

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL TECHNOLOGY STUDY GROUP  
MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2011, AT 7:00 P.M. IN  
ROOM 207, TOWN HALL, 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410**

Present

Study Group Chairman Steve Carroll; Committee Members Patti Flynn-Harris, Peter Talbot. Study Group Staff Members – Town Manager Michael A. Milone, Dr. Greg Florio, Superintendent of Schools; Scott Dietrich, Asst. Superintendent of Schools; Vincent Masciana, Director of Management Services, BOE; Arnett Talbot, Exec. Assistant to Town Manager; James Jaskot, Finance Director; Ramona Burkey, Library Director.

Guest: Anthony Verrill, The Apex Technology Group.

**1. ROLL CALL**

The clerk called the roll and a quorum was determined to be present.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The group Pledged Allegiance to the Flag.

**3. TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE UPDATE**

Town Manager Milone informed the group that for the last 6 weeks staff has been working closely with Apex, covering a lot of ground regarding technology. Mr. Verrill will be taking the committee through everything being faced, how it is being dealt with, and plans going forward. There is an expenditure initiative, identifying expensive equipment, which the committee must discuss.

Mr. Verrill distributed handouts of information to be reviewed with the committee. He stated that the Town and School District have signed a contract with Apex to provide a Personal Technology Officer for outsource support. In the information there is an outline of what this service provides.

Apex will provide technology and engineering guidelines for the Town and School District, to do network maintenance and monitoring, network support and help desk services. Under the CTO services, there will be a minimum of one day a week with a CTO (Mr. Verrill) on site, and one engineer on site for a minimum of one day a week. Mr. Verrill's task is to provide central technology guidance, including development of I.T. standards, project priorities, engage and find immediate critical projects, look at staff and team response.

To start the process, Apex has gotten all the I.T. (Town and School District) together, develop a team approach to technology, find out who is good at what, where staff can best be used. A subcommittee of this group will meet once a month.

Apex has begun to develop a business resumption /disaster recovery strategy, and has started the technical piece, phase one of this task.

When Apex started in November, Mr. Verrill noted that the first thing they encountered was the disaster with the Munis application, wherein old servers crashed without backup service. The local I.T. group was under the impression that the Munis people were to provide disaster recovery, and Munis said it was the Town's responsibility. Apex spent the first 80 hours under the contract bringing this server back on line, moving it to a virtual space, and managed to get the application and data back on line in a week.

Mr. Jaskot explained that the disaster with Munis affected the ability for the Town to process checks. This happened the week after the storm when power was lost to the Town.

Mr. Carroll asked about the critical immediate projects, and asked whether this is being looked at immediately by Apex.

This is high level and being looked at immediately, and Mr. Verrill said a week of down time is unacceptable, and even one day is unacceptable. Phase one of the BD/DR plan includes the engineering piece, technical piece, and start of the narrative of the documentation of the plan.

According to Mr. Verrill, Apex knows the Town's network fairly well, tries to get some user communication so people know on an acceptable, regular basis, that there is a problem, status of the recovery process, and applications availability. Mr. Verrill wants to begin to engage in user interviews of staff, along with completion of a Town Staff and Teaching Technology Survey by the staff. These surveys will be completed in January 2012.

Network Management – there will be server and network element 24/7 monitoring. Mr. Verrill stated that as part of the contract there will be monitoring of every element which Apex can monitor in this enterprise and environment. So, if something goes wrong, Apex will get an alert. The help desk is manned during normal business hours by 2 or 3 Apex staff members, and an engineer on call during off hours. 80% of the problems reported can be repaired remotely without a dispatcher. All routers, switches, firewalls, security devices are on the monitoring system. About 80% of the network switches are not manageable, and they are called soho devices (small office, home office). There are about 60 devices on the system, with an additional 60 to be added after January. If there is a major problem with the end user, Apex will deliver messages through e-mail. If there is a problem with this system, a mobile text messaging system will be set up for key staff.

End user support – Town and Schools have separate I.T. groups. Apex has decided to migrate the Town to the Apex help desk exclusively, and Apex will provide level 1, 2 and 3 support. Level 1 is dispatching one of the Town I.T. resources or an Apex engineer. Level 2 is an Apex engineer on site engineering

day. Level 3 is to dispatch an Apex engineer as required. The schools have their own good help desk system, and I.T. support at each school. Apex will provide levels 2 and 3, as required to the school system, with the school using their own system and escalating to Apex. The Town will start to use the help desk after the holidays.

