

Technology Committee  
January 19, 2011 – 4:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Veitch; Supervisors Raymond, Barrett, Daly, Southworth, Hellwig, Kemper, Lawler and Kingsbury; Spencer Hellwig, County Administrator; Press.

Chairman Veitch called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.

Chairman Veitch announced the appointment of Ms. Daly as the Vice-Chairman of the Technology Committee.

Mr. Veitch said his first experience in trying to deal with technology at the county was when he wanted to use his laptop, that is issued from the county, at his seat in the boardroom. He was given an IP address by Mr. Kingsbury that was connected to the data port at his desk, and in trying to get the computer to work with the IP address that he was given, it didn't work very well and he was not able to connect to the Internet. Mr. Veitch said the county has a static IP system, which is a ten to twelve year old technology for IP addresses. Most IP's today are dynamic IP addresses, where when you connect your computer it just plugs in and it is assigned an IP address automatically. You don't have to program the computer to recognize what IP address is in the data port, he said.

Mr. Veitch said in another regard, the Public Safety Committee was working the on reverse 911 system, and companies came into the committee room to show the committee what they could do. The first thing they asked for was, can we connect our computer to the Internet in this room? Mr. Veitch said he had to tell them no, that we didn't have a data port in the committee room. Today the reverse 911 system is built on an Internet system so you have to be connected to the Internet in order to type in the message that you want. They wanted to test the system that the county was going to purchase and they were unable to do so.

Mr. Veitch said the county doesn't really have an up to date system that will serve people coming in for presentations, supervisors as well as the public.

Mr. Veitch said several supervisors discussed the need to upgrade the facilities. The idea was brought to the incoming Chairman, Mr. Wood, requesting a Technology Committee that would be assigned to study and

look at the county's needs to work in a more efficient way, hopefully save money and also serve the public better.

Mr. Veitch said there are several things that the committee will be looking at, and this is a pretty far-reaching task. He said four or five department heads have already approached him with requests. This is not just one department or area, it will be opened up to the whole county operation to see what we can do, where improvements can be made, and try to prioritize what is most important.

Mr. Veitch said the county is in the process of building a state of the art chip plant, one of the biggest in world and most highly advanced companies here and in the county, and in our own committee room there isn't even a data port. There will be a cost investment to make improvements, however, there will be ways that can be explored to recoup some of the costs, as well as in personnel time and energy save the money that we would be spending to improve our technology.

Mr. Veitch suggested looking at the time card process, i.e. upgrades to the email system, what kind of PC's the county has, how old are they and what should be replaced, and find opportunities for sale and reuse of old equipment. He suggested that possibly some of the towns may be able to use some of the old equipment.

Mr. Lawler said the county prides itself on fiscal conservatism. It is timely that we take a look and see what improvements can be done that are cost effective and are going to have a benefit to the taxpayer. We have been wise to sit back a little and let technology shake out. The price of technology drops substantially over time as it comes out. This is a perfect time to take a look and use a financially cautious approach. Make no mistake, for an organization of this size, this is an expensive undertaking.

Mr. Kemper said their time card system is wall mounted and when someone comes in they are assigned a card where they pull a lever down and it stamps it. Individuals clock out when they come in, leave on lunch break and come back in, and leave for the day. All this is done with a manual punch. After corrections are made, the time cards are then entered into the AS-400 system. There is then a printout that occurs from there, and goes back to Mr. Kemper who verifies that everything is okay. It then goes back up to the employees to verify that all the sick time is correct, and then finally punched back permanently into the AS-400 system, and Mr. Kemper signs off on it

one last time. The system is manual and antiquated, with approximately four steps in the process taking approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete.

Ms. Raymond asked if this was done once a week? Mr. Kemper said it is done every ten days. Ms. Raymond asked what the lead-time was from the time of the final entry until they need it at payroll? Mr. Kemper said it is submitted the Thursday before payroll. Ms. Raymond asked if Mr. Kemper ever ran into problems where there were failures and systems were down and there is a probability that you might not be able to get it in on time? Mr. Kemper said it is cumbersome, but it hasn't caused an issue.

Mr. Veitch said the system is a very old, and we could take a little bit of the expense out of buying the tie cards, and the time that it takes to process it if we had a swipe card system or some other way of doing it. This is just one opportunity out of many at the county that we should look at how to improve the system and make it more efficient. Potentially, it may save some time in the Personnel Department with having to verify things.

