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MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council members

DATE: September 18, 2019

RE: Proposed 28E with Polk County for dispatch services

As I have discussed at recent City Council meetings, the Polk County Sheriff has been contemplating a technology/radio upgrade for both mobile and portable radios used by law enforcement and numerous fire departments in the county. As you know, the Polk County Sheriff's Office manages the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP)/911 Emergency Dispatch Communications Center, located on NE 14th Street just south of Ankeny in unincorporated Polk County, on behalf of 31 agencies, including Ankeny Police and Fire. Ankeny is the largest city in the dispatch area, which also includes Johnston, Altoona, Pleasant Hill, Grimes and Bondurant. Sheriff Kevin Schneider, as part of this upgrade process, asked all of the County's partner agencies to consider a 28E extension through June 30, 2030. Fire Chief Jim Clack, Police Chief Darius Potts and I met with Sheriff Schneider and his staff several months ago as this process began, and the Sheriff's Office has been responsive to our input throughout the process. The October 7 City Council agenda will include an action item to approve a 28E agreement with Polk County through fiscal year 2030, providing for direct payments by Ankeny and other agencies for the first time and also providing for significant hardware, service and safety upgrades as part of the agreement.

Background

Polk County has provided Ankeny's dispatch/public safety communications for about two decades. Our relationship is governed by an existing 28E agreement that was entered into on April 27, 2012 and expires on June 30, 2024. That agreement included new radios with a set service fee, and it also provided for a reopener after six years (in 2018), to "evaluate alternative funding formulas for communication services." Polk County was clear back in 2012 that it would request compensation from its partners given the level of subsidy it provided for its emergency communications operation. Not only was this cost-sharing provision specifically stated in the 28E, but County representatives also met with partners to explain the reopener provision in the agreement. Fortunately for us, Polk leadership subsequently decided to delay charging communities until 2024. While 911 fees collected by telephone companies provide revenues for emergency communication centers, due to costs associated with a 24/7 operation and the

difficulty in securing regulatory approval for fee increases, it is not uncommon for local governments to provide significant direct funding to cover a portion of dispatching costs. The Sheriff Bob E. Rice Communications Center is a large operation, dispatching more than 18,600 fire/EMS and more than 189,000 law enforcement calls for service last fiscal year. The center handles more than 49,000 calls for service annually for Ankeny so nearly one of every four calls into the center results in an Ankeny call for service.

New 28E provides for new mobile and portable radios, new tower and enhanced coverage

Ankeny's public safety employees utilize two types of Raycom (Harris) radios in the course of their jobs. Raycom is the provider of radios selected by the County during a thorough review in 2011-12 as the County transitioned to a Project 25 (P25) platform. P25 brought higher standards of interoperability to emergency communications nationwide and replaced the previous analog systems. The proposed 28E agreement calls for the upgrade and replacement of **all radios** utilized by City public safety personnel. Raycom will provide new Harris XL-185 P25 Phase 2 portable radios and also new mobile radios in vehicles, all of which will replace older models on a one-for-one basis. The value to Ankeny of this capital purchase, which will be 100% funded by Polk County, is approximately **\$730,000**. By replacing both the mobile and the portable radios, we will essentially have all brand-new equipment next year, which will also reduce any potential short-term replacement costs we would have incurred had we retained the aging radios. The City, as we currently do, will need to budget for additional new equipment related to staffing growth. Polk County will also construct a new P25 radio communications tower at NE 126th Avenue and NE 29th Street. Staff believe this will provide a much-needed coverage enhancement in areas of north Ankeny. Polk County is also guaranteeing 95% portable radio coverage, which is a new guarantee not in the current agreement.

Level of Service

Before contemplating the new, extended agreement, I asked both Chief Clack and Chief Potts to review the level of service we are receiving from the County, and both—along with other staff—have participated in technical review meetings to test the proposed equipment we will be acquiring as part of the new agreement. Our public safety leaders are satisfied with the service provided, they are in agreement that the upgrades provided in the new deal are needed and benefit Ankeny, and are satisfied with the technical aspects of the proposed new equipment. As part of the new agreement, the Polk County Sheriff will establish a PSAP Operational Advisory Committee, to include Ankeny, which will meet quarterly and provide recommendations for procedural revisions to the Sheriff.

Future Costs

The new 28E provides for payments from partnering agencies to Polk County at a rate of 25% of its General Fund costs to operate the Emergency Communications Center, effective July 1, 2024 (fiscal year 2025). Those costs will be shared pro-rata based on each participating community's population. The City will need to plan for this new cost, which is estimated at more than **\$337,000** annually based on current costs, and will likely be higher because of our significant population growth (pro rata amounts will be determined by the 2020 Census) and the fact that the

County's costs will increase incrementally over the next several years before the service cost provision takes effect. After the initial year, costs can increase by a maximum of 2% annually through the term of the agreement. Polk County, by delaying the funding requirement until fiscal year 2025, is providing sufficient time to incorporate these costs into future budgets. While it is always uncomfortable to transition to direct payments for a service when historically somebody else has covered those costs, the payments contemplated in the 28E were expected given the 2012 negotiations and explicit language in the existing 28E. Polk County will continue to cover the large majority of the costs of running the Emergency Communications Center. Polk County has also included language in the new agreement that the annual service fees will be reinvested in public safety communications, which will benefit Ankeny and the other communities/public safety agencies served by Polk County. By way of comparison, West Des Moines, our closest comparable community in the metro in terms of size, will pay \$1.84 million this fiscal year to Westcom for similar services. Urbandale, which now has approximately 25,000 fewer residents than Ankeny, will pay \$1.22 million. Ankeny will continue to make no direct payments until fiscal year 2025, at which time we will be paying a small fraction of the cost paid by our peer cities for similar services, and with Polk County continuing to cover at least 75% of the General Fund costs of operating the Emergency Communications Center.

I recommend approval of the new 28E agreement with Polk County. If you have any questions, please let me know.

C: James Clack, Fire Chief
 Darius Potts, Police Chief
 Jennifer Sease, Administrative Services Director