

# City communications projects move forward

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The city of Chanute signed a liability contract with Ash Grove Cement Company Tuesday allowing the city to place radio equipment on the Ash Grove tower to upgrade communication between safety facilities, utilities and government departments.

This is a step forward in the city's ongoing communication upgrade, which is broken into four parts that are advancing simultaneously.

The radio equipment to be installed on the Ash Grove tower by the end of December will connect the waste water plant, water intake plant, utility complex, landfill, gas border station, airport, fuel storage tanks and city offices. The equipment will also connect to Neosho County's radio tower in Erie, enabling public safety officials to have direct contact.



**This city-controlled room houses communication and emergency response equipment. Sam Budreau, director of public safety said the equipment, which is like a central nucleus for emergency communications, is functional, but the city is looking to upgrade.**

"Those are all the types of things that we want to be able to communicate with," Randy Riggs, city manager, said.

The project could be eligible for funding under federal Homeland Preparedness grants.

Another part to the upgrade process is the city contract with SBC to install equipment in the Memorial Building, allowing the city to offer Internet service directly to other entities.

This service becomes valuable as the city works to install its own fiber-optic network with links to USD 413 and Neosho County Community College.

Mikel Kline, planning and economic studies manager, Sega, Inc., the engineering company working with the city on the project, claims those entities that will be connected to this network will pay the city at the same or at a lower rate as their current provider as well as have the ability to be connected on a network while keeping finances invested local.

The lines - once installed - will have more than 100 times the bandwidth entities get with current providers, up to 1,000 megabytes per second. Schools and businesses currently connected to a T1 line get 1.5 megabytes per second. The school district currently has one T1 line to each school.

Kline explained that ethernet networks can be beneficial in sending information that cannot or should not be sent over regular Internet connections. Also, the network allows entities to share resources, such as software programs.

"This is an opportunity for the school system, college and city to work together to maximize the public resources," Riggs said. "What we're planning on doing in the long run is sharing equipment, sharing expertise and sharing services."

Riggs explained that the schools have multiple pieces of equipment and servers in different buildings. If something needs to be changed in one computer system, someone has to go to each building. If the schools were connected to a server, then all of those changes in each location could be completed at one time at one central location, saving expenses on labor and equipment.

Some construction will be necessary to install the lines to connect the schools and college. The construction has not yet been approved by the city commission.

Lines already run down Plummer Avenue west of the college and through the downtown area. Riggs said it's just a matter of connecting. Kline said there is a possibility to connect businesses that will be along the fiber corridor, but as of yet, the city commission has not authorized the project to move forward to offer services to all businesses and private customers.

Kline estimates that the project of connecting the schools, college and city will cost about \$125,000 to 145,000. He claims that over time, the project will pay for itself through e-rates, a federal reimbursement program available from Universal Service Funds collected on communication services. These funds are distributed to public schools.

Chanute qualifies as a 70 percent e-rate reimbursement community. Kline gives the example that if the schools pay \$1 for Internet service, they will get reimbursed 70 cents. He claims that once the infrastructure is paid for, the price for service will decrease.

Riggs thinks that when the city gets close to making this part of the project a reality, the public will be interested and enthused that all three public entities are working together to utilize those resources.

Riggs said the third aspect of the communications projects is to help local Internet providers and businesses make money by saving costs through shared resources and offering equipment and services as a lower cost than outside providers.

"We want local businesses to thrive," he said. The city also hopes the added connectivity will attract new businesses to Chanute.

The fourth portion of the project is to aggregate T1 Internet lines. The city plans to buy the service lines in bulk and sell those back to businesses which only require that size of line - at a reduced price.

Riggs said the purpose of this project is to maximize the public sector effort and to provide businesses with the opportunity to make money and to be connected to the outside world.

"Our businesses are going to be forced to be a part of that world market," he said. "The wired world is very important to the Chanute's well-being. We can wait for it to happen or take matters into our own hands and make sure we are a part of that."