Information Technology (IT) Committee Report - 1.23.2024 Meeting via Zoom

Committee Members Present:
- Nancy Kail - D9, Chair
- Clarence Hayes - D4
- David Rosenwaks - D6

(Matthew Mandell - D1 was absent)

Other RTM Members Present
- Jeff Wieser - D4, RTM Moderator
- Claudia Shaum - D5
- Sal Liccione - D9
- Andrew Collabela - D4

Town Officials and Others Present
- Eileen Zhang (EZ), Town IT Dept Head
- Darrell Demakes (DD), Town Digital Operations Manager
- Tom Kiely (TK), Town Director of Operations
- Nick Bamonte (NB), Town Attorney
- Tim McHugh, Resident

Meeting Agenda and Goals
1. **Committee organization and IT Department overview (EZ presenting, approx 30 min)**
   Goal: To have an understanding of the IT Department & its budget so that at the next IT Com mtg, we can efficiently review, discuss and vote on the IT Com's IT Dept FY24-25 budget recommendation to the RTM.

2. **Improving RTM Communications discussion (with EZ, TK, NB, 30 min)**
   Goal: To discuss/add to the *Communications Ideas* list (below) so that at the next IT Com mtg we can prioritize ideas and commit to IT Com work on a few designated improvements

Meeting Materials
- RTM Adopted FY 2024 Town Budget - Information Technology
- Office of Information Technology, Contact Us, WPTV Town Website information on IT Dept
- Communications Ideas

Summary
The IT Committee held its first meeting of the RTM 2023-25 session on 1.23.24 to discuss 2 agenda items and goals (above). Materials referenced during the meeting are also above. Eileen Zhang presented on the IT Department's responsibilities, work and FY 23-24 activities/accomplishments. Following the IT Dept overview, all meeting attendees discussed RTM related communications improvements our committee might spearhead. We added to the Communications Ideas (above). We agreed to continue adding to the list of ideas and at the next committee meeting, prioritize the list and assign committee members to 1-3 of the actionable items. No votes were taken.

Discussion, Input, Questions

IT Department Overview
Highlights from EZ's presentation and Q&A
● IT delivers secure, reliable, cost-effective services that are accessible, mobile, connected
● System offers redundancy, high availability, high capacity, security and speed
● #1 priority is security - town owned dark fiber ring network plus
● A mostly cloud based system with sufficient back up,
● A vast digital service catalog that serves several areas of town govt & the public
● Incl watching town mtgs, registering to vote, sign ups for P&R programs, paying taxes, etc.
● System includes a mobile ready town website that delivers all services to the public
● An online Geographic Information System (GIS) - (Westport is an early adopter of this)
● A digital marketing effort to showcase Westports attributes and offerings
● IT is a cost effective area - 3 FTEs, outsourcing, efficient operations
● It is service oriented and "back office" in nature
● Challenges incl increasing complexity, cybersecurity, cost control, maintaining skilled workforce
● There is 0 margin for error (during Covid all shut down, but IT kept govt going)

Communications Improvements
Highlights from discussion about other communications ideas and next steps
● Some improvements are already taking place - more recorded mtgs, some newsletters
● Other ideas discussed: RTM newsletters, fireside chats, podcasts, high school visits, plus:
● Website improvements - updated/improved content, better organization/navigation, & add AI
● Darrell noted How Do I… plus Navigation Tips on the website and outside google searches are good ways to help find Town website based info and services
● It was noted while IT manages town tech incl website, Town departments need to provide content for their areas of responsibility
● We agreed to add to the list and at next mtg prioritize & designate 1-3 items to address
● Important: with any improvement recommendations, we need to consider appropriateness for government entity, compliance, cost and staff implications.

Action Items
IT FY24-25 Budget
Review the FY24-25 IT Budget when available, attend budget related meetings. Come to the April RTM IT Committee meeting prepared with questions and ready to discuss and vote on our committee's IT budget recommendation to the full RTM.
Communications Improvements
Add to the Communications Ideas list. Be prepared to prioritize the list and select 1-2 actionable items you would like to spearhead on the list.

Next IT Committee Meeting: TBD

Outcome of the Meeting/Vote: Discussion only, no votes were taken.

Reporter: Nancy Kail, RTM IT Committee Chair, January 2024