The group was informed by Mr. Milone that Mr. Verrill made a presentation to the department heads, explained how the help desk works once it is set up. A lengthy e-mail was sent to staff explaining talking about the technology initiative, explaining how there would be migration away from the current aid system and to the help desk. On the Town side the help desk has not been implemented yet because there is a level of I.T. response that must be eliminated. People must understand how to take care of problems on their own. By early January, it is hoped the Apex help desk will be ready for the Town. Mr. Milone will hold another department head meeting, send an e-mail to all employees, explaining how to get assistance from the help desk. There will be a limited number of people with direct access to the help desk. People in the department will go to a supervisor about a problem before going to the help desk.

Mr. Verrill said one issue with Cheshire is having level 2 engineers doing level 1 support. Apex engineers will be doing help desk all day, every day, and they know their job.

Mr. Masciana informed the group that the school system has been escalating to the help desk.

Ms. Talbot said there would be internal documents describing safe areas and levels and problems, there will be training during the process.

Devices used to monitor the system were displayed by Mr. Verrill.

High Priority Projects – Critical issues will be tracked immediately; some servers are at the end of their life cycle; there will be a disaster recovery process in place.

In response to a question from Ms. Flynn-Harris regarding the number of servers, Mr. Verrill said there are another 12 from the schools, 8 from the Police Department, so the final number will be above 70.

Police Department – Apex worked with their core public safety application upgrade, mobile unit WAN upgrade, field reporting, GIS upgrade.

Apex Deliverables – these include infrastructure upgrade recommendations – enterprise wide; complete server and hardware upgrades, enterprise wide; retool internet edge and metro fiber routing and security; exchange migration upgrade or hosted; desktop virtualization – pilot; wireless expansion and wireless DR for

all schools and town hall, with a question about other town and school buildings and public spaces. On line application expansion and accessibility for Parks and Recreation, Library, and Public Works Departments. Expansion of the fiber MAN to Cheshire Library.

Deliverables in process - Mr. Verrill commented on immediate and critical issues such as the servers at end of life, and working to virtualizing them, disaster recovery process, devise security standards, server and other hardware standards, review IP technology service and options, review document management and archiving systems and options.

Cheshire BR/DR Plan - the handout was discussed by Mr. Verrill, who noted that the Production-Primary Data Center is Town Hall; and the Backup Data Center is the Cheshire Police Department.

All servers will be migrated to a virtual space; elimination of 80% of the current servers at the end of their life cycle; all of this will happen as part of phase #1. If the Munis server was to go down again, it would come up at the Police Department, and users would not know there had been down time, continue to work on the disaster recovery server until the production server is repaired. This is not complex, but works well. Everything running at the Police Department would be replicated at Town Hall. This is cross site replication with all applications able to be brought up at the other location.

Phase #2 – there is no voice recovery; there is need to eliminate single points of failure in the network with all work stopping; and this will be worked on.

Internet Edge – this has one circuit and if this goes down everything stops, so something must be done in the short term. We are bringing up a major wireless network to the schools, which is an important piece of what is going on in education in Cheshire. There is also a look at migrating some of the key applications to the Town, like Munis and e-mail, into a hosted space. We cannot risk the internet going down, so there will be development of interim solutions to split the traffic across the existing internet circuit on a cable modem circuit. There must be more security with retooling the internet edge security with some real enterprise class stuff.

In the packets there is best practices security approach outlined, and Cheshire must implement this approach, creating a security network.

The wireless network for the school district is a high priority project, and it has been extended to the public spaces in Town Hall. By next year it is hoped to have a whole enterprise lit for schools, town hall, some public spaces, fields, etc.

Another major issue is the voice system, and Mr. Verrill said there is no documentation for the phone system. He met with the phone vendor and is

starting to document the voice network. Apex will start doing some redesign to provide more interim fix for the poor voice quality issues. The firm will have to get into a real VOIP enterprise class telephone environment to clean up the bad call quality. The Police station has VOIP phones. We will get to the I.P. proves and then monitor the situation.

Key Deliverables – Mr. Verrill reviewed Apex’s key deliverables for the Town and School District.

Town and School District - Administrative /Planning; Software, Hardware, Infrastructure; Personnel.

Mr.Verrill reviewed the General I.T. System Support for the Town and Education, with descriptions and estimated milestones.

Apex will provide BR/DR expansion as part of the capital appropriation; assist with the CEP and appropriation of \$350,000; review maintenance agreements, prioritize I.T. projects.

Mr. Milone explained that there is \$350,000 appropriated in the CEP for technology. Given what has happened in the last 6 months it is clear and the committee agrees that costs will be in the \$120,000 to \$130,000 range. We want to move forward and make some acquisitions so disaster recovery and business resumption plans are in place.

In 2012 we will have to upgrade most of the equipment, find out costs, and phase in over a few years. It was stated by Mr. Verrill that in the new year the Town will have to look at the rest of the infrastructure, replace the end of life servers, retool the internet edge, implement the desk top virtualization pilot, wireless expansion, create a better on-line service for the public.

