

**ALLEGANY COUNTY BOARD OF LEGISLATORS
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

March 14, 2016

LEGISLATORS PRESENT: Chairman C. Crandall, S. Burt, P. Curran, D. Decker, K. Graves, D. Healy, J. Hopkins, C. Jessup, K. LaForge, T. O'Grady, D. Pullen, N. Ungermann (Absent: D. Fanton, A. McGraw, D. Root)

OTHERS PRESENT: H. Budinger, K. Dirlam, L. Edwards, M. Gasdik, V. Grant, R. Hollis, K. Hooker, C. Knapp, J. Luckey, J. Margeson, T. Miner, K. Monroe, B. Riehle, T. Ross, R. Scott, R. Sobeck-Lynch, R. Whitney (Newcastle Communications Guests: Gioia Ambrette, Mark Fogel, and Brianna Gallowe)

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Curtis Crandall called the meeting to order at 3:50 p.m.

Newcastle Communications

Information Technology Director Keith Hooker introduced representatives from Newcastle Communications: President Gioia Ambrette, Account Manager Mark Fogel, and Customer Support Brianna Gallowe. Mr. Hooker stated the current phone system is old, and at the end of service. He noted it is more expensive to upgrade the old system than to purchase a new system. Mr. Hooker stated he recommends the Newcastle Communications phone system. He said the difference between the current phone system and the Newcastle system is outstanding.

President of Newcastle Communications Gioia Ambrette stated she has been with the company for 37 years. Ms. Ambrette stated Mr. Hooker did his due diligence, and asked for a request for proposal (RFP). She gave a PowerPoint presentation about the Newcastle Communications telephone system, and the benefits of the system. Ms. Ambrette noted the County's current phone system is considered from the Stone Age. She said if there is a problem with one of the cards in the system, the phones are out of commission for over 24 hours. With the new system, that would no longer be an issue. She stated the phone system option they have is a software based system. It can run on any standard server. It is a virtual system, where the phone system is an application on the computer. Annual software assurance is part of the package. Each year, the County will receive an upgrade to the system. There is an annual cost of ownership and this upgrade is included. She stated the cost of ownership is the lowest in the industry.

Ms. Ambrette noted a crash kit is left on site for emergencies. It does not cost the County anything, unless the crash kit is lost. Disaster Recovery Software is also included. Once it is purchased, the County can make as many copies as they want for free. If there is a failure at one place, the system will keep on going. Mass notification is also built into the product. She stated it is an important component, and the County doesn't have to pay for it. Legislator Decker stated they have been discussing building security, and this system would fit in with what they are doing. Ms. Ambrette stated the system requires simple administration, and the Information Technology Department should be able to manage it. Training is included in the installation, and part of the annual package is training including new staff. Ms. Ambrette stated the phone system is Department of Defense JITC certified.

There was much discussion about connecting cell phones with the desk phones. Employees would download an app on their Smartphones, and would be able to receive calls from their desk phones. Employees can also make calls using their cell phones, and the office number will shield the private cell phone number. Legislator Ungermann asked if a citizen calls a County Office number, will the employee be able to answer if they are out in the field. Ms. Ambrette stated it can simultaneously ring the cell phone and desk phone. Legislator Ungermann asked if it will eliminate a receptionist. Ms. Ambrette stated they don't want to replace any jobs. Legislator Graves asked if cell phones came with the system. Ms. Ambrette said no, but they can download the app to their

own cell phones. She noted it will not work with a Blackberry. Legislator Hopkins asked if the employee has to have a Smartphone. Ms. Ambrette said yes.

Legislator LaForge asked if the system is hard wired. Ms. Ambrette said you use a network or standard T1 line from a phone company. Legislator Graves asked if the system is internet based. Ms. Ambrette said yes. Legislator Graves asked if the range is unlimited. Ms. Ambrette said yes as long as they have a phone and Wi-Fi. Mr. Hooker stated there are currently about 500 County phones. Ms. Ambrette stated the phone system is scalable so they can have as many as 3,500 phones if they want to expand. Legislator Graves asked if the County would have to run new wires for the phone system. Mr. Hooker said some floors would need some rewiring, and others would use the same wires. Legislator Graves asked about onsite service and the cost. Ms. Ambrette stated they have a technician in Walton, New York, but reiterated there will be a crash kit onsite. She also said that there is no additional cost for onsite service. Legislator Graves asked about the timeline once it has been approved. Ms. Ambrette stated they replace the phones, test, and then switch them over.

Ms. Ambrette stated they have been working with Ulster County. She suggested the County talk to them about the phone system, and their experiences. She noted Ulster County switched their phones over one department at a time. Mr. Hooker stated he has spoken with Ulster County Information Services Director Sylvia Wohlfahrt, and they are happy with the system.

Social Services Commissioner Vicki Grant asked if the system had paging capability. Ms. Ambrette said it does have the capability for mass notification. Youth Bureau Director Linda Edwards asked about faxes. Ms. Ambrette stated that would be another product that would need to be added on to the package. Mr. Hooker believes it was in the package. Legislator Graves asked if it has voice recognition. Ms. Ambrette stated in the future there may be facial recognition, and it is another component that would be an additional cost.

Chairman Crandall asked about the cost of the system. Ms. Ambrette stated it is the lowest cost system they have proposed to anyone. She said there are two components in the cost of ownership. That is what the dealer (Newcastle) will charge you and the cost of the software assurance from the manufacturer. Ms. Ambrette said they are fixed costs. Chairman Crandall asked if Mr. Hooker was going to talk about cost at this time. Mr. Hooker said no, they are still working on it. Chairman Crandall stated Mr. Hooker should bring his recommendation, and the specific cost of the system with options to Committee.

Finally, the representatives from Newcastle Communications gave a brief demonstration of the phone system.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 4:37 p.m. following a motion made by Legislator Graves, seconded by Legislator Decker, and carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Scott, Secretary to the Clerk of the Board