

City of Alexandria, Virginia
Commission on Information Technology

MINUTES

April 19 , 2011 Meeting

Meeting called to order at 7:20pm.

Roll Call

Members present: Phillip Acosta, Nina Baliga, Daniel Brooks (Vice-Chairman), Marjorie Conner, Kostas Liopiros (Chairman), Debra Roepke (for Del Pepper), Marie Schuler

Excused: Steven Cooper, Catherine Hogan, Lynda Rudd

Un-excused: Councilman Alicia Hughes, Margaret Leary, Helen Morris, Page Moon

City Staff Present: Tom Trobridge

Approval of Minutes

There was no quorum to approve the minutes of the March 10, 2011 meeting.

Final Review and Approval of the Commission's Report on the City's IT Plan

Vice Chairman Dan Brooks presented the Commissions review of the Proposed FY 2012-2017 Information Technology Plan. There were no further comments or edits to the review. The Chair proposed forwarding the review to City Council.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40pm.

**City of Alexandria
Commission on Information Technology**

**Review of the Proposed FY 2012-2017
Information Technology Plan**

April 19, 2010

Phillip Acosta
Nina Baliga
Daniel Brooks, Vice-Chair
Marjorie Conner
Steve Cooper
Catherine Hogan
Alicia Hughes
Margaret Leary
Kostas Liopiros, Chair
Page Moon
Helen Morris
Redella S. Pepper
Lynda Rudd, Secretary
Marie Schuler

Introduction

The Alexandria Commission on Information Technology has reviewed the City Manager's Proposed Information Technology Plan for Fiscal Years 2012-2017, in accordance with provisions of The Code of the City of Alexandria, Section 2-4-113(a)(1). The Commission makes the following observations regarding the current plan and recommendations for the development of future plans.

The FY 2012-2017 Information Technology Plan

The Information Technology Services (ITS) staff has developed a reasoned and organized plan that is responsive to the difficult budget environment facing the City. As has been the case each year, this year's plan is an improvement over previous efforts.

The Commission agrees with the general approach to prioritize project funding into three categories - Maintenance/Continuation, Enhancements, and New Projects – and to align each project with the goals of the City's Strategic Plan. This clearly provides some improved coordination and understanding of IT projects. However, this is but the first step in developing an IT strategic plan, which requires a clearly defined set of IT strategic goals to be implemented through the Information Technologies Steering Committee (ITSC). The Commission finds that a set of IT strategic goals, essential to the strategic planning process, continues to be lacking in the IT planning process.

The ITS staff continues to make progress in cooperation and consolidation of IT support and planning across City departments, the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) and the Alexandria Libraries. We believe these efforts will provide additional future benefits as well as cost savings to the City. However, there are more efficiencies and savings that can be gained. The Commission again recommends that cooperation and consolidation of IT be addressed not only at the working level but that the executive and elected officials of Alexandria affirm their support to ensure that planning for additional cost benefits be incorporated in future IT Plans by all city organizations including the Alexandria City Public Schools and the Alexandria Libraries.

The current IT Plan is better documented than previous efforts. However there are still some areas where the City could use the IT Plan to better educate citizens about its plans and operations. To achieve transparency, the IT Plan should explain the City's technology priorities and expenditures, including any pertinent cost-benefit analysis and rationale for spending -- especially on new projects or those that result in increased costs.

The Commission agrees generally with the stated priorities of the IT plan. However, certain items could be described in greater detail or better aligned with long term planning. Although these items are few they raise the question as to whether they were part of a strategic plan or pet projects. The discrepancy between these projects and the City's strategic plan appears to indicate that the City's strategic planning process is not yet integrated onto the IT planning process. One item particularly stands out in this area: the Fire Radios.

The Fire Radios project is described as purchasing a few expensive hand-held radios in order to

evaluate their performance when used with firefighting gear. However, the description in the current IT plan includes neither out-year budgeting to purchase additional units nor funds to replace the existing hand-held radios that were recently acquired. Without linkage to the City's Strategic Plan to justify the life cycle of this program, there is little justification to purchase and evaluate these units during the current fiscal cycle *especially in a tightly constrained fiscal environment*.

Future Information Technology Plans

The Commission encourages the development of smart, future oriented plans for the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to enhance the operation of city government and the delivery of services to the citizens of Alexandria. Optimally this effort should include top-down "strategic planning" for ICT resources that is driven by the City's Strategic Plan as well as by guidance from City Council. To achieve the best efficiencies and interoperability, an IT strategic plan should cut across departmental stovepipes including the Alexandria City Public Schools and the Alexandria Libraries.

The current IT planning process, however, results in a "bottom-up" collection of program and funding descriptions, as noted in previous Commission's reviews of the City's Information Technology Plan. The current IT Plan provides a linkage to the City's strategic plan in the form of a chart that associates each IT Plan project with a strategic goal in the City's Strategic Plan. This is a useful first step but it is not a strategic IT plan. An IT strategic plan cannot be achieved solely from an after-the fact "strategic alignment" of the current bottoms-up plan.

The Commission believes that the process for developing the City's annual IT Plan can be further improved and respectfully continues to make the following recommendations:

- Make the IT Plan a true top-down strategic planning document that is driven by the City's Strategic Plan. Rather than list programs under a city strategic goal, the plan should develop a set of IT strategic goals that are derived from the City's Strategic Plan. Each program item should identify its linkage to an IT strategic goal(s) and show how it integrates with others to fulfill a common goal. Commonality of function and consolidation need to be further addressed from the top down to gain efficiency and cost savings.
- Expand the IT Plan to include all aspects of IT funding in Alexandria, including operational expenses (OpEx) as well as capital expenditures (CapEx). This is critical to strategic planning to ensure that investments are not made that could increase the OpEx to a point that may not be sustainable or would require drastically reducing the CapEx for needed investments. The plan should include a rationale and supporting data for all projects and CapEx and OpEx so citizens can understand how their tax dollars are allocated.
- Require the IT Plan to provide an annual assessment of the state of Information Technology in the City identifying any gaps and shortfalls in how IT is supporting the IT strategic goals and therefore the City's Strategic Plan.

Alexandria is acknowledged as one of the more progressive cities in using IT to support its citizens and business. To maintain this leadership, the City's IT Plan must look forward to ensure the use of innovative and cost-efficient technologies to maintain a first class IT infrastructure for Alexandria.