Once there things are identified, Mr. Milone will return to the committee to review and discuss everything, get input and its recommendations before the capital budget is put together for next year.

Regarding better on-line service to the public, Mr. Milone noted that the Parks and Rec Department uses on-line registrations for its programs. People can see the programs and do on-line registration.

Mr. Verrill stated that Apex plans to provide a more visible presence to the community. There can be credit card payments for implemented into the system.

Contract Overview – during the budget process the Town Council talked about maintenance agreements and the savings involved, and Mr. Milone stated that 20 agreements have been turned over to Apex and Mr.Verrill. It is hoped to scale back these agreements and save money.

The CAD system concerns were also raised by the Council and whether or not the training budget would be adequate. Mr. Milone said that many of these concerns will be handled by Apex and they will be on top of it.

Phone system – Mr. Milone explained that Apex is working to get issues and problems with the phone system addressed. The vendor cannot understand or assist with these problems, and over the last 3 years there have been more issues. GIS is ongoing and important, and is being monitored by Apex as it relates to the Police Department new software CAD system, making sure it is properly integrated. In the spring there will be a fly over to provide more accurate information.

Ms. Flynn-Harris said she wants CPFA to be involved in the entire on-line process as soon as possible.

Mr. Milone stated that Parks and Rec has the software, staff is trained, and this department has the most repeat registration programs in Town. CPFA will be included in the system.

Everything must be documented by Apex and Mr. Verrill said anything which Apex has not yet touched is not documented.

Concerns were cited by Mr. Carroll related to replacement of every major piece of the network within a 5 year window. His technical concerns include development of an overall strategy of what we want the new network to look like. What is to be done in terms of storage network; how servers will be virtualized; and the life span of this equipment, i.e. 5 years, 6 years, 7 years...and looking at replacement of the entire network at one time and costs of \$1 million to \$2 million. These numbers must be looked at in the operating budget for a budget number each year sufficient to maintain the network going forward. There are things which must be decided soon.

Regarding the second phase, Ms. Flynn-Harris commented on the disaster recovery, and asked if this should be off site. Costs must be looked at, such as power generation for the D.R. site.

In reply, Mr. Verrill said Apex has an idea of what the D.R. should look like, but this is not on paper yet, and whatever is done with the network, it must meet certain standards. As part of phase #2 there will be inclusion of loss of key data, off-site data vaulting, in a cost effective manner. To address the capital piece, this will not be done in the first year. It is hoped that Apex can take the infrastructure expenditure and plan out over a three year period. By year #3 we will be looking at the infrastructure of year #1 expenditure. Now we are getting into the maintenance mode, not replacement mode all the time.

Dr. Florio said that message is very important to be studied by this committee...to make the investment knowing there is a long term cost, and saving money if equipment is maintained as opposed to letting it sit there.

At the next meeting Mr. Verrill will have an overview of these issues for discussion and review. He said there is no need to go back to the vendor for equipment owned or leased. It is our devices which will determine what the band will be. We want to have multiple points of access to the internet; collapse all the diverse services to a few central locations; and set a minimum equipment standard. Apex must look at every piece of equipment and device in the infrastructure, and money will not be wasted. In phase #1, Mr. Verrill said that even if the Munis environment is out-sourced next year, we must still deal with the existing environment so it does not go down again. Apex has support engineers on site to do things. Cheshire has high level I.T. staff to work on a shared point project or wireless implementation. Mr. Verrill said there are not many schools or municipalities undertaking this effort and Cheshire is putting the Town towards the forefront.

Mr. Masciana commented on being excited about bringing laptops into the school system and students getting onto the pilot.

Mr. Dietrich talked about the BOE three year plan, and the State DOE requiring public schools to complete a three year technology plan. He has a copy of Cheshire's plan for the committee. The focus of the plan is for instruction to change based on the application of technology and the use of it. Mr. Dietrich said that students want an independent learning device. The question is how that is achieved, and the plan is for middle school and high school students to be operational in that capacity. It starts with the infrastructure, teacher/professional development, and we have some on-site professional developers who are teachers and who have met in roads with staff. There are pilot pockets of work going on with high school teachers and the technology community, district wide technology academy and training, with feedback on what does and does not work. At the end of three years the goal is to have a personal learning device in the students' hands. The BOE is sharing documents; all the administration is paperless; and the committee receives and does work on google for viewing by all committee members.

Ms. Flynn-Harris commented on this being a Connecticut requirement for all school systems.

The Technology Study Group will schedule a meeting for the end of January 2012 for a status report.

**4. ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION by Ms. Flynn-Harris; seconded by Mr. Talbot.

MOVED to adjourn at 8:40 p.m.

VOTE        The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

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Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk