

**MINUTES
VILLAGE OF CUYAHOGA HEIGHTS
COUNCIL WORKSHOP
MAY 24, 2017
6:00 PM**

ROLL CALL: BIRO BLOAM DUSZYNSKI HARRIS HENLEY SCHOEFFLER

NEW FINANCE PROGRAM – VIP SOFTWARE

Ms. Duszynski introduced Mr. Kevin Nye from Software Solutions, to give Council a presentation on the new VIP program being considered for the Finance Department. Mr. Nye thanked Council for inviting him, and proceeded to show how the new computer program will enhance our Finance & Payroll reporting.

Mr. Nye explained that the software program that we currently use, eGov, is also their product, but the VIP Program is the company's updated new software. The current software that we are using is over 12 years old, and the VIP program is replacing eGov.

Mr. Nye said that when we originally purchased our eGov program, it was through RITA, and they supported the program for all the communities. Purchasing the new VIP program, we will no longer be supported by RITA, but we will now be supported by his company, Software Solutions. Currently, there is a monthly fee of \$1,700.00 for the RITA support with eGov, and with the new VIP program supported by Software Solutions and not RITA, the monthly support fee will be \$1,400.00, a savings of \$300.00 per month.

Mr. Nye stated that the VIP system is currently being used by over 100 communities in Ohio, and then went over a number of computer screenshots that show how the VIP system could enhance the financial data reporting and information gathering in real time. He went over the many opportunities and software enhancements that it affords over the current eGov system.

Mr. Nye went over a couple of testimonials from Ohio communities that made the switch from eGov to VIP. Some of the statements made are, "It was like going from a flip phone to an I phone." "The more I use this, the more I love it." "Thanks to Software Solutions for improving the auditing process tremendously."

Council had a number of questions concerning the Software and how it would apply to our Finance Department including questions on vouchers, payroll, and security. All the questions were answered by Mr. Nye, Mr. Unger, and Ms. Meriwether.

The Mayor stated that this new program will allow us to have all of our financial information in real time. He said that currently if he needs any information, Bob or Angel will get it for him, but

sometimes it takes a lot of time, and a lot of digging. This program will give us immediate access to all information in real time.

Mr. Nye explained that the system could be set up to give the Mayor and department heads access to certain reports, so they can see their budgets and other information daily. Ms. Meriwether would have control of what every department head has access too, and be able to set it up in the system. She would be the Administrator of the system.

Ms. Duszynski asked if this new program would cut back on the staff needed in the Finance Department. Ms. Meriwether stated that we need to keep the staffing level the same, we not only do finance, but we wear many hats of responsibilities. She asked if the members of the Finance Committee would have to come in to sign the vouchers with this new program. Mr. Nye said that the vouchers could be moved into a neat and tidy report to work off of instead of the large amounts of paper you currently use. This program will actually increase the checks and balances in the finance department.

Ms. Duszynski and Mr. Schoeffler asked about the cost of this program. Mr. Nye stated that there is a onetime cost of \$83,700.00 for the software, and a yearly cost of \$14,000.00 for support. Currently we pay RITA \$20,000.00 a year for support, so there would be a yearly savings of \$6,000.00.

Ms. Biro asked what the \$83,700.00 covers. Mr. Nye said that it is for software, installation, conversion of data, and 6 months of support. Mr. Schoeffler asked if there would be yearly increases. Mr. Nye said that there will be an increase of 3%-5% yearly for the support and maintenance side, it just depends on how the economy is doing, and how many upgrades are needed during the year in order to cover our costs.

Ms. Biro asked since it is a database system, what security measures are in place for this program, because it's possible that someone could get into the server. Mr. Nye stated that everyone who uses the software has a user name and a password, which will be administered by Ms. Meriwether. She will also be able to assign them limited access, or full access to the system.

