery back-up. Mr. Lander informed the Committee that all of StarCom21's sites are monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week , 365 days a year by their system support center in Schaumburg, IL. By being able to remotely monitor the network, they are able to identify any potential issues as they arise.

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Mr. Lander commented that there are not any networks that are on the air 100% of the time. There could be an occasion when there is something that takes the network off the air. In the Motorola contract with the State of Illinois, there are a list of severity codes and based upon the severity of the issue, Motorola has a certain amount of time to guarantee a response to the problem. The level of response may be a telephone call or it may be a sending a person out to the site to take a look at the problem.

Mr. Hoselton asked Mr. Reese if Clear Talk will offer something that will be compatible for fire departments to use. Mr. Reese replied that has to do with system design and how much the user wants to specify. He mentioned that the LaSalle County Sheriff's Department are using the Clear Talk system. They bought their equipment from Motorola. If they decide to go with StarCom21 at a later date they can simply reprogram their current radios and make the change. Mr. Reese stated that a radio with a console can be patched to the State Police.

Mr. Lander stated that if the dispatch operations were to include a way to connect to the StarCom21 system, the console has the ability to do the patch. The existing fire frequencies or other local police departments could actually be patched to the StarCom21 network.

Mr. Renner asked Mr. Lander if he could explain to the Committee how the system that Motorola built for the State of Michigan is working and what problems were encountered with getting it up and running. Mr. Lander said that he did not know many specific details about that particular system. He stated that it is a State owned system. The State of Michigan issued a bid specification for the State Police. They required 97% coverage from the upper to lower peninsula of the state. That was Motorola's first roll out of a Project 25 digital network. The State of Michigan contracted with Motorola to roll out a digital network with the requirement to upgrade it to Project 25 when all of the standards were in place. They have just completed the upgrade and the entire state is operating in a Project 25 mode. Mr. Renner asked if there were any delays in getting the operation set-up and running in Michigan. Mr. Lander stated that system was a customer owned system and not a Motorola owned system. The major delays were caused by the time needed to build towers and purchase property to construct the towers on. In Illinois, Motorola is trying to make use of existing infrastructure, such as Clear Talk's towers, or any existing State Police towers. Mr. Renner asked if the State of Illinois will begin to utilize the StarCom21 system in September, 2004. Mr. Lander replied that is correct. The coverage testing will be completed and the system should be ready for the State Police to begin use on September 28, 2004.

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In McLean County, the equipment should be in place and ready to test by June, 2003. Motorola fully expects to have coverage for McLean County completed by August, 2003. The tests need to be completed from May through September for full foliage to be in place. Mr. Renner stated that he was a little concerned with the use of the words "fully expect" and "probably". He asked if the system would be ready for use in August or a few months after that. Mr. Lander stated that it would probably not be more than a month after the August date because coverage testing for the majority of the State needs to be done by the end of September.

Mr. Selzer stated that another concern of the County is the cost of the system. He stated that the monthly fees are a big issue. Mr. Reese stated that Clear Talk is willing to negotiate on monthly fees as they did with Stark Excavating and LaSalle County Sheriff's Department. A factor in the negotiation will be the length of the contract signed. Clear Talk is interested in public safety and the community. Mr. Selzer stated that if the County has to pay a monthly fee for each officer's car radio and the one on his belt, it will be very expensive. Mr. Selzer also mentioned that fire departments have vehicles that they do not use on a regular basis, but they need radios. They will not want to pay a monthly service fee for a vehicle not regularly used.

Mr. Selzer asked Mr. Lander to respond. Mr. Lander stated the monthly fee ensures the reliability that is contractually guaranteed. Mr. Lander referred to the old adage "*You get what you pay for*". The days of buying a radio that you just install and forget about are over. The rate quoted is \$53/month per unit. Not all vehicles in all agencies will need a mobile radio. Motorola realizes that most fire departments are happy with the 154 radio band that they currently use. This does not allow them interoperability for any large emergency. So, for example, maybe a couple of trucks (that are used in nearly each call) in each department will need a StarCom21 radio and repeater. Each individual agency's needs will be different.

Mr. Selzer stated that paying \$100.00+ per month for each County Deputy was not going to be affordable. Each will need a mobile and portable radio and each carries a \$53.00 per month service charge.

Mr. Lander stated that the rural communities may only need a portable radio which will only have one monthly service fee. Mr. Lander further stated that Motorola is working with governmental agencies to help them apply for grants in order to purchase their equipment. There are no maintenance fees and the County is not paying for the infrastructure, that is what the \$53.00 monthly service charge covers.

Mr. Selzer stated that he did not want to make a decision by cost alone. However, it is an issue.

Mr. Reese stated that the Sheriff's Department has tested the Clear Talk system and they are comfortable with its reliability. Mr. Reese also noted that after the Clear Talk system has retired its debt, the monthly service fee will come back to the users in a dividend or reduced rate.

Mr. Renner asked Mr. Reese if the County chose Clear Talk, could they sign a short-term contract so they could eventually upgrade from analog to digital (StarCom21). Mr. Reese stated that there would not be a problem with a short-term contract. A short contract may equal a higher monthly fee. There would have to be negotiations, but Clear Talk would probably require at least a 12 month contract. If the County buys the right kind of equipment, the County can switch to the StarCom21 network without having to buy new equipment. But, the hope would be that when the County started with the Clear Talk system, they would be happy with it and want to stay with it. Clear Talk wants a long-term relationship with the County.

Mr. Hoselton asked what the definition of long-term is. Mr. Reese stated that the system and equipment should last for 10 – 20 years. Mr. Lander stated that technology changes very rapidly. The platform that Clear Talk is currently using will not be receiving any enhancements from Motorola. Analog technology is basically a technology of the past. Project 25 is a standard for public safety for a variety of reasons. One is for the ability for multiple vendors to manufacture equipment to provide a level of interoperability nationwide. Because Motorola owns and operates the StarCom21 network, it is dictating that the people joining the network buy Motorola radios.

Mr. Reese stated that the Sheriff's Department was happy with the way that the Clear Talk system works. There is a difference between analog and digital, a lot of people are not happy with the way digital radios perform.

Chairman Sorensen asked Mr. Reese if an additional tower site would be necessary for use with the Clear Talk system. Mr. Reese replied that it would be necessary for the desired reception. Clear Talk would back away from the deal if that stipulation was not carried through. Chairman Sorensen noted that there were not any specific prices listed in the proposal for this addition. He asked Mr. Reese if he had an estimate. Mr. Reese replied that until a commitment is made by the County, it is difficult to give an estimate. There are some sites in the target area that are privately owned and if that can be used, the County would only have to pay for the antenna and line. If a tower would have to be erected, the cost would be significantly more.

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Chairman Sorensen stated that the estimate just states less than \$15,000.00 and that is not extremely accurate in order to make a recommendation. Mr. Reese said that the estimate in the informational packet is the best guess at this stage.

Chairman Sorensen introduced the Honorable Jeffrey Swartz, Mayor of Downs to speak to the committee on behalf of the Rural Mayors Association.

Mr. Swartz stated that a year ago, the Mayor's Association heard a presentation by the Sheriff on the proposed Clear Talk system. The cost to outfit the Downs Police Department with that system is \$19,000.00. The Downs Police Department consists of one car and two officers. That is a very high cost and the Village cannot afford that cost. Mr. Swartz added that the Motorola representative should not speak for the potential need of the small police departments. Mr. Swartz stated that the radio situation has been a difficult issue and that he thanked the Committee for trying to find a solution to this problem. The small communities will need to be setting their budgets soon and they will need to know if and how much will need to be spent. He asked the Committee to keep in mind that it needs to work for the small communities as well.

Mr. Selzer thanked Mr. Swartz for his perspective.

Mr. Hoselton stated that he has been thinking about the small communities and there has been a request to the ETSB to investigate possibilities of aiding the small communities with funding.

Chairman Sorensen thanked Mr. Swartz. The next item on the agenda is to set a meeting date. Mr. Selzer stated that perhaps the Committee should review all of the information that has been given to them and to discuss a meeting date after the County Board meeting on April 15<sup>th</sup>. Chairman Sorensen asked the Committee Members to forward any questions to Mr. Zeunik so that he may pass them on to the vendors.

Mr. Hoselton asked if there was another vendor for consideration. Chairman Sorensen noted that Hill Radio could not be here at today's meeting, but had expressed interest in presenting information to the Committee.

Mr. Selzer stated that he did not think the Committee needed to hear another vendor's proposal.

Motion by Hoselton/Renner to eliminate Hill Radio as a Vendor for consideration to the radio solution. Motion carried.

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Chairman Sorensen noted that he will inform Hill Radio about the Committee's decision.

Mr. Renner stated that he would like to see some more definite cost numbers for the tower included in the Clear Talk proposal. Mr. Hoselton echoed that sentiment and said that he is sure that he will think of other questions that he would like to ask the vendors. Mr. Selzer stated that at the next meeting parameters should be set as to the reliability that will be accepted and so forth.

Ms. Johnson asked if they will have definite cost figures for the next meeting. Chairman Sorensen responded that information will be requested from the vendors.

There being nothing further to come before the Committee at this time, Chairman Sorensen adjourned the meeting at 3:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine S. Northcutt  
Recording Secretary