

New records management system connects sheriff and police departments

by DENISE MARTIN

If everything went according to plans the new records management system serving all law enforcement departments in Chisago County was fired up yesterday morning, Wednesday, at 6:30 a.m.

What this means for county residents is that all three police departments, and sheriff's agencies will be using a first rate, "unique product" in responding to and being proactive against crime.

The switch to a new countywide law enforcement records management system has taken a bit longer than projected, leading to a flurry of activity in the last couple of months. The timeframe presented to county commissioners in July 2010 called for flipping the switch on the new records management in early 2011. There was much that needed to be done to prepare for the new system, contracts that needed to be written for all parties to know what's expected.

But it is finally happening.

Lakes Area Police Deputy Chief Bill Schlumbohm explained how, for the past several weeks he's been involved with a team of county and city staff members, and records software product reps, working to install and connect a hybrid version of Pro Phoenix records management software and hardware. It was a complicated process to physically bring it to offices and

vehicles of Wyoming, North Branch, Lakes Area police and sheriff's operations.

"I hesitate to use the word groundbreaking," said Schlumbohm, but, "...we are creating a unique product, we are now joined together."

Schlumbohm said local agencies will be capable of electronically communicating directly amongst themselves-- sharing records, updates on incidents, suspicious activities etc. The system will enhance what law enforcement refers to as "situational awareness," especially useful is the ability to see where each other's squads are, now tracked by GPS in the Pro Phoenix network.

The team working on this has given up weekends and they worked through the Martin Luther King Day Monday holiday this week wiring, testing and integrating components of the computerized network.

Schlumbohm noted, "This has been a completely collaborative effort."

In about six months the Pro Phoenix records management network migrates to its permanent hub in the \$1.2 million county dispatch and 9-1-1 center nearing completion in Center City.

The comm center is part of another parallel effort underway, where Chisago County is meeting a Federal Commu-

nications Commission mandate moving emergency radio communications to 800 MHz. The County Board voted February 17, 2010 to embrace the Allied Radio Matrix for Emergency Response (ARMER). This has to be "live" by 2013.

The "next big step" is a records management system connection with the county attorney and courts, hopefully by the end of the year.

Schlumbohm said the goal is to eliminate a paper-based courts process where information is literally handed from one agency to another and transcribed and re-drafted many times over -- to a seamless electronic document and data sharing process.

Using fingerprint recognition software the officers on the street, their office staff, the prosecutors and the judicial arena will become part of a much more efficient records sharing effort. "We'll be one of the more advanced systems in the state," Schlumbohm commented.

Chisago County is one of very few counties in Minnesota where all criminal prosecution ends up in the hands of the county attorney. The vast majority of police departments outside of Chisago County have city attorneys on staff to handle criminal incidents within city borders.