

County makes communications center project purchases

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by Peter Bodley

Managing editor

Two more purchases have been made by the Anoka County Board for the \$1.9 million project currently under way to remodel and expand the space in which Anoka County Central Communications operates in the courthouse.

On the recommendation of its Management Committee, the board has approved the purchase of computer workstations in an amount not to exceed \$46,000 as well as network and cabling work for a price not to exceed \$43,600.

“Funding is in place for the work stations and cabling,” said County Commissioner Jim Kordiak, Management Committee chairman.

According to John Tonding, Central Communications manager, money to pay for these purchases is available from the Enhanced 911 surcharge fund and Homeland Security grant dollars.

Both were budgeted and planned for in the original approved capital improvement program, Tonding said.

The replacement work stations are for the Central Communications computer aided dispatch system and the network wiring and cabling will support the expansion, he said.

Late last year, the county board approved the construction contract totaling \$350,922 with Morcon Construction, Minneapolis.

In addition, the board approved requests for proposal (RFP) for the new 911 phone system (\$571,899) and dispatch furniture (\$147,476) to replace the existing phone system and furniture, which are more than 15 years old, Tonding said.

“Those portions of the project are progressing as scheduled,” he said.

“This project will provide for five additional 911 call taking stations in the center as well as much needed space in our locker room, emergency operations center and lead dispatcher’s office.”

Project completion is scheduled in April.

In addition to the construction contract, the board last year awarded a contract to Energy Services Group Inc. for \$370,000 for the mechanical work associated with the project plus \$233,000 for enhancements including connection to emergency power, expansion of a chilled water line from the center courthouse and connection to the west courthouse building for efficiency and equipment life, air handling unit for free cooling, outside air duct and dry coolers.

In addition to the remodeling of the existing space, the department is expanding into an area that has been vacated by the county’s Information Services Department, Tonding said.

Sources of funding for the project include the county's capital improvements program budget, 911 surcharge revenue and money provided in the 2010 county building fund.

The contracts awarded for the project have been under budget, Tonding said.

Despite continual increases in 911 calls, police and fire incidents and county population, Central Communications has not added any operational space in 15 years, according to the county's capital improvements budget document.

Additional 911 call taking stations are badly needed to handle high volume events, existing console furniture is worn and advances in 911 phone equipment will provide enhanced call handling capabilities, the document states.

As part of the construction, a hallway that currently separates the dispatch center from the computer room is being removed to provide more space.

The computer and dispatch personnel areas will remain separate, but the hallway is not needed because both rooms have their own emergency exits, according to Cevin Petersen, county finance and central services division manager.

The energy improvements were included because the current air handling and mechanical systems were installed in 1976, Petersen said.

"The current HVAC unit and air handling system is very old and inefficient," he said.

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