

REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

DATE: SEPTEMBER 10, 2008

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: GREG RAMIREZ, CITY MANAGER

BY: LOUIS CELAYA, ASSISTANT TO THE CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF AGREEMENT WITH BLACKBOARD CONNECT, INC., TO PROVIDE MASS NOTIFICATION SERVICES

At the FY 2008-09 Budget Workshop, the City Council was presented a proposal to consider securing a mass notification service for the purpose of providing information to residents during the event of natural disasters or citywide emergencies. Mass notification systems provide cities and counties the ability to contact residents quickly through various communication methods. This technology proved to be a valuable public safety tool during the wildfires in San Diego County as a means for evacuation notifications.

The City currently utilizes an older and antiquated system, American Emergency Network (AEN), for emergency notifications. This was a shared system with the cities of Calabasas, Hidden Hills, Malibu, Westlake Village, the Las Virgines Municipal Water District, and the Las Virgines Unified School District and was limited to one form of communication (telephone). The group shared the total cost for the AEN system, with individual cost based on population, in addition to the per-call fees when the system was used. With the advancement of technology and the importance of the ability to notify residents quicker and through various communication methods during emergencies, this past year, the cities of Calabasas, Hidden Hills, Malibu, and Westlake Village secured separate services with "Connect-CTY" (the system provided by Blackboard Connect, Inc.). With the departure of the other cities from the AEN system, the City will realize an increased cost for the current antiquated system. There is also a growing trend with municipalities to secure independent services from companies specializing in mass notification technology that can provide many forms of communication methods versus one form, as well as having a system to meet their individual city needs.

The Connect-CTY service is an integrated communications suite, fully hosted SaaS (Software as a Service) application requiring no maintenance or upgrades by the City. The service provides the City the ability to deliver a message to multiple communication devices, including cell phone, email, Personal Digital Assistant, pager, and landline telephones. The Connect-CTY service provides unlimited use for a fixed annual fee, 24/7/365 customer care support, initial on-site and on-going refresher training sessions, message delivery tracking, and comprehensive reporting at no additional costs. The service can deliver notification of up to three (3) telephone numbers and two email addresses per contact (residential household). Also, as part of the

service, Connect-CTY will also provide assistance with outreach to advise residents of the new service, assist in establishing a website link for residents to update contact information, provide additional contact numbers, and select desired methods of delivery.

Staff is proposing a five (5) year agreement term, as it guarantees the service fee (\$2.00/household) is locked-in for five years. Within the agreement, there is an annual opt-out clause that affords the City the ability to terminate the agreement, should it find that service use is no longer needed. Additionally, staff has been able to negotiate a limited “like-size cities” (defined as 15,000 households or less) favorite nation clause, whereby should another city in California secure mass notification services with Blackboard Connect, Inc., at a service fee lower than the current rate, the City will automatically receive that rate.

The cost for the service is as follows:

Service Fee	5 Year Term
Estimated Number of Residences	7,692
Message Fee per Address (residences)	\$2.00
One Time Set Up Fee (Orientation, Training, etc)	\$1,500
Total Annual Service Cost	Year One \$16,884 Year Two \$15,384 Year Three \$15,384 Year Four \$15,384 Year Five \$15,384

The first-year cost has been allocated in the FY 2008-2009 Budget, and will be subsequently budgeted each fiscal year thereafter for the duration of the agreement. Staff met with the Law Enforcement Committee during the FY 2008-2009 Budget Workshop period and received its full support for the service. Additionally, representatives from the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department concur that this is a valuable and essential tool for public safety.

At the June 25, 2008, City Council meeting, the item was scheduled to be presented for consideration, however, it was removed from the agenda pending some agreement language modifications. Staff and the City Attorney have discussed the language with representatives from Blackboard Connect inc., and changes have been incorporated into the agreement. It should be noted that this system is intended to be an “additional tool” for the City and public safety agencies to utilize and “not to be substituted” with the standard first response notifications provided by public safety agencies during natural disasters and/or emergencies (i.e., neighborhood evacuation notifications by public safety patrol units, etc.).

At the time this staff report was generated, the proposed agreement was under review by the City Attorney and not available for distribution with this report. Once reviewed and approved by the City Attorney, a copy of the proposed agreement will be provided to the City Council prior to the scheduled meeting of September 10, 2008.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the City Council approve an agreement with Blackboard Connect, Inc., for mass notification services on an annual basis for the time period starting October 1, 2008 and terminating October 30, 2013, with a not-to-exceed amount of \$16,884 for year one, and \$15,384 for subsequent years.