



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

February 8, 2012

REPORT OF THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Bruce M. Desmond	Chair	Present	
William M. Roche	Vice Chair	Present	
Rebekah Gewirtz	Ward Six Alderman	Absent	
Maryann M. Heuston	Ward Two Alderman	Present	
William A. White Jr.	Alderman At Large	Present	
Thomas F. Taylor	Ward Three Alderman	Present	
John M Connolly	Alderman At Large	Present	
Omar Boukili	Administrative Assistant	Present	
Michael Glavin	Exec. Dir., OSPCD	Present	
Karthik Viswanathan	CIO	Present	
Thomas Champion	Director of Communications	Present	
Ed Bean	CFO	Present	

192116 - That the Director of SPCD research Boston's New Urban Mechanics program, that engages community members in promoting civic innovation, and determine if a similar program is feasible in Somerville.:

Mr. Glavin spoke about the City of Boston's program and its successes noting that that Somerville's 311, ResiStat and SomerStat are similar in nature and he provided examples of how residents are engaged in various programs, e.g., an application for smart phones that allows individuals to communicate with the city. Mr. Glavin will continue to follow Boston's program.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

192322 - That the Chief Information Officer make recommendations for a centralized database so that information may be shared among various city departments when tracking problem properties, etc.:

Alderman Roche referenced a recent shooting in East Somerville as an example of the need for information to be shared among city departments. In another instance, 50 calls had been made regarding a problem property, however the Chief of Police was only aware of 3 of those calls. Mr. Viswanathan explained how MUNIS could be utilized to share information. At the present time, the city is focusing more on property information and is implementing a new procedure to

categorize everything by parcel ID. The data will have to be normalized across departments and there will be an automatic interface with 311. The data will be accessible in real time by all departments. The committee asked to be kept updated on the progress of this project

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

192437 - That the Chief Financial Officer post on the City's website, an "Open Checkbook" so the public can search details of city spending and vendor payments.:

Mr. Beane spoke about the requirements of the state to report yearly expenses and told the members that the city already makes the information available. Mr. Viswanathan said that the information provided to the public could be updated monthly, since some data, (e.g. payments to veterans), would need to be deleted prior to making it public.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

192539 - That the Director of Communications appear before this Board's Committee of Information Technology to explain why Comcast charges residents much more for its service than in other surrounding communities and to provide suggestions on if and how Somerville's rates could be lowered.:

Mr. Champion spoke about the concerns of citizens over cable rates and discussed FCC regulations and regulation of rates, noting that the local franchising authority has the power to regulate rates in certain instances. Only certain channels may be regulated, such as those included in the basic package. In a market like Somerville, where competition exists, the state cannot set a price. Mr. Champion went on to say that Comcast is the only provider that offers basic service, adding that it is a marketing technique used to make their enhanced packages seem more attractive. Somerville's rates were compared to those in some other communities and Mr. Champion told the members that some communities have cable provided by the municipal utility. The committee inquired about discounts to seniors and asked how that could be implemented and Mr. Champion stated that the city could ask the providers to offer a senior discount. Mr. Champion discussed ways in which the cable companies offer reduced rates on internet for low income families and said that Verizon is not willing to provide FIOS to all areas, preferring to offer it only in areas where it is easy for them, e.g., suburban areas, where the installation of the infrastructure is much easier than urban areas. There was also a discussion of the timeline for renegotiating the cable company contracts.

Chairman Desmond's motion *that the Director of Communications and the Administration make a good faith effort to explore the possibility of obtaining a discounted rate for the City's senior citizens when the contracts with cable providers are renegotiated,* was approved.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED