

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE:       **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

DATE:               MAY 1, 2008

**Committee Members Present:**

Supervisors Girard  
                  Kenny  
                  Stec  
                  Goodspeed  
                  Strainer

**Others Present:**

Robert Metthe, Director, Information Technology  
Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal  
                  Services  
Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board  
Debra L. Schreiber, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist

**Committee Members Absent:**

Supervisors Sokol  
                  VanNess

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Mr. Girard called the Information Technology (IT) Committee meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Strainer, and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the February 27, 2008 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Rob Metthe, Information Technology Director, who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of same is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Metthe began the meeting by requesting permission to attend the 2008 New York State (NYS) Local Government Information Technology Directors' Association Conference in Saratoga Springs, New York, from May 6 through 9, 2008.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Goodspeed and carried unanimously approving the request as submitted. *A copy of the Authorization to Attend Meeting or Convention is on file with the minutes.*

With respect to the second item on the agenda, Mr. Metthe advised the 2008 NYS contract price for a personal computer configured to County specifications was \$515, compared to the 2007 price of \$690, a decrease of \$175. He said he would be happy to provide a copy of the County specifications to the Supervisors.

Referring to the third item on the agenda, Mr. Metthe requested permission to transfer funds in the amount of \$15,000 into the IT overtime budget that had been omitted during the 2008 Budget process. In response to an inquiry by Mr. Kenny, Mr. Metthe replied that

with the Business Analyst position being vacant, he anticipated there being sufficient funds within the IT Budget to transfer the monies from the .1's to the .3's.

Motion was made by Mr. Goodspeed, seconded by Mr. Stec and carried unanimously approving the request as outlined above; and to refer same to the Finance Committee for consideration. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Metthe indicated the IT Department had the opportunity to review the various vendors and NYS contracts entered into by the County. In the past, he said, they retained the services of Rebecca Schlick, a telecommunications consultant, to provide an analysis and professional guidance in assisting the County in reducing their telecommunication and data transmission costs. He noted the contract would not exceed \$3,000; however, he said, he expected a minimum savings of approximately \$10,000 per year. In response to an inquiry by Chairman Girard, Mr. Metthe replied he anticipated the savings to far outweigh the cost of hiring the consultant. He further indicated the savings would decrease the invoices currently being paid from the funds appropriated in the Telecommunication Budget.

Motion was made by Mr. Goodspeed, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously authorizing the request to enter into a contract with Rebecca Schlick for consulting services, in an amount not to exceed \$3,000 for the purpose of reducing the County's Telecommunication costs. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Continuing on with the next agenda item, Mr. Metthe stated he would be happy to update the Committee on the status of any particular project should they have any questions. In previous Committee meetings, Mr. Stec said he recalled some discussions about time and attendance, and he queried about the status of that particular project. Mr. Metthe replied they met with representatives of Washington County to review their timekeeping system. He indicated their system was biometric, utilized Kronos, and like any new program, there was an adjustment period. Subsequently, Mr. Metthe said he contacted other counties that used the New World financial system and learned they had installed Kronos, as well. He noted the new payroll supervisor in the Treasurer's Office had prior Kronos experience, thereby making the transition potentially easier should the County decide to switch. No definitive decisions had been made, added Mr. Metthe.

During one of the Committee meetings he attended this week, Mr. Goodspeed apprised that Paul Dusek, County Attorney, discussed developing an overall timekeeping policy for the County and he suggested the IT Department assist the County Attorney in this project. He further asked whether all Departments were pleased with the New World system. During his tenure as Warren County Public Defender, he explained they worked for three years with New World representatives and the program still did not meet the design requirements, which ultimately resulted in them purchasing a program from another entity for a lot less money. Mr. Metthe indicated the New World program was the number one

vendor to counties across New York State (NYS); their technology far exceeded that of the other vendors; and the various Departments throughout Warren County picked this system as their program of choice. He further explained there was a meeting held approximately one month ago that reviewed the internal efficiencies that New World brought to the County, including the savings in both time and money, and Mr. Metthe noted that Mr. Goodspeed had not attended that meeting. Mr. Goodspeed queried what meeting Mr. Metthe was referring to as he thought he had attended each of the IT Committee meetings. Mr. Goodspeed noted that he did not mean to bring his bias into the discussion; however, he said, he had a negative experience with the New World representatives and many of the employees that worked in the Public Defender Office would have been extremely pleased to go back to the old system.

Mr. Metthe reported that for the past twenty-five years, the County Sheriff had maintained a New World Public Safety system and approximately three to four years ago, the County adopted the New World Public Administration system, which were two completely different platforms. Mr. Girard asked Mr. Goodspeed to make inquiry of the District Attorney and Public Defender to determine their input of the current New World system. At the same time, Mr. Girard suggested Mr. Metthe consult with Mr. Dusek regarding the formation of a County timekeeping policy. Mr. Metthe emphasized the New World program had been utilized for the past three to four years and he did not feel there was any decision to be made. Mr. Girard responded that it would be difficult to change at this particular time. In response to an inquiry by Mr. Girard, Mr. Metthe recommended doing a pilot system that could be executed in 2009.

Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, apprised that Cattaraugus County contacted him requesting a demonstration of the County New World system until they learned we were not utilizing the time and attendance portion of the program and canceled their visit. In response, Mr. Metthe stated there had been ongoing discussions relative to the responsibilities of both the Personnel and Human Resource Departments; however, he said, they were still in the implementation phase of some of the modules.

A brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Metthe briefly reviewed a Power Point Presentation developed by their Department that revealed the various responsibilities of the IT Department. As reflected on page two of the agenda, he stated that each section of the pie represented the efforts put forth by the users of each program. At each Committee meeting, Mr. Metthe suggested discussing such topics as shared services, centralization/decentralization, future technology advances at future IT Committee meetings; however, he said, he felt some background was needed prior to discussing these topics.

He apprised the Committee of an interesting statistic that was released this week: for

medium to large size businesses, information technology overtook real estate as the number two expense/investment of these successful businesses. As the IT Director, he said, it was his responsibility to outline the opportunities that had been missed and what technological advancements could be made to further enhance County business.

Mr. Metthe went on to explain that since the County website was established in 2004, the usage had quadrupled for citizens because information was being provided twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week without the need to travel to the Municipal Center. In addition, he said, the website had reduced labor/staff, as well as time and expense of mailing information. In response to an inquiry by Mr. Stec, Mr. Metthe responded the spike on the graph was attributable to the IT Department assuming the responsibilities of the Tourism website. If that particular spike were discounted, Mr. Stec stated the red line revealed a steady increase of website traffic.

A brief discussion ensued.

While the County technology had significantly improved, Mr. Metthe stated that his Department was still in the infancy stages of increasing and improving the content and useful services to both their employees, as well as the general public. He mentioned the IT web services included the County website, the Tourism website, internet (outside world) and intranet (Sharepoint). Mr. Metthe briefly explained that all the resolution request forms and other miscellaneous documents were accessible on the Sharepoint site. While the technology was provided by the IT Department, he said, JoAnn McKinstry, Deputy Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, and the staff of Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, provided the information for the site.

Mr. Metthe went on to explain that their Department was working on the extranet, which provided an inside service to the outside world. For example, he said, the Purchasing Department suggested some information be made available online to the towns, thereby reducing additional time and expense and making it extremely convenient.

In 2006, Mr. Metthe apprised the Tourism Department submitted RFP's (requests for proposals) to maintain their website and the bids they received were in excess of \$100,000. When the IT Department assumed that responsibility, he said, the funds derived from Occupancy Tax "paid" to maintain the Tourism website and a portion of the IT employee's salary. Mr. Metthe reported the employee that had assumed the responsibility of the County website was originally hired as an intern and had become an incredibly talented and productive worker that was being paid an extremely low salary for the expertise he provided. If they lost his services, he said, the Tourism Department would need to hire an individual who would perform their website work and the IT Department would need to hire another intern. When the IT Department assumed the responsibility of the Tourism website, he said, he was promised assistance, if needed, from the savings derived by

performing the work in-house. During the 2008 Budget session, Mr. Metthe indicated the IT Committee requested permission to bill the Tourism Department \$40,000 for their (Tourism) website services, thus taking the cost of those services from the Occupancy Tax; however, he said, the Budget Committee reduced this amount to \$15,000. In response to a query by Mr. Kenny, Mr. Payne responded it was the opinion of the Budget Committee that the two Departments (IT and Tourism) share in the salary cost of this particular employee. According to his recollection, Mr. Metthe said the Budget Committee recommended the Tourism website services performed by the IT Department be expended from the Occupancy Tax Budget.

Mr. Kenny stated he was apprised at the Tourism Committee that some important information that should have been placed on the website in February still had not been added. Mr. Payne suggested this Committee recommend to the Budget Committee that the salary for this employee be funded from the Occupancy Tax Budget. In response to an inquiry by Mr. Kenny, Mr. Metthe reiterated the RFP's for Tourism website services came in around \$100,000 and the 2008 IT Budget requested reimbursement from the Tourism Department for the same services in the amount of \$40,000; however, he said, the Budget Committee reduced his request by \$25,000, to a total of \$15,000. Mr. Payne advised that the Tourism Director proposed funding the salary of this particular IT employee from Occupancy Tax funds in exchange for his full-time commitment to the Tourism website. Mr. Metthe reported the workload to maintain the Tourism website had far exceeded the original request from two years ago. Mr. Kenny stated there was a \$600,000 increase in Occupancy Tax funds for 2007, compared to 2006, and he suggested utilizing some of those funds to assist the IT Department.

In summation, Mr. Metthe said the Budget Committee reduced their revenue while his Department continued to operate at the same staffing level without having the necessary funds to hire additional help, which had created a hardship in some areas. Mr. Kenny responded the County was currently in a hiring freeze and he did not believe any of the Supervisors would support employing additional staff; however, he said, the Committee could recommend various funding options. Mr. Metthe commented there had to be some balance, as it was almost impossible for him to assign an IT employee exclusively to one Department. While Mr. Kenny concurred with the IT Director, he said, the Tourism website should be their number one priority.

Mr. Payne indicated that he became involved when the Tourism Director approached him regarding the fishing information that had not been placed on the website until a couple weeks after their season opened on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Metthe stated it had always been the practice of the IT Department to perform any requests based on priority. He said his Department was asked to perform work for the Tourism website only to be presented with numerous changes the following day that involved a tremendous amount of work. Messrs. Kenny and Goodspeed queried when the changes would be made and the information

posted on the website. Mr. Metthe answered it could take a couple days. Mr. Kenny asked Mr. Payne to review this matter with Ms. Johnson so the IT Director had this information as soon as possible. Mr. Payne asked if it was the desire of the Committee to amend the IT and Tourism Department Budgets, to include additional revenue to the IT Budget. Mr. Kenny responded that he did not have any difficulty with that suggestion, although he may want to discuss it with the Budget Officer first. Mr. Metthe reminded the Committee that he had recently lost his Business Analyst, which necessitated him having to pay overtime to his other staff members. He commented that he recently learned from the County Attorney that this particular webmaster position could not work overtime.

A brief discussion ensued.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Strainer to transfer \$35,000 from the Occupancy Tax Budget to the IT Budget for reimbursement and future costs in 2008 relating to the Tourism website. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.* (Subsequent to the meeting it was determined that this request would be tabled until the June 11<sup>th</sup> Finance Committee meeting pending additional information.)

Mr. Metthe noted he would be submitting a bill to the Tourism Department for IT services next week.

Mr. Strainer asked Mr. Metthe how he prioritized the County IT projects as tourism was extremely important to the County and this information should have been on the website. He further stated that although he was not familiar with the amount of time expended on some of these projects, the presentation given by the Tourism Department yesterday was extremely well done. He said he understood the County previously paid an outside organization \$100,000 to perform this job, which the IT Department had assumed; however, he questioned what other projects were more important. In response to a query by Mr. Strainer relative to the number of employees that were in the IT Department, Mr. Metthe replied nine. Mr. Strainer further asked if that was the average number of employees for a County of this size and Mr. Metthe said it was low and added that a significant portion of any IT Budget involved salaries and the Washington County IT Budget was twice the size of Warren County and they had a \$400,000 project this year.

Based on the current discussions, Mr. Girard suggested giving Mr. Metthe the opportunity to compile this information and report back to the Committee at a subsequent meeting. While it was not the intention of this Committee to run the IT Department, he said, he would like to know how they operated; how the priorities were determined; and what the problems were. Mr. Metthe responded there were 35 County Departments and they attempted to identify every project; however, he said, at this particular time, all other projects had been put aside allowing the Tourism Department to receive top priority. He asked how long he was expected to continue operating his Department in this manner,

when there were other projects and Departments that needed attention as well. When he agreed to assume this responsibility, he said, he was told by the prior Budget Officer that he would receive assistance, only to have his request significantly reduced during the budget process. In addition, he stated, when they began maintaining the Tourism website, they (Tourism Department) requested 30 percent of their manpower and now they were asking for 100 percent. Furthermore, some of the requests by the Tourism Department did not appear critical; however, he said, they continued to give them priority over other Departments.

Mr. Payne noted salaried employees were not paid overtime. Mr. Metthe indicated that this employee worked additional hours on his own time, carried a tremendous workload, was extremely skilled and knowledgeable and was being paid an extremely low salary (\$38,000). He further articulated that the Tourism Department's kids page required almost twelve pages of computer language with detailed spaces and letters and the Tourism Department now requested major modifications that involved a significant amount of time.

Mr. Strainer asked Mr. Metthe to explain the chart on page 2 of the agenda. Mr. Metthe responded there were 700 users on the telecommunications system; they maintained 60 network/infrastructure systems; they were responsible for 45 vendor software systems; they wrote approximately 100 custom software programs from scratch; and they had knowledge of and assisted with 55 State software systems.

Mr. Goodspeed stated he made great use of the paper data on the Real Property site and he queried whether Mr. Metthe had seen any trends in other counties whereby they were putting historical information on that site, as well as the overall records of the County Clerk. He said he had read some articles about computerized filing and he asked whether other counties had started to include historical data on their County website. Mr. Metthe apprised there was information from the Historian and County Clerk that they anticipated adding to the County website and within the next couple of days, the new tax assessment rolls would be included as well.

A brief discussion ensued after which Mr. Girard suggested adjourning the meeting since discussion on the agenda had been completed. Mr. Goodspeed commented that according to the minutes, he had attended the previous meeting of the IT Committee.

There being no further business, on motion by Mr. Goodspeed and seconded by Mr. Stec, Mr. Girard adjourned the meeting at 11:25 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra L. Schreiber, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist