



Visalia City Council

Staff Report

Visalia City Council
707 W. Acequia
Visalia, CA 93291

File #: 25-0478

Agenda Date: 11/17/2025

Agenda #: 11.

Agenda Item Wording:

Award the Purchase and Installation of Cellular Radios - Authorize the City Manager to award the sole source purchase and installation of 13 cellular radios at the City's sanitary sewer lift stations in the amount of \$112,278 to Telstar Instruments and the transfer of funds within the Wastewater Fund.

Prepared by:

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Department Recommendation: Staff recommends that the City Council authorize the City Manager to award a sole source purchase order in the amount of \$112,278 to Telstar Instruments for the installation of 13 cellular radios at the City's sanitary sewer lift stations and the transfer of funds within the Wastewater Fund (431).

Summary:

The City's sanitary sewer lift stations currently utilize traditional radio communications to relay operational data to the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system. These radios have become increasingly unreliable, resulting in frequent communication failures and unnecessary alarm callouts to staff. Telstar Instruments has proposed the installation of cellular radios at all 13 lift stations for a total cost of \$112,278. This upgrade will replace the existing radio system with a modern, more reliable cellular communication network and represents significant cost savings compared to the previously planned fiber optic installation project.

Background Discussion:

The City's sanitary sewer lift stations play a critical role in conveying wastewater to the Water Reclamation Facility. Reliable communication between these lift stations and the SCADA system is essential for continuous monitoring, control, and regulatory compliance. The existing radio-based communication network has become increasingly prone to interference, signal loss, and environmental degradation, leading to frequent communication failures, false alarms, and unnecessary callouts to on-call operators.

Initially, staff evaluated a Capital Improvement Project (CIP) that would extend fiber optic communications to two of the City's lift stations at an estimated cost of approximately \$400,000. During the planning process, staff identified cellular communication as a more cost-effective, reliable, and scalable alternative. While the cellular radios will incur an ongoing monthly service fee, the cost savings in equipment and installation when compared to fiber optic installation far exceed those ongoing costs, resulting in significant long-term savings to the City.

Telstar Instruments, the City's long-standing SCADA system integrator and control systems contractor, provided a proposal to equip all 13 sanitary sewer lift stations with cellular radios for a

total cost of \$112,278. The proposed cellular radios utilize secure private network technology approved by the City's Information Services Department, ensuring data transmission remains insulated from internet exposure. Staff recommends using Telstar Instruments due to their established role as the City's system integrator for the collections system and Water Reclamation Facility. The proposed cellular radio installation requires integration with the City's proprietary SCADA system architecture, including Wonderware and Telstar-configured programmable logic controllers (PLCs). Because Telstar originally programmed and maintains the City's lift station controls, only Telstar has the necessary technical expertise and proprietary programming access to modify the existing control logic and ensure compatibility with the new cellular radios. Engaging a third party would risk system conflicts, warranty issues, and communication failures that could impact regulatory operations.

Based on these considerations, staff determined that Telstar Instruments is uniquely qualified to perform this scope of work, and that competitive bidding would not produce a comparable or compatible result.

Fiscal Impact: The cost of the equipment, installation, and sales tax is \$112,278. A transfer of funds from the Wastewater Fund (431) within the Capital Budget project CP0664 is required to cover the cost of the purchase. CP0664 is for fiber installation and will no longer include the liftstations.

Prior Council Action: N/A

Other: N/A

Alternatives: Proceed with the currently budgeted fiber optic projects at a significantly higher cost and longer timeline for implementation.

Recommended Motion (and Alternative Motions if expected):

I move to authorize the City Manager to award a sole source purchase order in the amount of \$112,278 to Telstar Instruments for the installation of 13 cellular radios at the City's sanitary sewer lift stations and the transfer of funds within the Wastewater Fund (431) to cover the cost of the purchase.

Environmental Assessment Status: N/A

CEQA Review: N/A

Deadline for Action: 11/17/2025

Attachments:

Telstar Proposal
Levine Act
Agreement