

CITY OF FORT SASKATCHEWAN

Electronic Meeting Management

Motions:

That Council:

1. authorize Administration to enter into an agreement with eSCRIBE for new Electronic Meeting Management system; and
2. approve the one-time implementation fee and subscription cost of \$22,175 for 2017, to be funded from the Financial Stabilization Reserve.

Purpose:

To provide Council with an update and information on the proposed next steps for the City's Electronic Meeting Management system.

Background:

The City purchased the current Electronic Meeting Management system, SIRE in June 2012 and started providing video streaming to the public in May 2014. The SIRE software has a number of components, such as video streaming, electronic voting, automated minute and agenda development, and workflow.

When the City was implementing the various SIRE software components, we were advised that Hyland Software acquired SIRE Technologies Inc. At that time, there were no concerns with this change because it was Hyland Software's intention to transition the SIRE meeting management system to a new platform called OnBase. Hyland Software has transitioned some of the SIRE components onto the new platform, leaving the City unable to fully utilize the entire new system. This has created challenges for Administration, due to specific components and processes being unavailable for use. The following are examples of the challenges that exist:

- Streaming video to mobile devices: this has created frustration for the public who commonly use mobile devices for streaming.
- Workflow: this component improves efficiency by providing electronic management of agenda report preparation and approval.
- Without being able to obtain the outstanding component, the City is unable to properly update the equipment.
- Resulting from SIRE's inability to stay current, the system routinely experiences error messages, during and post Council meetings. Fortunately, this has not yet resulted in a loss of data or video footage.
- Using the current software, the Legislative Officer is required to use three different software programs to conduct a Council meeting. This can at times create challenges due to technical difficulties.
- Public who use new computing systems are unable to access the streaming, as one of the required software systems currently used for viewing SIRE is obsolete.
- Internet Browsers, such as Chrome and Firefox cannot be used. SIRE is only compatible with Internet Explorer and Windows 10 or lower.

The City has been waiting for the final component of the SIRE software since April 2015. Hyland Software recognizes the frustrations that its customers are experiencing, and is aware that alternatives are being considered.

Similar to SIRE, the eSCRIBE Electronic Meeting Management also contains a number of components, such as meeting and legislative management; meeting templates; workflow for agenda items; electronic voting; agenda and minute preparation; flexible video streaming and archiving; tracking and reporting post-meeting statistics and actions.

The benefits of changing to the eSCRIBE Electronic Meeting Management system have been noted below:

- The software system is current and fully functioning;
- Has a proven record within a number of other municipalities in Canada;
- Provides flexibility in editing, for both live during Council meetings and with post meeting processes;
- the ability to easily stream Council meetings on portable devices;
- eSCRIBE is a Canadian company, and is used by a number of municipalities in Canada, including municipalities in the Capital Region.
- All of its content is cloud-based and is managed and stored in Canada;
- Similar to SIRE, eSCRIBE includes a number of components, all of which are available and ready to use upon installation.
- ESCRIBE representatives have indicated that they will provide the City with an encoder, which is the only new equipment needed to operate the system. The program works with the use of an iPad, so the 7 laptops currently used by members of Council will be added to the IT equipment assets.
- ESCRIBE is compatible with the City's records management software, Laserfiche.
- Using the Workflow component, all agenda document templates and approvals could be done electronically, increasing efficiency for Administration.
- Able to use the equipment currently in place.

In summary, SIRE provided the City with an introduction to electronic meeting management, however the system has not been able to maintain an expected operating level. Moving forward, it is important to consider the functionality of the system, ease of use for members of Council, the public, and Administration. The current system is not meeting the needs of Administration, and a number of comments from the public have been received regarding the incompatibility and usability of the system.

Financial Impacts:

Currently, the annual maintenance fee for SIRE is \$10,700, plus costs associated with the purchase of any equipment.

The subscription price for 2017 has been reduced to reflect the timing within the year, for a total of \$22,175 (\$12,050 subscription fee and \$10,125 one-time implementation fee). Funding is recommended to be taken from the Financial Stabilization Reserve. In subsequent years, the annual subscription amount is anticipated to be \$24,100, which would be incorporated into the IT Department's annual budget.

The City will not need to purchase any additional equipment to get the new system operational. eSCRIBE will provide any necessary equipment, and members of Council will already have access to iPads, which is the device required for this system.

Next Steps:

Should Council support this request to move forward with eSCRIBE, finalization of the agreement and staff training would take place in the fall of 2017. The expectation would be to have the system operational for the next term of Council.

Recommendation:

That Council:

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