

EAST HADDAM EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT RADIO PROJECT OVERVIEW

Background:

- Project discussions began after the severe communication challenges faced during Hurricane Irene.
- Committee began meeting in early 2012.
- April 2012 the Committee sent out an RFP, interviewed three vendors and Tactical Communications was selected.
- Town has been working with the Department of Public Safety (DPS) for space on the Mt. Parnassus tower site. Access to this site will provide the Town a substantial **annual cost savings in rent (\$40,000-70,000/year.)**
- A review of surrounding town systems was completed as well as a cost review of recently installed systems:
 - Guilford (49 square miles)—\$2.5 Million
 - Old Saybrook (15 square miles)—\$2.8 Million
 - Waterford (32 square miles)—\$7.5 Million
 - Groton (45 square miles)—\$1 Million (1 channel upgrade to existing system)
 - Clinton (19 square miles)—\$3.4 Million
 - New London (11 square miles)—\$2.5 Million (add on to existing system)
- Documented system issues :
 - Daily dispatch/communication issues with Fire and EMS calls being received by responders—**PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUE.**
 - EXTREMELY limited communications between members and dispatch center when responding to calls—**RESPONDER SAFETY ISSUE.**
 - Difficulty with interoperability when providing or receiving mutual aid with other towns because most have switched away from low band 1950's technology (frequency band that East Haddam Fire, Ambulance, PW and Town Government currently uses.)
- Findings of initial RFP system technical review :
 - East Haddam terrain and size (57 square miles) makes any system design a challenge.
 - A multi-site system will be needed to meet coverage requirements (several sites in town were surveyed and studied to get best coverage for the least cost).
 - Based on the initial RFP coverage requirements the system construction would be financially impossible for the town to support at this time (\$4 to \$5 million estimate.)
 - Finding suitable frequencies to support the system would also be very difficult.
- After review of the initial findings the committee revised the scope of the project to include :
 - Reduce the coverage requirements due to initial coverage requirements being cost prohibitive.
 - Continue to use low band system for Ambulance out of town communications and system backup.
 - Hired a consultant to coordinate frequency licensing.
 - Migrate to a multi-site system over a two to three year time period.
- In August 2014 the committee provided both the BOS and BOF with a project update and anticipated cost for the system.

Current Status:

- Through working with consultant the Town has been licensed on four frequencies at two sites (Mt Parnassus and River House).
- The Town has a construction deadline of August 2015 for two of the frequencies and November 2015 for the remaining two frequencies. ***If construction is not completed, we will lose these frequencies.***
- The Town is working with the DPS on the construction of the Mt. Parnassus site. The DPS has provided us an estimated tower construction completion date of August 2015.
- If funding is approved and equipment can be purchased, the DPS vendor will mount all antennas and cable for the town as part of their installation (**approximately \$20,000 savings.**)
- Committee is in a holding pattern until funding can be secured.

Recommendations:

- After an analysis of the current East Haddam system, the committee is requesting \$2,100,000 (\$700,000/phase) in funding to improve the overall response to calls for assistance as well as to address the safety issues associated with the current lack of reliable communications for our first responders.
- This project will be completed in a three phase approach to allow the committee to meet the construction requirements of the FCC, to work with the DPS to benefit from a substantial cost savings and to continue to investigate additional opportunities to provide the best radio coverage possible within the current budget restraints.