




City of Bowie

2614 Kenhill Drive
Bowie, Maryland 20715

MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council

FROM: David J. Deutsch
City Manager 

SUBJECT: Budget Follow-up Memo #3

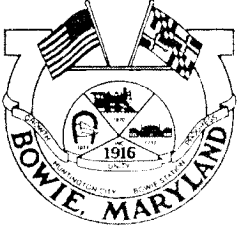
DATE: April 21, 2010

1. Green Power Purchase. The EAC has suggested that the City purchase 10% of total City electricity as of June 30, 2011 from alternative energy sources. The City will be purchasing 5.67% of our electricity from alternative energy sources as mandated by the State of Maryland in 2011. The City intends to purchase 35% of the electricity used at the new City Hall from alternative energy sources in order to qualify for a LEED™ point toward reaching a LEED™ Silver Rating. We estimate this to represent an additional 4% of our total Citywide energy usage. Therefore, the City will be purchasing approximately 9.67% of our electricity usage from alternative energy sources by June 30, 2011.

2. Outdoor Warning Systems. A follow-up memo is attached. It is recommended that further staff research on this subject be suspended.

DJD/asf

Attachment



City of Bowie

2614 Kenhill Drive
Bowie, Maryland 20715

MEMORANDUM

To: David J. Deutsch, City Manager

From: Alan E. Creveling, Emergency Management Resources Coordinator

Subject: Outdoor Warning Systems

Date: April 19, 2010

Background

On June 3, 2009, staff presented Council with a memo describing the current uses of emergency warning sirens (see Attachment A). The memo included a history, local uses, and other descriptive information about Outdoor Warning systems (OWS). A particular cost estimate for a system for Bowie was not provided due to the fact that cost is dependent on many variables including manufacturer, number of speakers, contracted technology, etc.

Staff presented the report to the Public Safety Committee in 2009. The PSC did not deliver a written position back to staff after the presentation. Both Bowie Volunteer Fire Chief Lee Havens and Bowie State University Police Chief subsequently presented their views on OWS to the Public Safety Committee (BSU has an OWS). The PSC has not delivered a written position regarding OWS since that meeting.

Cost Variables

According to Chief Waiters, the BSU system cost \$40,000 and does not currently meet their needs of covering their entire property with the audio messages they require. (The City of Bowie is more than 11 times the size of BSU.) A recent news release in ICMA News Briefing (online) referenced a purchase of a single severe weather warning siren by the Coffee County (Alabama) Commissioners for a new high school in their jurisdiction. The cost of the siren was \$16,000; an installation cost was not included (see Attachment B).

Recommendation

The June 3, 2009 memo recommended that certain staff members and the PSC be assembled to study the need and applicability of an OWS for the City of Bowie. Those persons and the PSC have all been given a chance to review the memo, conduct independent fact finding, and deliver a position statement. To date, no need has been established. I would recommend that any further staff research be suspended.

MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council

FROM: David J. Deutsch
City Manager

SUBJECT: Outdoor Warning Systems

DATE: June 3, 2009

Council requested that staff research the use of emergency warning sirens to alert City residents of impending emergency situations. This memo will describe the current uses of emergency warning sirens by a cross-section of local and other jurisdictions.

History

Sirens, bells, whistles, air horns, and other similar devices are known as outdoor warning systems (OWS). The systems have historically been used to summon help or to warn of an impending or ongoing emergency. Probably the most recognizable OWS has been the sirens used to summon fire/EMS personnel.

With the improvements in communications technology, particularly pagers and cell phones, many OWS used to summon first responders became obsolete. However, since 9/11 there has been a resurgence of interest and necessity to improve the ability of warning the public about impending emergencies. The purpose of an OWS is to warn those persons conducting business or pleasure activities outside to seek shelter and monitor a radio or television Emergency Alert System (EAS). Generally, OWS are not intended to be heard indoors. It is assumed that people indoors have EAS televisions, radios, or other systems available.

Bowie Area OWS

The Bowie Volunteer Fire Department (BVFD) has three sirens (one at each station) that have been used in the past to summon volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel. The BVFD currently uses pagers to summon personnel in an emergency. The sirens have not been regularly used for several years. However, the BVFD is currently investigating the cost of refurbishing the sirens in case a need arises for their use. The percentage of local Bowie population that is within hearing range of the BVFD OWS is not known.

