INFORMATION SYSTEMS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
November 4, 2019

The Information Systems Committee meeting was called to order by Chairperson, Amy Michael at 6:03 P.M. Present were: Present were: Rob Kairis, Andrew Kluge, Paul Moskun, Bruce Ribelin and Joe Bica. Also attending the meeting were Mayor Frank Seman; Finance Director, Kimble Cecora; Police Chief, Jeff Wallis; Nick Cecil and Katie Mazanek representing Quality IP; Christina West of 732 Eastland Avenue, Ravenna, Ohio; Tim Calfee of 910 Murray Avenue, Ravenna, Ohio; Brian Huff of 667 Ellen Court, Ravenna, Ohio; Larry Silenius of 123 North Walnut Street, Ravenna, Ohio and Deena Tannert of 784 East Main Street, Ravenna, Ohio.

Ms. Michael said the purpose of the meeting is to meet with Quality IP for a discussion of the telephone system replacement and internet service provider. She would like to say that she contacted Cleveland Punch and Die who also had an Avaya telephone system, which is currently what the City is looking to replace. They also are a recent customer of Quality IP and have had to replace their phone system. She said the phone system is very easy to use and Nick at Quality IP did a great job showing how to use them. They are always ready to answer any questions before they become problems and it was a smooth transition. They have had so many issues with the last network this has a great experience for Cleveland Punch and Die.

Mr. Kluge said there are other companies they could go with and after doing some digging a lot of the companies he saw are not as reliable. His main concern with this upgrade is that the dispatch center does not fail and there are no issues. That being said, Cisco is one of the biggest and he understands, one of the more expensive. But they are talking about cost savings and phasing it in over time, he doesn't see any savings in talking with the two representatives from Quality IP, there is no savings over time. There are cheaper options but not as reliable. Again, when they are looking at dispatch and having a failsafe, he thinks they are putting themselves at risk when they don't need to. The issue is, for example the water department, if the system fails, it will go to city hall or a phone in the police department, they'll lose some control at the water department and that's one area that could be phased in which is about $18,000.00. There would be the two utilities and the annex.

Mr. Kluge said they could also look at not engaging in the ongoing fee of $750.00 a month. It depends on turnover and it could be three or four hours a year.

Mr. Kairis said he had someone look at this quote and it is reasonable. There is nothing unreasonable about it considering the size and complexity of our city system with all these different locations. What is questionable is that $750.00. A lot of companies like Quality IP, when they contracted with them, no one mentioned anything about phones. Now that they are adding the phone system, the cost is $750.00 a month. He thinks that is a high amount. The other thing is, he thinks there are options: What are they paying for? Someone to just add a phone for a new employee? Is that not something that anybody who has access to the software can do? He knows in his environment, it's not a technician that does it, it's a secretary. There may be some different situations where a specific configuration might be beyond their expertise. They aren't paying for the service of the system because he sees they are paying for other warranties being paid directly to Cisco.

Mr. Cecil said there are warranties but what those get you is services above and beyond what IP Quality provides. They get you in the event that a piece of hardware has failed, they will replace that piece of hardware. That also covers the continuous upgrade of the system. If you don't maintain that, the system will stay on the version you purchased it with and it will not be upgraded and no security updates, nothing more than what it came with. Those are highly recommended because they allow you to jump through as Cisco releases new versions and updates, that allows you to stay up to date with the system.

Mr. Cecora said that they are mandatory and you can't get around it.

Mr. Cecil said that you should look at it that way because to do without them would be a large risk.

Mr. Kairis said he is questioning what the $750.00 a month actually pays for.

Mr. Cecil said that is for programming changes. The believe that a secretary could jump into this system and add a phone is incorrect. It is not an easy system to manage and program. Adding a phone is quite complex. Attaching a person to that phone and to the software and then adding a phone to the desk; there is much more than just adding a new unit and plugging it in and clicking a button.

Mr. Kairis said that in his environment that is not done by a software technician.

Ms. Michael said it is done by a software technician in her environment.

