

December 5, 2005

2006 Budget Briefing Note

Business Support Services Division issues referred to 2006 Capital Budget

**Issue/
Background:**

1. The Commissioner of Urban Development Services report to the Planning and Transportation Committee on the results of the IBMS Remote Computing Pilot during the 2006 budget process, prior to the approval of additional funds for its full-scale implementation.
2. The Commissioner of Urban Development Services include the 5 year cash flow requirements of future IBMS enhancements in the 2006 Urban Development Services Capital Budget Submission.

Key Points:

The IBMS Remote Computing Pilot Project was a 2005 Capital project to explore existing corporate mobile/remote computing solutions for the Building and Municipal Licensing & Standards (MLS) divisions. The intention was to have a small pilot that would include a cross section of staff from each Division. The \$100,000 assigned to the project would be used to purchase a limited amount of equipment which could then be field tested during 2005.

Business Systems Section (BSS) staff considered the two different remote computing solutions developed by Public Health and the former Work & Emergency Services (WES) department.

The Public Health remote computing solution involved a significant amount of in-house development work that resulted in a new application that interfaces with their existing database. This approach was not considered viable for the IBMS Remote Computing Pilot project due to the amount of further work that would be required to customize the application for the specific needs of the Building and MLS divisions. Furthermore, this solution would result in an additional application that would have to be supported on an ongoing basis.

The WES approach was next considered. The internally developed WES solution involved configuring laptops to connect wirelessly to the City's network through the City's Corporate Secure Remote Access Service. This allowed for the full version of their Hanson application to be accessed from the field.

The WES approach was further investigated as it makes use of existing City infrastructure and required no customization of the IBMS application

Testing began in mid 2005 and did result in some success but also highlighted a number of concerns:

- The laptop screens are smaller so more scrolling is required than is required with a standard desktop.
- Laptops are too cumbersome to use in many of the locations where staff would be performing their inspections/investigations. In some cases (e.g. large construction sites), it would not make sense to even bring the laptop out of the car, requiring staff to create hand-written notes to be transcribed later, thus practically eliminating the advantage of a remote solution.
- Operating a laptop in a car without a proper stand is not easily done. Building and MLS field staff use personal vehicles, so mounting a stand is not feasible, whereas in WES city-owned vehicles are used by staff.
- The glare from the sun at times causes a problem seeing the screen.
- The connection speed is too slow, comparable to a 56K modem.
- Logging into the system is cumbersome; many logins are required (laptop, portal, MetaFrame, TorDomain, IBMS).
- Connectivity is unreliable, similar to a cell phone. There is no option for inputting data if a wireless connection is not available.

A presentation of this option was made to Building and MLS senior management. A decision was then made that, due to the above listed concerns, Business Systems would not continue with further testing of this option.

In consultation with the Building and MLS Divisions and in reviewing the results of the 2005 pilot, a new 2006 Remote Pilot project has been proposed as part of the 2006 capital budget. The new project will focus on a larger pilot that would see the implementation of 100 units in the field for the Building and MLS Divisions. The proposed pilot would consist of testing a solution (AMANDA Mobile) from our existing IBMS vendor that has been successfully implemented in other municipalities. The solution would allow for a subset of the IBMS data to be available in the field via a wireless connection on a smaller handheld device. It would also be less resource intensive in terms of ongoing maintenance than if an internal customized solution was to be pursued. Staff can report back later in 2006 on the results of this expanded pilot.

IBMS 5 Year Enhancements

In the summer of 2005, information technology strategic planning sessions were held with representatives from the Building, City Planning and MLS divisions in order to develop a 5-year capital plan. The identified budget request for the submissions that resulted from these sessions was \$8.03 million over 5 years or an average of \$1.61 million per year.

These amounts currently exceed the \$1.5 million annual budget envelope which

has been assigned. Staff will be working with the client divisions to prioritize the requests so that they meet the envelope. This prioritized list of capital projects will be submitted to the Deputy City Manager and the Chief Financial Officer in February, 2006 for their review and inclusion in the corporate 5-year capital plan.

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