



Police Department

Edward A. Flynn  
Chief of Police

March 25, 2010

Alderman Michael Murphy, Chair  
Finance & Personnel Committee  
200 East Wells Street – Room 205  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Alderman Robert G. Donovan, Chair  
Public Safety Committee  
200 East Wells Street – Room 205  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Aldermen:

At the request of the Finance & Personnel and Public Safety Committees, the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) wishes to provide an update on the OpenSky project. It is important to note that the success of the OpenSky project is a top priority for me. Officer safety is our number one concern. Resistance to and frustration with change is inevitable, especially with an issue that touches every single officer within the department.

Harris Corporation has pledged to ensure the system will be successfully implemented. The Milwaukee Police Department's recent hiring of Federal Engineering to advise us on critical system issues goes a long way towards ensuring the efficient, timely and fully operational implementation of the OpenSky system.

**Contract Update**

The Milwaukee Police Department is working closely with city purchasing and city legal to finalize a contract extension of the project that will run through December 31, 2010. This contract extension will include the provision of 51 Maestro Consoles to MPD free-of-charge. The actual cost of these consoles would have been \$3 million. Harris Corporation recognizes and admits the current consoles (which were purchased at the beginning of the process) will not adequately support the OpenSky system.

Harris estimates the new consoles could be installed and operational by the end of September. However, MPD must carefully analyze and determine the best date for the installation so it does not affect public safety during the busiest time of the year.

This contract extension does not include or authorize any additional spending of taxpayer dollars.

**Trouble Reports & Officer Involvement**

In February of 2009, a PowerPoint was issued through MPD's Directives Internet to provide all officers with a hard copy of the radio handbook and how to submit trouble reports. In August of the same year, OpenSky issues were discussed with officers at their regularly scheduled in-service training session. Officers were then reminded to submit trouble reports if they were experiencing difficulties with the system.

Then, in February of this year, I issued a memorandum that reminded people to submit trouble reports. That was followed by another memo to staff on March 12<sup>th</sup>, encouraging people to share their radio issues via an internal Share Point website, and again to complete and submit trouble reports for all radio issues. Members can submit these reports either electronically or via traditional means.

In addition, a number of committees (comprised of line personnel) have been in operation to help resolve issues in the field. This includes a Radio Etiquette Committee and two Super-User groups. The Super-User groups include officers from each district and bureau who become the "go-to radio expert" in their area. They have received extensive training on the system, and they are also used to report back on the issues officers in their area are experiencing.

#### **Operator Error**

As with any new system, the learning curve can be steep. When it comes to a piece of equipment that officers use many times a day, the "muscle memory" change required is significant. Officers must now wait for an "allow" tone before they speak. Even though the wait time is typically less than a quarter of a second, this is difficult to do after using a radio that was immediate "push-to-talk" for years. No longer can officers "step" on each other during transmissions. However, an additional safety feature of the new system allows a supervisor to take priority over any broadcast.

#### **Coverage Issues**

As with our old analog system, the new digital system does not guarantee coverage in every building and in every square foot of the city. The analog system had "dead spots" that officers knew about. A number of buildings and structures have long been known as "dead" for radio transmissions. This has always been an issue since the inception of any radio system as it is economically prohibitive to provide coverage to 100% of any geographical area.

The original RFP required 95% mobile and outdoor portable coverage across the service area defined as the county. Portable in-building voice coverage (assuming 12 dB penetration loss for the structures) is required by the RFP to be provided to at least 95% of the specified service area within the legal boundaries of the City of Milwaukee. Federal Engineering will work with Harris and MPD to determine the baseline coverage delivered by Harris and will also make recommendations on the best way to improve coverage in marginal areas of the city. There are discussions currently taking place between MPD and Harris about adding two additional repeater locations using existing towers to improve overall coverage.

In addition, once coverage testing is complete and the system is fully operational, MPD may ask the Common Council to consider implementing a City Ordinance requiring new construction and other high density buildings, such as older office towers, parking garages, shopping malls, hospitals and schools, to install bi-directional amplifiers (BDAs) in their facilities to enhance portable radio coverage. We can also work with city facilities that may want to add BDAs to specific buildings to enhance public safety portable communications. Consideration may also be given to passing an ordinance that would require any new cell towers being erected in the city to have space/allowances for the addition of public safety repeaters.

#### **Asset Forfeiture Funds**

The Milwaukee Police Department hired Federal Engineering in December of 2009 to act as the Department's expert consultant. Federal has successfully aided a number of public safety agencies in the United States in working through digital system issues. Asset Forfeiture funds paid for Phase I of their project (console review) and Phase II (coverage) will begin shortly. Phase III and Phase IV will be reviewed/analyzed and implemented as MPD sees fit.

The Milwaukee Police Department will expend an additional \$1.6 million over two years to purchase enough extra radios (450) to equip each field officer requiring a radio with their own hand-held. Currently, radios are passed between members at shift change, so some of the new features of the radio – including safety features – have not been activated.

By providing each officer with their own radio, officer safety will be greatly enhanced and each officer will be able to program the radio specific to his or her duties and assignments. For example, a patrol officer who works in District 3 and is also a Bomb Technician and MIRT member will be able to program his or her radio for each of those talk groups.

Asset Forfeiture funds will pay for the cost of these additional radios -- \$900,000 in 2010 and the balance in 2011.

Staffing

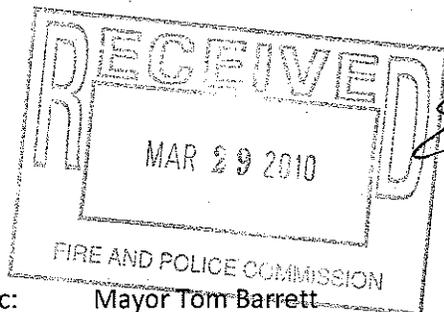
Funding was provided to MPD to hire additional information technology staff. A civilian IT Director was added. However, three critical IT positions remain authorized but not funded. They are a Systems Analyst Project Leader, Wireless Interface Manager and Network Manager Assistant. With the current moratorium on hiring, MPD will once again request these positions be funded when the freeze on new positions is lifted.

Conclusions

The Milwaukee Police Department has worked with Harris to both identify and rectify many issues with the system. In hindsight, a police department the size of Milwaukee, which generates approximately 28,00 push-to-talk transmissions each day, took a significant risk in being one of the first major cities to move to this technology. We are the proverbial 'guinea pig' for the thousands of other agencies that will follow.

It is important to remember that there is no turning back. The Motorola system that OpenSky replaces is obsolete and is no longer being manufactured. The Federal mandate is to move to a narrowband system. A trucked, digital system is the most efficient way to expand our capacity and make optimal use of the available radio channels for both voice and data transmission. I am confident that the Milwaukee Police Department is moving expeditiously, carefully and responsibly in the right direction to both ensure the safety of our officers and the public; and to make certain the City has a radio system that will serve the citizens of Milwaukee well into the future.

Sincerely,



EDWARD A. FLYNN  
CHIEF OF POLICE

c: Mayor Tom Barrett  
F&PC Executive Director Michael Tobin