

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

DATE: JULY 24, 2008

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS GIRARD
SOKOL
KENNY
VANNESS
STEC
GOODSPEED
STRAINER

OTHERS PRESENT:

ROB METTHE, DIRECTOR, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
CHAIRMAN MONROE
PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ATTORNEY
HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL
SERVICES
JOAN SADY, CLERK
SUPERVISORS CHAMPAGNE
THOMAS
AMANDA ALLEN, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Girard called the meeting of the Information Technology Committee to order at 10:24 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the May 29, 2008 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Rob Metthe, Director of Information Technology (IT), who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members. *A copy of the agenda is on file with the minutes.*

In the interest of time, Mr. Metthe apprised that he would begin the agenda review with Item 2, Server and PC (personal computer) Replacements. He apprised that his Department had a policy of replacing critical computer servers when they reached the end of their warranty which was five years; he added that extended warranties were not offered based on statistics which showed a 50% rate of failure in the fifth year. Mr. Metthe stated that of the 80 pieces of computer equipment in place within his Department, 20 were considered critical and he noted that one of these items had been replaced in 2008 at a cost of approximately \$4,500. He noted that he valued this piece of equipment at \$1 million as that represented the amount of staff work that would have been lost in the event of a system failure. Mr. Metthe stated that the funds for the server replacements scheduled were included in the existing Budget and he sought the assurance of the Committee that the purchases would not be denied through the new purchasing procedures.

Mr. Kenny stated that the computer systems maintained by the IT Department were the infrastructure of County operations and should be kept up to date as the County could not operate without them and Mr. Stec agreed. Mr. Stec then asked what was done with the servers being replaced and Mr. Metthe advised that these were used to replace other servers in less critical areas.

Chairman Monroe interjected that the new purchasing policy required all purchases of amounts over \$1,000 to be reviewed and approved by Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal

Services, for verification that the purchases were necessary in an attempt to preserve the County Budget. In the case of the \$4,500 server recently purchased, he said that although Mr. Payne had initially determined the purchase to be unnecessary, after speaking with Mr. Metthe on the matter the server purchase had been approved. Chairman Monroe suggested that an alternative to replacing all of the servers every five years might be to purchase a few backup servers to be kept on hand when one of the critical servers failed, allowing for the equipment in place to be used until such a time that it failed. He said that by doing this they may be able to extend the useful life of the equipment beyond the five year warranty period while ensuring that the equipment could be replaced immediately as necessary through the use of the backup equipment kept on hand. Mr. Metthe replied that although this was a viable suggestion, he was not sure if it would be cost effective as they would be required to purchase five or six different types of backup servers as they were not standardized.

Mr. Stec asked if \$4,500 was a typical per year cost for server replacement and Mr. Metthe replied in the negative, noting that the replacement costs would be considerably higher for other years. However, he added, the amount of money spent annually for server replacement was far less than the value of the work that would be lost through its failure; therefore, he felt it was very important that the servers be replaced as scheduled and that the Committee understand the importance of the matter.

Along the same lines, Mr. Payne noted that a request had been received from DPW for the purchase of six new PC's for DPW staff as the current units were inoperable. He added that approval had been given for only one of these computers because it would be required by the newly hired DPW Engineer; however, he said, William Lamy, DPW Superintendent, would be addressing the matter at the upcoming Public Works Committee meeting as he claimed that the remaining five PC's requested were necessary. Mr. Payne asked Mr. Metthe if he felt the PC's should be replaced and, in addition, he asked Mr. Metthe to explain the other purchase orders received from the IT Department which consisted of a warranty renewal at a cost of \$2,000; a software update at a cost of \$3,000 and a Symantec PC Anywhere Software purchase in the amount of \$1,500.

With respect to the DPW request for PC's, Mr. Metthe advised that although he had not personally assessed the existing computers, he would recommend their replacement based on the information he had received. He said that from his point of view as IT Director, each employee should be given the best possible tool to perform their job and if the current PC's were inoperable, they should be replaced. Mr. Metthe apprised that the warranty renewal was for his Department's auto loader equipment which served as a backup for all information within the County's computer systems. He said that this piece of equipment had cost \$8,800 new and had been scheduled for replacement in 2008; however, he noted, they had been offered the opportunity to purchase an extended warranty for a cost of \$2,000, which would save the County funds in 2008 and the purchase of a new unit would be re-scheduled for another year. Mr. Metthe stated that the auto loader had proven invaluable during the fire incident at the Municipal Center in 2007 as had it not been in place, ten years worth of work would have been lost. The software update in the amount of \$3,000 was

necessary to update the program used by the Programming staff to develop all of the software used by County employees, he advised. As for the Symantec PC Anywhere Software purchase in the amount of \$1,500, Mr. Metthe explained that this had been requested in light of the increasing workload acquired at the off-site DPW offices. He said that the PC Anywhere Software would allow his employees to work on the DPW system remotely from their own offices, thereby saving time and travel costs.

