
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report CLS-06-2019 Changes to the Meeting Management Solution For Consideration by Council in Committee on May 28, 2019



OBJECTIVE:

To seek authorization from Council to move from an on-premises to an externally hosted solution for meeting management software, subscribe to a video module to enhance webcasting of meetings, and revise the associated budget.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report CLS-06-2019 Changes to the Meeting Management Solution be received;
2. AND THAT the 2019 Tax Supported Operating Budget be revised as outlined in Report CLS-06-2019;
3. AND THAT the one-time costs identified in Report CLS-06-2019 be funded from the Capital Replacement Reserve – Information Technology;
4. AND THAT staff be authorized to enter into a revised agreement with eSCRIBE, subscribing to the externally hosted meeting management software solution;
5. AND THAT staff be authorized to subscribe to the eSCRIBE Video Manager module to index webcasting to meeting minutes.

Prepared by: Evelyn Eichenbaum, Manager, Citizen & Legislative Services/Clerk

Respectfully submitted: Cathy Case, General Manager of Corporate & Social Services

Approved: Donald G. Boyle, Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

With the advancement of technology platforms moving to hosted solutions, it is recommended that Haldimand County move from the current on-premises solution that is in place for meeting management, to the solution externally hosted by eSCRIBE to ensure consistency in use and performance, and ensure access to all software components and to the most up-to-date software. Enhancement of the current webcasting of Council and Council in Committee (CIC) meetings, by tying in to the meeting management software, will also increase public accessibility to meetings and the Council decision-making process. Both of these changes include associated costs that are outlined in this report. Overall, switching from the on-premises to an externally hosted solution will move the County forward in terms of municipal meeting management. Additionally, the webcasting module directly contributes to the County identified community engagement initiative.

BACKGROUND:

In 2016, Haldimand County purchased a software solution for meeting management from eSCRIBE. The solution provides efficiencies in regards to the workflow involved with the drafting and review of

staff reports, the production of meeting agendas and minutes, and the recording of decisions made at Council and CIC meetings. At the time, the County had the option of moving forward with an on-premises solution or an externally hosted solution. The on-premises solution was selected, which means that the software is installed on County servers and any maintenance or upgrades are performed remotely through access to our servers. While there was merit in choosing this option at the time, this option is no longer available as the vendor has moved to a model focused on offering their solution via an externally hosted solution.

The initiative will require an amendment to the 2019 Tax Supported Operating Budget. Although staff anticipated this requirement coming forward, the timing was such that the administration of the municipal election was the staff priority and sufficient research into costing and associated implications were unable to be completed in time for consideration during budget deliberations. In February 2019, staff became aware that this is a higher priority than originally anticipated due to the potential for loss of support for the existing eSCRIBE system.

Staff feel that it is critical to consider switching from the on-premises to an externally hosted solution at this time.

ANALYSIS:

The eSCRIBE meeting management software solution has proven to be an effective and efficient tool for Haldimand County in the processes used in drafting and reviewing reports, and the production of agendas and minutes. As with any software, enhancements and bug fixes are developed on a regular basis and provided as updates with regular frequency. With the current on-premises solution, updates have to be scheduled to occur during a timeframe that is least disruptive to the end users, i.e. on a declared holiday such as Remembrance Day or Easter Monday, or during the summer break. Updates are not provided during evenings or weekends. This means that our software is generally not as current as those clients that use the externally hosted solution, as the hosted updates are run every couple of weeks during off-hours.

As externally hosted solutions become more of the norm, eSCRIBE has advised that they are not able to guarantee that some of the software enhancements will work on the on-premises solution. In fact, of 91 customers in Ontario, Haldimand County is one of only two customers remaining with the on-premises solution. There are beneficial features that only the hosted solution provides. For example, eSCRIBE has recently developed a new component to the software that would allow members of Council who utilize the electronic agenda application, to register a declaration of pecuniary interest through the software, which will populate an electronic registry for the municipality (the registry is a new legislated requirement). While Haldimand County has not yet moved to full electronic participation by members of Council through the app, the intent is to do so in the near future. It is anticipated that this new component will likely not be available to the County if we remain with the older method of accessing the software.

When the County first contracted with eSCRIBE, it was understood that at some point, a move to the externally hosted solution would need to be made. While they have sought our interest in this move over the last couple of years, staff feel that we are at a point now that it is in the best interest of the County to move to the hosted solution to ensure that all components will be accessible and the most updated version of the software will be available. The transition to the new solution will take a minimal number of days, however, as many staff use the software on a regular basis, it is felt that making the transition in July, at the beginning of the summer break, is the least disruptive option. Once the transition is complete, staff should not see any difference in usage of the software – it will look and feel the same as what is used now.

With the externally hosted solution, the County will retain ownership of our data, which will be retained indefinitely. If at any time the County chooses to pursue an alternative option in terms of meeting management, the data will be provided to us in its original format.

The County currently uses other externally hosted software such as:

- ActiveNet (program registration and facility booking)
- iMedic (EMS patient recording system)
- Point Click Care (GVL resident/patient care system)
- Staff Schedule Care (GVL staff scheduling)
- Symphony (library automation/circulation), and
- VoterView (voters' list administration)

The County has recently been webcasting our CIC and Council meetings via YouTube. We have the option to index our webcasting to the meeting minutes by subscribing to an eSCRIBE module that will manage the webcast and link it to the related items in the meeting minutes. Staff feel that this would provide additional accessibility for residents, providing more convenience to citizens and potentially increasing public engagement in terms of viewing the specific portions of meetings that are relevant to them. Initially it was thought that this module would be implemented once the move to the new building is complete; however, by moving forward with this initiative in 2019, the opportunity to pursue this component now, contributes to the corporate goal of enhancing community engagement efforts, gains efficiency in implementing both eSCRIBE changes simultaneously and allows staff an opportunity to get accustomed to the new process prior to moving into the new building.

FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Currently, the County pays an annual maintenance fee for eSCRIBE software of \$4,850. Moving to the externally hosted solution, allows for more frequent and consistent updates, enhancements, unlimited data storage, etc. with an associated increase to the annual fee. The annual fee for the hosted solution will be \$12,700, resulting in a difference of \$7,850 for 2019 which will form part of the overall 2019 operating variance. The ongoing annual fee will be presented in the Draft 2020 Tax Supported Operating Budget and subsequent applicable budgets.

There is a one-time migration fee of \$1,530 and a one-time set up and configuration of the ADFS (single sign-on solution) of \$2,750 related to the transition to the hosted solution which will both be funded through the Capital Replacement Reserve – Information Technology.

Utilization of eSCRIBE's Webcasting Plus module for the webcasting of meetings has an associated annual fee of \$10,634. Upon approval of subscribing to this module, the \$10,634 would form part of the 2019 operating variance. The ongoing annual fee will be presented in the Draft 2020 Tax Supported Operating Budget and subsequent applicable budgets. A one-time implementation fee of \$2,060 for set up and training related to the Webcasting Plus module would also be funded through the Capital Replacement Reserve – Information Technology.

All costs reflect non-rebateable HST.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:

The Police Services Board agendas and minutes are currently drafted through eSCRIBE and the intent is to use the software with other committees and internal groups in the future.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: Yes

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: Yes

Policy: No

ATTACHMENTS:

None.