



Staff Report

TO: City Council
FROM: Sean Thuilliez, Chief of Police
DATE: August 3, 2021
SUBJECT: Public Safety Enterprise Communication

Background and Analysis:

The Beaumont Police Department is a member of the Eastern Riverside County Interoperable Communications Authority (ERICA) which formed a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) with the Cities of Palm Springs, Desert Hot Springs, Indio, and Cathedral City. The ERICA communications infrastructure is housed at the Cathedral City Police Department. Under the provisions of the current JPA, an agency may leave the JPA with 90 days written notice. Cathedral City is required to provide 12 months written notice because of housing the infrastructure. Currently the City of Beaumont is responsible for 20% of all costs associated with ERICA. If agencies leave the ERICA JPA, the cost sharing for the remaining agencies will increase to maintain the ERICA system.

ERICA was formed out of the necessity and desire for cities within the region to be able to communicate in a seamless manner and to upgrade their current radio systems to an 800 MHz system. In December 2008 the JPA agreement was amended to include the City of Beaumont as a member.

The original radio system was robustly built to accommodate the addition of new users and radios in addition to providing radio connectivity amongst the other agencies, departments, and/or municipalities that wanted to join. The other agencies would join using the ERICA operating system, not as members of the JPA, and would pay start up and reoccurring fees to ERICA.

The amended JPA documents set up a cost sharing agreement between all cities. The initial startup cost was equal between all cities and going forward each city would be responsible for 20% of any operational and maintenance fees. Beaumont currently pays \$237,000 per year toward maintenance and costs for ERICA.

In the coming years ERICA will require upgrades. The cost for the upgrades are estimated be \$5,195,100. Beaumont's share of those costs would be \$1,039,020. The upgrade would include the replacement of the original equipment that is now at its end of life, meaning the manufacturers no longer make the parts and equipment necessary to service the product.

The current issues being faced with the ERICA radio system include an inability to communicate with Riverside County Sheriff's Department (RSO), Banning Police Department and other County task force members in a seamless manner. The current setup has ERICA subscribers using a type of bandwidth which uses more capacity while transmitting. As a result, ERICA has not been successful in being able to add RSO's radio channels into the system. Although the ability exists, the County's system (Public Safety Enterprise Communication Project or PSEC) has declined to allow this because when transmitting, the current system requires more bandwidth allowing less communication on their system. This has led to using a radio "patch" in order to successfully communicate in an emergency.

Two radio channels, an ERICA radio channel and an RSO radio channel, are "patched" together so that all users on both channels can hear one another. Patching channels is problematic as the sound quality of the radio traffic is very poor and there is a time delay when an officer or dispatcher keys their microphone to speak. This delay generally cuts off the beginning of the radio transmission, which is most often the radio call sign of the officer, making it difficult for dispatch or field units to know which officer is speaking. The delay can also lead to officers "covering" one another, which occurs when two officers are speaking at the same time.

When covering occurs only one officer's radio traffic will be heard and the officer that is covered or talked over is not aware their radio communication was not heard. This can lead to officer safety issues as the covered traffic could be extremely important and critical to officer safety. In addition to the patch, there are some specialized units within the Sheriff's Department that have ERICA channels programmed into their radios, some of those units include patrol sergeants, K9 units, and airships. Because of the poor quality of patching, those specialized units are many times relied on to relay all the radio traffic via the ERICA channel. ERICA's current radio coverage only extends throughout the Coachella Valley and into the Beaumont/Banning Pass Area. The coverage does not continue west of Beaumont into San Bernardino County or into the western portion of Riverside County. There are also areas within the City of Beaumont itself where coverage is poor and, as a result, communications are disrupted.

The Riverside County Sheriff's Department will be presenting an option to City Council for future emergency communications, which should provide seamless interoperability throughout Riverside County. This will require Beaumont to join Riverside County's system titled PSEC (Public Safety Enterprise Communications) project. Apart from the five ERICA agencies and Blythe Police Department, the remainder of Riverside County police agencies are on the PSEC system.

Fiscal Impact:

Staff estimates the cost to prepare this report to be \$290.

Recommended Action:

Direct City staff to coordinate with the Riverside County Sheriff's Department the migration to the PSEC Radio System and bring the proposal back to City Council at a later time to include costs and timelines.