

Clermont County commmits to 911 phone study

BATAVIA—Clermont County commissioners Thursday took Cincinnati Bell a key step closer toward establishing a sophisticated emergency phone system for Southern Ohio and Northern Kentucky.

Commissioners signed a letter of intent that authorizes Cincinnati Bell to study an Enhanced 911 phone system in Clermont County.

The commitment gives Cincinnati Bell 48,000 more users interested in the system. Bell wants 450,000 committed users before installing Enhanced 911. The Clermont County commitment sends the total to about 400,000 users.

The authorization signed Thursday carries no financial obligation to eventually contract with Cincinnati Bell for the tele-

phone system, said commissioners.

"It is not really committing us to anything, as I understand it," said Dale Romohr, chairman of the commissioners.

Thomas L. Blust, chief of the county prosecuting attorney's civil division, said the letter of intent is "simply an indication...that they wish Bell to undertake the expense of such

planning and would not be binding upon the commissioners upon final determination of the system designed as contracts for the individual communities would be necessary at that time."

HOWEVER, BLUST ENCOURAGED commissioners to give the letter of intent "serious consideration."

He said he is sure Cincinnati

Bell would not make a thorough study of what it would cost to install Enhanced 911 phones unless it were reasonably sure the county had a "sincere intention" to ultimately accept it.

Lou Johnson, Cincinnati Bell account executive, has called the letter of intent a sign of "good faith" on the part of county commissioners.

Cincinnati Bell estimates it

would cost about \$219,000 to actually install Enhanced 911 phones. Monthly maintenance would be \$8500.

Each telephone user would be automatically plugged into the system, at no individual expense.

John Hitch, a Stonelick Township resident, urged com-

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missioners not to sign the letter of intent before making a thorough study of Enhanced 911. Commissioners rejected Hitch's plea Thursday without comment.

Enhanced 911 is a telephone system that requires that a caller only dial 9-1-1 to get prompt emergency response. The hardware for Enhanced 911 would be installed at existing emergency dispatch stations, such as the sheriff's office.

Other dispatches, including those at Bethel and New Richmond, might be linked to Enhanced 911. Felicity also might be included.

JOHNSON SAID CINCINNATI Bell will not undertake its study of supplying Enhanced 911 to six southern Ohio and northern Kentucky counties until it has letters of intent representing 450,000 users.

In addition to Clermont County, letters have been received from the cities of Cincinnati, Fairfield and Hamilton and the Kentucky counties of Boone, Campbell and Kenton. Negotiations continue with Hamilton and Butler counties.

A study will take about nine months and the system will take two years to install, said Johnson.