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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Bob Donovan
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Alderman Donovan: Newly Released Documents Show OpenSky “Bid Rigging”

Public Safety Chair will testify during a special committee meeting Tuesday; will lay out reasons why Chief Flyun should comply fully with subpoena

Newly released documents show the company behind the troubled OpenSky police radio system was allowed to fashion the city’s bid specifications in such an advantageous way that no other bidder would be selected, according to **Alderman Bob Donovan**, chair of the Common Council’s Public Safety Committee.

The documents will be a part of Alderman Donovan’s arsenal tomorrow (**Tuesday, March 22**) when he testifies during a special meeting of the **Public Safety Committee at 10 a.m. in room 301-B at City Hall, 200 E. Wells St.**

The alderman, who has provided copies of the documents to all of his Common Council colleagues, said tomorrow’s special meeting regarding the OpenSky system was called at the request of Common Council President Willie L. Hines, Jr.

In December 2010, Alderman Donovan issued a subpoena to Milwaukee Police Chief Edward Flynn, demanding that he provide correspondence – including emails – from current and former MPD officials pertaining to the troubled OpenSky digital police radio system. A sweeping open records request made by Alderman Donovan in October 2010 has not been complied with as requested, thus prompting the subpoena.

The newly released documents show the bid was awarded to M/A Comm-Ericsson for the OpenSky system even though there were serious questions about the system’s operation in other communities, as well as the fact that the system would not be compatible with many of the systems in the suburbs, most of which were using a Motorola system.

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OpenSky Special Meeting/ADD ONE

Alderman Donovan said no “third party” technical experts reviewed the OpenSky system on behalf of the city. Also M/A Comm-Ericsson was able to advise city purchasing officials on how the bid request should be structured and written, he said.

“This whole OpenSky thing stunk back in 2002-2003 (when the bid was advertised and awarded), and still stinks,” Alderman Donovan said.

“The odor just seems to linger,” he said.

A portion of the documents show the bid process objection and appeal filed on behalf of Motorola by Milwaukee lawyer John D. Finerty of Friebert, Finerty & St. John. In those documents, Finerty notes that the bid process was handled by a now-retired city purchasing director during the administration of former Mayor John O. Norquist.

However, Alderman Donovan said the documents also include press announcements by then U.S. Congressmen Tom Barrett and Gerald Kleczka, and Senator Herb Kohl, noting \$3 million in federal funds had been awarded for the radio system and that OpenSky had been selected as the winning system. “The only problem with these news releases is that they were issued almost three months prior to the start of the bid process for the system,” Alderman Donovan said.

“Again, something certainly doesn’t smell right, and calls into question ethics and integrity of the city’s bid process in this case,” he said.

The alderman issued his open records request for OpenSky correspondence on October 11, 2010, shortly after an October 7 citywide failure that shut down the system for 30 minutes, leaving officers with only cell phones and squad computers as a means of communicating with each other and with dispatchers.

The October request was issued for records from Mayor Tom Barrett, Chief Flynn (and several others at MPD, including Chiefs Nannette Hegerty and Arthur Jones), Mayor’s Office Chief of Staff Patrick Curley, Department of City Development spokesman Jeff Fleming, as well as other high-ranking current and former MPD commanders and civilian personnel, including current MPD chief of staff Joel Plant and former COS Judy Pal.

Alderman Donovan has said the purpose of the original records request was threefold:

- To determine if the safety of officers and citizens is and has always been the top concern in implementing the OpenSky system.
- To determine if the system will ever work the way it is supposed to.
- With regard to the system – what mistakes were made in the past, who made them, and what steps are being taken to ensure they don’t happen again?