

Warren County agrees to state partnership

By Justin McClelland

Staff Writer

Warren County was held up as a model of saving money through shared services between different government entities as commissioners signed an agreement to partner with the state for an \$8 million upgrade to the county's emergency communications equipment.

"We were presented with a choice," said Warren County Commissioner Dave Young. "Do what government leaders have done in the past and build up your own private kingdom or say 'here's a viable option from the state that's going to save Warren County taxpayers more than a million dollars.'"

The county had to upgrade its 23-year-old emergency communications system because it had been outpaced by technological advances of the past two-plus decades. Instead of buying its own broadband server, the county chose to buy into the state's Multi-Agency Radio Communications Systems.

"The old ways of belt tightening aren't working anymore," said Randy Cole, controlling board president and policy adviser for the state's Office of Budget and Management. "We need permanent policy changes at state and local levels like the kind we are seeing here with Warren County partnering with the state of Ohio."

"Government leaders must show some humility," Cole said. "Sharing services is not about making a power grab. It's an opportunity to find money saving opportunities in services every government entity has to provide."

Beyond saving taxpayers the cost of building a new server, the state and county can pool their communications towers to provide greater coverage over Warren County for emergency responders, said Paul Kindell, director of Warren County Telecommunications. The county will also save an estimated \$200,000 in annual maintenance costs for the system.

"Just like we opened up and shared our communication bands with neighboring counties, now we're ready to open up and share with the state," Kindell said.

Young said he felt governments were often hesitant to partner on services out of fear of losing control.

“People talk about regionalism, but they don’t want to give up power,” Young said. “We can’t keep doing the same things we have been doing. Warren County tries to do everything differently and that’s why the county is in good financial shape.”