

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF WHATCOM COUNTY WASHINGTON, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON AND THE BOARD OF THE WHATCOM TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY REGARDING THE POTENTIAL CREATION OF A WHATCOM PUBLIC RADIO SYSTEM

WHEREAS, The City of Bellingham (City), Whatcom County (County) and Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA), have defined operational needs for a secure, reliable and redundant radio system to support daily operations and safety of employees and the public, and;

WHEREAS, licenses created and issued by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) are limited in availability and with future narrowing banding further limiting access it is essential to secure and preserve licenses, frequencies and infrastructure for public safety needs separate from private sector use, and;

WHEREAS, public agencies in our community, especially those involved in public safety, lack an integrated public agency radio service and the public safety of Whatcom County citizens is negatively impacted by the lack of an integrated public agency radio service, and;

WHEREAS, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C. the creation of interagency communications systems to allow first responders, including police, fire and emergency medical services and public service agencies, including public works, transit, schools, agencies, was identified as a critical element to respond to emergencies, and;

WHEREAS, the 2016 Cascadia Rising emergency management drill identified improving interagency radio communications as a key issue to help facilitate response to disasters within Whatcom County, and;

WHEREAS, the existing VHF and UHF radio systems used by some agencies is subject to interference, have aging and failing physical infrastructure, do not provide coverage to all areas of the county, and do not facilitate interagency communications, and;

WHEREAS, the lack of a reliable countywide radio system puts agency staff and the public at risk in locations and areas with limited communication; and,

WHEREAS, models of countywide systems in Kitsap, King and other counties have proven the effectiveness of a countywide system in increasing interagency communication and individual public safety employee safety; and,

WHEREAS, City, County and WTA have identified that the development of an 800 MHz digital radio system can provide the desired interagency communications; and,

WHEREAS, the County, the City and WTA each have complementary in-house staff expertise necessary to establish an integrated public agency radio system, and;

WHEREAS, no single agency has the resources to fund or operate a countywide system alone and that partnering between the City, County and WTA is a desirable solution, and;

WHEREAS, the City, County, and WTA have existing assets and/or are currently negotiating the potential acquisition of assets necessary to create and operate a countywide digital 800 MHz digital radio system, and;

WHEREAS, it is contemplated that additional public entities (e.g. Fire Districts, School Districts, etc.) have similar radio issues and needs, and it is anticipated those public entities could utilize a countywide digital 800 MHz digital radio system subject to rates, charges and conditions to partially reimburse costs for developing, operating and managing potential radio services, as agreed to with such other public agency pursuant to RCW Chapter 39.34, and;

WHEREAS, RCW Chapter 39.34 permits local government units to enter interlocal agreements enabling them to cooperate with other governmental entities on a basis of mutual advantage, and;

WHEREAS, the parties also recognize that it is in the best interests of the citizens of Whatcom County to take advantage of economies of scale and to enhance coordination of effort and financing in preparing for and carrying out all functions required to establish and maintain a countywide public safety radio system;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BELLINGHAM, THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF WHATCOM COUNTY AND THE WHATCOM TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY BOARD:

SECTION 1. Policy

WTA, the County and the City will develop a proposed plan to partner, cooperate and share staff resources, physical assets and commit financial resources for the potential creation of a countywide digital public radio system that may be accessible for use by other public agencies, including identification of agreeable terms and conditions of a proposed interlocal agreement identified in Section 2 below. The objective is to enable the creation of a countywide redundant and reliable communications system for daily public safety operations as well as emergency and disaster response. Furthermore, the objective is to create a system that can be used for daily operations by all public organizations in the County as primary, or secondary, radio communications with reliable coverage in all areas of the county and to enable interagency communication capability with all relevant local, State and Federal public safety agencies.

SECTION 2. Action

Staff from WTA, the County and the City will seek to negotiate a proposed interlocal agreement for consideration by the boards and councils of all three agencies outlining roles and responsibilities in the development and operation of a countywide public safety grade radio system. The proposed interlocal agreement shall outline a long-term operations plan, security, infrastructure and asset needs. The proposed interlocal agreement shall outline a funding strategy for the system including capital investment, replacement and renewals of hardware and software, service providers and staffing. The proposed interlocal agreement shall define levels of service to be provided for all users. The proposed interlocal agreement shall further provide mechanisms, and the desired terms and conditions for other potential partner public agencies to join and benefit from the countywide system.

PASSED by the City Council this _____ day of _____, 2021.

City Council President

APPROVED by me this _____ day of _____, 2021

Mayor

ATTEST:

Finance Director

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Office of the City Attorney

APPROVED this _____ day of _____, 2021.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Dana Brown-Davis, County Council Clerk

Barry Buchanan, County Council Chair

APPROVED as to form:

County Civil Deputy Prosecutor

PASSED in open public meeting this _____ day of _____,
2021 for the

**WHATCOM TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

**Michael Lilliquist
Chairperson**

ATTEST

**Vicki G. Esser
Clerk of the Board**