



Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request

Meeting Date: June 24, 2014

Prepared By/Phone Number: Danny Hobby/854-4416

Elected/Appointed Official/Dept. Head: Danny Hobby

Commissioners Court Sponsor: Commissioner Gerald Daugherty, Pct. 3
Commissioner Bruce Todd, Pct. 2

AGENDA LANGUAGE:

CONSIDER AND TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION REGARDING AN INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN TRAVIS COUNTY, THE CITY OF AUSTIN, AND THE CITY OF WESTLAKE HILLS RELATED TO A PILOT PROJECT FOR AN EARLY WARNING WILDFIRE DETECTION SYSTEM.

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF REQUEST AND ATTACHMENTS:

Since the Labor Day fires several years ago it has been the desire of many to plan and develop effective resources and detection systems for potential wildfire conditions and events in Travis County. This request is to begin a one year pilot project to purchase and implement an early warning detection system using smoke sensors at selected tower locations in western Travis County. The pilot project will include the participation of the City of Austin, the City of Westlake Hills and Travis County. The Austin City Council approved on Thursday, June 12, 2014, the authorization to negotiate and execute an interlocal agreement between the City, the City of Westlake Hills, and Travis County for the coordinated operation of wildfire detection systems.

See attached cover memo and interlocal agreement that will detail more information about the pilot project and the costs associated with it.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Emergency Services recommends approval of this request.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES:

It is beneficial to our community and our fire responders to provide early warning wildfire detection resources if they prove to demonstrate preventive and improved response data.

FISCAL IMPACT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:

The fiscal impact for Travis County to be a participant in this one year pilot project for the shared use of the system will be \$180,019.

The source of funding will be requested from allocated reserves to fund the County's portion of the project. A separate agenda item will be placed on the Court Agenda regarding the use of allocated funds for this pilot project.

Future funding will be determined after the one year pilot project has been completed and the analysis has been developed.

REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS:

Barbara Wilson, County Attorney's Office
Alan Miller, Planning and Budget Office

EMERGENCY SERVICES

DANNY HOBBY, COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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*Emergency Management
Pete Baldwin, Emergency
Mgmt. Coordinator*

*Fire Marshal
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*Chief Medical Examiner
Dr. David Dolinak*

*STAR Flight
Casey Ping, Program
Director*

MEMORANDUM

To: Travis County Commissioners Court

From: Danny Hobby, County Executive, Emergency Services *[Signature]*

Date: June 16, 2014

Subject: Interlocal Agreement between Travis County, the City of Austin, and the City of Westlake Hills for the coordinated operation of a wildfire detection system in selected areas in the County, and the use of allocated funds for the County's portion of the project.

This agenda request is to ask your approval of an interlocal agreement between Travis County, the City of Austin, and the City of West Lake Hills that provides for a pilot project related to the purchase and implementation of an early warning wildfire detection system, and to use allocated reserves to fund the County's portion of the project.

The pilot project will test the effectiveness of an early warning detection system for wildfires using smoke sensors placed at selected tower locations in western Travis County for a one year time period. After the pilot phase has been completed, the parties will review and develop recommendations for wildfire detection to determine continuation of the use of smoke sensors, or consider what other alternative methods are being tested in other parts of the country.

The City of Austin evaluated and interviewed vendors to determine who would best fit the needs for this pilot project. The vendor chosen currently has equipment in use in a pilot project with the City of West Lake Hills. The equipment in that pilot project will interface with the equipment purchased by the City of Austin for the pilot project outlined in the interlocal agreement. The vendor will be able to complete the entire installation of the system within 60 days from the time approvals are completed. Travis County will reimburse its portion of the pilot project for the shared use of the system in the amount of \$180,019. A separate budget request will be placed on the Court agenda regarding the use of allocated funds for this pilot project.

The City of Austin will purchase two smoke sensors if the vendor delivers two additional smoke sensors at no charge to the City of Austin or Travis County after approval of this Agreement. The City of Austin will be responsible for the installation, and maintenance of the sensors at four locations. At the end of the pilot project, two of these sensors shall be the property of the City of

Austin, while the second two of these sensors shall be the property of Travis County. The City of West Lake Hills has one sensor already installed at a location and will be participating in the pilot project with the City of Austin and Travis County

The detection system consists of a computer based configuration of high-resolution optical sensors and a remote central office to provide smoke detection within a range of up to six miles with just one sensor (depending on terrain features). The image processing software analyzes the motion, structure, and brightness of smoke plumes and automatically alerts monitoring personnel within six minutes during daylight and within twelve minutes at night. Monitoring personnel receive target images and coordinates to alert the appropriate response resources.

The sensor systems are installed on selected towers and are allowed to rotate up to 360 degrees every four to six minutes during daylight and eight to twelve minutes at night. If the sensor detects a column of smoke, it sends information to an operator. The operator will be located at a central office during wildfire high hazard days. Once the sensor is reviewed by a qualified operator, generally a specifically trained firefighter, it will be reported to the Austin/Travis County Emergency Communications Center for dispatch.

Emergency Services recommends partnering with the City of Austin and the City of West Lake Hills for this pilot project. It is beneficial to our community and our fire responders to provide early warning wildfire detection resources if they prove to demonstrate preventive and improved response data. This pilot project will be a valuable step in determining if a sensor system is the detection system we need in the future for Travis County.