

LRB RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS MEMORANDUM

Mon, May 21, 2007

To: Ald. Terry Witkowski, 13th District

From: Tom Shaffer, Fiscal Review Analyst Senior, Legislative Reference Bureau

Re: Call boxes and the City of Milwaukee copper cabling system

As requested, LRB staff researched call boxes and interviewed staff at the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) and the Department of Public Works (DPW).

Call box use. There are approximately 1,400 call boxes in the city and many are used. Call boxes are used mainly by school crossing guards to call in when they arrive at their posts. Some DPW field crews use call boxes. In addition the lower portion of the call box houses the cable cross connects for the City of Milwaukee's extensive underground copper cabling system.

The MPD is trying to phase call boxes out of their operation, as "cell phones are the standard for communications" according to Deputy Inspector Anna Ruzinski. The police chief is not putting any extra funds for major call box repair into the proposed 2008 budget.

Purchase, installation and maintenance of call boxes. DPW states that maintenance and repair costs for call boxes totaled \$74,503.62 in 2005 and \$86,600.12 in 2006. DPW replaces approximately 50 call boxes yearly due to knockdowns caused by car accidents.

This doesn't include funding for the periodic painting of call boxes. Call boxes do get tagged with graffiti. It is estimated that DPW spends \$11,000 annually to paint call boxes due to graffiti.

Removing call boxes and the copper cabling system. DPW states the call boxes could be replaced with what is called a "combination post" that does not contain an emergency telephone but houses the cross connects for the City's copper cabling system. The copper cabling system is important because it is used to extend data circuit to locations without fiber optics typically using a digital subscriber line (DSL) type technology to provide a high speed Internet connection. The predominant use of the copper cabling is for the telephone system. As an example, the telephones at the fire stations are connected to the City telephone system through the copper cabling.

The cost to relocate all the wiring at a location and eliminate a call box and any cabling presence would start at about \$5,000 depending on the location and rewiring costs. To remove all the call boxes would cost \$3,500,000 to \$7,500,000. It would require considerable analysis to get a more definitive cost estimate according to DPW Network Planning Manager Gerry Froh. It would be prudent to consider how removal of the call boxes would also impact the copper cabling system.

Please contact me at X8661 if you have any questions regarding this information.