Mr. Kluge said that as they said previously we've had kind of a turn on turn off system so if you see upfront there is something we're going to need, they could opt into it for a month or two months and then opt out. L

Ms. Michael said that is not something they necessarily need as an expense the beginning and evaluate where they are with it. They could take it out for now and that is a cost savings. We have a contract with Quality IP and they have gotten the City out of a lot of problems and have worked diligently and she's heard positive feedback from the staff. She has spoken with other businesses that have had recent upgrades and they say that it's not cheap and is a lot of money. They knew this was coming and they cannot really put off. If the system crashes, we're done.

Mr. Cecil said he would like to add that the cost of the $750.00 a month not only allows them to access the software to update the system but also allows them, at no additional cost, load those updates in. Just because you have access to the updates, they don't load themselves into the system. It has to be taken down, put into the correct state, load it in. The actual maintenance of the system is also included in that $750.00 a month.

Mr. Ribelin said he is not Mr. Technology and would never claim to be. However, he would think there are a couple of things he needs to interject. He knows the Portage County Health Department is now using this phone system and they seem to be very, very happy with it. Our phone system is six years old and is now obsolete. He thinks if they're going to mess around and try to get the cheapest system they can, cheapest isn't necessarily best and what is going to be best for the city. Look what happened here, after six years.

Mr. Moskun said he is similar with Mr. Ribelin in a way. But he has seen some things over the past few years, they almost just can't afford to have it go down for hours or sometimes a day or two. It has to be extremely critical and if something does go down, they have to have a backup.

Mr. Cecora said one question they haven't asked in the past is what is the shelf life and what is a reasonable expectation of the whole phone system.

Mr. Cecil said there are multiple parts to that question. There are the handsets themselves, the phones are ten plus years. Those handsets will probably live far longer than some of the software versions that are in the system, far longer than many of the computers themselves will. The benefit of this system is that it is contained within a physical server but all of the pieces that run it are actually virtual so as that physical server ages out, all of the core programming, all of the system that makes the phone system do what it does, can move between server to server to server. As there are new versions or as the system does get older, they'll never incur that initial programming or setup costs again. You will continue to carry forward this programming into newer hardware as the system goes. They're never that have to change the system and learn everything over again. That will never occur as long as they stick with Cisco and keep loading the updates. As the hardware ages out, they will just move those virtual systems into newer components.

Mr. Bica asked for a review of the current Spectrum charges and what is required and where that is going.

Ms. Mazanek said that the cost was a shock compared to what they are paying. It's not out of the ordinary for Spectrum costs, particularly for what they are getting. Right now the connection being used has caused a lot of issues with the remote facilities, Water, Wastewater, etc., when they are trying to access their programs. They are getting really slow or freezing. That pipe was just not big enough. That pipe was only meant for that bridge traffic and not regular traffic. The Spectrum proposal is to make that pipe to allow greater data to filter through.

Mr. Kluge asked if there is a reason to go with Spectrum over AT&T.

Mr. Cecil said that as far as customer service and response time goes, for all of their client base, Spectrum has provided much better response time. They are easier to work with. They have direct access to the account managers. They can get pricing, data, information and support within almost less than an hour, every single time they've reached out to them.

Mr. Kluge asked if they had to come in and lay new lines, is that in the quote.

Ms. Mazanek said there will be a little bit of wiring involved but it is so little, they will incur the cost of that.

Mr. Bica asked if the City doesn't currently have Spectrum service in certain buildings.

Mr. Cecil said that the Police Department. It is interesting because AT&T is the interconnect between all of the City facilities. The internet itself, actual access to the outside world uses Spectrum.

Mr. Bica said he understands there are direct pipes to each one of the facilities that come back to city hall then they tie actually to the internet here through that dedicated pipeline.

Mr. Cecil responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Cecora said Mr. Huff had sent him an email; how much does Kent pay a year for internet connectivity.

Mr. Huff said that it's about $63,000.00.

Mr. Cecil said that in Kent the central internet comes into the Fire Department and provides network for Fire as one entity. The largest bulk of their staff is at the service complex which is far larger than any one of the Ravenna out facilities. They pay for a much bigger pipe between central and service complex.

Mr. Bica said he would assume there are different levels of speed and data. How do they determine what speed they should be getting.