Mr. Barrett said, there is no doubt that technology costs money. In Clifton Park we have invested some of the ideas that came from Mr. Kemper. It has greatly increased productivity to the point where even with additional workload there wasn't a need for added personnel. Approximately three years ago the town had a serious SPAM problem. The technology consultant was called and with some very simple and quick upgrades the SPAM issue was resolved. There are some things that are pretty inexpensive to not only increase productivity, but to protect the system from SPAM and other potential problems.

Mr. Lawler asked if every county employee has county email? Mr. Kingsbury said, no.

Mr. Lawler said a good place to start is to get some sense of where we are technologically. We need to give some idea of what the return on the investment would be because if you are spending money on technology it has got to be with some tangible benefit back, and that benefit can be cost savings, better service to constituents, etc. This is probably going to be a multi-year project of investment and renewal, and maybe this committee will find a permanent home on the committee list because technology is a critical part of what we have in our lives every day.

Mr. Veitch said in the technology world upgrades and changes happen faster. Fifteen years ago you might have been able to do something in one year and the upgrade didn't have to happen for a few years. Today the upgrade is within two or three years. For example, the county website was a fantastic job when it was put together, but it has only been a few years and we are ready to look at it again to see how to upgrade and update it because that world changes so fast.

Mr. Barrett said the website is a great site, but we are not utilizing it to its fullest. Instances where there are better and more offerings from the website will make it easier for Saratoga County residents to interact with government, which is the whole reason for having a website.

Mr. Veitch said we are at the point where it is timely, in that there may be a more permanent home for this committee at some point going forward.

Ms. Raymond said it is important that there is an inventory of what is out there, and what the capabilities are in each and every office. A lot of the offices have systems that came from the State. We need to know what can we do within those systems, can we provide an internal email address, can we have external email? Some of those systems are closed because of security reasons. The next step to build on that is to get some input from each department. We need to become a little more standardized. There are certain key people that must have external email. It is very important that we look at what departments need to talk to each other. There have been stories of systems going down, and not having redundancy, sometimes taking a long time to get systems back up. If people are depending on that technology to do their job, you can't say it will be ten days before the part comes in.

Ms. Raymond said if you have the software, whether you got it because someone gave it to you, you received a grant or purchased it, but you don't have the backup hardware, storage, and technology you need to properly use it, the software is wasted. Long term, there are places that it would be nice if certain departments and the towns could get in, even if it was just on a read only basis.

Ms. Daly said as work was done through the Personnel subcommittee there were several positions that were listed as clerk/typist. There were many positions whose job descriptions were such that these people were at that time a clerk/typist. Many of those positions have been put on hold as a

recommendation of the committee, pending some kind of attention from the Technology Committee to address how are we currently doing business, and what is the roll of a clerk/typist.

Ms. Daly suggested that the committee may want to look at having a consultant come in after taking inventory and receiving feedback from department heads, and offer some of the positions and departments advise on what could be done differently. We do use web-based programs in some departments and there are many other opportunities that we could look at in the future. Some of the families, whether they are a family member of someone in Maplewood Manor or if they have someone involved in another services industry, if there was a way that you could log into their file and get an update of how things are going using a password system, that would be a tremendous service. We are currently servicing residents that do not have family members around who may want to connect back with us in some fashion.

Mr. Barrett asked Mr. Kemper if he had a copier with a scanner? Mr. Kemper said his office has a scanner that is used for many departments. Mr. Barrett asked if there were any copiers in the county that scan? Mr. Veitch said, possibly.

Mrs. Southworth said that is something we should look as we look at equipment replacement. A lot of us instead of upgrading printers and buying new printers we just print to the copier. If the copier is in a strategic location you are going to save on a lot of printing costs and printer maintenance because it is a lot cheaper to print at a copier than it is on a printer.

Ms. Raymond said the county has had a policy for a long time of not having very many copiers, so many people are probably using their printers and faxes for copies.

Mr. Lawler said faxes are antiquated. Most technologically forward-looking companies have the fax go directly to the computer through email.

Mr. Lawler asked if there was any money in the 2011 operating budget to support recommendations from this committee or to hire a consultant?

Mr. Hellwig said, yes there is a data users account that we use during the year if a department has a request that they don't have money in their budget

for. The board historically would approve the transfer from that account into their budget. A total of \$30,000 was placed in that account this year. Historically, it has been \$60,000.

