

# **Board of County Commissioners**

## **Agenda Request**

Date of Meeting: January 20, 2009

Date Submitted: January 5, 2009

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Benjamin H. Pingree, County Administrator  
Scott Nelson, Wakulla County Emergency Management Director  
Wakulla County Sheriff's Office  
Public Safety Communications Committee consisting of representation from County Administration, Fire, EMS, Law Enforcement, and Amateur Radio Operations

Subject: Request for Board Consideration and Approval of the DHS, PSIC Grant Opportunity for the Installation of 700-MHz Radio Equipment in Crawfordville

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### **Statement of Issue:**

This agenda item requests Board consideration and approval of the PSIC 700-MHZ grant being offered by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to the Regional Domestic Security Task Force and managed by the City of Tallahassee. A letter dated December 31, 2008 (Attachment #1) from Michael Hayes, Radio Communications, City of Tallahassee, defines the opportunity to accept equipment and radios that will allow Wakulla County to participate in a Grant from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for the purpose of enhancing radio Interoperable Communications (IO) within the 13 county region (Region 2). The goal is to provide a level of interpretability throughout the region by utilizing the 700-MHz system. As stated in the letter, the system may require additional reoccurring costs for sustainment and maintenance; however, they also point out that once the grant period is over, the equipment becomes the property of Wakulla County. A more detailed White paper defining a snapshot of our current radio communications situation, upcoming requirements, and some potential solutions has been included as Attachment #2.

### **Background:**

The North Florida Regional Domestic Security Task Force (NFRDSTF) is comprised of 13 counties, including Wakulla County. Subject matter experts from the NFRDSTF have been working for over a year to receive a Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) Grant from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for the purpose of enhancing radio Interoperable Communications (IO) within the 13 county region (Region 2). In the spring of this year, Region 2 was notified that it will receive \$3,850,000 from the PSIC grant. The grant amount will pay for the procurement, operations and sustainment of the Region 2 radio IO Communication solution until the end of the grant period. The specific equipment requested by the Region includes two transportable communications trailers

equipped with radio equipment as well as a number of fixed 700 MHz three-channel sites. The NFRDSTF is actively seeking locations to install the fixed 700 MHz three-channel sites.

**Analysis:**

The proposed system will be fully interoperable with the City of Tallahassee, and eventually, Leon County. It is difficult to define other counties in the region will have the ability to directly communicate on this system since we do not know what other counties will accept this offer for the fixed equipment. The grant will also provide two mobile trailers and a cache of radios, which will be utilized for emergencies throughout the region as needed. This system (limited to the new tower in Crawfordville) will not be sufficient to provide coverage throughout the entire County. It will take at least two and possibly three additional tower sites and equipment to provide adequate coverage over the entire County. Therefore, if the County chooses to accept this equipment, it will not be sufficient as a replacement for our current system without a significant investment to increase the footprint by adding additional towers and equipment. The system will provide us with a capability to communicate within much of the Crawfordville area. It will also allow the County to own radios that will be interoperable with the mobile radio system provided by the grant. We will also have the ability to evaluate the equipment and system over the next few years as we make decisions about the future replacement/upgrade of our current system required by 2013 (see Attachment #2 for more information).

**Options:**

1. Consider and approve to accept the equipment being offered by the PSIC grant with the following conditions:
  - a. The equipment be upgraded to provide a five-channel site instead of a three-channel site.
  - b. The RDSTF clearly understands that the continued maintenance of the system, once ownership is transferred to Wakulla County will be at the discretion of the County and will be subject to funding availability.
  - c. The number of mobile and/or portable radios is increased to 100.
2. Consider not participating in the grant.
3. Board direction.

**Recommendation:**

Option #1

**Attachment(s):**

1. Letter to Chairman Howard Kessler from the City of Tallahassee.
2. White Paper summarizing the current radio capabilities, future requirements and some potential solutions.