

## **Special Called Board of Supervisors Meeting (Wednesday, May 18, 2022)**

This meeting is held pursuant to and in compliance with the Emergency Ordinance for Continuity of Government due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Members of the Board of Supervisors were present together at the New Courts Building, 220 Judicial Pl., Heathsville, VA 22473. Members of the public were present in attendance and virtually with approximately 15 call-ins noted.

### **Members present:**

Ronald L. Jett, James M. Long, Richard F. Haynie, Thomas H. Tomlin, James W. Brann

### **Other Staff Present:**

Mr. Luttrell Tadlock, County Administrator

Mr. Drew Basye, Assistant County Administrator

Ms. Morgan Wilson, Executive Assistant

Mr. Robert Headley, IT Administrator

Mr. Matthew Bailey, IT Assistant

## **1. Call to Order**

**Procedural: A. Meeting Call to Order 5:30 p.m.**

## **2. Radio Committee Discussion**

### **Action, Discussion: A. Radio System Discussion**

Chairman Haynie asked Sheriff Beauchamp to start the discussion on the regional radio system.

Sheriff Beauchamp thanked the Board for adding an additional meeting to their busy schedules and introduced Mr. Wayne Duff, representative of L3Harris, as well as Greg Hunter, the regional radio system Administrator.

Sheriff Beauchamp began with a quick overview on their proposal. The radio committee was given three options based on the Federal Engineering report and they chose to investigate the option for the middle peninsula regional radio system based on coverage, inoperability, and cost. The new system is a UHF, whereas the current system is VHF which is an entirely different frequency band. If the County were to decide to go with the new regional system, everything would need to be replaced (dispatch, infrastructure, radios, pagers, etc.)

Sheriff Beauchamp informed the Board that the system proposes the County use four out of the five existing towers that we already have and if decided to move forward, the County will have

to look at the existing leases and discuss the actions that need to be taken in order to install this new system. Mr. Beauchamp opened the floor to the Board to ask any questions they may have related to the radio system.

Supervisor Tomlin referred to the four out of the five existing towers that will be used and asked which tower would not work.

Sheriff Beauchamp stated that the tower in Wicomico Church at Mount Olive would be excluded in this system.

Supervisor Long asked why this tower would be excluded.

Sheriff Beauchamp explained that it was not needed in the coverage. Mr. Wayne Duff, L3Harris representative, understood Supervisor Long's concern of eliminating one of their sites. Mr. Duff informed Supervisor Long that this new system is a great opportunity for the County because it allows the sharing of assets and costs among neighboring counties which benefits everyone. Mr. Duff continued by stating that the overlapping coverage in Northumberland from the existing system is incredible, so the proposed plan is sublimating that by having four sites that will be more direct in serving Northumberland.

Supervisor Tomlin asked if we would be picking up the tower located on Good Luck Rd.

Sheriff Beauchamp informed the Board that the County would be picking up from this tower which would help us when losing the tower in Wicomico Church.

Supervisor Tomlin was concerned about any conflict occurring at Rappahannock General Hospital with the new system.

Sheriff Beauchamp stated that if not already done, they could set up a site to receive UHF at the hospital.

Sheriff Beauchamp went on by providing some further information related to the second proposal that includes Lancaster County if they are interested in joining the regional radio system as well. If entering the joint contract with Lancaster County, Northumberland would be looking at some cost savings because Lancaster would absorb the costs of the tower on Good Luck Rd.

Supervisor Tomlin asked Sheriff Beauchamp if Northumberland were to move forward with this and Lancaster did not, what's the inoperability look like for them?

Sheriff Beauchamp stated that they had proposed multi-band radios that would be compatible with the new system.

Mr. Duff informed the Board that if Lancaster doesn't choose to join this system, the coverage from Northumberland and the coverage from the existing regional system provides significant overlapping coverage into Lancaster. A gateway would be made between the VHF and the new regional system and Lancaster. The coverage footprint will allow you to talk to Lancaster and back to dispatch while traveling in Lancaster County as long as they are in the coverage footprint.

Supervisor Brann asked where Richmond County stands with this process.

Mr. Duff explained that Richmond County has requested a proposal for adding two sites and wants L3Harris to look at the existing coverage to determine the location of the two sites that will provide them with better in-building coverage. Mr. Duff informed the Board that if Richmond County were to move forward with this as part of the regional system, it would further enhance the coverage into Northumberland and Lancaster.

