MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF CHESHIRE TECHNOLOGY STUDY GROUP MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 28, 2014, AT 7:00 P.M. IN ROOM 207, TOWN HALL, 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410

Present
Steve Carroll, Chairman; Council Members Patti Flynn-Harris and Peter Talbot; Ramona Burkey, Library Director; Vincent Masciana, Director of Management Services, Dept. of Education.
Staff: Michael A. Milone, Town Manager; James Jaskot, Finance Director; Arnett Talbot, Executive Assistant to Town Manager.
Anthony Verrill, CTO, 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 STATUS REPORT

4.   CAPITAL BUDGET FUNDING REQUEST

Town Manager Milone stated that there has been a big change from last year with the start of out-sourcing the I.T. operation.   The transition has worked very well with Apex Technology as the firm and its staff was known to the Town.   Things on many different levels have received the attention required along with the expertise needed.   Mr. Milone thanked the committee for its support of the technology initiative which has resulted in more efficiencies, effectiveness, and expansion of technology. It has been a good, productive and beneficial experience.

Mr. Carroll commented on the unseen benefit of knowing the network will be up and running 24/7.

A summary and highlights of the technology initiatives, progress and budget review were presented by Mr. Verrill.

Help Desk Ticket Summary – December 2013 to May 2014.   358 total tickets; 347 tickets closed; 260 hours spent by engineers on support tickets (non project).

IT Project Summary – 511 hours spent on project work; 32 major and minor projects were worked on; new ticket system in process and reports are now complete.

Capital Recommendations – the original allocation for FY 2013, $750,000 was received. Cost of some of the equipment was brought down; money was saved and money was moved to other areas such as the Door Access System.   This software will be upgraded with municipal buildings put on the same system as the Dept. of Education,

with one system throughout the enterprise. With issuance of a card to a person there can be access to any municipal building, data centers, and other rooms.

Another big project is the Enterprise Video System, $170,000 which was not originally planned.   The system is legacy, analog, is not enterprise based, with each location standing alone. The plan is to put everything on IP Video, one system/server based, with increased coverage and reduction in the storage footprint, and it will be integrated with remote access through desktops. The total allocation for the 2 years will be spent; it will be parceled out; some money will be left over in the capital allocation in the event the technology initiative is not approved at referendum.

Mr. Masciana advised that the DOE has an enterprise license, RBH software, with cards issued to staff, and it is administered by a staff assistant.

Mr. Verrill said a price estimate was done to replace the video system, and the goal is to get the municipal side done out of the current allocation.   As part of this we want to cover parking lots, and the goal is to replace the video system at current locations. A State mandated video system has been done at the Police Department, and there are no storage issues. Part of the cost for the enterprise wide system will include storage costs. The IP cameras, with one camera, can catch the area that would take 5 analog cameras to get.   Mr. Verrill said we want to get the municipal side done and then do the schools.

Town Web Site – this project work included video and audio integration; upgraded application and new environment on which the Town web site runs; on the municipal side there are no more Windows XP desktops; school infrastructure upgrades were done at Chapman School and DOE as part of this project rollout.   Delivery Recording System at the Police Department was implemented as required on January 1st.

Mr. Masciana reported that Apex assisted rolling out the schools with Chrome Books at Dodd Middle School (720 Chrome Books issued, connected to the wireless), and it is working very well, with no issues.   This has assisted teachers' engagement with technology. Chrome Books are being used across the classrooms; it is a good educational process for the school system; and 2000+ wireless devices are on the wireless network from the schools.

Mr. Verrill reported that Town projects are underway including getting arms around the printing for the Town. An RFP is out and vendor responses are due next Thursday. The school system is already doing this with a vendor managing all their printing, all leased equipment, toner, etc. There will be a recommendation made on how this should go forward, how it should be managed, and how much money can be saved. Vendors are advising that the savings could be 30% to 40% on printing costs. Mr. Verrill said we want to train people to use network based devices for printing which will be easier to manage.

The group was told by Mr. Jaskot that the Town has a few dozen copiers on 5 year leases, and these machines are getting dated.

Ms. Flynn-Harris commented on discussions regarding the RFP for the BOE phone system at the schools.   She said there was a requirement for some State functions/paperwork that must be faxed, and could not be e-faxed.

WWTP Upgrade, installation of equipment, network, phone system and data network will be an end of summer installation by Apex.

Town Hall tablet deployments – this went well and they are being used by people.