Bowie State University has a siren-based OWS on its campus. The sirens can be activated by the Public Safety Department to alert students, faculty and visitors to an emergency or impending emergency. The sirens also act as voice loudspeakers so that voice messages can be broadcast on campus.

Specific and Other Uses

OWS are in use at nuclear reactor sites and HAZMAT producing areas across the country. These systems are aimed to inform a specific population about a specific danger.

Many local jurisdictions have installed OWS to warn their populations about all hazards, particularly severe weather conditions such as tornadoes.

Population Coverage and Outreach

The OWS are generally used to notify persons who are outdoors that they should seek cover indoors and listen to an emergency broadcast describing the emergency or impending event. Sirens must be placed in locations where they can be heard by anyone who is outdoors. Engineering and planning of the placement of the OWS are integral components of a successful system.

OWS can be designed to warn of specific or general hazards. Often, different tones from the OWS indicate different hazards. The public must be educated in advance about the presence and activation protocols of the systems so there is no confusion regarding the warning.

Market and Style Availability

Several companies manufacture a wide variety of OWS. Models exist that can be remotely activated by cell phone or computer. Models are available that can broadcast a variety of tones as well as voice.

Cost

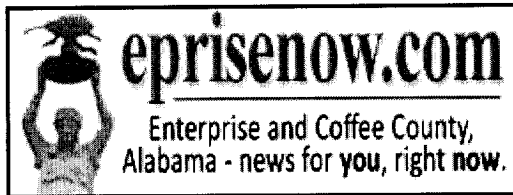
Cost is dependent upon the manufacturer, quality and complexity of the system, number of speakers, contracted technology, etc. OWS need to be planned and purchased for the specific needs of the population and community.

Recommendation

Staff recommends a small working group, whose members have an appropriate related expertise/background in OWS, be assembled to study the need and applicability of an OWS for the City of Bowie. Suggested members of the working group would be a member of the BVFD, a member of the City's Public Safety Committee, and a representative from the Bowie State University Public Safety Office. Staff members

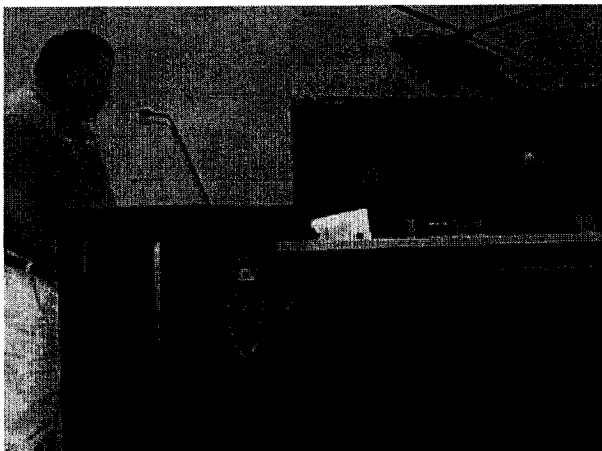
could include a representative from the Police Department, Information and Technology Department, the Emergency Management Resources Coordinator, and the Communications Coordinator.

DJD/AC



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Coffee County upgrades weather warning system



Coffee County Emergency Management Agency Director John Tallas, left, explains upgrades to the county emergency weather warning system as Coffee County Commissioners Al Britt and Kim Ellis look on.

By [Michelle Mann](#)

Published: April 13, 2010

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A new severe weather warning siren approved Monday will increase the number of sirens in the Coffee County Emergency Management Agency system to 27.

Coffee County Commissioners unanimously voted to pay \$4,000 toward the cost of a new weather siren at the new Enterprise High School site. Coffee County Emergency Management Agency Director John Tallas asked the commissioners for the funding, which amounts to 25 percent of the cost for an emergency weather warning siren.

Tallas said the City of Enterprise is expected to fund an additional \$4,000. The remainder of the cost

will be paid through the Choctawhatchee-Pea-Yellow River Watershed Authority, Tallas said. "If we do part of the installation work ourselves, it will offset the cost," he said. "We're trying to economize everywhere we can."

Tallas told commissioners the new siren will be placed at the new Enterprise High School, and the school will provide electricity and insurance for it. The new siren will fill a void in a geographical area where no other siren can be heard, Tallas said. "It will cover the area of the Enterprise Preparatory Academy and from Martin's Trailer Park to the South Industrial Park," he said.

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