Ms. Biro asked Mr. Unger and Ms. Meriwether what our level of cyber security is with our insurance company. Ms. Meriwether said that with the new server, there will be an increase in firewalls, but currently since we have the Police Department on our fiber optics system, we have a high degree of security now. Ms. Biro told Ms. Meriwether that in the future she might want to look at increasing our liability with Love Insurance from a million, to two and a half million.

Mr. Schoeffler asked if this program was going to be a huge time saver as Mr. Nye stated will we need to adjust our staffing levels in the Finance Department, or utilize them somewhere else. Mr. Unger said that the primary function of the new program is not only to save time, but to be able to access information quickly and correctly. The finance employees are going to do the same work they do currently, but it will be faster and more accurate in order to make informed decisions.

Mayor Bacci said that this has been a struggle for Council for many years concerning the Finance Department, and can't figure out why. He said that the Finance Department is what propels our Village, our money, our finances, and to manage it efficiently and accurately, and always having the ability to answer to the Mayor, Clerk, Council, or any other person looking for information. Mr. Unger said that the Fire Department buys new ambulances every twelve years, the Police Department buys three new patrol cars every year, and the Service Department buys new lawnmowers and trucks every couple years, because these are the tools that they need to run their department. But when it comes to the Finance Department, we go for years, and no one thinks they need any new tools to do their job. This program will help us in the budgeting process, it will give us quick and accurate information, and it will help Council decide what projects they should move forward with based on finances. This is a tool that we are asking for that we have not asked for since 2005.

Ms. Biro asked if this would have to go out for bid since it was over \$50,000.00. Mr. Chojnacki believes that it is a build out and update of an existing system from RITA and he doesn't think it needs to go out for bid, but he will let Council know.

Ms. Duszynski asked if this purchase will be in this year's budget. Ms. Meriwether stated that we already have it in this year's budget under Capital Outlay, but if Council decides to move forward with the purchase, we will need to put 10% down and a onetime payment of \$37,000.00 this year, and another onetime payment of \$37,000.00 next year. Mr. Nye said that it will take up to a year to be live in the system.

Ms. Duszynski asked if the \$83,700.00 is the total cost including training. Mr. Nye said it does include everything from installation to training, and also includes six months of support as well. If you compare the costs of the current eGov system with the new VIP system, you are currently paying RITA \$20,000.00 a year for support that you will not pay them with the new VIP system, and we will give you six months of free support, then the yearly charge will only be \$14,000.00 so there is a \$6,000.00 savings every year for support and upgrades with the new VIP system.

Ms. Henley asked Ms. Meriwether if this would take a whole year to get the new system up and running. Ms. Meriwether said that is correct. If we purchase the program this summer, employees from Software Solutions that will install the system would have to come out and learn all of our processes and laws before installing the software, then we will hit the holiday season, year end, and budgeting, so we would put the process on hold for a couple of months and by the time we were ready to go live, it would be a year out from purchase. Mr. Nye explained that no one wants to implement a new system at year end or budgeting, so you will be crossing years and it would take a little more time.

Ms. Meriwether wanted Council to know that with her past employer, she implemented a new software system for the company she worked for, and integrated the whole Canadian office in the first six months that she worked for them. The Canadian office told her that they had been trying

to install the new system upgrade for the last six years, and couldn't do it. Ms. Meriwether came in, and within six months, she got it done. So she wanted Council to know that she has done this before, so this is her comfort zone. Ms. Henley said that we are lucky to have her skill set, everyone agreed. Mayor Bacci said that it is exciting to see the Finance Department moving forward with bringing the department into the 21st century, it is very exciting.

The Mayor said that this new software is great for the future of the department, and we don't have to stroke a check for \$83,000.00 this year, it is broke into two separate payments, in two different years. He said we need to start looking at the Finance Department and their needs just like we look at the Fire, Police, and Service Department. They take care of all of our money, and anything financially related, including getting everyone their paychecks. He supports this purchase for the department. He said if anyone has any more questions, you can ask Mr. Nye, Mr. Unger, Ms. Meriwether, or himself. At this time, Council had no more questions.

