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Dispatch center plans moving ahead

SHAFFER SHELTON
STAFF

MetroSafe contract bids are reviewed

Sheldon S. Shafer

sshaffer@courier-journal.com

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Its building isn't ready, its funding is only partly secured, and its opening is nearly two years away. But metro Louisville officials say they are making strides in laying the groundwork for **MetroSafe**, a new public-safety dispatching and communications network.


"We are now beginning to see **MetroSafe** move from the planning stage to reality," said Metro Mayor Jerry Abramson.

MetroSafe will allow all metro and, eventually, suburban police, fire, EMS and other public-safety employees to talk to each other on a compatible radio system and to consolidate their dispatching, which is now scattered among numerous locations.

The goal is to have the new **MetroSafe** communications center, to be housed in the old Federal Reserve Bank Building near Fifth and Liberty streets, operating in the fall of 2006.

"We've set an aggressive timetable" for getting the center running, Abramson said. More than a half -dozen

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committees, made up primarily of metro officials, are reviewing some aspect of the **MetroSafe** effort. Each is meeting weekly, said **MetroSafe** director Doug Hamilton.

Hamilton said two key bid packages for center work are being evaluated, and a third will be opened Dec. 28. They are for these pieces:

Computer-aided dispatching system. Nineteen vendors submitted bids, ranging from \$1.6 million to \$5 million, to supply the equipment for the system that will be the crux of Metro Safe, Hamilton said.

All were below a consultant's estimate of \$6 million.

The equipment - computers, screens, linking equipment and work stations - "will be the brains behind the dispatching and coordination" of metro public-safety agencies, Hamilton said.

It will provide many new capabilities, such as the ability to pinpoint at any time the locations of police cars, ambulances and fire trucks, and a large database to analyze how to better deploy resources, he said.

Hamilton said a committee will recommend a vendor for the contract by late January; it's subject to Metro Council approval.

Design contract. Five vendors submitted bids, ranging from \$200,000 to \$775,000, for engineering and design work on conversion of the old Federal Reserve Bank Building.

Metro government paid \$4 million for the five-story building and will take title in mid-January. The building has about 125,000 square feet of space, all of which will be used for **MetroSafe** operations, Hamilton said.

A contract for the design work should be awarded soon, subject to council approval, with a design for the renovation due by early spring, Hamilton said.

After that, another contract will be awarded for the actual renovation, which is expected to cost at least \$4 million, he said.

Backup center. A Dec. 28 deadline has been set for vendors to bid on upgrading the existing main metro communications center at 758 Barret Ave., in the old county police headquarters. The estimated cost is \$8 million.

The Barret site will serve as a backup dispatching center once the **MetroSafe** center site is operating. Until then, Barret will remain the primary dispatching location.

The contract will call for upgrading the communications equipment and extensive renovation of space at the Barret facility. The vendor also will develop a new frequency "bridge" that will allow first responders with the currently incompatible VHF and UHF radios to talk to each other.

When the Barret renovation is complete, metro government dispatching personnel now scattered at three locations will be consolidated there.

Officials believe it will cost more than \$70 million to fully implement **MetroSafe**.

So far, about \$30 million has been found, including \$18 million from local sources and nearly all the rest in federal grants.

A metro bond issue will probably cover much of the remaining cost, officials said.

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