

COUNCIL MINUTES

September 7, 2000

The City Council of the City of Mesa met in a Technology Briefing Session at the South Center Street Campus, 200 South Center Street, on September 7, 2000 at 9:25 a.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Keno Hawker
Jim Davidson
Pat Pomeroy
Claudia Walters
Mike Whalen

COUNCIL ABSENT

Bill Jaffa
Dennis Kavanaugh

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson

Mayor Hawker excused Councilmembers Jaffa and Kavanaugh from the meeting.

1. Introductions.

General Services Manager Rich Lorig welcomed the Council to the Information Services Division (ISD) and presented a brief overview of the Division's responsibilities. Mr. Lorig explained that ISD provides the major link for all information technology and also is an integral component within General Services Administration in acquiring data relative to communications, telephone services and information technology. Mr. Lorig introduced the panel participants.

2. Overview of ISD.

Information Services Director Karen Kille stated that it is the goal of ISD to deliver and support quality information technology services to all customers; collaborate with its customers to enable them to achieve their missions; provide reliable and timely information technology services; enhance services by tracking, identifying and implementing technology, and associate costs with the services provided and thus improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of the City's operations.

Ms. Kille commented that ISD currently receives approximately 60,000 "hits" per day on the City's web page and roughly 300,000 daily transactions on the City's mainframe system; the fact that ISD provides technical support to all City departments and applications; the fact that a business contingency plan has been implemented in an effort to protect and recover the City's mainframe system in the event of a major disaster, and the fact that as part of the City's daily billing process, ISD runs backup files which are stored off site.

Ms. Kille indicated that for the past two years, ISD's primary focus has been the potential Y2K disaster and the modification and/or replacement of the City's existing applications to ensure operability into the new millennium. Ms. Kille stated that this year, as a result of input from City departments, ISD has compiled a list of wide-ranging projects ranked in order of priority, including such topics as the implementation of the Citizen Contact System, Customer Information System (CIS), Business Contingency Services, a pilot project for Citywide Intranet usage and various Capital Improvement Projects.

3. Key Technology Issues.

Mr. Lorig provided the Council with a brief synopsis of "e-government." Mr. Lorig explained that the purpose of e-government is to enhance citizen communication and participation in government, to provide access to information, services and people, and to improve City responsiveness and customer service. Mr. Lorig noted that the primary objectives of e-government include the ability to extend the availability of information and services beyond the normal hours and to non-traditional locations; to enhance operational efficiency or cost reduction; to improve the responsiveness of government and generate revenue, and to provide citizens greater opportunities for input and involvement.

In response to a question from Councilmember Whalen, Ms. Kille clarified that the Mesa Public Library has personal computers which can be utilized by citizens to access the Internet. City Manager Mike Hutchinson remarked that it is the goal of the City to provide greater public access to computers in venues such as senior centers, libraries and public buildings.

Ms. Kille said that potential government online services include the payment of library fines and utility bills; registration for classes, team sports and park facilities; applying for permits; providing input or participation of Council forums, and obtaining service at the convenience of the individual. Ms. Kille noted that e-government will allow City employees to share information interdepartmentally and complete forms online; access personnel information/benefits management; conduct surveys, feedback and polls; complete expense reports and education requests, and allow individual employees the opportunity to create a personalized view of City services.

Technical Support Analyst Paul Calebaugh presented the Council with a brief explanation of the terms "Intranet," "Internet" and the "World Wide Web." Mr. Calebaugh explained that the Intranet is the transport, the physical layer connected around the globe; the World Wide Web represents a system of delivery over the Internet, and the Intranet travels over a physical architecture but is an internal system. Mr. Calebaugh said that one of the major priorities of ISD is the development of a Citywide Intranet system which would be utilized solely by City of Mesa employees and would be inaccessible to the public.

Senior Project and Services Leader Shirl Butler stated that currently, the City website offers employees access to e-mail and the World Wide Web; provides citizens the ability to contact elected, appointed and staff personnel, and allows library patrons to renew books. Mr. Butler added that the proposed Internet initiatives include Parks registration, increased citizen contact, ISD Intranet, Customer Information System (CIS) and added that the City website will continue to undergo revisions including GIS and interactive maps. Mr. Butler noted that future Internet projects include citizen voting, the creation of City Council agendas and the routing of background documents, and access to e-mail from anywhere. Mr. Butler discussed additional

suggestions including interagency sharing of criminal activity and patterns; access to collections information and images at the Southwest Museum; paperless processes from the inception of a Purchase Order to payment, and the review and payment of court and library fines.

(Councilmembers Pomeroy and Whalen left the Technology Briefing at 10:30 a.m.)

4. Key Technology Issue: Standardization.

Senior Project and Services Leader Dale Shaw informed the Council that in 1997, the City began the standardization of the City computer environment and noted that the purpose of standardization is to achieve and maintain a common computing environment with City systems and devices which communicate with each other. Mr. Shaw noted that the benefits of standardization include the ability to optimize economies of scale in purchasing, the ability to enhance information-sharing among departments and also the reduction in the total cost of ownership including support and training costs. Mr. Shaw added that through standardization, ISD has instituted new support tools, including remote support service and also electronic software distribution which has been beneficial in the reduction of computer viruses. Mr. Shaw said that in the future, ISD will be exploring new web browser-based technology, simplification “plug and play” of the personal computer, faster data delivery and emerging technologies such as video conferencing and PC-based telephony.

5. Key Management Issues: Technical Staff Retention.

Senior Project and Services Leader Wendy Saadi provided the Council with a brief overview of the challenges facing ISD relative to the acquisition and retention of competent technical staff. Ms. Saadi explained that one of the primary obstacles municipalities face is attracting qualified information technology candidates due to the fact that private industry offers higher salaries and more competitive benefits packages.

Ms. Saadi stated that in an effort to attract and keep qualified individuals, the department has instituted new policies including more staff participation in the decision-making process, the creation of cross-functional teams that meet on a weekly basis and discuss division-wide issues and participate in teamwork training and the development of interpersonal skills.

Ms. Saadi also noted that in an effort to enhance the staff’s career opportunities and technical growth, ISD has adopted a policy of promoting from within the department and enlisting individuals who are interested in career advancement. Ms. Saadi added that ISD currently is working in conjunction with the Personnel Department to streamline 27 technical job classifications down to 8 categories, whereby ISD’s staff will have the opportunity to shift from one position to another without the necessity of the formal submission of job applications and promotional recruitment. Ms. Saadi remarked that it is imperative that Mesa recruits and retains a qualified technical staff to accomplish the goals and objectives that have been discussed in this briefing.

Mr. Hutchinson notified the Council that the Personnel Department has been requested to address the issue of how to most effectively attract qualified technical workers to the City and also potential salary range adjustments relative to such positions.

Mayor Hawker requested additional input from staff regarding the feasibility of placing computer kiosks in Fiesta Mall and the implementation of higher priority alternatives.

Mayor Hawker thanked the staff for their presentation.

7. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Technology Briefing Session adjourned at 10:50 a.m.

KENO HAWKER, MAYOR

ATTEST:

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Technology Briefing of the City Council of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 7th day of September, 2000. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Dated this ____ day of _____ 2000

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

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