Chairman Haynie wanted to know which tower the County would be losing.

As earlier mentioned, Sheriff Beauchamp clarified that they would be losing the tower in Wicomico Church. Mr. Beauchamp went on to share an experience of his that led to the discomfort of trusting this tower in comparison to the tower on Good Luck Rd. He expressed the urgency of this matter and stated that something needs to be done as soon as possible before the County loses a deputy or a first responder. Sheriff Beauchamp acknowledged the hard work done by the radio committee and feels that this is the best plan for the County moving forward.

Chairman Haynie asked about the coverage in the lower areas (gullies) of the County.

Sheriff Beauchamp stated that there will be no system that is going to give the County one-hundred percent coverage, but based on the coverage maps, we are currently at ninety-five percent plus.

Mr. Wayne Duff ensured the Board that this is excellent coverage, and the guarantee is if they miss that mark as shown on the coverage map, they will fix it at the expense of L3Harris. He understands that the County would be investing in a system with certain expectations, and L3Harris plans to meet those expectations.

Supervisor Tomlin asked for clarification on the 95% coverage.

Mr. Duff explained to the Board that in the County of Northumberland, L3Harris will guarantee that ninety-five percent of the County boundary will have coverage with ninety-five percent reliability. Furthermore, voice quality and signal strength tests will need to be passed (inbound and outbound) in every place of the County that is accessible.

Supervisor Tomlin asked if that was mobile versus portable versus in a building.

Mr. Duff stated that right now it is set up as mobile and portable, but testing could be done in buildings if they would like.

Supervisor Tomlin asked what type of building is worse for penetration.

Mr. Duff answered with Walmart, schools, and older buildings that are dense and made of cinder block.

Supervisor Tomlin stated that if schools were a problem, his concern as a first responder would be a mass casualty school shooting.

Mr. Duff informed the Board that schools and government buildings are the toughest to penetrate but they would test this coverage. Sheriff Beauchamp enlightened the Board by stating that luckily there is a site located right on school property.

Vice Chairman Jett asked what kind of timeframe they were looking at in relation to completion.

Mr. Duff stated that they were on an 18-month schedule but that timeframe can probably be adjusted to a 16-18 month schedule.

Vice Chairman Jett asked about how feasible it is to get the supplies/equipment needed for this system.

Mr. Duff explained that although they are experiencing some increases in labor pricing, they build all their radio products in New York, so supply chain issues have not kept them from completing any projects on time. It's the licensing process as well as tower structural analysis that takes up the most time during this process.

Vice Chairman Jett asked how the handheld testing would be performed.

Mr. Duff informed the Board that the handheld testing would be done on the hip with a standard antenna.

Vice Chairman Jett asked if L3Harris would be responsible for the costs for adjustments made due to coverage not being as promised.

Mr. Duff confirmed that L3Harris would be responsible for these costs.

Vice Chairman Jett asked if the microwaves were included in this pricing.

Mr. Duff informed the Board that the microwave backhaul is extra and would be totally independent from this proposal.

Mr. Hunter spoke on this matter stating that what they decided to do in the regional system was build a robust safety microwave backhaul system to support all future integrations.

Vice Chairman Jett asked what the estimated cost was per microwave.

Mr. Hunter explained that it's roughly \$125,000 per link and Northumberland County would need four microwaves.

Vice Chairman Jett asked if the \$20,000 annual fee was per County or per site after the second year.

Mr. Hunter stated that there is a \$20,000 per site buy in during installation and then an ongoing annual fee of \$20,000 per County to support the system's staff.

Supervisor Tomlin asked about the towers' leases.

Sheriff Beauchamp stated that the County would have to review those leases and potentially modify them after seeing what each tower owner will allow.

Supervisor Tomlin asked how the conversion between the two systems occurs seamlessly.

Mr. Duff explained that nothing will ever be seamless, however they will be able to maintain both systems until they are ready to be switched over.

Vice Chairman Jett asked if this project would benefit Richmond County.

Mr. Duff confirmed that this system would benefit Richmond County, but it benefits everyone.

Vice Chairman Jett stated that he didn't mind helping Richmond County but not at our taxpayer's expense.

Supervisor Tomlin asked what the practice in the current jurisdiction is as far as who owns and maintains the new mobiles and portables.

Mr. Hunter stated that in all four jurisdictions, they are purchasing and owning the equipment, so the counties are owning it rather than each individual volunteer agency.

