



Consideration of Adding Campbell County to the Regional Radio System

Summary

Campbell County is considering asking to join the Regional Radio Communications system with Amherst, Bedford, and Lynchburg. All of the legacy jurisdictions and the Planning District Commission will need to offer their approval for Campbell to join the system.

Background

In 1996 Amherst and Bedford Counties and Bedford and Lynchburg Cities consolidated their public safety radio broadcast systems into a single trunked 800 MHz system of eleven towers and three dispatch centers. In 2017 the system expanded to sixteen towers and upgraded to Phase I of P25 communication standards.

In recent years several regional or public safety organizations have joined the system as paying customers. These organizations include the Greater Lynchburg Transit Company, the Blue Ridge Regional Jail, the Region 2000 Services Authority (regional landfill), Liberty University Police Department and Central Virginia Community College Security.

The Radio System is managed by a Board of Directors consisting of the Emergency Communications Director or Chief Law Enforcement Officer from each jurisdiction and manage a \$1.16 million budget.

Impacts

The equipment installed in 2017 is fully capable of incorporating the calls from Campbell County without deteriorating the service to the existing jurisdictions. Campbell will be responsible for any costs to upgrade hardware or software at the central server and responsible to equipment on four towers and subscriber equipment (mobile and portable radios).

There will be some financial advantage to the Radio Board when Campbell's 500+ radio units are added to the current 2,700 unit system due to economies of scale. A significant advantage happens around 2030 when the system will likely need to be replaced/upgraded as Campbell will pay their proportional share of the regional system upgrade.

Interoperability

Radio Board members see interoperability in communications with Campbell as the most important aspect of Campbell's membership in the Regional System. Currently with two independent radio systems, communications with Campbell's public safety and emergency service providers requires several steps and transfers. With Campbell a part of a single system, communications become faster and more seamless between public safety and EMS officers. That is especially important with responses to Liberty University and the Regional Airport.

Logistics

The Agreement provides for incorporating Campbell County as an equal voting member of the Regional Radio System and fully incorporating them into the regional radio system.

Campbell will pay a one-time buy-in fee of \$1,620,883 and pay for the equipment necessary to integrate into the system. Campbell will see some savings by integrating into the regional system sharing equipment and capacity. Campbell's radios will also become interoperable with the Lynchburg's, Amherst's and Bedford's, for improved communications.

Once installed, the Regional Radio System will maintain all of Campbell's radios and equipment, as we do for current members.

Recommended Action

If Campbell County asks to join the system by approving the Amendment next week, then it is recommended that the PDC approve the Amendment as well.