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MEMORANDUM

To: Dane County Towns and Communities

From: DCTA President Jerry Derr

Date: June 10, 2014

Re: Status of DaneCom Implementation

The DCTA has patiently awaited start-up of the new DaneCom system. We have been too patient. The latest communication from County Executive Parisi states “It is our hope this system will be fully implemented this summer.” The latest communication from DaneCom staff suggests that “burn in” of the system might begin in early July. However, no one is providing a start-up date with confidence in its certainty.

Of course, DaneCom is a major undertaking. The technology involved is complex. We don’t have enough facts to be able to evaluate the quality of the engineering that has gone into the system’s construction and testing. But that isn’t the point. We as lay people never will have that kind of sophistication. The real problem with where we are on DaneCom lies with management of the project. Towns, cities and villages have been expected to pay operation and maintenance fees into the system – millions of dollars. But the County has not affirmatively and transparently informed us what really is going on with the project.

Mr. Parisi’s letter indicates that he has directed the County Corporation Counsel to actively pursue remedies from the DaneCom vendor “...as a result of their delay.” The implicit suggestion is that the DaneCom system is late (by about a year) in start-up because of the vendor. This June 4, 2014 letter from Joe Parisi is the first indication to local governments that there is anything wrong with the

vendor's performance. Indeed, it is the first explanation, of any kind, for the one-year delay in start-up of DaneCom. And yet, the statement lacks any details. Surely the vendor has a very different perspective on this issue, one we are not aware of.

The \$18 million in capital costs incurred to construct DaneCom came from the taxpayers. The millions of dollars which the County insisted be paid by cities, towns and villages came from those same taxpayers. The County insisted on taking responsibility for managing the engineering and implementation of the system. With those duties come accountability, to those taxpayers. They are entitled to know how this money is being spent – and why the result, for which it has been levied, has not yet been attained. The lack of specific, adequate information is a serious failure of management.

One town, Blue Mounds, responded to this failure of information by voting to stop paying O&M fees. The DCTA is evaluating the options towns have under the agreements we signed with the County. We are not yet encouraging towns to stop paying O&M fees. But, we are completely dissatisfied with the lack of respect and transparency shown in the implementation of DaneCom.

It is not enough to hold out the vague possibility of partial refunds of the O&M fees. The County needs to start sharing the facts about the implementation of DaneCom. We need to know what the technical issues are. Will DaneCom really cover 95 percent of the County? Will additional towers be necessary? And, most importantly, realistically, when will it work?

We are not encouraged by the handling of the separate but related issue of the 9-1-1 Center's dispatch program. Here again, those who depend on and are integral to that system were not informed of the issues which occurred as the new system came on line. Only when police, fire and EMS personnel persuaded Madison Mayor Paul Soglin to raise the issue, did any real response occur.

I am confident that County Executive Parisi has acted at all times in good faith to promote public safety. The point of this letter is not to point fingers. That isn't necessary. The County took on the project and is responsible for it. Rather, it's to say that management staff tasked with implementing DaneCom has failed to accomplish a major requirement of the project – keeping local communities informed of the specific details of the project's implementation. That has to change if local governments are going to remain involved in DaneCom.

Jerry Derr

Gerald H. Derr, President
Dane County Towns Association

Cc: Dane County Cities and Villages Association