Exchange & Email upgrades – this was one of the bigger projects and took a lot of time by Apex Technology staff.   We are, finally, on Exchange 2010. Part of the process was creating a disaster recovery environment for exchange, replicating the data bases. There is monitoring now to become more sophisticated; people can use Outlook; and all emails are being archived to be compliant should there be an audit or litigation.

Upgrade Anti-virus application – Mr. Verrill informed the group that the product was about four versions old; that the Town is done; Apex is working on the schools; and this gives the ability to patch other applications like Adobe, Flash Player and Chrome apps.

Ms. Talbot reported that the Town web site impact has been considerable. There has been expansion of web site capabilities; there is video on demand; web site is linked to CH 14; work is being done on fill able forms; and laying the ground work for people who do business with the Town and e-commerce.   There is successful expansion into social media, face book, with public feedback received via email. Because of the GIS System we have a disk of the survey maps from the Town Clerk's office which will be linked with GIS. This is huge in terms of ease of access of information for the public and those who do business with the Town.

It was stated by Mr. Carroll that we have succeeded in providing access to the public at Town Hall, and information the people request.

Mr. Milone said the Town was at a disadvantage when a purchase or lease was initiated, where technology was involved. It was not realized how inadequate the support was because everything was looked at in a vacuum rather than as an enterprise or holistically. He cited an example of Apex helping with the printers and copy machines. Five years ago the Town relied on advice and guidance from someone with tunnel vision. What was given was adequate but did not work well in terms of integration with the pieces of technology.

Phone System – Mr. Milone stated a consultant was hired, but the system has never adequately provided the service expected. It has been a nightmare, and has never given good communication with the Library or Police Department.   The consultant

worked in a vacuum, did not connect the dots, and did not ask questions which should have been asked.

Mr. Milone commented on the PEGPETIA grant from the State, $146,000, which allowed the Town to do all the audio/video upgrades for Council Chambers.   Without Apex stepping in and providing assistance there would have been major gaps in the ability to connect to the web site and other needs.   There would have been all this equipment without being able to utilize it to the extent that can be done. Apex has made a marked difference with effectiveness.

Ms. Talbot commented on the culture change regarding technology, with people looking at what else can be done. This has been a major shift and a pleasure to see people seeking what else can be done…with Apex helping to find a way.

Project Focus – May 2014 to December 2014.   Mr. Verrill reported that Apex will be hiring more technology engineers, providing more flexibility.

VDI production implementation – Mr. Verrill advised that this has not been fully implemented because the products being piloted were not adequate to do what was needed. It's an expensive project, is mission critical for people using it for the desktops. Products were tested, and it was found they were failing, with the biggest problem being the audio/visual.   Apex selected VM Wares Horizon View which has all the integration, runs on any mobile client out there, and is a mature product and well supported. Apex is working with Dell's VM Ware group on this product, equipment and gear are in place, and it will start rolling out full scale over the summer.

MDF Upgrade – for Town Hall and Cheshire High School over this summer, with the RFP out for the equipment.

Apex is reconfiguring the network piece for the telephone system.   They will provide the VM Ware environment for the call manager and voice mail system and switches to insure the voice network runs on its own network. Apex will remove all XP machines in the schools.

Door Access Control System – the Town side must be done, and it is a high priority. Mr. Verrill will be consulting with department heads/maintenance staff/people in the buildings regarding the card system. He wants to get Town Hall done, and then move onto the public safety buildings and Library.

Library – modifications are being made on the internet access for better performance than going through Library Connection.

Update BR/DR application and plan – this is a minor project to be done over the summer.

Capital Requests – 2014-2015, $295,000; 2015-2016, $670,000; total $965,000.

Mr. Verrill informed the group that the new combined request for FY 14-15 will be $527,000. This will include the phone system, video system, complete additional projects, complete major capital components and a few unanticipated projects.

Because the Town is only asking for $295,000 in FY 2014-15 and asking for $670,000 FY 2015-16, Mr. Milone requested Mr. Verrill take a look at the last two years of the projects, and see if they could be aggregated into one year.   These capital requests must go to referendum, and Mr. Verrill designed a more realistic way to take advantage of what is not being used to this point, reallocate it, and aggregate the last two years. The phone system costs were reduced because BOE and WWTP have done their systems.

The group was informed by Mr. Masciana that the school district phone system is Mitel. Two vendors were interviewed (BEI Communications and Total Communications). The DOE chose Total Communications which was a stronger and larger team than BEI. Following this decision, Mr. Masciana learned that BEI was taken over by Total Communications.

