

The completion of the E911 Phase II project allows the location of Hinds County cell phone users in emergencies without the need for giving verbal directions – a very important piece of the Emergency Management plan to assure timely response operations. I favor the implementation of this project and voted for it almost two years ago.

The Board of Supervisors recently voted to transfer E911 Emergency Management Funds, gained through a monthly charge to all consumers/taxpayers through their phone bill, to the general fund and garbage fund. Additionally, questions concerning the responsible County agency to administer the second phase of the E911 upgrade raised its head. Three issues jump out, as well as the second level effects.

Although not present for the vote – due to my deployment to Afghanistan – I remain opposed to the process of borrowing from one budget fund to prop up another. Previous Boards used the Emergency Management fund to pay salaries of County employees and the legality of this process verified by the Attorney General's Office. This Board continues that process. I believe the need for borrowing within the County budget represents a failure to plan/match revenue and expenditures in the budget process.

County leadership institutionally misunderstands the budget process and that this Board borrowed \$6,000,000 (Fisher voting no) to establish a surplus to prevent future borrowing from other County budgets. I did not say it made sense, only saying it happened. The budget process gets worse with every "fix", and the borrowing from Peter to pay Paul continues.

The second issue is the loan of garbage funds, paid by those that use the garbage service, to the general fund, paid by all taxpayers. The garbage fund must stand on its own, through the monthly garbage fees paid by those using the service. By law, the BOS cannot transfer funds from the general fund to supplement the garbage fund. Put another way, a fund paid by a small portion of the whole group, balances a fund for the benefit of the whole. The County Attorney really needs to recheck that procedure.

As proven by my past votes, I oppose these actions taken by the BOS – whether they pass legal muster or not – because I believe neither passes the 'good fiscal/common sense' practice those trusted with taxpayer dollars must use.

The third problem involved with the E911 Phase II Project, is the assumption of responsibility. The BOS retains ultimate responsibility for any expenditure of County funds. While the level of responsibility differs, the weight of responsibility belongs to both.

With that said the funding budget for this project falls into the realm of Emergency Management for project oversight and implementation. It is unfortunate that the Emergency Management Director feels no responsibility to administer this project. His stated reason – no written direction. If a project falls under your budget, you got it – if not in writing then the tasking strongly implied. Emergency Management's history of dodging responsibility started with the hiring of the current director. Whether the issue is failure to give Clinton radios (and now refusing to give the City of Byram radios), endangering

public safety officers, or the E911 Phase II oversight discussed here, the failure to lead or accept responsibility hurts the entire County.

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