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\$1.48 million contract awarded for city security camera system

(Reading Eagle (PA) (KRT) Via Thomson Dialog NewsEdge) Mar. 25--After two years of planning, City Council voted unanimously Monday to get started on the city's security camera system.

Council awarded a \$1.48 million contract to CelPlan/Wi4Net of Reston, Va., for the first 22 cameras, expected to be installed in two or three months.

The price includes the cameras as well as their installation, setting up a fiber optic network through much of the city, construction of the monitoring station in City Hall and operating expenses for the second through fifth years.

Police Chief William M. Heim said some of the cameras will be wired and others will be wireless and mobile. They will be installed in the neighborhoods surrounding the downtown, he said.

The 22 are the first of what is planned to be about 75 cameras around the city.

The city has committed \$390,000 from the capital improvements budget and last week got \$1.7 million in federal funds, most of it for the camera system.

Another \$100,000 is coming from a state grant, Heim said.

The first phase that council agreed to Monday gets most of the work done, so that later phases will require little more than buying more cameras. The city expects those to cost about \$320,000.

Meanwhile, after arguing with the administration for months, council voted 6-1 to award a contract to design the new sewage treatment plant to Black & Veatch Corp., a Kansas City, Mo., firm with an office in Philadelphia.

The company, which has spent four years helping the city choose what processes the new plant will use, last year was the only one to submit a proposal to design the plant itself.

Three other firms backed out, some because of the federal deadline -- September 2012 -- to get the plant open, and some because they felt Black & Veatch, as the city's consultant, had an advantage.

The city is under federal orders to replace the existing plant on Fritz's Island, and even the steps to do that have deadlines.

Council had debated since January about whether to try to get other firms to submit proposals.

Public Works Director Charles M. Jones said getting new proposals would take six months, and city lawyer David A. Binder said the city has less than two months to meet a deadline to hire the designer.

Council President Vaughn D. Spencer voted against awarding the contract, noting he'd rather wait two months until a separate project manager -- now being sought -- is on board.

Meanwhile, council agreed to let the Reading Redevelopment Authority hire Adam Mukerji as its executive director, thus taking Mukerji out of city charter rules requiring he live in Reading.

Mukerji lives in Montgomery County and already is the authority's executive director, but the city pays his \$78,000 salary.

Under the agreement, the authority would set his salary, but the city would pay the authority \$120,000 for his salary, benefits and office expenses.

Contact reporter Don Spatz at 610-371-5027 or dspatz@readingeagle.com.

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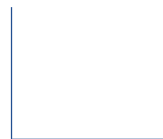
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