Supervisor Tomlin asked if the public would be able to use scanners and scan this frequency.

Mr. Hunter said yes, but it would take expensive scanners and the public can't hear if it's encrypted.

Supervisor Tomlin mentioned seven to eight years ago when they were going through a similar process, he was told 95% coverage then as well. He asked if this system will give the County 95% coverage as stated.

Mr. Duff confirmed that it would give the County this coverage and L3Harris would make any adjustments needed to make sure that it does.

Chairman Haynie asked how long it takes to get repairs done.

Mr. Duff explained that it would depend on the repair needed but a repair usually only takes a week or two. If the repair cannot be done in the field, it would go to the factory in Bedford County and take up to three weeks.

Chairman Haynie asked what would happen if two or three of the towers were to blow down.

Mr. Duff informed the Board that site coverage footprint would be lost and signal would have to rely on the most nearby tower.

Supervisor Tomlin stated under the current system, the tower located at the school is the central hub and wondered if this would be the same in the new system.

Mr. Duff stated that the County would not have a central hub and that all sites would be working together simultaneously.

Supervisor Tomlin stated in the event that Northumberland and Lancaster both join the system, how simple would it be for dispatch between counties to get information to each other.

Mr. Duff informed the Board that it would work as if it were one whole system.

Supervisor Tomlin asked what system the Virginia State Police are on.

Mr. Duff stated that the Virginia State Police are on the VHF system.

Supervisor Tomlin asked if our current dispatch system allows dispatchers to notify deputies through their cell phones as a patch.

Sheriff Beauchamp stated no, not as a patch but Mr. Duff stated that deputies can in the new system if the Sheriff allows it.

Supervisor Brann asked Mr. Duff to briefly touch on the BeOn.

Mr. Duff informed the Board that the BeOn is a push to talk application that comes with the system. It is encrypted and runs on any smart device along with all the radios but requires LTE or Wi-Fi coverage for use.

Chairman Haynie asked if there was a limit to the number of radios that can be talking on the system at one time.

Mr. Duff stated that with this system, you can have eight simultaneous conversations without being denied, but there is no limit to the number of radios connected to the system.

County Administrator Tadlock asked if there is shared equipment and what the age of that equipment is. Mr. Tadlock's concern is the need for equipment upgrades and how much it would cost, or if the \$20,000 annual membership fee is part of these maintenance costs.

Mr. Hunter informed County Administrator Tadlock that with each addition, they hold L3Harris accountable to make sure the system is up to the most recent released version at the core. Furthermore, that is the premise of the buy in cost and the annual fee because the actual hardware is based on a ten-to-fifteen-year replacement cycle.

Mr. Duff also informed the Board that as long as the County is under a maintenance agreement, L3Harris is required to fix anything that breaks.

County Administrator Tadlock asked if this system is something that has been cooperatively procured and requested further information on whether we needed to go out to bid on this or receive proposals.

Mr. Duff stated that the County has the option of procuring the equipment from the existing regional contract or using sole source. Mr. Duff went on to say that this has been completed very vigorously based on prices that the region has and the system on what they have moving forward.

Supervisor Tomlin wanted clarification that L3Harris is the actual corporation for the radio system and are not using other companies.

Mr. Duff clarified that Harris merged with L3 a couple of years ago and although they do have other partners, L3Harris is the corporation working directly with the region.

Supervisor Tomlin asked what would happen with the system if the County wanted to add a microwave later on.

Mr. Duff explained that the system would have no connectivity and would not work.

Supervisor Brann would like to see the Sheriff reach out to Richmond County to see what tower sites they may be looking at and see if it's something we could work on together.

Mr. Hunter stated that Richmond County asked for an analysis from L3Harris on recommendations on all their sites and the following areas were discussed: upper Newland area, Warsaw, and Haynesville/Village.

Supervisor Brann asked what coverage they have in Richmond County on their tower sites.

Mr. Hunter stated that Richmond County is at 94.8% coverage.

Sheriff Beauchamp thanked the Board and asked them to reach out for what they would like to radio committee to do next.

Supervisor Tomlin asked what needed to be done to reach a possible contract signature.

Mr. Duff stated that the County needs to decide to enter a joint contract with Lancaster or stand alone and therefore amend the contract.

Supervisor Tomlin asked Sheriff Beauchamp what discussions he has had with Lancaster County.

