Electronic Voting Study Committee Meeting Minutes
January 23, 2019

In attendance: John Covey, Donna O'Connor, Bryan Moss, Neena Mohanka, Sandy Wright, Chris Mehne

Vendor presentation by Options Technologies held via web conference. Mark Fite

Meeting called to order by Committee Chair Bryan Moss at 7:06. Motion to approve meeting minutes from January 17, 2019, made by Sandy Wright, seconded by John Covey, unanimously approved.

Options Technologies is a Mass company, working with several companies in the area. A handheld system with live feedback and reporting. Used in Arlington and Framingham. Also, have a tablet or phone app for a similar service. Focusing presentation on stand-alone handsets. Ie, G4. It is a radio frequency item, limited in range to the location, 650 feet, and connects to a windows device that runs the main software.

When provided as a service, they pre-stage the devices to hand out by precinct. Live screen shows the question. Also has feedback set by precinct to show the vote in progress, Grey box to show voted or not. Once the question is finalized, the results are yes, no, abstain.

The handset has immediate feedback to show the vote registered. Base stations are used for storage and charging.

Option Power is the database that drives the system. It is an SQL database that is used for reporting and communicating handsets. It tracks the results and responses to votes, can flag requests to speak and make roll call or quorum functions.

The system is a closed module and does not require a connection to the internet. It can be set up to support multiple voting sites if that is required. But the person voting still needs to be present at the polling location to vote.

Adding items to be voted on is very easy, questions can be copied and pasted. Amendments can be added on the fly. Any stock questions, such as a motion to discuss, would be prepared in advance. The warrant would be set up as slide presentations. There is a results button and a pass-fail button. There is area to add text for explanation of the item, and the yes or no explanation.

Some questions can be done electronic votes, some can be voice votes, it is the discretion of the Town Moderator. It is a process decision made ahead of time. Amendments and wording can be adjusted as needed.

The system can be used as a purchase item or a provided service. If provided as a service, they provide the backup and run all the voting process. The system can display info in a voting grid or a simple bar graph. All reports are digital.

Pricing is driven by the number of town meeting members, and the number of sessions that are held. The service pricing model is that the first time is setup and or test of the location. There are cabling and monitors to install, setup of devices, and registration to each town meeting member. The ideal setup is to leave and store the system on site. Cost per meeting would be between 5-8;000 for a three-day meeting. Setup and tear down may affect end cost. This includes all support

Donna asked the vendor how their availability is - they responded that they have had as little as one day's notice. In business 8-9 years. Used in Natick, Plymouth, Arlington, Framingham before they became a city. Advantage is that it speeds up tabulation and results. And aids in accountability. The drawback is cost. Can display to multiple screens.

Chris asked about reports. Shown excel report downloaded from the system. Shows results in each column for every vote.

Sandy asked if this is used for every vote, the answer; it is a choice by the group using it.

John asked about an ownership model. Purchase runs from $29-30k, plus maintenance costs. However, this could be broken into a 4-5 year support contract. Ownership would average between $8-15K annually. The hidden cost is if a device is lost or broken, and the cost of ongoing staff support (internal).

These costs may rise between 5 to 7 percent over time. The vendor can run a more accurate cost estimate if we need one.

Donna asked about security. How easy is it to hack the system. The devices are encrypted and are set up with frequency hopping across a broad spectrum. Devices have unique ID's and are programmed as assigned to a specific person. The radio only runs local to the voting place. To hack the actual device or the radio receivers would require destroying the device. The system shows status and would indicate tampering.

People who do not want to use the handset can be handled in several ways. Usually by some process or protocol. These systems have Braille compatible versions for ADA compliance.

Bryan asked about a pilot night, trial basis to see if the process would be acceptable. But would need an NDA agreement and some show that our interest is earnest.

Questions on the results process. And town meeting member training. Have the moderator conduct a practice vote at the beginning of every town meeting. The vendor has sample scripts.

The demo ended.

The group discussed the next steps. The recommendation was to format a report to turn over to the Board of Selectmen. We should make an overview of our process. List the relative pros and cons of each system (or a system at all) and allow each committee member to indicate their personal recommendations.

Motion to adjourn by Donna O'Connor, 2ndSandy, all in favor.
Minutes submitted by John covey