Discussion ensued with respect to the matter.

Mr. Goodspeed noted that when determining whether a PC should be replaced the function of the unit should be considered as well as the life span of the equipment. He said that some positions which consisted mostly of word processing duties did not require a brand new computer, but could get by with their older units until a newer version was absolutely necessary.

Mr. Metthe apprised that computer donations from ACC (Adirondack Community College) continued to be accepted and were used to replace PC's in an attempt to keep the technology up to date. He added that other Departments were able to secure grant funding to purchase new computers and were able to remain consistent with the changing technology.

Mr. Kenny stated that there should be a policy developed to determine an appropriate replacement term for the computers used by County staff and Mr. Metthe agreed. He said that generally, PC's should be replaced every three years to maintain current technology, although the County had been attempting to perform replacements after five years. Mr. Metthe advised that if it was the Committee's desire, he would assess the DPW computers in question to determine whether or not replacement was necessary.

Motion was made by Mr. VanNess, seconded by Mr. Goodspeed and carried unanimously to direct Mr. Metthe to assess the five computers currently in use by DPW staff to determine if replacement was necessary and report back to the Committee at their next meeting.

Moving ahead to Agenda Item 3, Mr. Metthe directed the Committee to the second page of the agenda which reflected the Telecommunications Savings realized from 2004 through 2008. He said that he was pleasantly surprised to find that \$1,085,750 had been saved over this term and he noted that the cost to the County for telecommunications was approximately \$30,000 per year. Mr. Metthe stated that he and his staff were working very hard to cut costs and gain additional savings on behalf of the County.

Mr. Metthe stated that Agenda Item 4 pertained to a report on a restructuring of the IT Department. He apprised that he was working with Rich Kelly, Personnel Officer, and Todd Lunt, Director of Human Resources, to develop a budget neutral solution to restructure the IT Department and distribute the duties within the Department appropriately. Mr. Metthe advised that he hoped to make a full presentation on this matter at the next Committee meeting.

Mr. Champagne entered the meeting at 10:58 a.m.

Concluding the agenda review, Mr. Metthe advised that Agenda Item 5 consisted of Budget adjustments and he advised that although there was an upcoming conference that had been very important to the County in the past, he had decided to forego attendance this year as he did not have the right person on staff to send to the meeting. He said that there were additional budget reductions that he felt the Committee would be in agreement with; however, he said, because they were running short on time he would not be presenting them at this meeting.

Also in the interest of time, Mr. Metthe noted that he wished to postpone the technology demo listed under Agenda Item 1 until the next Committee meeting.

Mr. Strainer pointed out that the IT/Telecom Report included in the agenda listed the Tourism Website Fall Layouts as a "major project" and he asked if this work would be a high priority as the fall season was approaching. Mr. Metthe replied that they were working on the Fall Tourism Website Layouts but did not have all of the information necessary to complete the project. He reminded the Committee that his Department had taken on the responsibility of maintaining the Tourism website with no additional staff and now had the opportunity to obtain additional revenues in the amount of \$30,000 for the County by maintaining the First Wilderness Heritage Corridor website. Mr. Metthe said that he wanted to add a part-time hourly position to his staff as part of the restructuring process to ensure that both the Tourism and First Wilderness websites would be maintained appropriately. He added that a portion of the revenues received could be used to fund the part-time hourly position, making the addition budget neutral.

Mr. VanNess asked if approval of the part-time position was being requested and Mr. Metthe replied in the negative, explaining that he would present this issue at the next Committee meeting as part of his restructuring request. He noted that he wanted the Committee to be aware that the request would be forthcoming.

Mr. Goodspeed stated that his only objection to the additional position would be that it seemed to be an increasing occurrence that additional employees were hired when grant funding was available and once the grant money ran out there seemed to be a need for that employee which incurred additional expenses for the County. Mr. Payne apprised that verbiage could be included in the Resolution approving the position ensuring that it would be eliminated when revenue from the First Wilderness Heritage Corridor website work ceased.

With respect to the Broadband Study, Chairman Monroe noted that he had recently spoken with Bob Elliot, Deputy Secretary of State, who had advised that there did not appear to be grant funds available for the Planning & Community Development Department in connection with the Study. However, he said, Mr. Elliot felt that the Department of State would be willing to redirect grant funds for this purpose. Chairman Monroe added that he would keep the Committee abreast of any new information on the matter.

Mr. Payne asked if any further developments had been made on time card issues and Mr. Metthe

replied that his staff was working on this issue, although the study was not proceeding as quickly as he had hoped. Mr. Girard asked if a more detailed update could be given on the matter at the next Committee meeting and Mr. Metthe replied affirmatively. Mr. Payne noted that the results of this study would be vital to the number of time clocks included in the new Health and Human Services Building and their placement.

As there was no further business to come before the Information Technology Committee, on motion made by Mr. Goodspeed and seconded by Mr. Kenny, Mr. Girard adjourned the meeting at 11:05 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Amanda Allen, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist