Princeton Transition Task Force

Information Technology Subcommittee

Proposed recommendation regarding the adoption of a mass notification system

For consideration by the IT Subcommittee on July 19, 2012

The task force recommends that the consolidated Princeton adopt Rapid Notify as its mass notification system, at an estimated cost of $9,500 per year.

Rationale:

The Information Technology Subcommittee of the Transition Task Force compared the two mass notification systems currently in use by Princeton Township and Princeton Borough. Princeton Township currently uses Rapid Notify for mass notification, at an annual cost of $9,500. Princeton Borough currently uses Mercer County’s mass notification system, which is currently available to municipalities within the county at no annual cost. The subcommittee did not consider other mass notification systems.

Both systems provide basic functionality for mass notification in the event of an emergency. The system currently in use by the Township provides several additional features not currently available from the system in use by Mercer County, including:

* Princeton administrative staff have direct access to the notification system;
* Princeton determines the prioritization of outgoing messages; and
* the system supports distribution of non-emergency messages, such as traffic advisories.

Princeton Township currently makes use of all of these features, and moving to the system provided by Mercer County would result in a noticeable loss of functionality for its residents.

The annual cost of the system for the combined Princeton is commensurate with the additional benefits provided, and is equivalent to the annual cost currently paid by Princeton Township.

The Joint Consolidation / Shared Services Study Commission did not specifically address the mass notification system in its reports.

A more complete side by side comparison of the two systems is included in the following table:

| **Feature** | **Rapid Notify** | **Mercer County** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Does the municipality have a login to use the system? | Yes | No |
| Message priority set by | Princeton staff | Mercer County staff |
| Non-emergency messages permitted | Yes | No |
| Annual Cost | $9,500  | None |
| Database of phone numbers provided by | Verizon | Verizon |
| Database includes unlisted numbers | Yes | Yes |
| Update frequency | Weekly | Weekly |
| File upload available | Yes | Uncertain |
| Mapping capability | Yes | Yes |
| Messages may be restricted to specific streets based on text file | Yes | No |
| Self-Registration portal | Yes | Yes |
| The system allows municipal staff to manage multiple preconfigured contact lists | Yes | No |
| How many calls may be completed at one time? | 500 | Unknown |
| How many phone lines are available for use? | Several Thousand | Several Thousand |
| Average time to set up an outgoing message | 5-10 min | 5-15 min |
| Number of employees authorized to activate | 6 (Princeton) | 2 (Mercer County) |
| Can calls be scheduled to go out at a certain time? | Yes (automated) | No, but Mercer County staff may manually trigger messages at any scheduled time. |
| Guaranteed 24 hours 7 days a week | Yes | Yes |
| Software used | Rapid Notify | Cassidian Communications GeoCast Web |