

# Indianapolis ends doomed \$13 million deal on public safety communications

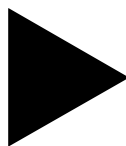
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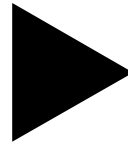


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**City out \$10 million on another bad deal**



## **Indianapolis ends doomed \$13 million deal on public safety communications**



INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. (Dec. 14, 2015)-- Interim Public Safety Director Dr. David Wantz has informed the builder of a revolutionary but untried public safety communication system for the City of Indianapolis that DPS is pulling the plug on a project that was doomed from the start.

Wantz has written a pair of letters to InterAct, the company that entered into a \$12.7 million contract with the city in 2012 to build a so-called state-of-the-art police and fire dispatch and records management system that was purported to be the public safety communications system of the future, that Indianapolis is calling a halt to its contract after the company could not reach a December 15 deadline to deliver its product to protect the citizens of Marion County.

“InterAct’s repeated failures to fulfill its responsibilities under the System Agreement have resulted in a series of project delays and performance deficiencies that have severely undermined the CAD (computer aided dispatch) Project,” reads one letter obtained exclusively by FOX59. “In light of the risks to public safety posed by InterAct’s continued failures to perform its obligations under the System Agreement, the City has determined that it is in the City’s best interest to terminate the System Agreement and pursue alternative solutions.”

Wantz told FOX59 he is hopeful that a third party arbitrator might negotiate a deal to recover some of the nearly \$10 million the city has now invested in a partially useless CAD/Records Management System.

The interim director said police and fire records have been updated and maintained and will be accessible under a new system, though the software and hardware purchased to run the InterAct CAD system may not be salvageable.

DPS has reached a Letter of Agreement with Tiburon/Tri-Tech, the company that provided and operated its previous CAD/RMS, to continue its support of the current system and provide software upgrades to that system at a cost of \$5.7 million in 2016.

“We have the option to upgrade to the latest version, or one version or two versions back,” said Public Safety Communications Chief Al Stovall. “Obviously that speaks to stability and how comfortable...I don’t necessarily want to be the first guy on the block with a new product.”

Because that’s what happened with InterAct.

For more than a dozen years, the Tiburon system provided computer aided dispatch for police, fire and EMS runs in the City of Indianapolis and its 800,000 residents. That system had been updated over the course of time but was in need of an overhaul. Tiburon authorities told FOX59 that they had been assured by then-Public Safety Director Dr. Frank Straub that their company would be chosen to provide Indianapolis with a new system at a cost of approximately \$3 million which maintain continuity of operations, maintenance and records.

Straub resigned at the end of April, 2012, chased out of office over unfounded claims of widespread police corruption and a deteriorating relationship with police, the public and the staff of Mayor Greg Ballard.

Ballard allowed Straub to stay on for 90 days that summer to search for a new job and it was during that window Tiburon officials claim they were informed their bid would not be accepted and that the Department of Public Safety, and the Public Safety Board, operating on behalf of the mayor's office, would enter into a contract with a new provider.

That provider was InterAct which would build a CAD/RMS project that would integrate information and dispatch on a level not seen before in the United States.

The eyes of the industry were on Indianapolis, InterAct officials told city leaders and communications specialists from throughout the metro area.

InterAct hoped its projected success in its biggest most complex market ever would lead to other contracts in other cities across the country.

In August of 2012 Straub was forced out in disgrace after lobbying unsuccessfully to stay on past his departure deadline as evidence of mismanagement, deceit, plummeting public safety morale and budget red ink continued to pile up.

A month later the Public Safety Board, over the objections of Marion County Sheriff John Layton, approved the InterAct deal.

In October, Troy Riggs was hired to replace Straub and inherited the proposed but ill-defined project as well as several other budget and infrastructure, funding and manpower dilemmas left behind by Straub under the authority of the Ballard Administration.

Throughout its life the InterAct project has had fits and starts, been plagued with missteps and missed deadlines.

Earlier this year Riggs became aware that InterAct teetered on the edge of insolvency and, at the last minute, negotiated an amended contract that committed the company's new owner, Harris Computers, to fulfill the obligations of the original deal by December 15.

By late September Wantz, who succeeded Riggs when the director left to take a position at the IUPUI School of Environmental and Public Affairs, admitted that InterAct/Harris was unlikely to meet the mid-December deadline and talks were underway with Tiburon to continue providing CAD support after its contract was slated to expire at the end of the year.

Which led to today's letters.

"InterAct has failed to provide adequate assurances or plausible plans for meeting its obligations," Wantz wrote, "and has consistently failed to meet those obligations."

In essence, the Ballard Administration has thrown in the towel on a bad deal that promised too much of an unrealized technology with a company in over its head at a cost of nearly \$10 million that will take a mediator or lawsuits to attempt to recover.

“These are difficult decisions to make because they’re pretty complex, they’re complicated negotiations, and the technology is changing even in the midst of that,” said Wantz. “An upgrade of a system that we already have is a whole lot better way for us to go forward than for us to try to start something all over again.”

Stovall said the records keeping aspect is functional and can be transitioned to a new-and-improved Tiburon system, which the city did not expect to spend nearly \$6 million on in 2016 to keep the dispatch service operational.

“We’ve already talked to the controller about this, the controller understands the situation we’ve got in front of us and we’ve been assured they’re going to pay for it. They have to,” said Wantz. “Our citizens have nothing to worry about and our police officers have nothing to worry about with our computer aided dispatch.”

The incoming administration of Mayor Elect Joe Hogsett will be left to fund and sort out the InterAct disaster when it takes office January 1, 2016.

In Hogsett’s favor is his selection of former Public Safety Director Troy Riggs as IMPD’s next chief.

Riggs inherited the InterAct dilemma from Straub when he was hired by Mayor Ballard in 2012.

He’ll grapple with it again when Ballard leaves in two weeks.

