

**NORTH RIDGEVILLE CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING MINUTES  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS – 6:20 p.m.  
TUESDAY, JULY 6, 2021**

**To Order:**

Chairman Martin DeVries called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 6:20 p.m.

**Attendance:**

Members present: Councilwoman Holly Swenk, Councilman Dennis Boose, Councilman Bruce Abens, Councilman Clifford Winkel, Councilman Jason Jacobs, Councilman James Maleski, and Chairman Martin DeVries

Also present: Mayor Kevin Corcoran, Safety-Service Director Jeff Armbruster, Auditor April Wilkerson, Clerk of Council Nancy Linden, and Assistant Clerk of Council Shari Ma.

Chairman DeVries thanked guests for attending and then introduced T 84-2021.

Chairman DeVries requested members from North Ridgeville's Fire Department to stand and provide an explanation of T 84-2021.

Assistant Fire Chief Jon Graf stated he would read a position statement on behalf of Fire Chief Reese.

Assistant Fire Chief Graf read the statement.

Chairman DeVries asked for comments from the Administration.

Mayor Corcoran stated the communication issue is a complicated issue. He went on to say the communication issue has been ongoing, and because there is a lot of money involved, some entities have turned Lorain County into a battleground.

Mayor Corcoran stated the Lorain County Commissioners had not yet voted on the communication issue. They stated that a tower would be put up, but it hasn't happened.

In reference to Chief Reese's written statement, Mayor Corcoran went on to clarify that on the second page, in the second to last paragraph, Chief Reese references an interface console, which will allow the City to connect to other systems so that the City does not have to experience multiple user fees. The topic was introduced during the state budget process; however, it was removed from the budget several weeks or months ago. Mayor Corcoran explained there would be other fees that will have to be paid if the radio is programmable to the other two systems, there will be multiple fees.

Mayor Corcoran stated in general, nothing is stopping the system from going forward. Cleveland Communications, who has put the system together, said from the beginning that it would only take four of the five communities to agree to move forward.

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Mayor Corcoran believes the other four communities would like to move forward with the system; however, the only thing holding this project back is getting on the tower.

Mayor Corcoran stated the City is not holding anything up. He advised Council not to feel pressured to do anything because the system is going forward no matter what, as long as they can get on the County tower.

Mayor Corcoran explained if the City receives the grant they applied for with the other five communities, they can still buy the radios. The City is still working with Cleveland Communications to ensure the other free radios are free at the beginning of the contract and to remove other fees as part of the contract.

He stated the Fire Department has been consistent with their belief that this communication system is a better system. This system guarantees 95-percent in-building coverage; however, there is some question as to whether the decibel levels that are mentioned is an achievable goal or not. So far, on any of the tests that had been done, we have not been able to duplicate the 95-percent at that decibel level. Mayor Corcoran stated he still has some concern that a system that has not been built is being projected as the best thing ever, and it cannot be confirmed because we do not have the ability to test it.

Mayor Corcoran stated he introduced the legislation because he wants to bring the issues to life and allow the discussion. He explained to Council that the City has the ability to join a system that the other five cities would be a part of. However, the number one community that North Ridgeville deals with in mutual aid is Avon, and the second is Westlake. Westlake is on a different system, so the City uses a different set of radios to communicate with Westlake. He stated his concern is to get everyone on the same system so that they can communicate with each other all at the same time. No offense to Avon Lake or Sheffield Lake, but the amount of times that North Ridgeville deals with them on a mutual aid basis is next to zero.

Mayor Corcoran explained that he is also concerned about a system the Police Department can join; however, the Police Department would like to test the system out before they agree to move to it. One challenge the Police Department has is the State Highway Patrol is on a different system. The Police Department does not have a restricted area that they deal with like the Fire Department. The original thought was to move service over to this system, but the Police Department said their current system is fine. Therefore, for the time being, the City is only looking at moving the Fire Department over to this system.

Chairman DeVries thanked Mayor Corcoran for his comments and asked Safety-Service Director Armbruster for comments.

Safety-Service Director Armbruster stated 75 out of 88 counties in Ohio are on the DAS MARCS system, including the Highway Patrol and ODOT. Not saying the Harris system is not better and not suggesting there is no other way, but the State of Ohio and the budget is going toward the MARCS system.

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Chairman DeVries thanked Safety-Service Director Armbruster and asked Council members for questions.

Councilwoman Swenk asked if the Lorain County Commissioners received their contracts yet.

