

REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION

Date: April 23, 2012
Item No.: 13.b

Department Approval

City Manager Approval

W. J. Mahonen

Item Description: Discuss Electronic Meeting Packets

BACKGROUND

The City prints and posts council meeting materials prior to each council meeting. It is a time consuming and costly process.

Numerous cities, counties and school boards in Minnesota are taking advantage of new technologies to get information to elected officials and citizens. They have eliminated printed packets and instead rely on electronic devices at council meetings.

Staff has researched several options for tablet type devices. There are many options, each with advantages and disadvantages, mainly around compatibility with city-based programs. Most tablets or notebooks have programs or applications that can be purchased to ameliorate those concerns. Additionally, transitioning to electronic media supports the city's commitment to reduce our environmental impact.

POLICY OBJECTIVE

Provide complete, accurate and timely council packets to city councilmembers and to the public in a cost effective manner while practicing good environmental stewardship.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

The council has approximately 30 meetings per year. It costs approximately \$2,300 per year to print five packets for each meeting. This includes the cost of paper (35 and 40 reams of paper) and the cost of printing equipment. In addition to the print cost, the City collectively spends about 180 hours (more than \$4,500 staff time) annually to print and collate packets and to have a Community Services Officer deliver the packets. In total we devote approximately \$7,000 per year to produce paper-based information packets

Tablets, notebooks and laptops starts at around \$500. Peripherals and applications add to the cost.

If the Council decides to use electronic meeting packets, the Council has several options to make electronic devices available to Councilmembers

1. City purchases devices.
2. City compensates councilmembers for the purchase (reimbursement or pay increase).
3. Councilmembers bear the full cost of purchasing electronic device, applications and peripherals.

Each option has advantages and disadvantages.

1. If the City purchases devices, we would purchase certain types of tablets to make it easier to access city-generated materials. Councilmembers would not have a choice about the device that best meets their preferences. If a device is lost, broken or stolen, the City would be financially responsible to replace or repair it. There are also questions about who “owns” the device, and whether it could be used for personal reasons (checking email).
2. Councilmembers could be compensated for a required purchase. In this option, Councilmembers would purchase a device of their choosing and would be able to use for personal reasons. Once the Councilmember left office he/she would retain ownership. Devices would have to be compatible with city programs/technology. If a device was lost, broken or stolen, the Councilmember would be financially responsible to replace or repair it. If a Councilmember leaves office before his/her term is completed, he/she would be expected to reimburse the City at a pro-rated rate.
3. Councilmembers could purchase a device of their choosing and would have full rights of ownership. They could use it for personal reasons as well as use it for council meetings. If a device was lost, broken or stolen, the Councilmember would be financially responsible to replace or repair it, even if they were using it for official city business. The City would have no input over compatibility with accessing city-generated materials.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Discuss the value of moving to electronic meeting packets.

Discuss options to pay for or reimburse councilmembers for purchase of electronic device.

REQUESTED COUNCIL ACTION

Discuss the value of moving to electronic meeting packets.

Discuss options to pay for or reimburse councilmembers for purchase of electronic device.

Prepared by: William J. Malinen

Attachments: A: None