



### **Agenda Action Form Overview**

Authorize the County Manager to award a contract to Innovative Emergency Management (IEM) in the amount of \$99,853 to develop and provide a completed Joint City and County Crisis Communications Plan, applicable training and workshops that outline a clear and concise communications strategy during emergencies, disasters, and crisis events.

### **Background/Justification**

The Board is requested to authorize the County Manager to award a contract to Innovative Emergency Management (IEM), a renowned emergency management firm that works closely with public and private entities around the world to improve disaster preparedness, response, recovery, mitigation and long-term recovery efforts, in the amount of \$99,853, with the total cost to be split evenly between the City and the County. This new contract will allow for the creation of a joint City and County Crisis Communication plan and applicable training for both City and County Communication departments enhancing their ability during an emergency or disaster event.

In 2019 a gas explosion occurred at 115 North Duke Street resulting in a combined City and County response. The blast destroyed several buildings, damaged several more in the area and resulted in 2 fatalities and 25 additional injuries which included 9 firefighters who responded to the scene. The multi-agency extended response to the initial explosion, and the ongoing recovery efforts afterwards, highlighted a need for a formalized Crisis Communications plan for both the City of Durham and the County of Durham. These "Crisis Events," including school shootings, active assailant attacks, train derailments, and cyber-attacks, demand that local governments respond quickly, effectively, and with coordinated messaging to maintain public trust and ensure the safety of their residents. Given the rising frequency of such events, it is essential that both the City and County are prepared to deliver timely and accurate public information during such events. Efforts to formalize the plan were sidetracked due to the COVID 19 pandemic response. Currently, a formal Crisis Communications Plan does not exist for either government.

Members of the City of Durham's Communications Department, the County of Durham's Communications Department and the Office of Emergency Services Emergency Management team conducted an RFP process for a Crisis Communication Plan vendor. The process resulted in the selection of IEM as the preferred vendor to craft the plan. For the Joint Crisis Communication plan, they will provide:

- A tailored City and County Joint Crisis Communications strategy that unifies city and county communication efforts during a crisis.
- Hands on media training sessions to prepare members of both communication departments to interact and engage with members of the media.
- Training workshops to familiarize City and County leadership and additional stakeholders of the plan and test its effectiveness.
- A complete and finalized plan as well as all necessary supporting documentation.

This initiative will ensure that the City and County are fully prepared to respond to crisis situations, with a unified, coordinated communications strategy that enhances public safety and maintains trust in local government.



**Policy Impact**

This action item follows previous Board actions authorizing contracted services. There is no anticipated policy impact.

**Procurement Background**

**Type of purchase**

- Goods
- Services
- Construction Work

**Did this request for purchase go through a bid process? Yes  No**

*Goods: Bids required if  $\geq$  \$30,000, BOCC approval if  $\geq$  \$90,000*  
*Services: Bids required if  $\geq$  \$30,000, BOCC approval if  $>$  \$40,000*  
*Construction/Repair work: Bids required if  $\geq$  \$30,000, BOCC approval if  $\geq$  \$500,000*

If yes, attach a copy of bid tab and the minority and women business enterprise (MWBE) compliance review form provided by the Purchasing Division.

If no, why?

- Sole source exemption
- Cooperative purchasing program exemption
- State and federal contract exemption
- Contract is an amendment to an existing contract
- Other (please explain)

**If exempted from bidding, has this request been reviewed and approved by the Purchasing Division in the agenda Legistar system? Yes  No**

If no, why?

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**Fiscal Impact**

This contract will result in a one-time fee for the development of the plan and include training for City and County Communication team members with the cost to be split between the City and the County.

**Recommendation**



The County Manager recommends that the BOCC authorize the County Manager to award a contract with Innovative Emergency Management (IEM) in the amount of \$99,853 for the Joint City and County Crisis Communication Plan.