Mr. Cecil responded in the affirmative explaining it is analytics based on the current system. They looked at what each device in the building are pooling individually and based it on that. The other thing to know is they try to start at a somewhat moderate level. They can always go much larger. If they were to add five more departments to the annex building, that could change just that part of the contract.

Mr. Cecora noted as far as the phone system is concerned, there is virtually no way they can upgrade the phone system and continue to operate on the current technology.

Mr. Cecil responded that even if it wasn't a Cisco system, any voice over IP system would require a larger interconnect.

Mr. Cecora said that he had asked previously if there were any other layers of service they might consider from Quality IP. The answer was security. Could they expand on what security services would look like and how it would impact that $750.00 per month if they were trying to bundle something in a more comprehensive way.

Ms. Mazanek said she can't specifically give him that number. Security would keep the staff up to date on all of the current scams. They can do phishing to show them what a scam email would look like.

Mr. Cecil said above and beyond the typical monitoring and management of the network is security management. It would be several pieces of software that is layered into the system and begin to watch them and look for anomalies or different components or out of the ordinary processes or different types of network traffic. They report back to them in almost live time so they can see it even before it actually happens.

Mr. Cecora asked how that is different from the systems in place right now.

Mr. Cecil said there is anti-virus software which does an excellent job. Typically people see security as having an anti-virus on the computer. But what they leave out is there are acts that can copy credit cards, etc. It is a huge component of compliance is continuous internal and external scans to be performed. This system does that constantly. It watches the network traffic, all the switches all the wiring and analyzes them and aggregates that back.

Mr. Moskun said he believes having a price for the security would be a factor.

Ms. Mazanek said she would get that price and forward it on to Mr. Cecora.

Mr. Kluge said he wanted a person, a Director of IT but they hired Quality IP and he thinks they hired them as a consultant to look out for the City's best interest. His two main questions are do they want that $750.00 up front and then turn it off after everything is set up? Is saving $18,000.00 and turn off the failsafe something they want to do and if so, would Quality IP walk us through it. That puts other facilities at risk if something would happen.

Mr. Cecora said that adding five years onto the cost of that, they might as well just go with it.

Mr. Kairis said the $750.00 is after everything is installed. They will have the system set up and running before they would opt out, after 30 days.

Mr. Cecil said that if there is an upgrade, he would touch base with the appropriate authorities and let them know there is an upgrade and the cost of that upgrade. He will still absolutely keep track of it. It's up to them as to whether or not they wish to incur the costs of loading that upgrade into the system. If they have the maintenance contract of $750.00 a month, he will just let them know that it will be loaded, when and length of time, etc.

Mr. Bica asked how many updates were installed in the last year.

Mr. Cecil said that there were two updates last year. There were more but Cisco tells them why the update was released. Sometimes that update doesn't actually apply to a certain customer. There were four total that existed in the last year. They did two of them because those were the relevant security ones that applied to how they were using and what they were using. It typically takes three or four hours.

Mr. Bica said he thinks it might make more sense to pay an hourly rate when an update is needed or have an issue vs. having a retainer.

Mr. Cecora asked if there are a lot of phone related phone calls.

Ms. Mazanek said they get at least one phone call a day with phone changes, etc. The turnover at the RAC is a little different but it is a very lengthy process.

Mr. Cecil said the current contract is up mid-June. At that time, they could always renegotiate the cost of that contract and the Cisco one together. It may be possible to change the support to go through June to co-term with the existing contract.

Ms. Michael asked for to go into a contract at this point, do they want to include the contract for $750.00 per month.

Discussion ensued about financing options.

Mr. Cecora noted that with the Spectrum notification is needed because the drop dead date to cancel the current internet is February when the AT&T contract is up.

Mr. Cecil said AT&T wants six months but he has never seen it take that long.

Ms. Michael said it is important to have a good reliable phone system in place. After some discussion it was decided by those present that the contracts need to be secured and the issue forwarded to Committee of the Whole for further action.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 6:45 P.M.

ATTEST:

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Clerk of Council   Amy Michael, Chairperson
                                                                      Information Systems Committee