Mr. Verrill stated that the Apex engineering staff is on site in Cheshire 3 to 4 days a week.   The DOE total IT staff is 7 people (down 2 people), and the Library has 3 to 5 IT people on staff.

Mr. Milone noted that the Town staff is comfortable with the Apex help desk and the immediate resolution of problems.

With the help desk, Mr. Verrill said Apex is more flexible, and with the company's new phone system they will have "mobile help desk".   He wants the firm's clients to meet help desk staff people and develop a better client relationship.

Under "Project Focus" January 2015 to June 2016, Mr. Verrill highlighted the projects to be completed.
Finish VDI production and implementation; Door Access Control System; Municipal telephone system upgrade; CPD scheduling software implementation, CPD new World Software upgrade, and CPD public safety network backbone migration; Municipal video system upgrade to IP; and Schools video system migration to IP.   June 2016 is the target date for completion of these projects.

Regarding the capital budget numbers, Mr. Milone advised that they will be refined, and this budget goes to the Town Council in one month.   He noted that the telephone system could be a separate appropriation.

Phone System – estimated cost of $250,000, but it is expected to be lower.

6.   SUCCESSOR CTO CONTRACT
Mr. Milone stated that the renewal of the agreement with Apex Technology must be revisited, and it runs until June 2014.   He requested Mr. Verrill consider maintaining the

relationship with the Town of Cheshire, and a three year agreement was drawn up. The proposal is similar to what is now in effect for services, and holding the price constant at $20,000 a month, $240,000 annually. This cost is split 35% Town and 65% DOE.   With regard to "extenuating circumstances" Mr. Milone said this should be recognized in the agreement. There have been emergency situations wherein Apex spent 3 or 4 days, 20 hours a day working on problems. The extenuating circumstances would involve problems requiring extra hours for Apex staff.   The renewed contract will be put together, referred to the Town Attorney, and the Council will be requested to give the Town Manager some authority to exceed the stated costs for excess work within certain limits. The language will be discussed, put together, and Mr. Milone asked for support of the study group to pursue a 3 year agreement to keep costs constant.

The issue of "extenuating circumstances" was identified by Mr. Verrill.   This would include extra problems or issues such as Apex staff working during the night.   He cited an example of one client requiring 4 engineers for an entire week working round the clock.   He commented on wanting to be able to split the extra costs with the client for extenuating circumstances which are out of scope of the contract, i.e. a disaster.

Mr. Carroll commented on a contract going out 3 years, and wanting to insure there are an appropriate amount of projects still being done on time. As part of a 3 year deal we must have a project schedule and reporting process, so progress can be seen at all times.   He supports continuation of the Town engagement with Apex on the current technology level as they are still doing work above a skill level that exceeds what would be found in an IT staff person. He would not want Apex to do low level routine work that a tech person could do.   Mr. Carroll wants a project list covered by Apex, with quarterly updates, manpower required, progress etc.

In response, Mr. Verrill said that the Town already has this flexibility in the existing contract language.   Some of his clients do get to the point of only needing help desk assistance.

Thinking optimistically, Mr. Carroll expects that in two years the Town and DOE will be in good shape with technology, and would sit down with Apex for discussion.

Ms. Flynn-Harris commented on having a two year contract with the scope of the work performed by Apex.

When Apex was hired, Mr. Milone said it was for the purpose of taking the Town and DOE through a five year capital plan. As things eroded internally and operationally Apex took on the responsibility of overseeing the day to day operations.   When these five years of projects are completed there will be work…but the question is whether it will be at the level where Apex is needed and at what level.   He said we can look at a two year time horizon and see what happens after that.

Mr. Verrill stated that Apex will not increase the cost unless there is a disaster. Under the current contract the Town can walk Apex out the door, with payment only for work performed.

In that regard, Mr. Milone said there could be a step down in the level of responsibility of Apex to the Town.   We want to retain the company, but possibly at a lower level of services, and this should be a provision in the contract.   The proposed renewed contract will be modified by Mr. Milone and Mr. Verrill.

Ms. Flynn-Harris supports solidifying a three year contract with the understanding that in two years it can be amended.

The group was informed by Mr. Verrill that Apex will be reviewing and developing a new Strategic Plan for Cheshire's technology, and administering the plan should get easier.

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

MOVED that the Technology Study Group approve the renewal of a contract with Apex Technology Group for two (2) years at the current level of $240,000 annually, payable at $20,000 per month, and forward this recommendation to the full Town Council for approval.

VOTE   The motion passed unanimously by those present.

7.   ADJOURNMENT

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

MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:17 p.m.

VOTE   The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

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Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk