

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

Meeting Date: 07/24/06		Item Number: <u>A-2</u>	
AGENDA ITEM: Discussion of Purchase of Laptops for Use by the City Council			
Contact Person/Dept.: Martin R. Cole, Assistant City Manager		Phone Number: (310) 253-6000	
Fiscal Impact: Yes ☒ No ☐		General Fund: Yes ☒ No ☐	
Public Hearing: ☐		Action Item: ☒	Attachments: ☒
Public Notification: Master Notification List (07/19/06)			
Department Approval: Martin R. Cole (07/19/06)		City Manager Approval: Jerry B. Fulwood (07/19/06)	
City Controller Approval: Marlee Chang (07/19/06)			

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council discuss the purchase of laptops for use by the City Council and direct staff as deemed appropriate.

BACKGROUND:

The transmission of information has become an increasingly rapid and electronic process, especially in this age of ever-shrinking pocket-sized devices that connect people with data and each other via the internet in almost every area on Earth. Information which once took months to reach distant places is now received in a matter of seconds.

On June 13, 2006, Councilmember Rose requested the City Council to discuss the prospect of purchasing laptops for use by the City Council. Therefore, this item is presented to City Council this evening.

DISCUSSION:

Providing information to the City Council is one of the primary roles of staff. Through the use of e-mail, staff is able to provide the Council with up-to-the minute information on various issues in a format that allows the Council to retrieve that information at a time convenient for each Councilmember. Additionally, at times when Councilmembers may be away from their homes/offices, use of e-mail allows Members to retrieve information at places where, only a few years ago, might not have been accessible at all.

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The purchase of laptops for use by the City Council presents several positive opportunities. These include (but are not limited to):

- Providing the Councilmembers with a laptop configured and maintained by the City's Information Technology Division to ensure standardized software and hardware to facilitate connection with the City's servers;
- The ability to distribute to all five Councilmembers information at the same time and in the same format in a more rapid manner;
- The ability of Councilmembers to travel with the laptop, thereby allowing the Councilmembers to retrieve data in a place and at a time convenient to the City Councilmembers; and,
- The prospect of providing the City Council Agenda Packet to the City Council in a format that conserves both natural (paper and energy), human (staff time), and financial (dollars) resources;

While this proposal has several positive aspects, there are still some challenges to overcome. For example, scanning of odd-sized attachments (and the viewing thereof on a computer screen if scanning is successful) presents some concern. In some cases, odd-sized originals may still need to be provided in paper format. To address this challenge, staff is considering various ways to have data produced by applicants in electronic format to be provided to the City in electronic format. Such a policy would successfully overcome this challenge.

A second challenge is the potential availability of connection to the City's network and/or connection to the internet via wireless connections. Because of the potential for conflicts with the state's open meetings law (the Brown Act), should Council determine to provide laptops to City Councilmembers, it be with the distinct provision that, while in use on the dais, the laptops would not have access to any form of e-mail or other interpersonal communications method (instant messaging).

Staff did perform a quick survey via the League of California Cities' administrative listserve. None of the nine (9) responses who provide City own laptops mentioned any major problems in their cities. However, three (3) did report the City laptops were governed by a policy that (1) required only City business be conducted using the City laptops (2) reiterated the legal requirement that City owned laptops do not come with a presumption of privacy (anything stored on the City laptops is open to inspection by the City at any time) and (3) no use of e-mail or other interpersonal communications methods (instant messaging) while using the laptop during a public meeting.

This proposal certainly presents many advantages. However, the most important aspect of information is its acceptance. And acceptance of information is, many

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times, dependent upon the comfort level of the recipient with the format of the information. Taking some license with a not so old adage: some say there is nothing quite like picking up a good [paper based agenda].

Councilmember Rose has been provided with the City Council and Redevelopment Agency agendas for the past month or so in electronic format. The agenda is delivered on a "flash card" that is inserted into the computer's Universal Service Bus (USB) port at the same time standard paper agendas are provided to the other Councilmembers. Councilmember Rose may wish to share his experiences with the Council during discussion of this item.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Information Technology Division has estimated the costs to implement this proposal to be approximately \$6,700 for the purchase of the hardware and software. After the initial set-up and configuration of the laptops, the staff time devoted to ongoing maintenance is expected to be de minimis.

Should the City Council determine to move forward with this proposal, the Council may wish to consider two funding options: (1) the City Council's discretionary fund, or (2) appropriated reserves.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Administrative Policy VI-03 (Internet Use)
2. Administrative Policy VI-02 (Electronic Mail)

Note: The City Manager's Office is currently reviewing all City Council and Administrative Policies for the purposes of update and conformance with the new Charter. References in the above policies to the Chief Administrative Officer should be considered references to the City Manager.

OPTIONS

Staff does see many advantages to having the agenda packet provided in electronic format and, therefore, recommends the City Council authorize the purchase of City laptops for any member of the City Council who requests one. This recommendation comes with the requirements of Administrative Policy VI-03 (Internet Use) and VI-02 (Electronic Mail). However, the following options are available for Council consideration:

- (1) Purchase City laptops for any member of the City Council who requests one for the conduct of City business with the provision that e-mail and other

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- interpersonal communications methods (instant messaging) be unavailable while the laptops are in use on the dais (**recommended option**);
- (2) Adopt a policy requiring Councilmembers to accept a City laptop and direct staff to deliver the Council agenda in electronic format only (with the same provisions for e-mail etc. provided in Item #1); or
 - (3) Retain the current practice of not providing City laptops to City Councilmembers.

MOTION:

That the City Council discuss the purchase of laptops for use by the City Council and direct staff as deemed appropriate.