Sheriff Beauchamp stated that he has talked to Chief Matt Smith several times and he said that their Board gave them permission to pursue the costs with L3Harris and potentially even set

aside money for this. Mr. Beauchamp wouldn't go as far as saying this money was allocated, but believes it is a part of their capital improvement plan. Mr. Duff shared his experience at Lancaster's last Board meeting, and his takeaway was that their Board approved pursuing a contract to be reviewed by the County based on the joint proposal and the funding amount that was discussed was \$3.3 million with four sites of responsibility and Northumberland having three.

Supervisor Tomlin asked if the County were to go alone, but then Lancaster came in after our decision, what differences would the County look at in the contract.

Mr. Duff explained that it would depend on the timeline. If Lancaster decided to join a month after Northumberland signed the contract, some negotiation could take place, but if it's later after Northumberland has made some investments into this system, some type of partnership would take place between the two counties.

Supervisor Brann stated that the committee has put in a lot of work and thinks the Board owes it to them to have the County Administrator reach out to Lancaster to see if they are willing to talk with us about going in with a joint effort on this system. If not, Supervisor Brann wants to bring this matter back to the Board to decide on whether to move forward with the system. Supervisor Brann would like this information back to the Board by the regular Board of Supervisors meeting in June.

Chairman Haynie asked if L3Harris is going to come back with pricing on the microwaves.

Mr. Duff stated that this would be independent from L3Harris.

Vice Chairman Jett asked Supervisor Brann to restate his motion.

Supervisor Brann motioned to have the County Administrator reach out to Lancaster County to see if they are interested in joining the Upper Middle Peninsula Regional Radio System and requested this information to be brought back to the next regular Board of Supervisors meeting on June 9, 2022.

Vice Chairman Jett stated his concerns and believed there should be more Board discussion on this matter before taking any action.

Supervisor Brann stated that he's not saying the County should commit, but he wants to see if Lancaster has an interest in the radio system.

Chairman Haynie asked about a timeframe.

Supervisor Brann stated that if Northumberland decided to move forward, then Lancaster would have to meet the County's timeframe on this.

Supervisor Tomlin asked how much difficulty it would be to get the two possible scenarios on the microwaves without a hard contract.

Mr. Hunter stated that he has those figures, but not present with him at the meeting.

Motion to have the County Administrator reach out to Lancaster County to see if they are interested in joining the Upper Middle Peninsula Regional Radio System and request this information to be brought back to the next regular Board of Supervisors meeting on June 9, 2022.

Motion by: James W. Brann, second by: James M. Long

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Aye: James M. Long, Richard F. Haynie, Thomas H. Tomlin, James W. Brann

Nay: Ronald L. Jett

Vice Chairman Jett asked where the money is going to come from to pay for this system.

The Board ensured Vice Chairman Jett that's further discussion they will need to have on this matter.

### **3. Budget Discussion (if time permits)**

#### **Action, Discussion: A. Discussion**

County Administrator Tadlock asked the Board if they had any questions related to the budget or if they wished for him to move forward with advertising the County's budget, School Board budget, and the capital improvement plan for a public hearing on June 2, 2022. If the Board proceeds with authorization to advertise, there would be no need to meet for a budget work session on May 19, 2022.

Supervisor Tomlin expressed that the Board needs to advertise because their time frame is getting tight.

The Board set up budget work sessions for May 26, 2022 at 5:30 p.m., June 2, 2022 at 5:30 p.m., and June 7, 2022 at 5:30 p.m.

After the June 2, 2022 5:30 p.m. budget work session, the Board scheduled a public hearing at 7:00 p.m. for the County's budget, School Board budget, and the capital improvement plan.

Motion to advertise the County budget, School Board budget, and Capital Improvement Plan as it was presented to the Board for a public hearing on June 2, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

Motion by Thomas H. Tomlin, second by Ronald L. Jett

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Aye: Ronald L. Jett, James M. Long, Richard F. Haynie, Thomas H. Tomlin, James W. Brann

County Administrator Tadlock asked the Board if he could pursue Luper's request for parking on County property administratively rather than doing a license agreement.

The Board agreed to County Administrator Tadlock's request.

#### **4. Closing of Meeting**

##### **Action: A. Carry Over**

Motion to carry over to the special called meeting on May 26, 2022.

Motion by: Ronald L. Jett, second by: James M. Long.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Aye: Ronald L. Jett, James M. Long, Richard F. Haynie, Thomas H. Tomlin, James W. Brann