

**Subject:** Digital Radio Fiasco - Part II

**From:** Frank Benn <11-17@nsfd.net>

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Dear Commissioners:

This started with one basic issue: **How did the radio communications for the Nottawa-Sherman Fire Department go from a working system to one that is dysfunctional, at best.**

Unable to get any significant action to improve the safety of NSFD personnel on emergency scenes and unable to get any indication that Isabella County personnel were taking our concerns seriously, I began a personal quest for a remedy and information.

On 1/5/16 and 1/9/16, I submitted FOIA requests for information regarding this one basic issue. Yesterday, I received a statement of costs related to those request and I'm left with a burning question:

**Has Ms. McAvoy just slapped me with one of her gloves?**

If so, I accept the challenge. The money isn't an issue and I have ordered the check for the 50% deposit allowed by the Michigan FOIA (*ACT 442 OF 1976, 15.234., Sec. 4/2*).

Attempted intimidation by a County official is definitely an issue with me. I'm tempted to view it as fraud and/or extortion, but that will mean more billing hours for my attorneys.

Who would have guessed that your " ... *lowest paid public body employee capable of retrieving the information necessary to comply with a request under this act.*" (*ACT 442 OF 1976, 15.234., Sec. 4/3/1*) earns **\$39.83/hr?** Nearly **\$80,000 a year** for file handling and copying? Wow!

Ms. McAvoy implies there are **10,000 pages** of documents associated with this digital radio fiasco. Amazing!

Ms. McAvoy claims it will take 74 hours of searching & copying to provide the documents related to an issue that is less than two years old! If this issue comes before a jury, I predict that not many of our citizen peers will believe that records keeping in our county headquarters is that disorganized or the workers that incompetent.

For the record, my FOIA requests encompass only two general areas:

The two areas are divided into five subtopics, **the first four being entirely about the new digital system for fire service communications**:

1. *All records pertaining to procurement and installation of equipment;*  
I'm seeking answers to questions like: Where did it come from? Was it new equipment, never in service? How much did it cost?, Who did the job?, How did they get the job?
2. *All records pertaining to radio signal propagation studies;*  
I'm seeking answers to questions like: What research was done and what studies were undertaken to

make sure the system would be as good or better than the system it replaced?

3. *All records pertaining to the basis (reasons) for the conversion;*

I'm seeking answers to questions like: Why was the conversion deemed necessary?, Who first proposed the conversion?, Who was consulted?

4. *All records pertaining to the upgrading of County facilities in preparation for the transition to digital communications;*

I'm seeking answers to questions like: What was done to improve the infrastructure in preparation for the conversion?

The fifth subtopic is entirely about **what has been done to keep the "fire west" repeater system functioning properly:**

5. *All records pertaining to the repair and maintenance of the "fire west" repeater system for the past 5 years.*

I'm seeking answers to questions like: What repairs and/or upgrades have been made to the system over the past five years? In addition to repairs or upgrades, what has been done to maintain the system over the past five years?

During a Board meeting last year, Ms. McAvoy said something to the effect that Pro Comm is the largest vendor for Isabella County. Given that fact, I would think they would be eager to provide you with whatever records you require at no cost to the County. I think my peers will agree. I mean, who is paying who?

I'll pay Ms. McAvoy's exorbitant fee and it will be appealed later. I'll want the names of the people doing the "searching" and copying and a detailed accounting of every minute of their time.

Heavy handed intimidation by a local government official doesn't work well with me and it makes me think that Ms. McAvoy would really like the documents I've requested to remain out of public view. This issue may be just a "tip of an iceberg" sort of thing.

On a positive note, you should commend Mark Griffis and his hard working staff for providing a temporary and partial "fix". I know it has been a real challenge for our dispatchers and I very much appreciate their efforts. Because of those efforts by Mark and his crew, I was under the impression that these issues might be resolved without further action on my part. Obviously, my thoughts were naive.

Respectfully,

Frank E. Benn  
Firefighter/EMT/Safety Officer  
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The only thing more expensive than education is ignorance.

- Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is  
for good men to do nothing.

- Edmund Burke (1729-1797)

A MAJOR INCENTIVE FOR CRIMINALS:

Law abiding citizens are almost always unarmed.

THE SAFEST PLACE TO COMMIT A CRIME:

A "no gun zone".

"The right of self-defence never ceases. It is among the most sacred, and alike necessary to nations and to individuals..."

-James Monroe,  
President of the United States, 1818.

Smith & Wesson: One of the best life assurance companies in the world.

<http://www.bennsci.com>

Yellowstone National Park pictures.

<http://www.nsfd.net>

Nottawa-Sherman Fire/Rescue