

## LRB RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

April 19, 2010

ITEM 3, FILE # 091674

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

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### Introduction

File # 091674 appropriates \$700,000 from the 2010 Common Council Contingent Fund for purchase of digital radios for the Police Department.

### Background

The Milwaukee Police Department is currently in the process of converting its radio communications from a conventional two-way analog wireless system to a trunked digital control system. Rather than assigning and limiting users to assigned channels, a trunked system effectively pools all channels together and assigns radio transmissions automatically to an open frequency. The unique address code assigned to each radio enables user assignment to various “talk groups” while also providing a vehicle for private, one-on-one discussions between supervisors and officers.

The MPD began its digital radio conversion project in 2003, choosing the “OpenSky” system manufactured by M/A-COM, a developer of digital communications systems for customers in the public safety, utility, transit and public service arenas. At project inception, M/A-COM was a subsidiary of Tyco Electronics Ltd. In 2008, after the sale of other technology-related business units, Tyco Electronics changed the name of its wireless operations from M/A-COM to Tyco Electronics Wireless Systems. On June 1, 2009, Harris Corporation, an international communications and information technology company, purchased Tyco Electronics Wireless Systems.

Implementation of OpenSky has been a multi-year, multi-phase process, dependant on funding and radio spectrum availability. By 2005, project construction was sufficient to enable data only transmission. Between 2005 and 2008, the department focused on other necessary project infrastructure, including adding radio spectrum, securing sites for radio improvements, and constructing these improvements. The MPD began installing OpenSky mobile radios in all new squad cars in 2007 and has essentially completed retro-fitting OpenSky mobile radios in pre-2007 squads. After a failed deployment of OpenSky portable radios in October 2008, roll-out recommenced in April 2009, and the first stage was completed in November 2009.

The Police Department plans to purchase 450 additional radios, resulting in the outfitting of every field officer requiring a radio with an OpenSky handheld digital radio. Providing each officer with his or her own radio will increase officer safety, as each officer will be able to program the radio specific to duties and assignments. The Police Department has proposed funding the purchase of the remaining radios by appropriating \$900,000 in 2010 from the Asset Forfeiture fund and appropriating the remaining \$700,000 in 2011 from the Asset Forfeiture fund. Completing the transition to digital radios in 2010 rather than 2011 will provide increased safety for every officer a year earlier.

### Discussion

Approval of this resolution would appropriate \$700,000 from the 2010 Common Council Contingent Fund to pay for the purchase of digital radios for the Milwaukee Police Department. This amount, along with an anticipated \$900,000 appropriation from the Police Department Asset Forfeiture funds, will provide the \$1.6 million required to purchase 450 radios for the Police Department.

**Fiscal Impact**

The resolution in file 091674 will reduce the Common Council Contingent Fund by \$700,000 and increase Police Department equipment purchase funding by \$700,000. The 2010 Common Council Contingent Fund was budgeted at \$5,000,000, and as of April 19, 2010, before considering this resolution, had a balance of \$5,000,000.

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