Mr. Lawler said a lot of what may get done is simply identifying what needs to be done. It may become an issue for Long Range Capital Planning to put a Technology Capital budget together with a depreciation schedule of how technology will be financed going forward. This is not only a technology change, it is a cultural change, which is harder to do than bringing in the technology. If this committee were to do some of the things that we think need to be done, it is going to have a dramatic impact on the people. Change is always tough, so as we look at these things this is one of the things that will have to be managed. One of the biggest wastes today, is software that is never used because of the learning curve.

Mr. Lawler asked if the county had a technology training budget or training staff? Mr. Kingsbury said there is one person. Mr. Lawler asked how many employees are in the county? Mr. Kingsbury said there are 1,200 employees and 350 personal computers.

Ms. Raymond said some of the larger counties have some pretty advanced stuff. Before you invent a wheel, you might as well look at the wheel that another person has spent a lot of time inventing. There may be technologies that none of us are aware of that exist for government operations. NYSAC also has a technology person on staff, she said.

Mr. Lawler asked if the county has a disaster recovery plan? Mr. Kingsbury said, the county has a contract with a site that will get hardware to us within a four-hour response time for the AS400 and servers. Currently there are thirteen stand alone departmental servers throughout the county.

Mr. Lawler asked where would this company that is going to bring its hardware in four hours, put it. Mr. Kingsbury said whatever building is left standing. The only thing we will need is power and connectivity. Mr. Lawler said that may be a tangible something that we can do because that is true planning and an immediate exposure and risk

Mr. Lawler asked where all the data is kept? Mr. Kingsbury said we keep backups in a safe in the main complex, separate from the backups that are kept across the street. If you are going to make a to do list, perhaps a disaster recovery plan could be on that list, he said.

Mr. Lawler said the committee should take a look at how each county department would function if we had to create an alternative information-processing center?

Mr. Lawler asked if the site had ever been called to see if they would show up in four hours? Mr. Kingsbury said, no. He said one time they were called and then they weren't needed. He clarified by saying the four-hour response time is they calling us back; it isn't necessarily shipping the equipment in four hours. Mr. Lawler said we would like to know how long we would be down, and what would be the critical window for other departments, such as how long can they be without access to their computer systems before their critical functions are compromised. If we don't know that, then that is something we should know.

Ms. Raymond asked if the contract was with a company that is going to bring equipment or is it going to bring equipment and then reconstruct what we have. Mr. Kingsbury said they would just be bringing the equipment.

Mr. Lawler said we might need more resources by the time we are done with this. It is our nature to be careful with the money we spend, and it has served our constituents very well. As we move forward, we may find out that we have to give people more resources to get them to do what we think should be done, and what is the best practice.

Mrs. Southworth said focus on the critical functions first. Disaster Recovery is important and obviously you need the treasurer's office up and functioning. They need to be the primary focus and then you move out from there.

Ms. Daly said she has certain agencies or other organizations that will email her meeting notifications and requests and if she chooses to accept it, it will automatically go to the blackberry. She suggested that perhaps the new Clerk of the Board could begin to do that with the Board of Supervisors meetings.

Mr. Kemper said many department heads have expressed to him problems with SPAM email. Currently, he is receiving approximately 80 to 100 SPAM emails a day. The email program that is being used is three to four years old, he said.

Mr. Barrett said with any capital investment of any type that we look to put in next years budget, and also with any money that is expended, scheduled to be expended or proposed to be expended there should be a definitive savings tied to the money that would be spent. The SPAM problems should be resolved now, he said.

Mr. Lawler said he would suggest going beyond just the SPAM and look at security protocol. He asked if some ideas could be presented at the next meeting.

Mr. Kingsbury said, right now the county email is hosted by a place in Virginia, which went along with the package when it was bought through ICOM Systems. The District Attorney's office has a unique problem because of the words that they have to let through as opposed to the things that you want to block.

Mr. Veitch outlined the following priorities:

- Email System - should be looked at now. Research the email SPAM filter and calendar function. Mr. Veitch asked Mr. Kemper to get a new quote ready to present to the next Technology Meeting.
- Inventory of what we have
- Look at each department for requests and needs that they have
- Long Range Capital Planning and Technology
- Emergency Preparedness – Disaster Recovery Plan

Mr. Kemper asked Mr. Kingsbury how many computer viruses he receives in a month? Mr. Kingsbury said his office spends approximately three days a week just cleaning up viruses off computers.

Mr. Kingsbury said discussions have taken place with regard to having an appliance to filter websites. He said a hardware device was found at a cost of approximately \$3,300/ea. He said the county has nine separate roadrunner connections. The system could be customized, he said.

**On a motion made by Ms. Raymond, seconded by Mr. Barrett the meeting was adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Chris Sansom