Mayor Corcoran stated the Commissioners had multiple conversations with Harris, MARCS, and Motorola. They have been presented with proposals from Harris, MARCS, and Motorola to build the system, and depending on the direction the Commissioners go in, this system might not be available.

Councilwoman Swenk asked if the Lorain County Commissioners were waiting to see what Ordinances other communities pass before they make a decision.

Mayor Corcoran stated the other four cities have decided to move forward with the communication system, and from his understanding, there is no other reason for the Commissioners to wait on moving forward.

Safety-Service Director Armbruster stated MARCS DAS has contacted the Lorain County Commissioners and said their antenna could be moved over to 9-1-1 at no cost to the County. He further explained that he can foresee down the road a Harris antenna, a private for-profit business, going up on a 9-1-1 pole. This would mean MARCS could put up their antenna, which would mean two competing radio systems.

Mayor Corcoran stated government entities usually do not allow for-profit entities to put equipment on their devices. He further explained he does not care which communication system the City goes with; he just would like a conclusion. If the Fire Department chooses the Harris system and the Police Department chooses the MARCS system he has a solution to get the two systems to communicate.

Councilman Abens asked if the City decides to use the system for two years and then decides not to renew the contract, would there be any penalties.

Mayor Corcoran stated this had been a common discussion, and from a financial standpoint, the City could implement the program and get the radios and not renew the contract after two years. The game-changer was when Cleveland Communications said they would build the system for free and provide free radios. The Mayors of the other communities said there are no downfalls and they should go with the system.

Councilman Abens stated it sounds like no one is entirely sure of themselves, including MARCS for at least another year, so it is either the free system or wait and see which is best for us.

Mayor Corcoran stated the idea is if the legislation is passed, then the City can move a lot faster instead of waiting.

Safety-Service Armbruster stated the Police Department has somewhat used the Harris radios, but the system is not built. Without any changes, the MARCS radios work. The Police

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Department can communicate all the way down to Cincinnati and communicate with everyone in all 88 counties on the current MARCS system. The MARCS system has towers all over the State of Ohio. The State is fully committed to the MARCS system. While the Harris system works, the MARCS system is in 75 out of the 88 counties in Ohio.

Chairman DeVries asked for any other comments.

Councilman Maleski stated he agreed with Safety-Service Director Armbruster's comments. If 75 out of the 88 counties in Ohio are on the MARCS system, it does not make sense to switch over to another communication system.

Councilwoman Swenk asked what it would cost the taxpayers to implement the MARCS system.

Mayor Corcoran stated the City would incur equipment costs.

Councilwoman Swenk asked if the City would still get the grant for fifty-thousand dollars even if they went with the MARCS system.

Mayor Corcoran stated the grant money would still come to the City even if they did not go with the Harris system. The radios would be programmed on the MARCS system instead of the Harris system.

Councilwoman Swenk asked if there would be any additional costs to taxpayers.

Mayor Corcoran stated there would be additional costs if additional devices were needed or for the installation of devices.

Councilwoman Swenk asked Mayor Corcoran if he knew the amount of the additional costs.

Mayor Corcoran replied, no.

Safety-Services Director Armbruster stated every cell phone in the room pays for the MARCS system through a tax. Therefore, everyone is already paying for the MARCS system.

Councilman DeVries asked for further questions or comments.

Councilman Abens asked why the Fire Department is drifting away from the MARCS system.

Mayor Corcoran stated the Safety-Service Director in Avon and the Chief in Sheffield Village did their own interviews and testing of the systems and felt the Harris system was a better choice. He stated that he is unsure of all the details that helped them arrive at that conclusion, but that is what they determined. Also, the 95-percent guaranteed building coverage goes a long way to making the Fire Department feel like Harris is the better choice.

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Mayor Corcoran stated the Fire Department was involved in several discussions regarding the radio systems before committing to anything. The idea of the Ordinance was to give the Mayor the power to move forward as opposed to waiting for testing to be done and sorted out.

Chairman DeVries stated, as Chief Reese's statement mentioned, the system needs to be replaced, and the fact that the City will receive grant money to support the new radio system is a benefit. If the City gets the grant, then the system is free, which is important.

Chairman DeVries stated the discussion would continue at a future meeting because of the regularly scheduled Council meeting.

**Adjournment:**

Chairman DeVries adjourned the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Date Approved: 7.20.2021



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Shari Ma  
Assistant Clerk of Council