MAYORS REPORT

Mayor Bacci said that he brought our Engineer Mr. Sciano in to the meeting tonight to go over a chart of our five year plan for Capital Outlay. These are projects and jobs that we need to start getting ready for in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021. He said that Public Works has looked at these projects three or four times, and we have discussed them with Council at least once or twice. What we want to get Council to understand is that we are going to need about a million to a million and a half dollars yearly to get these projects done in a five year period. Unfortunately, in the past, we looked at these projects, and continually put them off for many years because of the costs. Now we want Council to consider these projects, ask questions, and commit to getting them done. Some of the projects are Bletch Court repaving, Canal Road reconstruction, Service Department parking lot, and E. 71st Street crossover on Route 21. We want to move forward with these projects, as long as the revenue is there.

Ms. Biro asked a question about passing legislation for projects that are slated in future years. Mr. Mason stated that we can have a commitment from Council that these are projects they want to do, but we will need to wait until the projects begin to pass legislation. Mr. Sciano went over the process of a project, and how sometimes it takes a long time from start to finish, and payments for the project might span two or more years. Mr. Sciano would like Council to commit to a project, and encumber the total cost so that if there are delays, the money stays in that fund to complete the project no matter how long it takes.

The Mayor stated that we need to move forward with these projects so that when we talk to our residents, or our businesses, we can tell them that we are moving forward with all these upgrades

to our Village, and they can see the costs that we are incurring. In the five year plan, we will spend an average of a million and a half dollars every year on projects.

Ms. Biro understands the commitment of this Council moving forward, and also that we can't make legislation for the future, the only thing we must realize is that at any point in time the bottom can drop out of the economy and we must be able to certify the funds are available at that time. The Mayor had this conversation with Ms. Meriwether this morning, we need to be vigilant in watching our revenue and expenses on a daily basis, and this new VIP program that we hope to implement will help us to do just that. He understands that if the economy takes a dive we will need to back off our plan and readjust.

Ms. Harris asked the Mayor hypothetically, if we don't use the funds allocated for a project in the year we allocate it, can it be used for another purpose in the next year. Mayor Bacci said that the money will continue to stay in the fund for the project moving into the next year, unless there is a major emergency. Mr. Sciano explained that in some instances, the money continues to stay in the fund because it crosses over years because there are many stages in the project, especially when working with ODOT.

The Route 21 bridge replacement has been in the process for the last five years. An engineer that worked on it for five years is just starting to see actual work being done this year. It takes time for projects to move forward. Same thing with the Village projects. We plan for them, but actual construction might not begin for another year or two, but we need to plan this year if we are going to be moving forward with them in future years.

Ms. Duszynski asked Engineer Sciano if he looked at Willowbrook Drive to see if it needed any work. He said that the street itself is in good shape, mainly because it gets no truck traffic, but there is a storm sewer at the end of the street that needs some attention. She also asked about the cost of the parking lot project at the Service Department on the five year list. She said last time they were considering the project, it was 300 to 350 thousand, and now it is 400 thousand. Is this because of rising costs? Mr. Sciano said that it is not only from rising costs, but since Dave Sammons has taken over at the Service Department, he has a different view of the project as we move forward.

Ms. Biro asked Ms. Meriwether which fund all of the projects will be run through. She said it would be the 412 Capital Projects Fund. She also asked Mr. Mason if he could look into other creative ways to borrow money, to see if there is something out there that we are not using.

Mr. Sciano asked to address Council concerning the Canal Road Project. We talked about a DOPWIC project last year from E. 71st to Valley View and Garfield, we were successful and we got \$250,000.00 grant for the first phase in 2018. The Mayor said that we will continue to keep Council updated on all the projects that we are looking at for the future.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Duszynski made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Harris. All in favor, none opposed.
Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.